



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

TO

**LIEUTENANT ROBERT M. BOTNEN
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

Lieutenant BOTNEN is cited for meritorious achievement in aerial flight on 10 October 2006 while serving as copilot aboard Coast Guard MH-60J helicopter CGNR 6035 during the rescue of two injured goat hunters stranded on McKinley Peak in Cordova, Alaska. Diverting from a local trainer in Kodiak, Lieutenant BOTNEN skillfully negotiated the 270NM night transit across the Gulf of Alaska. Once on-scene, Lieutenant BOTNEN intrepidly searched several treacherous valleys while attempting to access the hunters veiled in billowing mountain clouds. With only minutes of fuel remaining, Lieutenant BOTNEN expertly piloted the MH-60 through poor visibility and heavy rain showers to locate the injured hunters clutching to a narrow rock ledge at 1900 feet. Airborne from Cordova after re-fueling and again on-scene, Lieutenant BOTNEN positioned CGNR 6035 alongside the cliff as clouds blanketed the ridge and completely engulfed the MH-60 in "zero-zero" conditions. Rapidly assessing the potential emergency, Lieutenant BOTNEN acted decisively to maintain contact with a single cloud enshrouded point on the rock face. Sustaining a precise hover for over 40 minutes within 15 feet of the cliff face, Lieutenant BOTNEN operated the MH-60 at its extreme limits in a 1900 foot out-of-ground effect hover while counteracting mountain turbulence and tail wind conditions. Delivering the rescue swimmer to the injured hunters' position numerous times, Lieutenant BOTNEN exactly maintained tension in the hoist cable as the swimmer traversed the 70 degree vertical surface and worked to package the survivors for recovery from the perilous rock ledge. Lieutenant BOTNEN's actions and aeronautical skill were instrumental in saving two 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.