



CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF THE AIR MEDAL

TO

LIEUTENANT PATRICK L. BLAIR UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

Lieutenant BLAIR is cited for meritorious achievement in aerial flight on 23 March 1983 while serving as aircraft commander of HH52A 1373 engaged in the delivery of dewatering pumps and lifesaving equipment to the sinking fishing vessel VJ ONEAL, 38 miles southeast of Rockaway Inlet, New York. Lieutenant BLAIR flew to the scene despite occasional snow showers and upon arrival observed the VJ ONEAL rocking violently in 12 foot seas. Lieutenant BLAIR skillfully kept his aircraft clear of antennae, rigging, and bobbing outriggers as a dewatering pump was delivered. After approximately 45 minutes, Lieutenant BLAIR decided to deliver a second pump and a liferaft. As the pump approached the vessel, the violently rocking deck action and the 40 knot winds buffeting the helicopter severed the trail line. Lieutenant BLAIR then conducted a direct delivery of the pump through the rigging to the stern from an altitude of 70 feet. Determining that 40 minutes of fuel remained, with 25 minutes required to transit for refueling, he positioned the aircraft over the vessel and a life raft was released by the crewman. It hit the target, but violent winds and the rocking deck forced the raft overboard. Following the crewman's directions, the raft was hoisted from the water with the rescue basket. With minimum fuel remaining, Lieutenant BLAIR successfully completed a direct delivery of the raft utilizing the attached anchor line. After refueling, Lieutenant BLAIR returned to scene and found that the flooding was under control. Lieutenant BLAIR's actions and aeronautical skill were instrumental in the rescue of 11 lives and thousands of dollars of property. 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.