



**CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF
THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS
(POSTHUMOUS)
TO**

**LIEUTENANT ERNEST P. RIVAS
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

Lieutenant RIVAS is cited for extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight over the Gulf of Alaska in the early morning of 7 August 1981. Lieutenant RIVAS was serving as pilot and aircraft commander of Coast Guard HH-3F 1471 engaged in the perilous attempt to rescue the crewman from the fishing vessel MARLENE which was foundering in heavy winds and seas and in immediate danger of sinking. The helicopter had been dispatched from Coast Guard Air Station Kodiak, and flown through strong headwinds, turbulence and an intense storm which necessitated night instrument flying. When the helicopter finally reached the area, it had insufficient fuel to conduct a full scale search. The aircrew diverted to Cordova, Alaska to refuel and requested that a Coast Guard C-130 assist in locating MARLENE. Despite worsening weather and loss of the helicopter's radar and navigational computer, they returned to the scene through heavy rain and winds gusting to 50 knots. Visibility was reduced to one-quarter mile. Extraordinarily, they almost immediately located MARLENE adrift in the raging 25 foot seas. Relaying hoisting instructions to the hapless vessel through the on-scene C-130, the aircrew prepared to hoist the fishermen to safety. Several times Lieutenant RIVAS maneuvered the helicopter over the wildly tossing vessel so that a trail line could be dropped. Each time the violent motion of MARLENE caused the fishermen to lose the line. After nearly an hour of effort the aircrew realized that they would not be able to hoist the man in the heavy weather. While preparing to lower an emergency communication radio to the fisherman, the helicopter suddenly crashed into the stormy seas. Although the four aircrewmembers successfully exited the aircraft, all of them succumbed to the frigid and heavy seas Lieutenant RIVAS' innovative actions, expert aeronautical skill and valor, while sacrificing his own life, in this rescue attempt are most heartily commended and are in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Coast Guard.