



CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS

TO

MICHAEL R. OLIVERSON AVIATION MACHINIST'S MATE THIRD CLASS UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

Perry Officer OLIVERSON is cited for extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight during the early morning hours and ensuing day of 4 October 1980 while serving as hoist operator and aircrewmen of Coast Guard HH-3F 1472 engaged in the perilous rescue of survivors from the passenger liner M/V PRINSENDAM which had caught fire in the Gulf of Alaska, 120 miles south of Yakutat. Dispatched from Coast Guard Air Station Sitka, the helicopter was loaded to maximum weight with a night sun and fuel, and proceeded to the scene despite darkness, rain showers, and strong, turbulent winds. Before arriving, the aircrew was advised that the fire was under control, but additional firefighting equipment was needed. The helicopter was then diverted to the T/V WILLIAMSBURGH, which was also proceeding to the scene, to pick up needed equipment. While enroute to WILLIAMSBURGH, PRINSENDAM reported that the fire was now out of control and that passengers were abandoning ship to the lifeboats. Immediately, a course for PRINSENDAM was set and, upon arrival, Petty Officer OLIVERSON helped illuminate the deck with the Aldis lamp. At one point, he prevented a potential disaster when he flashed the signal light to the ship to prevent one lifeboat from being lowered on to another. These efforts resulted in an orderly evacuation of all but 40 passengers and crew. After departing the scene for Yakutat to refuel, the helicopter was returned to PRINSENDAM, and a dewatering pump was lowered to the ship. At this time, WILLIAMSBURGH was experiencing difficulty in retrieving survivors from the lifeboats and the wind and sea conditions were building in intensity. Petty Officer OLIVERSON provided precise advisories to the pilot as the helicopter was maneuvered into position over the lifeboats. He then began to hoist survivors into the aircraft for transporting to WILLIAMSBURGH. Before departing again for Yakutat due to a low fuel state, 110 survivors had been hoisted from lifeboats. Petty officer OLIVERSON's innovative actions, expert aeronautical skill in valor throughout this rescue mission resulted in the successful evacuation of 110 survivors. His courage, sound judgment and unwavering devotion of duty are most heartily commended and in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Coast Guard.