



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

TO

**LIEUTENANT COMMANDER JEFFREY B. HUSTACE
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

Lieutenant Commander HUSTACE is cited for meritorious achievement in aerial flight while serving as Aircraft Commander aboard Coast Guard aircraft CG-1503 on 2 October 2015. That morning, he and his crew were directed to launch after a brief distress beacon was received from the M/V EL FARO, a 791-foot freighter with 33 souls on board, which earlier had reported it was disabled and taking on water in the midst of Hurricane JOAQUIN, a Category Four hurricane. After arriving on-scene and deciding a radar search from a higher altitude would be ineffective, he courageously elected to descend to the lowest search altitude possible under the most extreme of conditions. Battling jaw-jarring weather phenomena, including wind speeds up to 115 knots, airspeed fluctuations of 50 knots, heavy wind shear, and severe downdrafts causing altitude deviations in excess of 800 feet, Lieutenant Commander HUSTACE expertly combined weather data from a high altitude Air Force C-130 'Hurricane Hunter' with his own low altitude observations to devise a flight path to enable penetration into the center of the storm. Operating at the aerodynamic and structural limits of the aircraft, Lieutenant Commander HUSTACE skillfully piloted CG-1503 between narrow openings in the hurricane's violently churning feeder bands, plunging through cells of heavy rain and zero visibility to search as close as 15 miles from the storm's inner eye wall. Upon landing at an alternate airfield with minimum fuel, the crew discovered a significant fuel leak incurred during the extreme flight conditions. Lieutenant Commander HUSTACE's exceptional aeronautical skill in this most daring and expertly executed fifteen hour search effort provided invaluable information to planners for subsequent rescue and recovery efforts. His courage, judgment, and devotion to duty are most heartily commended and are in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Coast Guard.