



**CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF  
THE AIR MEDAL  
(GOLD STAR IN LIEU OF A SECOND)**

**TO**

**LIEUTENANT JAMES OWNBEY  
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

Lieutenant OWNBEY is cited for heroic achievement in aerial flight on 19 June 2021 while serving as Copilot of Coast Guard helicopter CG6565. The crew of CG6565 launched in response to a distress alert from the sailing vessel BARLOVENTO located 70 miles offshore of the California-Oregon border. Fighting deteriorating conditions, the crew located the disabled 79-foot schooner being battered by hurricane force winds and 20-foot seas with six souls on board, one with serious injuries requiring immediate evacuation. Lieutenant OWNBEY flew through the 55-knot winds and close to the two flailing masts to hoist the rescue swimmer 140 feet down to the water. Despite extreme winds pulling the basket 50 yards behind the aircraft, he delivered the device to the swimmer and survivor with three minutes of remaining fuel and, with few visual references, smoothly hoisted the survivor and swimmer from the building seas. At near-maximum range of the aircraft and low on fuel, he flew CG6565 to rendezvous and transfer the injured and hypothermic survivor to an awaiting ambulance before refueling and returning to the sinking vessel. With limited fuel, Lieutenant OWNBEY helped develop an innovative swimmer deployment technique to tackle the vessel's nine-knot drift. He executed three challenging 130-foot hoists and rescued survivors one by one, as they abandoned ship. His actions and aeronautical skill under pressure were instrumental in saving six lives. Lieutenant OWNBEY'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.