



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

**TO**

**LIEUTENANT JUSTIN R. NEAL  
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

Lieutenant NEAL is cited for heroic achievement in aerial flight on the night of 1 November 2020 while serving as Aircraft Commander aboard Coast Guard helicopter, CG6025. The crew launched at 1800L in response to Fishing Vessel IRONY's emergency beacon activated near Meyers Chuck, Alaska. For nearly the entire duration of the flight the crew encountered instrument meteorological conditions, moderate to severe turbulence, zero illumination and 60-knot winds. Lieutenant NEAL skillfully navigated the aircraft over 200 miles through mountainous terrain, deviating when able off the low visibility route to save critical fuel for the rescue. Nearing the last known position, Lieutenant NEAL adeptly employed the direction finder to vector the aircraft to the distress strobe location. Utilizing the infrared camera, his crew sighted the lone survivor clinging to debris in the turbulent waters nearby. Lieutenant NEAL led his crew through a challenging night approach to the water and rescue swimmer deployment to the tightly stacked 12-foot seas. In the midst of the waves and spray, Lieutenant NEAL gave radio vectors to the embattled rescue swimmer until he was able to reach the survivor. After recovering both men, CG6025 flew to Ketchikan, cloaked in a storm-driven blackout, where they safely navigated to land at an unlit, confined helipad. Lieutenant NEAL's actions and aeronautical skill were instrumental in the rescue of one life. 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.