



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

TO

**LIEUTENANT RYAN O'NEILL
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

Lieutenant O'NEILL is cited for heroic achievement in aerial flight on 19 June 2021 while serving as Aircraft Commander of Coast Guard helicopter CG6565. The crew of CG6565 launched from Sector Humboldt Bay in response to a distress alert from the sailing vessel BARLOVENTO located 70 miles off the California-Oregon border. Fighting deteriorating conditions, the crew located the disabled 79-foot schooner battered by hurricane force winds and 20-foot seas with six souls on board, one with serious injuries. Despite 55-knot winds and the boat's flailing masts, Lieutenant O'NEILL elected to deploy the rescue swimmer to board the vessel and assess the patient. He guided his crew through two precarious 140-foot-high hoists and recovered the injured survivor with three minutes of fuel remaining. Transferring on-scene command to an arriving C-27 aircraft, he flew 90 miles to deliver the patient to an awaiting ambulance and refuel. Returning to the scene, he found the vessel still taking on water and rapidly drifting in the extreme seas as the crew prepared to abandon ship. With few options due to the vessel's tall rigging and movement, Lieutenant O'NEILL and his crew modified the rescue swimmer deployment techniques and began recovering survivors one-by-one as they left overboard. He passed the same technique to CG6524 as they arrived to recover the last survivors, and all returned safely to shore. His leadership and aeronautical skills saved six lives. Lieutenant O'NEILL'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.