



CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS

TO

**COMMANDER DON S. BELLIS
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

Commander Bellis is cited for extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight on the afternoon of 27 May 1972 as aircraft commander of Coast Guard HH-3F 1468 helicopter engaged in the perilous rescue of three injured crewmen from the merchant vessel Zim Tokyo disabled in the turbulent Atlantic Ocean approximately 100 miles off the North Carolina coast. The ship, bound from New York to Savannah with a cargo of dangerous materials, had suffered a fire in the engine room and was disabled in 25-foot seas with winds of 35 to 40-knots generating very heavy rolls of up to 60 degrees. As a result of this severe wave action, two men were lost overboard, fire broke out on deck and ensuing explosions and flying debris caused one more death and serious injuries to three other men. Despite extremely hazardous flying conditions, complicated by failure of the Doppler navigation computer, Commander Bellis accomplished the flight by dead reckoning and coordinated radar vectors from a Coast Guard ship which was standing by the Zim Tokyo. Upon arrival, Commander Bellis' instructions to the ship had to be passed through translators in Norfolk. After determining that the hoists would have to be from the starboard bridge wing, since the main deck of the bridge superstructure was awash with toxic gasses from the smashed cargo, Commander Bellis courageously proceeded to attempt the dangerous rescue. Despite a perilous left-hand approach and increased wind instabilities which caused enormous control difficulties, Commander Bellis carefully piloted the helicopter over the bridge wing and maintained a stable hover in close proximity to the ship's superstructure while the injured crewmen were hoisted aboard for transfer to medical authorities. Commander Bellis' expert aeronautical skill and dauntless valor throughout this perilous mission resulted in saving the lives of the men. His heroic courage, sound judgment and unwavering devotion to duty are keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Coast Guard.