



**CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF
THE COAST GUARD COMMENDATION MEDAL**

TO

**LIEUTENANT MATTHEW L. THOMAS
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

Lieutenant THOMAS is cited for outstanding achievement while serving as Co-Pilot on Coast Guard helicopter number 1486 in the rescue of four persons from the fishing vessel Trilby which sank in Salisbury Sound, Alaska on 9 October 1989. Dispatched from Coast Guard Air Station Sitka, Lieutenant THOMAS, radar navigated at less than 200 feet above the water through low ceilings, low visibility and 45 knot winds to Salisbury Sound. After Lieutenant THOMAS identified the entrance to the sound on radar the aircraft proceeded into the sound between the 3,000 foot mountains until a strobe light was sighted through the rain and fog. He then orbited as the four survivors in a life raft were located. Lieutenant THOMAS monitored the radar, keeping the aircraft clear of the surrounding mountains, and assisted the pilot in a demanding instrument transition to a hover next to the life raft. Lieutenant THOMAS and the pilot alternated in flying the aircraft in a hover in the turbulent winds for an hour as the rescue swimmer was deployed and all survivors were safely hoisted. Once all four survivors were aboard, Lieutenant THOMAS again radar navigated through the dark, stormy weather along the mountainous coastline back to Sitka. Lieutenant THOMAS's actions and aeronautical skills were instrumental in the rescue of the four survivors. LT THOMAS'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.