

Hero of Hudson River crash landing Air Force vet

Donna Miles, American Forces Press Service

Hero of Hudson River crash landing got start in Air Force

WASHINGTON, Jan. 15, 2009 – The pilot who crash-landed a crippled airliner in New York's Hudson River this afternoon, saving 155 lives on board, is an Air Force Academy graduate who received his pilot training in the Air Force.

Chelsey B. "Sully" Sullenberger steered US Airways Flight 1549 toward the river when both engines failed less than five minutes after takeoff from LaGuardia Airport. All 150 passengers and five crew members survived the incident.

Sullenberger is an Air Force Academy graduate who served in the Air Force from 1973 to 1980, according to his resume posted on the homepage of his company, Safety Reliability Methods, Inc.

He was an U.S. Air Force F-4 Phantom II fighter pilot who served as a flight leader and training officer in Europe and the Pacific. He was also the Blue Force mission commander during Red Flag exercises at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev.

President George W. Bush and New York Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg were among the first to publicly laud Sullenberger for quick thinking and heroism that averted a catastrophe.

Bloomberg noted during an early evening news conference that Sullenberger did not leave the aircraft as it floated in the river until he had confirmed that every passenger had been safely evacuated.

"It would appear the pilot did a masterful job of landing in the river and making sure everybody got out," Bloomberg said. "I had a long conversation with the pilot. He walked the plane twice and made sure that everybody was out."

Bush, in a statement released by the White House, said his administration is coordinating with state and local officials to respond to the incident as it monitors the situation.

"Laura and I are inspired by the skill and heroism of the flight crew as well as the dedication and selflessness of the emergency responders and volunteers who rescued passengers from the icy waters of the Hudson," he said. "We send our thoughts and prayers to all involved in the accident."