



CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF THE COAST GUARD COMMENDATION MEDAL

TO

LIEUTENANT MARK H. HEUSSNER UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

Lieutenant HEUSSNER is cited for superior achievement in aerial flight on 11 February 2011 as Copilot aboard Coast Guard MH-60J helicopter CG 6007. CG 6007 was dispatched at approximately 0100L to assist the F/V MIDNITE SUN which was reported hard aground and taking on water near Tanaak Cape on Afognak Island, Alaska. During taxi to the runway, CG 6007 experienced erratic winds, blowing snow, and an icy ramp. These severe conditions nearly caused the helicopter to spin off the taxiway prior to takeoff. Once airborne, Lieutenant HEUSSNER expertly navigated CG 6007 in the darkness through mountainous terrain while encountering icing conditions, 45-50 knot headwinds, and turbulence that rocked the aircraft several hundred feet vertically from its intended flight path during the transit. Arriving on scene, the F/V MIDNITE SUN was found aground, taking on water, and listing severely with breaking seas washing over the entire vessel. As 25 foot seas continued to rock the stricken vessel, the captain radioed they were breaking up and preparing to abandon ship. After a thorough assessment of the extreme environmental conditions and the vessel's tangled rigging and cranes, CG 6007 decided to directly hoist each mariner in the rescue basket to minimize the aircraft and survivors' exposure to the breaking surf and rigging. Lieutenant HEUSSNER flawlessly performed safety pilot duties as CG 6007 maneuvered into position over the vessel and despite severe downdrafts, 60 knot gusts, and a steep cliff just aft of the helicopter, successfully hoisted the entire crew from the vessel while avoiding the swinging masts and rigging. Lieutenant HEUSSNER's actions and aeronautical skill were instrumental in the rescue of five mariners in distress. His dedication, judgment, and devotion to duty are most heartily commended and are in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Coast Guard.

The Operational Distinguishing Device is authorized.