



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

TO

**LIEUTENANT COMMANDER MATTHEW J. VAN GINKEL
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

Lieutenant Commander VAN GINKEL is cited for meritorious achievement in aerial flight while serving as the Mission Commander of CGNR 6559 deployed aboard USCGC TAMPA (WMEC 902) on 30 August 2021. At 0550, the aircrew launched with orders to locate a reported target of interest. Over the next six hours, he singlehandedly visually acquired multiple narcotics-laden go-fast vessels traveling at high rates of speed. Once counter-detected, the vessels rapidly evaded in different directions. Electing to pursue the first vessel dashing towards Dominican territorial seas, he simultaneously vectored the cutter's small boat to the second vessel. During this pursuit, the vessel made unpredictable turns to prevent disabling fire, as occupants shielded the engines with their bodies, rendering potential shots unsafe. Repositioning the aircraft, he flew the helicopter to the edge of its capabilities as the vessel exhibited the most extreme counter-tactics experienced in the aircrew's 22 combined deployments. Following warning shots, the aircrew disabled the vessel's propulsion with safe, precision fire to the engines' lower units, to avoid injuring shielding occupants. Quickly relocating the second vessel, the crew employed effective disabling fire and relocated jettisoned contraband. Lieutenant Commander VAN GINKEL's actions and aeronautical skill were instrumental in the seizure of 1,500 kgs of cocaine worth \$56 million and the detention of seven narco-traffickers. 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.