



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

**TO**

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

Lieutenant THOMAS is cited for meritorious achievement in aerial flight on the evening of 7 December 1990 while serving as copilot of Coast Guard HH-3F CGNR 1435 engaged in the perilous rescue of three survivors from the M/V NORSAL in Hecate Strait, British Columbia. Lieutenant THOMAS navigated 315 nautical miles from Sitka, Alaska, at night, in weather deteriorating to zero visibility, winds up to 50 knots, and severe turbulence. On scene, Lieutenant THOMAS maintained an exact position while attempting to locate and communicate with the NORSAL. Forced to depart the scene to refuel, Lieutenant THOMAS passed crucial instructions to the NORSAL for abandoning ship. Upon returning to the scene, Lieutenant THOMAS backed up the pilot while attempts to recover the survivors were made in darkness, 25-foot seas, 50-knot winds, and 35-degree water. After 25 minutes of an extremely demanding hoist, the first survivor and rescue swimmer were recovered. Lieutenant THOMAS then performed the remaining hoists, recovering the remaining survivors and rescue swimmer after 25 minutes. Lieutenant THOMAS' actions and aeronautical skills were instrumental in the rescue of three survivors. 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.