



CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF THE AIR MEDAL

TO

**AST3 KERIC H. ALLEN
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

Petty Officer ALLEN is cited for meritorious achievement in aerial flight from 30 August 2005 to 04 September 2005 as a rescue swimmer during hurricane Katrina rescue operations in New Orleans, Louisiana and along the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Demonstrating exemplary aeronautical skill and exceptional physical stamina, Petty Officer ALLEN flew over 23 hours on HH-65 aircraft including 14 hours at night, performing urban search and rescue resulting in 55 lives saved. At dawn on 30 August 2005, Petty Officer ALLEN completed triage of over 275 survivors and the transport and emergency care of 14 critically injured people from Mississippi, including two severe burn victims. Later that night in New Orleans, Petty Officer ALLEN displayed formidable strength and agility when he was forced to lean over the edge of a rooftop and physically lift a family of six, one at a time out of a window and onto the rooftop, to safely place them in the rescue basket. Remaining on a dangerously steep roof while the aircraft delivered survivors to a collection point, Petty Officer ALLEN used an axe to chop out foot-holds to gain sufficient grip and leverage to create access to a family of seven trapped within. Additionally, the extreme pitch of the roof required Petty Officer ALLEN to balance precariously at the edge of the cut-out and support each survivor on his back before placing them in the rescue basket, to prevent them from falling into the potentially toxic floodwaters below. When dangling power lines prevented the aircraft from reaching a trapped elderly couple directly with the hoist, Petty Officer ALLEN demonstrated exceptional bravery and endurance by swimming through an area littered with power lines, jagged debris, and industrial waste, risking his life to arrive at the survivors. Fighting the effects of skin and eye irritation during two trips and battling swift flood currents induced by the multiple levee breaches, he employed the physically demanding cross-chest carry to keep each survivor's head out of the water during the 50-meter transit from their home to the hoist area. Petty Officer ALLEN'S actions, skills, and valor were instrumental in the rescue of 55 lives. 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.