



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

TO

**ENSIGN JOHN J. DILEONARDO
UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE**

Ensign DILEONARDO is cited for meritorious achievement in aerial flight during the night of 15 April 1976 of the while serving as copilot of Coast Guard HH-52A 1444 helicopter engaged in the perilous rescue of the captain of the ocean drilling rig OCEAN EXPRESS, which was sinking 40 miles east of Port Aransas, Texas. Dispatched from Air Station Corpus Christi, the aircraft proceeded to the scene in darkness, gusting gale force winds, turbulence, and reduced visibility and, upon arrival, the rig was observed to be listing heavily and battered by the mountainous seas. As the pilot maneuvered the helicopter into position, Ensign DILEONARDO gave concise, accurate and invaluable information to the pilot as to aircraft position, since the pilot had no visual reference except occasional views of the pitching rig and foaming seas. As the aircraft approached the rig's threatening superstructure, Ensign DILEONARDO advised the pilot of the dangerous proximity and moment by moment attitude of the swaying towers. After abandoning the first rescue attempt, a second attempt was made with Ensign DILEONARDO providing precise advisories as the stranded man was hoisted from the rig which immediately capsized and sank. Ensign DILEONARDO's courage, sound judgment, perseverance and exceptional aeronautical skill contributed to saving the life of the rig captain. His dauntless valor and unwavering devotion to duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Coast Guard and the United States Navy.