



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

**TO**

**MICHAEL D. HARDER  
AVIATION MACHINIST'S MATE SECOND CLASS  
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

Petty Officer HARDER is cited for meritorious achievement in aerial flight on 13 May 1993 while assigned as flight mechanic aboard Coast Guard HH-65A CGNR 6541, during the rescue of 11 crewmen from the fishing vessel RESPONSE. While 18 miles from Kodiak, the RESPONSE made a desperate plea for help when attempts to control an onboard fire failed. Initially called upon as backup, the flight crew's role quickly changed when the ready aircraft could not launch. Despite heavy fog, 400-yard visibility, and a 75-foot ceiling, the flight crew located the RESPONSE within eight minutes, finding its stern, stack, and pilot house fully engulfed in flames. On scene conditions placed the flight crew in extreme danger. Heavy fog and thick smoke obscured the area, flames launched from the vessel and acetylene bottles located below deck threatened to explode. With incredible skill, and in the face of immense personal danger, Petty Officer HARDER calmly carried out his duties. Despite the thick smoke, he provided precise conning commands, allowing exact placement of the rescue basket during 11 no-reference recoveries. During one hoist, his quick reaction to a communications failure was crucial in preventing harm to a survivor and damage to the helicopter. Petty Officer HARDER's actions and skill were instrumental in the rescue of 11 persons. 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.