



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

TO

**LIEUTENANT COMMANDER DAVID M. GUNDERSEN
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

Lieutenant Commander GUNDERSEN is cited for extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight on 17 November 1994 while serving as aircraft commander aboard Coast Guard HH-60J helicopter CGNR 6034. The aircrew was engaged in the rescue of a family of four from the sailing vessel MARINE FLOWER II that was being thrashed by the 25-foot seas of Hurricane Gordon, 400 miles off the coast of North Carolina. Lieutenant Commander GUNDERSEN's meticulous preflight planning, precise aircraft control, and exceptional crew coordination enabled the successful completion of an extremely arduous rescue mission, which had stretched both the aircraft and crew to their upper limits. Lieutenant Commander GUNDERSEN guided the crew of the helicopter as they flew through severe squalls, thunderstorms, and moderate turbulence. He acted as safety pilot during two demanding landings aboard the USS AMERICA, with blue water breaking over her bow. He expeditiously formulated a course of action that would offer the family the best chance of survival in the raging seas of Hurricane Gordon. He displayed superior situational awareness by directing the flight mechanic to deploy the rescue basket when the mother and 4-month-old infant were preparing to enter the water. A huge wave suddenly washed them overboard into the grasp of the rescue swimmer. Lieutenant Commander GUNDERSEN battled to keep the helicopter positioned directly overhead despite storm force winds, while the flight mechanic and rescue swimmer worked frantically to get mother and infant safely aboard the helicopter. Lieutenant Commander GUNDERSEN's actions, aeronautical skill, and valor were instrumental in the rescue of four persons. 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.