



**CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF
THE COAST GUARD COMMENDATION MEDAL**

TO

**ZACHARY L. PARSHOOK
AVIONICS ELECTRICAL TECHNICIAN SECOND CLASS
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

Petty Officer PARSHOOK is cited for outstanding achievement while serving as the Sensor Systems Operator aboard Coast Guard aircraft CG-1503 on 2 October 2015. That morning, CG-1503 was 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 had earlier reported it was disabled and taking on water in the midst of Hurricane JOAQUIN. This mission required flight into the heart of the Category Four hurricane, battling wind speeds up to 115 knots, heavy wind shear, airspeed fluctuations of 50 knots, and uncommanded altitude deviations in excess of 800 feet. Despite this combination of weather factors, which shook screws from the overhead and caused a significant fuel leak discovered after the aircraft landed, Petty Officer PARSHOOK maintained vigilant radio communications for CG-1503's role as On-Scene Commander and coordinated with the Seventh Coast Guard District to determine the most effective method to cover the massive and perilous search area. Recognizing that the pilots were consumed with flying the aircraft and navigating through the hurricane's violently churning feeder bands, Petty Officer PARSHOOK communicated directly with a high-altitude Air Force C-130 Hurricane Hunter to obtain critical hurricane updates and crucial weather data from in and around the eye of the storm. At the height of this perilous mission, CG-1503 flew at the aerodynamic and structural limits of the aircraft as close as 15 miles from the hurricane's eye wall. His exceptional skill in this most daring and expertly executed fifteen hour search effort provided invaluable information to planners for subsequent rescue and recovery efforts. Petty Officer PARSHOOK's dedication, judgment, and devotion to duty are most heartily commended and are in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Coast Guard.

The Operational Distinguishing Device is authorized.