



CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF THE COAST GUARD COMMENDATION MEDAL

TO

**LIEUTENANT BEAU C. BELANGER
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

Lieutenant BELANGER is cited for heroic achievement while serving as Co-Pilot aboard Coast Guard helicopter CG-6515 on 30 July 2013 during the daring night rescue of six hypothermic hikers requiring immediate evacuation from a remote cove near Point Reyes, California. Demonstrating exceptional situational awareness in low-lying fog, Lieutenant BELANGER helped navigate six low level precision passes under two San Francisco bridges and along the mountainous coastline to the hikers' secluded location. While the helicopter hovered within a few feet of the jagged cliffs, he provided critical advisories to the Pilot-in-Command during a series of extremely demanding hoists before leaving the Rescue Swimmer and remaining hikers on scene due to minimum fuel. This complex evolution was further complicated by the helicopter's clamor that echoed off the steep-walled bluffs rendering radio communications with the Rescue Swimmer useless. Attentively watching the declining fuel reserves and relaying key updates to ground personnel, he helped navigate in deteriorating visibility around the precipitous cliffs through the obstacle-laden bay in order to deliver the four hikers to awaiting medical personnel. The deteriorating weather made the second sortie even more challenging, as he and his crew flew the same treacherous course back to the remote cove. When a flare used to reflect light off the sheer cliffs illuminating the cove had extinguished, Lieutenant BELANGER swiftly took the flight controls and initiated a no-reference orbit around the confined inlet until another flare could be deployed. Operating at the edge of the MH-65D's performance envelope, he made the key suggestion to hover "nose-into" the cliff without an emergency fly-out route placing their lives at risk to save others in order to optimize the wind ricocheting off the rock face. This unconventional maneuver provided enough power to complete the final hoists. Lieutenant BELANGER'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 United States Coast Guard.

The Operational Distinguishing Device is authorized.