

ALAUX 06-16 - ASSOCIATION FOR RESCUE AT SEA (AFRAS) AWARD RECIPIENTS

04 AUG 2016

2015 ASSOCIATION FOR RESCUE AT SEA (AFRAS) AWARD RECIPIENTS

1. Congratulations are extended to the 2015 Association for Rescue at Sea (AFRAS) award recipients. These include AFRAS Silver Medal awardee Auxiliarist Patrick Porter of D11-Southern Region as well as honorable mentions for Auxiliarists Bryan Teague, Mace Coleman, Lynn Disque, Ian Lickers, John Fewer, Paul Deafenbaugh, and Anthony Wisniewski of D5-Southern Region!

R 021545 AUG 16

FM COMDT COGARD WASHINGTON DC//CG-5RI//

TO ALCOAST

UNCLAS //N16100//

ALCOAST 284/16

COMDTNOTE 16100

SUBJ: 2015 ASSOCIATION FOR RESCUE AT SEA (AFRAS) AWARD RECIPIENTS

A. COMDT COGARD WASHINGTON DC 021345Z MAR 16/ALCOAST 081/16

1. IAW Ref (a), this ALCOAST announces award of the 2015 AFRAS Gold and Silver medals. The AFRAS Gold Medal is awarded annually to a Coast Guard enlisted member who exhibited exceptional courage and heroism during a rescue at sea. The Silver Medal is awarded annually to a deserving Coast Guard Auxiliarist for a heroic rescue either inland or in coastal waters.

2. The AFRAS Gold Medal has been awarded to Aviation Survival Technician First Class Benjamin A. Cournia, Air Station Clearwater, Florida. The AFRAS Silver Medal has been awarded to Coast Guard Auxiliarist Patrick Porter, District Eleven Southern Region. 3. Petty Officer Cournia is recognized for his heroic achievement while serving as rescue swimmer on Coast Guard Helicopters CG-6027 and CG-6009, on 01 October 2015.

A. While deployed to the Coast Guard Forward Operating Base in Great Inagua, Bahamas, CG-6027 responded to a distress call from M/V MINOUCHE, a 212-foot freighter that was rapidly taking on water 60 miles west of Haiti. CG-6027 launched into extremely poor visibility and winds exceeding 50 knots from Hurricane Joaquin, a category four storm whose eye was less than 90 miles from the stricken vessel.

B. As M/V MINOUCHE foundered, the 12 crew members were forced to abandon ship into a small life raft. Once on-scene, Petty Officer Cournia was lowered into tumultuous 15-foot seas and battled his way to the raft. After instructing the frightened crew on the impending rescue process, he took the first survivor and signaled for the rescue basket. By the time the first survivor was being hoisted, the raft had been blown nearly 100 yards away, visible only when it crested waves. Again and again, Petty Officer Cournia bravely

fought his way through the dark churning seas to the raft. One survivor panicked as he entered the water, grabbing Petty Officer Cournia around the head and neck, dangerously forcing him underwater. Remaining calm, Petty Officer Cournia conducted a front head-hold release and expertly placed the survivor in a cross-chest carry, safely bringing him to the rescue basket.

C. After rescuing eight survivors over two hours, Petty Officer Cournia was hoisted into the cabin as the aircraft returned to base for fuel. An hour later, Petty Officer Cournia again deployed into the turbulent seas, rescuing the ninth survivor before the flight mechanic found damage to the hoist cable, forcing the crew to return to Great Inagua and transfer to CG-6009.

D. On the third and final trip, Petty Officer Cournia rescued the final three survivors. The heroic actions and skill of Petty Officer Cournia were instrumental in the saving of 12 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.

4. U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliarist Porter is cited for outstanding, meritorious achievement and operational skill in performance of duty on 8 August 2015, while serving as a member of the 2015 Bullhead City River Regatta patrol team.

A. While conducting a ten-hour patrol that ensured the safety of over 35,000 event participants tube-floating a six-mile stretch of the Colorado River, the largest annual Sector San Diego marine event, Auxiliarist Porter demonstrated outstanding operational performance that prevented critical injury or death of two event participants.

B. During his patrol, Auxiliarist Porter observed a participant swimming against the current without a personal floatation device. After noticing the person go under the water three times due to fatigue, he navigated his personal water craft to the person's location, grabbed his clothing, and pulled him aboard. Auxiliarist Porter skillfully and quickly navigated through the heavy congestion of participants while ensuring the individual remained onboard to be successfully transported ashore for medical attention.

C. Later that day Auxiliarist Porter displayed expert situational awareness when he noticed a person in the middle of a large group of over 70 participants unconscious and foaming at the mouth. Executing careful and precise navigation, Auxiliarist Porter retrieved the person, transited to a safe location, and transferred him to another boat with medical personnel onboard.

D. As patrol team member and vessel operator, Auxiliarist Porter demonstrated expert proficiency during an extremely challenging mission. His actions were essential to the overall safety of event participants and prevention of further injuries or fatalities to two individuals. His perseverance, dedication and devotion to duty are most heartily commended and are in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Coast Guard.

5. Although there were several inspirational nominations, selection for the AFRAS Gold and Silver Medals is limited to one awardee per medal. Nonetheless, all of the AFRAS award nominees exhibited great courage and brought credit to the service. Their performance honors our profession and life-saving heritage. Other award nominees include:

A. AST2 Daniel Harrity, Coast Guard Sector North Bend, Oregon.

- B. AST2 Robert Granger, Coast Guard Air Station Miami, Florida.
- C. AST2 Phillip Walker, Coast Guard Air Station Barbers Point Kapolei, Hawaii.
- D. AST2 Jason Yelvington, Coast Guard Air Station Sitka, Alaska.
- E. Auxiliarists Bryan Teague, Mace Coleman, and Lynn Disque, Auxiliary Flotilla 054-23-03, West Annapolis, Maryland, and Ian Lickers, Auxiliary Flotilla 054-06-07, Williamsburg, Virginia.
- F. Auxiliarists John Fewer, Paul Deafenbaugh, and Anthony Wisniewski, Auxiliary Flotilla 054-23-03, West Annapolis, Maryland.

6. AST1 Cournia and Mr. Porter will be recognized at a ceremony hosted by AFRAS in the Rayburn Congressional Office Building, Washington, DC, on 21 September 2016.

7. Congratulations to AST1 Cournia, Mr. Porter, and all Active Duty and Auxiliary AFRAS award nominees for a job well done.

8. Ms. Dana S. Tulis, Director of Incident Management and Preparedness Policy, sends.

9. Internet release authorized.