



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

TO

**LIEUTENANT STEVEN E. CERVENY
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

Lieutenant CERVENY is cited for meritorious achievement in aerial flight as a pilot aboard Coast Guard HH-60J helicopters from 28 August 2005 to 5 September 2005, during Hurricane Katrina rescue operations. Demonstrating exceptional aeronautical skill, Lieutenant CERVENY flew over 44 hours, logging 15 hours at night saving 167 lives from the severely flooded areas of New Orleans. Working into the night during the first wave of rescue operations, Lieutenant CERVENY valiantly searched at low altitude, hovering between towers and below power lines to reach the most distressed survivors. On three separate occasions, Lieutenant CERVENY fought buffeting winds to hover his aircraft, lowering the basket through a network of trees and wires to rescue 15 survivors from the grips of the rising flood. On 31 August, Lieutenant CERVENY returned after sunset, expertly navigating with night vision goggles, operating within a square block of four helicopters, medically evacuating two critically ill patients from Baptist Hospital. On 1 September, Lieutenant CERVENY demonstrated remarkable physical and emotional stamina during 70 consecutive hoists, while operating his aircraft at maximum power capabilities to save 96 survivors from the roof of a 12 story hotel. Immediately following this series of rescues, he deployed the rescue swimmer directly to an apartment balcony, courageously threading the swimmer within feet of jagged obstacles to save four survivors. On 2 September, faced with the most demanding circumstances, Lieutenant CERVENY vertically descended between two buildings with only a few feet of clearance, saving a family trapped in chest deep water. On 5 September, Lieutenant CERVENY searched an area that had received little coverage in previous searches and located a family of five trapped in their home. This deployment was again challenging, as the only access point was through the front porch which was beneath an overhanging roof. Despite these obstacles, he was able to lower the rescue device near the porch and recover all five survivors. Lieutenant CERVENY'S actions and aeronautical skill were instrumental in the rescue of 167 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.