



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

TO

**BENJAMIN J. BERMAN
AVIONICS ELECTRICAL TECHNICIAN SECOND CLASS
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

Petty Officer BERMAN is cited for meritorious achievement in aerial flight from 30 August 2005 to 03 September 2005, during Hurricane Katrina rescue operations. Demonstrating exemplary aeronautical skill and superlative physical stamina, Petty Officer BERMAN served as flight mechanic aboard HH-65 helicopters flying multiple search and rescue missions in a hazardous urban disaster environment. Launching into the outer bands of Hurricane Katrina, Petty Officer BERMAN located an apartment complex ripped apart by storm surge. Fighting 50 knot winds, Petty Officer BERMAN deployed the rescue swimmer to search for survivors. Flying debris and the arduous conditions required a hoist from 100 feet; almost four times the normal hoisting altitude. Despite heavy winds buffeting the aircraft mere feet from power lines and trees, Petty Officer BERMAN skillfully conducted the hoist saving the life of a woman suffering from a severe heart condition. On September 1st, under immense pressure, Petty Officer BERMAN was ordered to evacuate a hospital filled with critically ill patients. Disregarding his own safety, Petty Officer BERMAN flew repeated sorties standing in the cabin door opening, unable to sit or close the door. He packed as many as 13 survivors into a cabin normally configured for five. On September 3rd, Petty Officer BERMAN demonstrated exceptional skill while delivering the rescue swimmer to a small second story porch, between two houses which were less than five feet apart. From 110 feet, Petty Officer BERMAN threaded the rescue swimmer through a large oak tree which was entangled with power lines. When the swimmer proved unable to reach the porch due to a roof overhang, Petty Officer BERMAN skillfully coned the pilot right and then swiftly gave a hold command before the helicopter contacted the nearby power lines. This induced a pendulum effect on the swimmer, allowing him to swing to the survivors. Petty Officer BERMAN's actions and skill were instrumental in saving 59 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.