



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

TO

**COMMANDER KARL BALDESSARI
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

Commander BALDESSARI is cited for meritorious achievement in aerial flight while serving as Aircraft Commander aboard Coast Guard HH-60J helicopter CG6005 on 19 October 2004. Dispatched from Air Station Astoria, the crew of CG6005 was directed to search for the *S/V Kamaa*, which had activated its EPIRB after suffering severe damage, including a disabled engine, torn sails, a cracked hull, and several broken windows while battling 30-foot seas and 50-knot winds 235 miles off the Washington coast. Commander BALDESSARI piloted CG6005 through low ceilings and rain showers reducing visibility to one-quarter mile during the 235-mile transit to scene. Arriving on scene, it took CG6005 several minutes to locate the 55-foot sailboat due to low visibility and monstrous seas that caused the vessel to disappear between waves. Commander BALDESSARI quickly took up position near the stern of the vessel and led his very junior crew through an assessment of rescue options. A fouled deck, violent rolls, and whipping masts made it impossible to hoist the survivors directly from the vessel. With limited on scene endurance, Commander BALDESSARI directed his Copilot to instruct the survivors to jump into the frigid water one at a time as the Rescue Swimmer approached. He then positioned CG6005 as close as safely possible to the vessel and directed the Flight Mechanic to deploy the Rescue Swimmer. Undaunted by the perilous situation, he deftly maintained a stable platform for the hoist of both survivors despite occasional 60-knot wind gusts and 40-foot swells that required him to apply nearly full forward cyclic to keep station and ensure safe recovery of each survivor and the Rescue Swimmer. Commander BALDESSARI's actions, aeronautical skills, and leadership were instrumental in saving two 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.