



**CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF  
THE AIR MEDAL  
(GOLD STAR IN LIEU OF A SECOND)**

**TO**

**LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ROCKY S. LEE  
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

Lieutenant Commander LEE is cited for meritorious achievement while participating in aerial flight as Aircraft Commander aboard Coast Guard HC-130H CGNR 1715 on 07 July 2001. As mission commander providing escort for a Coast Guard rescue helicopter, he orchestrated the perilous rescue of an unconscious crewman with weakening vital signs from the M/V SENECA MAIDEN 235 miles south of Adak Island, Alaska. Diligent preflight planning revealed the difficulty of completing the mission directly from Kodiak Island due to limitations imposed by extremely high aircraft gross weight, wet runways, and hazardous winds. Anticipating these mission limiting factors, Lieutenant Commander LEE planned an intermediate fuel stop at Cold Bay knowing he could take advantage of the long runway to fill the plane to capacity, achieving five additional hours of mission endurance. Arriving on scene, he provided an accurate position of the M/V SENECA MAIDEN and directed a hoist safety briefing - saving precious minutes for the approaching HH-60. After receiving word that a commercial life-flight aircraft could not land in Adak due to poor weather conditions, Lieutenant Commander LEE realized the medevac patient faced a life threatening extended delay there unless CGNR 1715 could land. After failing to break out of the clouds during the first standard instrument approach procedure, Lieutenant Commander LEE entered a holding pattern waiting for the weather to improve. Commencing his second instrument approach just before having to bingo for fuel, Lieutenant Commander LEE spotted a hole in the clouds, broke off from the instrument procedure and descended through moderate turbulence, icing, and at times near-zero visibility to safely perform a night visual contact approach to the Adak runway where, unbeknownst to the crew, the runway lighting system had just failed and gone dark. This unusual and highly demanding maneuver, coupled with outstanding airmanship in the face of the runway lighting failure, was the critical factor that allowed CGNR 1715 to land in Adak. Lieutenant Commander LEE and the rest of his crew then volunteered to exceed crew rest limitations, obtained a waiver from the Commanding Officer, and embarked the patient from the H-60 for the three-hour flight from Adak to Anchorage to reach advanced medical care. LCDR LEE's actions, aeronautical skill, and valor were instrumental in saving the life of this mariner. 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.