



**CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF
THE AIR MEDAL**

TO

**JAMES A. GERAMITA
AVIATION MAINTENANCE TECHNICIAN THIRD CLASS
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

Petty Officer GERAMITA is cited for meritorious achievement in aerial flight while serving as flight mechanic aboard Coast Guard HH-60J helicopter CGNR 6031 during the response to a "mayday call" from the motor vessel BOW MARINER on the evening of February 28, 2004. The motor vessel BOW MARINER caught fire and violently exploded 50 miles east of Chincoteague, Virginia, casting 27 crewmembers into frigid water and a lethal combination of ethanol and diesel fuel oil. As the second HH-60J dispatched in response to this catastrophic explosion, Petty Officer GERAMITA was well aware that the flight mechanic from the first HH-60J on scene had suffered effects of fumes at the ocean's surface, as well as in the aircraft cabin and prepared himself accordingly. When CG6031 arrived on scene, the BOW MARINER had already disappeared from the surface and left a large debris field in the middle of a 2-mile diameter chemical slick. With visibility degraded by darkness and contrast on the surface all but non-existent due to the black fuel/oil mixture that was covering everything, the crew of CG6031 began searching the numerous rafts and lifeboats for survivors. While suffering from burning eyes and nose and a headache from the ethanol fumes, Petty Officer GERAMITA expertly utilized the night sun to locate a survivor in one of the life rafts. Petty Officer GERAMITA then accomplished the deployment of the rescue swimmer to a 47-foot patrol boat as well as the recovery of the patient and rescue swimmer from the bow of the fishing vessel. This maneuver was skillfully accomplished even though two 50-foot masts extending above the fishing vessel forced the aircraft to hover within ten feet of the obstacles. Petty Officer GERAMITA'S courage, judgment and devotion to duty are most heartily commended and are in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Coast Guard.