



**CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF
THE AIR MEDAL**

TO

**CHARLES J. LONGER
AVIATION STRUCTURAL MECHANIC FIRST CLASS
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

Petty Officer LONGER is cited for heroic achievement in aerial flight while serving as flight mechanic on Coast Guard HH-3F helicopter 1495 engaged in the perilous and historic rescue of 37 crewmen from the Russian M/V KOMSOMLETS KIRGIZII on the morning of 14 March 1987. The vessel lost engine power and was in danger of sinking, approximately 206 nautical miles south of Cape Cod, Massachusetts. Dispatched from Coast Guard Air Station Cape Cod, the helicopter battled the turbulence of a North Atlantic winter gale. Arriving on-scene, the difficulty and severity of the distress was apparent as the stricken freighter was listing 40 degrees to port. The wildly pitching and rolling decks were continuously awash in the 20-foot seas. Petty Officer LONGER calmly directed the pilot into position for the first of eight demanding hoists. The dangerously listing deck and small hoisting area aft of the pilothouse prevented the use of a trilline, requiring the utmost in crew coordination. Petty Officer LONGER overcame those natural difficulties only to have overeager survivors overload the rescue basket during each hoist, thereby complicating the rescue operation's safety. The severe weather, including winds that exceeded 50 knots, constantly buffeted the helicopter, requiring numerous hoist attempts before the victims could finally be brought to safety. Petty Officer LONGER's actions and aeronautical skill were instrumental in the rescue of 16 lives. 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.