

CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF

THE AIR MEDAL

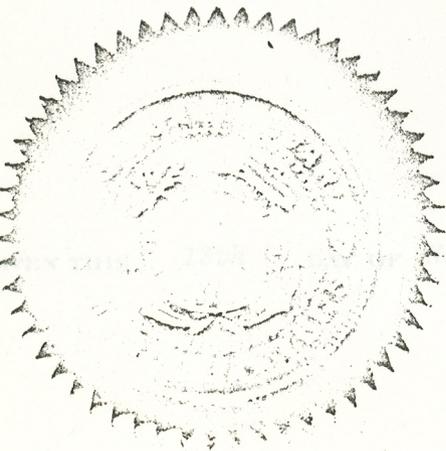
TO

COMMANDER BOBBY CHARLES WILKS

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

Commander WILKS is cited for meritorious achievement in aerial flight on the night of 9 December 1971 as aircraft commander of Coast Guard HH-52A 1448 helicopter engaged in the perilous medical evacuation of a heart attack victim, the master of a Russian vessel, located 116 miles east of Hilo, Hawaii in the Pacific Ocean. Commander WILKS departed the Air Station, Barbers Point, encountering strong and steady head winds enroute to Hilo for refueling, and attempted to rendezvous with the ship in her reported position 120 miles east of Hawaii. This attempt was aborted and the helicopter was forced to return to Hilo as the ship's actual position was approximately 40 miles outside of the aircraft's operational range. In the second attempt, after flying through instrument weather and encountering strong head winds, the rendezvous with the ship was accomplished. The ship was found to be pitching 30 to 40 feet vertically and rolling heavily. Clouds of salt spray, generated by the heavy seas, completely engulfed her and a language barrier hindered the coordination of ship/helicopter operations. Despite these problems, Commander WILKS persevered in his task, successfully hoisted the patient and transported him to medical assistance. Commander WILKS' initiative, foresight and aeronautical skill contributed to saving the man's life. His courage, sound judgment and unwavering devotion to duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Coast Guard.

MEMORIOUS ACHIEVEMENT IN AERIAL FLIGHT ON 9 DECEMBER 1971



C. P. Bender
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Admiral, U. S. Coast Guard
Commandant