



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

**TO**

**BRIAN E. LAUBENSTEIN  
AVIATION SURVIVAL TECHNICIAN FIRST CLASS  
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

Petty Officer LAUBENSTEIN is cited for meritorious achievement in aerial flight while serving as Rescue Swimmer aboard HH-60J helicopter CGNR 6001 on the night of 3 November 2005. Responding to a distress call from the 55-foot fishing vessel SEA WITCH V, Petty Officer LAUBENSTEIN and crew flew through the darkness, low visibility, and 55 knot winds to reach the distressed vessel. Disabled and taking on water, the SEA WITCH V was being tossed about severely by 20 foot seas, approximately 100 nautical miles NE of Cape Cod. The boat's erratic movement made a direct hoist from the vessel's deck impossible, and the vessel's Captain advised that the life raft was torn and would not inflate. Without hesitation, Petty Officer LAUBENSTEIN volunteered to deploy into the dark and raging seas to recover the crewmen as they abandoned ship into the frigid water. Demonstrating incredible courage and determination, he fought his way through the giant seas to reach the first survivor, who was entangled in several lines that effectively tethered him to the sinking vessel. Reacting quickly to save the imperiled fisherman, Petty Officer LAUBENSTEIN heroically struggled to cut the lines while keeping the combative victim's head above the surface. When he finally had the survivor untangled and secured to the rescue harness, Petty Officer LAUBENSTEIN astutely recognized that the man's survival suit had filled with water. In mid-hoist, he deftly retrieved his survival knife and carefully cut the ballooning suit, allowing for a safe recovery of both he and the survivor into the aircraft cabin. Undaunted by that harrowing and tiring evolution, he deployed twice more to successfully rescue the other two survivors, each time being repeatedly dragged underwater by the crashing waves. Petty Officer LAUBENSTEIN's actions and aeronautical skill were instrumental in saving three lives. His courage, judgment, and devotion to duty are most heartily commended and are in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Coast Guard.