



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

TO

**CHRISTOPHER J. WINDNAGLE
AVIATION MACHINIST'S MATE FIRST CLASS
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

Petty Officer WINDNAGLE is cited for outstanding achievement while serving as flight mechanic aboard Coast Guard HH-60J helicopter 6029 on the night of 30 January 1998. In response to an emergency radio beacon detected 50 miles west of Cape Fairweather, Alaska, CG 6029 launched into a violent winter storm, with winds in excess of 70 knots and seas 50-70 feet. Arriving on scene in total darkness, near zero visibility, and severe turbulence, Petty Officer WINDNAGLE deployed four marker flares that provided vital visual reference over the tumultuous seas. Petty Officer WINDNAGLE simultaneously, warned the pilots of imminent impact with the approaching waves, while delivering the rescue basket to the huddled survivors. In order for the aircraft to remain on scene in the strong gusting winds, extreme aircraft control inputs were required, resulting in rapid altitude changes from 40 to 200 feet and pitch and roll inputs of 20 degrees. With the survivors in sight, Petty Officer WINDNAGLE worked feverishly to deliver the rescue basket to the survivors, as the gusting winds drove the rescue basket 150 feet behind the aircraft. Despite the relentless wind driven rain and hail, the sailing rescue basket, rapid altitude changes, and violent oscillations of the aircraft, Petty Officer WINDNAGLE was able to deliver the rescue basket within reach of the survivors. However, before the survivors could reach the device, the winds and violent seas would rip the basket out of their grasp. After 45 minutes of intense hoisting, and fuel critically low, CG 6029 was forced to depart the scene. As a direct result of Petty Officer WINDNAGLE's experiences, the third aircraft carried an extra flight mechanic, 26 extra flares, and a higher intensity searchlight. Petty Officer WINDNAGLE's comprehensive debrief provided follow on aircrews vital information needed for the remarkable recovery of three mariners. Petty Officer WINDNAGLE'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.