



**CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF THE
AIR MEDAL**

TO

**LIEUTENANT DONALD E. BADER
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

Lieutenant BADER is cited for meritorious achievement in aerial flight while serving as Aircraft Commander on Coast Guard F11160J helicopter 6026 on 2 February 2004. The aircrew was engaged in the night rescue of six persons from the M/V BOW MARINER that sank following an explosion of its two thousand metric ton cargo of ethanol 50 miles east of Chincoteague, Virginia. The explosion cast the ship's twenty-seven crew members into frigid 43-degree water 'covered with a lethal combination of ethanol and diesel fuel, which created an apocalyptic scene in which the survivors were not even identifiable as humans. Once on scene, Lieutenant BADER coolly assessed the situation and attempted to minimize the danger to his crew and the survivors by signaling a nearby surface vessel towards the located raft. After a number of unsuccessful attempts at signaling the craft and realizing that time was of the essence in this explosive environment Lieutenant BADER established a high, no-reference hover in an attempt to reduce the potential of igniting the highly flammable vapors and limit the crew's exposure to the lethal atmosphere. Maintaining this high hover also minimized the amount of rotor wash on the fragile life raft. His difficult but critical decision to allow his rescue swimmer to enter the noxious waters to carry out the rescue saved 6 lives. Despite experiencing the poisonous effects of the deadly ethanol/fuel oil combination, Lieutenant BADER maintained this no reference hover for over three quarters of an hour while hoisting six survivors to the relative safety of the helicopter cabin. Understanding that the helicopter cabin with the oil soaked survivors inside had become a virtual tinderbox, Lieutenant BADER ensured Air Traffic Control provided the most direct routing during the 80 NM transit from on scene to Norfolk Sentara Hospital. His actions were directly responsible for saving the only survivors of this major catastrophe. 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.