



CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF THE AIR MEDAL

TO

**AST1 ERIC BIEHN
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

Petty Officer BIEHN is cited for meritorious achievement in aerial flight from 1 September 2005 to 8 September 2005, while serving as rescue swimmer aboard HH-65 and HH-60 helicopters during Hurricane Katrina rescue operations. Demonstrating exemplary skill and superior physical stamina, he flew for over 27 hours, flying repeated sorties on day and night rescue missions in a hazardous urban disaster environment. On the night of 1 September, he negotiated darkened buildings, downed power lines, blowing debris and unlit obstacles to rescue five patients and five medical personnel from the ruins of a New Orleans hospital. After delivering them to an operational medical facility, he was immediately dispatched to an apartment building where over 30 desperate people were trapped by rising floodwaters and in need of assistance. He was hoisted to a severely damaged rooftop where he was rushed by a frenzied group of survivors charging for the perceived safety of the rescue basket. Quickly sizing up the perilous mob scene developing, Petty Officer BIEHN asserted control over the group by shouting orders. He then enlisted the help of the largest man on the roof to maintain order, and established medical priorities, thereby deescalating the situation. Fearing the survivors were too weak to withstand the helicopter's rotor wash and would be blown off the damaged 15 story building, he physically carried over half of the 19 survivors through a perilous path to the hoisting area. Returning from his third sortie on the night of 4 September, Petty Officer BIEHN battled fatigue as he was lowered to a rooftop in the vicinity of a lone, flashing light where he rescued a man and his dog suffering from severe dehydration, having been six days without food or water. The following night, Petty Officer BIEHN was deployed to a tree limb, from which he used exceptional agility to crawl into an upstairs window to leave food and water for the trapped occupants. Petty Officer BIEHN's actions and skill were instrumental in the rescue of 116 victims. 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.