



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

TO

**BRUCE W. THORNAL
AVIATION ELECTRONICS TECHNICIAN FIRST CLASS
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

Petty Officer THORNAL is cited for outstanding achievement as a member of HC-130 CG 1719 aircrew on the afternoon of 29 May 1989 while rescuing two men clinging to the hull of their capsized 14 foot aluminum boat 1.5 miles southeast of Swann Island, Honduras. The aircraft diverted 220 nautical miles to the search area and successfully located the victims shortly after arrival on scene. Without the aid of a surface resource, a rendezvous was established with an American Embassy Bell helicopter which was not equipped to perform a hoist. Ingenuity prevailed as the HC-130 crew devised a plan to use rappelling ropes and a gunners's belt for a hoisting device. Petty Officer THORNAL and another crewman embarked the helicopter and returned to the victim's location. Once on scene, the other crewman deployed into the water to assist the victims. Petty Officer THORNAL directed the helicopter into position and began a hand-over-hand method of pulling the victims aboard. The second hoist proved extremely complicated by the man's large physique and the entanglement of the hoisting rope on the skid. Twice Petty Officer THORNAL exited the helo cabin and without regard for his own safety, stood on the skid tube in order to retrieve the man. Despite great danger, both panicked survivors were returned safely to Swann Island suffering from sunburn, abrasions, slight dehydration and hypothermia after spending nearly 23 hours in the water. Petty Officer THORNAL'S 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.