



CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF THE AIR MEDAL

TO

AST2 BRYAN S. CROOK UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

Petty Officer CROOK is cited for heroic achievement in aerial flight from 29 August 2005 to 01 September 2005, while serving as Flight Mechanic aboard Coast Guard HH-65B helicopters following hurricane Katrina's devastating passage over metropolitan New Orleans. Demonstrating noteworthy skill and innovating rescue techniques in which he was neither trained nor experienced, he saved 165 survivors during 26 night and day flight hours over 13 sorties in a challenging urban disaster environment. In the face of great danger, he maintained exceptional focus under stress as the aircrew operated at the edge of the power-limited HH-65B's performance envelope amid continuous reports of violence and gunfire, thousands of distressed survivors needing rescue, and the constant threat of midair collision in the highly congested and uncontrolled airspace. Among the first responders, he and his crew pushed through heavy rain squalls and limited visibility to reach survivors. Buffeted by winds over 50 knots, he skillfully performed multiple hoist operations to severely damaged and flooded buildings among debris, telephone poles and trees to save families from rising floodwaters. Working in concert with the pilots and rescue swimmer he vectored the aircraft to within feet of power lines to deploy the swimmer between two apartment buildings onto a walkway surrounded by cables and a fallen antenna to safely hoist an expectant mother and her dehydrated children. Expertly conning the aircraft to a landing on a narrow, muddy levee, he departed into a crowd of survivors and carried back two elderly patients in diabetic shock. Using night vision goggles, he located a non-ambulatory elderly woman with an oxygen breather and feeding tube, precariously floating on a sinking air mattress. Demonstrating exceptional skill, he expertly hoisted the survivor between a tangle of tree limbs and wires. Petty Officer CROOK'S actions and skill were instrumental in the saving of 165 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.

