



# THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT  
THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
HAS AWARDED THE

## DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS

TO

LIEUTENANT JOHN J. BRIGGS  
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD  
FOR

EXTRAORDINARY ACHIEVEMENT FROM 25 AUGUST TO 1 SEPTEMBER 2017

GIVEN THIS 29th DAY OF July 2019



Karl L. Schultz  
Admiral U. S. Coast Guard  
Commandant

**CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF**

**THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS**

**TO**

**LIEUTENANT JOHN J. BRIGGS**

**UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

Lieutenant BRIGGS is cited for extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight from 25 August to 1 September 2017, as an Aircraft Commander aboard Coast Guard MH-65D helicopters during Hurricane HARVEY rescue operations. As the pilot-in-command, Lieutenant BRIGGS heroically led the Coast Guard's first rescue in Houston, Texas, launching at 0230L well below operational weather minimums, into an unfamiliar operating area at night with winds gusting at 80 knots, visibility below 50 feet and torrential rain to respond to a critically-ill pregnant woman trapped by rising waters in her attic. Timing the 150-foot hoists between bands of life-threatening weather, the crew placed the swimmer between high-voltage power lines and 100-foot trees to reach the roof. Due to massive amounts of water intrusion, the crew endured multiple aircraft emergencies during the rescue of additional family members found in the attic. The combination of losing critical avionics, communication failures, the loss of aircraft stabilization systems, and the violent motion of the aircraft due to unprecedented 80KT winds made maintaining a hover an aeronautical feat. With a hoist failure on the subsequent hoist, the crew was forced to leave the swimmer on scene. As the only resource available at this early stage of the response, the crew returned with a new aircraft to complete the rescue. While confined by power lines and below the tree line, the crew performed a physical grip rescue from 20 feet of an infant swept into swift water from the home. Despite water intrusion causing systems and aircraft stabilization to fail, the crew executed the historic on-load of 14 individuals and 4 crewmembers at once; a testament to the crew's management of aircraft center of gravity and skill to hoist at MH65D limits. Lieutenant BRIGGS' aeronautical skill and heroism were instrumental in the rescue of 120 people. His courage, judgment, and devotion to duty in the face of hazardous flying conditions are most heartily commended and are in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Coast Guard.

