

Name:

Thomas W. O'Connell

Branch of Service:

USAF

Years of Military Service:

27 1/2 years

Rank upon discharge:

Colonel

Specialties:

C-141 Pilot (3,600 total flying hours); International Politico - Military Affairs; fluent in French and Spanish

Foreign countries where you were stationed:

Vietnam; Thailand; Chad, Africa; Panama; Germany

Medals/Honors Received:

Silver Star; Legion of Merit; Defense Meritorious Service Medal (2); USAF Meritorious Service Medal; 9 Air Medals; 2 Joint Service Commendation Medals; Air Force Commendation Medal

Highlights of Military Service:

Colonel Thomas W. O'Connell was born 4 Jan. 1943 in Wilkes-Barre, Pa. He received a B.S. in English from St. Joseph's College (Pa.) in 1965 and a M.S. in Management from Central Michigan University in 1980. He also graduated from Air Command and Staff College in 1977 and Air War College in 1984. Colonel O'Connell was commissioned in 1965 through the ROTC program and entered on active duty in October of that year. After completing undergraduate pilot training, he was assigned as a C-123 pilot with the 310th Air Commando Squadron, Nha Trang AB, Vietnam. In April 1967, he was reassigned to the 606th Air Commando Squadron, Nakhon Phanom RTAFB, Thailand. During duty in Southeast Asia, Colonel O'Connell accrued 248 combat sorties in South Vietnam, 88 missions in Laos, and 42 missions in North Vietnam involving special operations. Upon his return to the United States in 1968, he served as a UC-123 "Ranch Hand" aerial spray instructor pilot at Hurlburt Field, Fla. In June 1973, he was designated as Air Attache to the Republic of Chad with accreditation to Cameroon, Gabon and the Central African Republic. In September 1975, Colonel O'Connell transferred to Howard AFB, Panama, where he served as an Operation Plans Officer and later became Executive Officer to the Commander, USAF Southern Air Division. Arriving at McGuire AFB, New Jersey, in January 1979, he assumed the position as Chief Pilot, 6th Military Airlift Squadron (C-141). In July 1980, Colonel O'Connell was assigned as an International Politico-Military Planner for the Middle East and Africa at HQ US European Command, Stuttgart, Germany. After attending the Air War College, he was assigned to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Washington, as Special Assistant for National Security Council Affairs and subsequently as Chief, Africa Branch, Plans and Policy Directorate. In July 1986, he was selected as Director, European Command Liaison Office, MacDill AFB, Fla. to coordinate logistics support for the US Central Command's Middle East mission and the US Special Operations Command's European commitments. He returned to Washington, D.C. as Chief, Plans Division, International Staff, Inter-American Defense Board, in October 1989 and held that position until his retirement from active duty on 1 September 1992. Colonel O'Connell is a Command Pilot with more than 3,600 flying hours. His military decorations include the Silver Star, Legion of Merit, Defense Meritorious Service Medal with 1 Oak Leaf Cluster (OLC), USAF Meritorious Service Medal, Air Medal with 8 OLC, Joint Service Commendation Medal with 1 OLC, and the Air Force Commendation Medal. Why do you believe it is important for young people to register and vote? Voting is not a privilege; it's a responsibility. The youth of today will produce our leaders of tomorrow. The better understanding our youth have of the political process - local, state, and national - the better able they will be to lead our nation.