



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

TO

**LIEUTENANT JOHN M. BETTENCOURT
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

Lieutenant BETTENCOURT is cited for meritorious achievement in aerial flight while serving as Aircraft Commander on board CGNR 6531 in response to the massive explosion of the Deepwater Horizon (DWH) oil drilling platform in the pre-dawn hours of 21 April 2010. Demonstrating extreme poise and self-control following the request for assistance from the District Eight Command Center, he expeditiously assembled a SAR crew to respond to the urgent evacuation of 115 rig personnel and search for 11 missing persons in the water, approximately 100 miles offshore. During the transit to scene, he began assimilating vague and limited information while formulating an initial SAR action plan. Arriving on scene to find the entire DWH rig engulfed in 300 foot flames, he quickly directed a hasty search through the extensive burning debris field in hopes of finding any survivors. After completing the search and realizing his crew could provide greater benefit to survivors, he coordinated with the on scene HC-144 and began MEDEVAC operations of critical patients from an offshore supply vessel to a central triage point on a nearby oil rig. Battling strong wind burbles and limited visibility caused by the nearby smoke and flames, he skillfully deployed CGNR 6531's rescue swimmer to the supply vessel. Despite a narrow 5% power margin, his precise position keeping enabled the crew of CGNR 6531 to MEDEVAC three critical patients and transport them to the triage point. After leading the safe delivery of the survivors, he again displayed superior airmanship by taking off from the elevated rig into near total darkness, without a visible horizon, to continue the search for 11 persons still reported missing. He methodically monitored the progress of CGNR 6531's rescue swimmer aboard the supply vessel and once the situation was stabilized, safely recovered the rescue swimmer. Lieutenant BETTENCOURT's courage, judgment, and devotion to duty are most heartily commended and are in keeping with the highest tradition of the United States Coast Guard.