



**CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF  
THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS**

**TO**

**LIEUTENANT JOHN B. WHIDDON  
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

The President of the United States of America takes pleasure in presenting the Distinguished Flying Cross to Lieutenant John B. Whiddon, United States Coast Guard, for extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight on the afternoon of 4 October 1980 while serving as pilot and aircraft commander of Coast Guard HH-3F 1469 engaged in the rescue of 20 survivors from the stricken passenger liner M/V Prinsendam which had caught fire 120 miles south of Yakutat in the Gulf of Alaska. The fire had forced the passengers and crew of Prinsendam into lifeboats in the dark hours of early morning. Dispatched from Coast Guard Air Station Kodiak, Lieutenant Whiddon flew the helicopter to the scene and located a lifeboat being tossed by 25 foot cresting seas. Despite 35 knot winds and visibility often down to one-half mile, Lieutenant Whiddon skillfully guided the aircraft over the stern of the pitching and tossing boat and maintained the position as the rescue basket was lowered. During one of the hoists the cable became tangled in the rudder of the boat. With excellent crew coordination and precision flying Lieutenant Whiddon maneuvered the helicopter to a position where the cable was freed without shearing. The hoist operations were then completed and the survivors were transported to safety on the T/V Williamsburgh and to Yakutat. Lieutenant Whiddon's innovative actions, expert aeronautical skill and valor were instrumental in the rescue of 20 victims. His courage, sound judgment and unwavering devotion to duty are most heartily commended and are in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Coast Guard.