



**CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF  
THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS**

**TO**

**MICHAEL K. WHITCOMB  
AVIATION ELECTRONICS TECHNICIAN FIRST CLASS  
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

The President of the United States takes great pleasure in presenting the Distinguished Flying Cross to Petty Officer Michael K. Whitcomb for extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight on the morning of 22 December 1977 while serving as Avionicsman and Aircrewman of Coast Guard HH-3F 1484 engaged in the perilous rescue of two severely burned survivors of an explosion at the Continental Grain Elevator Company in Westwego, Louisiana. Enroute to Air Station New Orleans, the helicopter was diverted to the disaster area and immediately began to search the Mississippi River for survivors of the catastrophe. Upon confirming that no survivors were in the river, the helicopter was landed near the burning silos where a severely burned man was taken on board and transferred to a nearby hospital. To accomplish this, Petty Officer Whitcomb provided precise advisories to the Pilot, enabling him to avoid numerous obstructions. Returning to the scene, the aircrew was advised that a man was trapped on top of one of the silos. Proceeding to the silo, Petty Officer Whitcomb again provided advisories as the Pilot established the helicopter in a stable hover 150-feet above the ground, despite severe updrafts, turbulence from the flames and the silo's protruding wreckage. On the third attempt to hoist the man, an explosion occurred and smoke and flames completely enveloped him. Rescue firemen were then able to reach the now semi-conscious man and move him so that he could be safely hoisted. Petty Officer Whitcomb, now acting as the hoist operator, immediately lowered the rescue basket and hoisted the man. He was then airlifted to the hospital. Petty Officer Whitcomb's innovative actions, expert aeronautical skill and valor throughout this rescue mission resulted in the successful evacuation of the two men. His courage, sound judgment, and unwavering devotion to duty are most heartily commended and are in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Coast Guard.