



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

TO

**CALEB S. FLIPPIN
AVIATION SURVIVAL TECHNICIAN THIRD CLASS
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

Petty Officer FLIPPIN is cited for meritorious achievement in aerial flight from 18 to 22 March 2008 while serving as Rescue Swimmer aboard HH-65C CGNR 6551 during the catastrophic Midwest Floods of 2008. A series of severe storms combined with an early spring snow thaw led to rapidly rising water levels throughout the Mississippi River Valley, overtopping numerous levees and flooding cities throughout the Midwest. Launching from Air Station New Orleans on the evening of 18 March, the crew of CG6551 flew more than 500 miles to Cape Girardeau, Missouri, dodging thunderstorms and battling turbulent instrument meteorological conditions on the edge of a large cold front. Arriving the next day as the first air-rescue asset on scene, the crew alertly spotted a man signaling with a flashlight from his flooded home. In torrential rains and sustained winds exceeding 40 knots, Petty Officer FLIPPIN voluntarily deployed from a 120-foot hover through live power lines, trees, and light poles to rescue the survivor. Once the man was safely in the helicopter, the crew learned of two other flood victims trapped in a nearby house; once again, Petty Officer FLIPPIN volunteered to be hoisted through treacherous obstacles to evaluate, assist, and recover two more adults. The following day, the crew of CG6551 responded to the flooded community of Coon Island, Missouri, where nearly 100 residents were trapped by rising waters. Repeatedly deploying from the helicopter to evaluate survivors, prepare them for recovery, and provide first aid when needed, Petty Officer FLIPPIN expertly facilitated the rescue of 13 members of the community, including an infant and two children, for a total of 16 survivors rescued in two days. His brave actions, rescue skills, and stamina were instrumental in the Coast Guard's overall saving of 52 lives from the worst Missouri flooding in 25 years. Petty Officer FLIPPIN's courage, judgment, and devotion to duty are most heartily commended and are in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Coast Guard.