



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

**TO**

### **LIEUTENANT RUSSELL H. ZULLICK UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

Lieutenant ZULLICK is cited for outstanding achievement while serving as copilot aboard Coast Guard HH-60J helicopter 6029 on the night of 30 January 1998. Caught in a fierce winter storm, 70 knot winds and 50-70 foot seas, the Fishing Vessel LA CONTE sank 50 miles off Cape Fairweather, Alaska. Lieutenant ZULLICK launched in response to an unregistered emergency radio beacon. He expertly navigated CG 6029 120 miles through blinding sheets of rain, hail, severe turbulence, and zero visibility. The extreme winds required Lieutenant ZULLICK to constantly calculate "bingo" fuel calculations to ensure safe aircraft recovery. Despite the fierce winds, Lieutenant ZULLICK expertly tracked the beacon, continually re-orienting the search pattern to compensate for the gusting winds. Flying 300 feet above the massive wave crests and dense blowing spray, Lieutenant ZULLICK located the strobe light attached to the beacon. Aided by night vision goggles, Lieutenant ZULLICK visually guided the aircraft to the strobe light that was located amid the huddled survivors. Despite the rapid and dramatic 20 degree pitch and roll inputs a stable hover proved nearly impossible, as ferocious winds continually forced the helicopter out of position. Serving as safety pilot, he maintained altitude and limited cyclic inputs for the flying pilot. Allowing the pilot to concentrate on delivering the rescue basket, Lieutenant ZULLICK meticulously monitored the helicopter's altitude and routinely applied maximum power to prevent the helicopter from impacting the waves. After 45 minutes of intense hoisting attempts, the flares, which were the only source of visual reference, extinguished. With no visual reference and fuel critically low, CG 6029 was forced to depart scene. While returning to Sitka, critical information concerning on scene conditions and key flight characteristics were passed to the relieving HH-60J crew. This transfer of information proved essential and led to the eventual saving of three mariners' lives. Lieutenant ZULLICK'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.