



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

**TO**

**MARIO L. MUNOZ  
Aviation Electrician's Mate Third Class  
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

Petty Officer MUNOZ is cited for heroism on the morning of 24 March 1978 when he rescued a fellow Coast Guardsman from drowning following a helicopter crash in the Atlantic Ocean 15-miles east of Cat Island. Serving as an aircrewman on Coast Guard HH-52A *1412* deployed onboard USCGC *STEADFAST* (WMEC 623) when the helicopter rolled off the flight deck during take-off and fell into the water, Petty Officer MUNOZ found himself trapped inside the aircraft. Realizing that the aircraft had entered the water upside-down, and believing that it was sinking, Petty Officer MUNOZ quickly released his seat belt and without hesitation located another crewman struggling to free himself. Ensuring that the crewman was released from both his gunner's and seat belts, Petty Officer MUNOZ mustered his strength and physically pushed the man out the cabin door to safety. With complete disregard for his own personal safety, Petty Officer MUNOZ then tried to reach the cockpit crew to provide assistance. While feeling his way forward, he was temporarily snagged and realized that he was still attached to the helicopter by his gunner's belt. Managing to release the buckle and now desperately needing air, Petty Officer MUNOZ found a small pocket of air, only to receive mouthfuls of sea water mixed with jet fuel. Finally, instinctively knowing that he had few precious seconds of air left, Petty Officer MUNOZ felt his way out of the cabin to safety. Reaching the surface he saw that the entire crew was safely out of the helicopter and that a motor surfboat from the *STEADFAST* was on scene. Petty Officer MUNOZ demonstrated remarkable initiative, exceptional fortitude and daring in spite of imminent personal danger in this rescue. His unselfish actions, courage, and unwavering devotion to duty reflect the highest credit upon himself and the United States Coast Guard.