



CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS

TO

LIEUTENANT COMMANDER JOHN B. WHIDDON UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

The President of the United States of America takes pleasure in presenting a Gold Star in lieu of a Second Award of the Distinguished Flying Cross to Lieutenant Commander John B. Whiddon, United States Coast Guard, for heroism while participating in aerial flight on the night of 10 December 1987, as pilot and aircraft commander of Coast Guard HH-3F helicopter 1486. Lieutenant Commander Whiddon was engaged in the perilous rescue of a man and his 6 year old son from the F/V Bluebird, which sank in storm-tossed waters 10 miles southwest of Sitka, Alaska. Despite a dark, blinding snowstorm and severe turbulence, Lieutenant Commander Whiddon launched from Coast Guard Air Station Sitka and within 18 minutes located the stricken vessel foundering in 30-foot seas. Repeatedly, his helicopter was struck by 70-knot wind gusts causing it to pitch uncontrollably, the tail rotor dipping frighteningly close to the raging seas. Lieutenant Commander Whiddon expertly hovered his helicopter over the wildly pitching vessel and, by using maximum power and doggedly wrestling with the flight controls, barely kept it from crashing into the sea. When hoisting from the doomed vessel proved impossible, the victims donned survival suits and jumped into the frigid water - just before their vessel sank. Demonstrating excellent crew coordination and superior airmanship, Lieutenant Commander Whiddon deployed his rescue swimmer and plucked the survivors from the towering seas and certain death. Lieutenant Commander Whiddon's actions, aeronautical skill, and valor were instrumental in the rescue of two victims. 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.