



**CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF
THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS**

TO

**ARTHUR J. THOMPSON
AVIATION SURVIVAL TECHNICIAN FIRST CLASS
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

Petty Officer THOMPSON is cited for extraordinary heroism while participating in aerial flight on the day and night of 8 May 2005 while rescuing three people from the Sailing Vessel AL MEISAN. The vessel had been severely damaged and was sinking in a strong nor'easter 465 miles northeast of Air Station Elizabeth City, North Carolina. Demonstrating superior courage despite great danger, Petty Officer THOMPSON was deployed into 30-40 foot seas whipped by winds gusting in excess of 50 knots to rescue the three imperiled sailors. As he was lowered into the raging waters near the sailing vessel, he was nearly struck by the mast and broken rigging that was being whipped violently in the wind. Unable to make any forward progress against the overwhelming sea state and currents, he was hoisted back into the aircraft and immediately articulated a second plan to effect the rescue. He instructed the flight mechanic to lower him just above the top of the waves as he directed the first survivor to enter the water using hand signals. Once again in the raging seas, his determination and stalwart physical ability allowed him to reach the drifting survivor. Despite tumbling down the face of 40 foot breaking waves, he expertly placed the survivor in the basket only to find the hoist cable fouled on the aircraft. Exhibiting supreme poise and physical ability, he kept the basket upright and above the surface, and the survivor stable until the flight mechanic freed the cable and hoisted the sailor to safety. Petty Officer Thompson again reassessed the situation, and due to limited fuel, opted to rescue the remaining survivors with the more challenging rescue stop. He accomplished these last two hoists with incredible skill and alacrity. Petty Officer THOMPSON's actions, skill and heroism were instrumental in the rescue of three people. His courage, judgment and devotion to duty in the face of hazardous conditions are most heartily commended and are in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Coast Guard.