



CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF THE AIR MEDAL

TO

LIEUTENANT CORNELIUS E. CUMMINGS UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

Lieutenant CUMMINGS is cited for meritorious achievement in aerial flight from 28 August 2006 to 02 September 2006 while serving as an aircraft commander aboard Coast Guard HH-65 helicopters during Hurricane Katrina rescue operations. Testing the limits of his aeronautical skill and endurance he flew over 26 hours on day and night search and rescue missions over the devastated Gulf Coast. Lieutenant CUMMINGS departed for Waveland, Mississippi, one of the hardest hit areas, and found an elderly diabetic woman and her two daughters who had been treading water for over eight hours in a flooded forest. With the rotor blades passing within inches of the surrounding 72 foot tall pine trees, Lieutenant CUMMINGS painstakingly threaded the rescue swimmer to the top of a nearby boat pilothouse. All three women were helped to the boat and the now hypothermic women were hoisted to safety. On 31 August Lieutenant CUMMINGS selflessly braved chaotic helicopter traffic and unavoidable hydrogen sulfide fumes to rescue 18 survivors from flooded rooftops throughout New Orleans. After hoisting an elderly blind woman and her seeing-eye dog Lieutenant CUMMINGS continued hoisting injured survivors clear of the rising floodwaters, repeatedly ferrying them to an improvised triage area on Interstate 10. Survivors already in the helicopter reported an elderly woman lying on a countertop in a flooded home immobile due to recent hip and shoulder surgery. In the face of flying debris and low hanging power lines, Lieutenant CUMMINGS precisely positioned his helicopter to insure the fragile survivor remained stable and dry during her ascent into the aircraft. On the night of 02 September Lieutenant CUMMINGS recovered a nurse suffering from a punctured lung. While medical attendants prepared the critically injured man for inflight surgery Lieutenant CUMMINGS narrowly avoided unlighted radio towers and highrise buildings obscured by dense smoke to successfully deliver the injured man to the hospital ultimately saving his life. Lieutenant CUMMINGS' actions and aeronautical skill were instrumental in saving 29 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.

