



CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF THE AIR MEDAL

TO

LIEUTENANT JEFFREY R. GRAHAM UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

Lieutenant GRAHAM is cited for meritorious achievement in aerial flight while serving as the co-pilot aboard Coast Guard HH-65 helicopter CGNR 6588 on the evening of February 28, 2004. The helicopter crew was responding to a "mayday" call from the motor vessel BOW MARINER. The BOW MARINER had caught fire and violently exploded 50 miles east of Chincoteague, Virginia, casting 27 crewmembers into frigid water and a lethal combination of ethanol and diesel fuel oil. While enroute to the BOW MARINER, the aircrew conducted an operational risk analysis and determined the safest approach to the scene. Lieutenant GRAHAM's input during this process was pivotal to the safety of the entire aircrew. As the helicopter arrived on scene, noxious fumes from the chemicals were evident from 400 feet above the water. Lieutenant GRAHAM immediately began to coordinate air traffic separation, search areas, and communications with the on-scene commander. Using his night vision goggles, Lieutenant GRAHAM located several victims that were floating amidst the fuel oil slick. When one survivor was spotted weakly waving his arm, Lieutenant GRAHAM contacted the on-scene commander with the location and apparent condition of the victim. Lieutenant GRAHAM's careful risk assessment supported the rescue attempt, yet he continually evaluated the impacts of the highly toxic environment on the crew throughout the rescue evolution. He began to provide critical aircraft altitude and performance reports to assist the aircraft commander in holding a stable hover during the hoist. Lieutenant GRAHAM's exceptional situational awareness and external communications allowed the aircraft commander to focus solely on the recovery of the rescue swimmer and survivor. Once the rescue swimmer and the survivor were recovered, Lieutenant GRAHAM safely and expeditiously navigated the aircraft to the nearest advanced life support facility. Lieutenant GRAHAM'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.