



**CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF
THE COAST GUARD COMMENDATION MEDAL**

TO

**CAPTAIN THOMAS D. WALTERS
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE**

Captain WALTERS is cited for meritorious achievement in the performance of duty on 18 May 1980 while serving as pilot and aircraft commander of HH-3F CGNR 1489 engaged in the evacuation of personnel from the area devastated by the volcanic eruption of Mount St. Helens in the state of Washington. Numerous lives were lost, and millions of dollars of property damage was incurred in the wake of the volcano's blast. Flying out of Coast Guard Air Station Astoria, Captain WALTERS participated in the search for survivors trapped by floods and mudslides, and the evacuation of personnel from the ash covered terrain, operating in a completely unknown and unfamiliar terrain, Captain WALTERS conducted rescue operations for a period of six and one-half hours until darkness halted further searching. Despite visibility of one-half mile in smoke and haze with a ceiling of zero, Captain WALTERS made 17 landings with no visual references due to the volcanic ash being agitated by the helicopter's downwash. Upon landing, the ash concentrations were so thick that the rotor blades could not be seen, and the helicopter cabin and cockpit areas were clouded with blowing ash. On one occasion a hoist was made from 150-feet with no visual references due to the chimney effect of the ash. Though the danger of a second eruption was ever present, Captain WALTERS and his crew successfully evacuated 22 persons from the danger area. Captain WALTERS' complete dedication, sound judgment and unwavering devotion to duty are most heartily commended and are in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Air Force and the United States Coast Guard.

The Operational Distinguishing Device is authorized.