



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

TO

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

Lieutenant THOMAS is cited for outstanding achievement while serving as aircraft commander of Coast Guard helicopter number 1470 on 11 April 1991 engaged in the rescue of two survivors from the F/V TALIA which sank in Frederick Sound, Alaska. In spite of half-mile visibility, severe turbulence, heavy rains and sixty knot winds, Lieutenant THOMAS flew 120 miles through darkness and narrow straits to the TALIA's last position. Due to the failure of the two primary navigation systems, Lieutenant THOMAS relied solely on radar and vectoring by the helicopter crew to locate the distress flares. Locating the raft, Lieutenant THOMAS deployed the rescue swimmer and for 35 minutes battled fifty knot wind gusts buffeting the aircraft. During the recovery of the first survivor from fifteen foot seas, a sudden gust of wind threw the helicopter 100 feet backwards. Lieutenant THOMAS' quickly reacted preventing a water strike. He then expertly maneuvered the aircraft to recover the remaining survivor and rescue swimmer. Lieutenant THOMAS' 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.