



United States Coast Guard
U.S. Department of Homeland Security

22 MAR 2024
FM: CHDIRAUX
TO: ALAUX
ALAUX 012/24

Subj: 2024 ASSOCIATION FOR RESCUE AT SEA (AFRAS) SILVER AWARD RECIPIENTS

1. The Coast Guard recently issued ALCOAST 131/24 to recognize the annual Association for Rescue at Sea (AFRAS) award recipients.
2. Please join me in congratulating the 2024 AFRAS Silver Medal winner, District Eleven's Auxiliarist Alfred Verdi and crewmembers Auxiliarist Lori Barfield and Auxiliarist John Durrer for their response to a 22-foot motor vessel that lost power near a rock jetty in Los Angeles Harbor, California in July 2023. Their heroic actions saved the lives of five adults and two children onboard the vessel in distress and brought great credit to the United States Coast Guard and United States Coast Guard Auxiliary. Honorable mention is provided to Auxiliarists Gary Kessler, Stephen Wyatt, Judith Gettmann, and Kelly Murray from District Seven. Bravo Zulu!
3. The 2024 AFRAS Silver Medal recipients will be honored at a ceremony in April 2024 at the Hart Senate Office Building in Washington D.C.
4. Internet release authorized.

Respectfully,
Captain Troy P. Glendye
Chief Director of Auxiliary (CG-BSX)

For many reasons including the value of keeping communication lines clear and open as well as facilitating access to training and educational tools, all Auxiliarists are urged to have their own email address and to keep it updated in AUXDATA II.

*All ALAUX's are posted on the Chief Director of Auxiliary web site located at: [CHDIRAUX ALAUX](#)

If you have a question regarding this ALAUX, please seek resolution within your Chain of Leadership and Management (COLM) including up to your servicing District Director of Auxiliary (DIRAUX). If your question still cannot be resolved after that, then please email CGAUX@uscg.mil.

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FM COMDT COGARD WASHINGTON DC

TO ALCOAST

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ALCOAST 131/24

SSIC 16100

SUBJ: 2023 AND 2024 ASSOCIATION FOR RESCUE AT SEA (AFRAS) GOLD AND SILVER MEDALS AND GEOFF PAGELS SAR PROFESSIONALS OF THE YEAR AWARDS' RECIPIENTS

A. COMDT COGARD WASHINGTON DC 241225Z JAN 24/ALCOAST 032/24

1. Per REF (A), this ALCOAST announces the recipients of the 2023 and 2024 AFRAS Gold and Silver Medals and the Geoff Pagels SAR Professionals of the Year awards. The Gold and Silver Medals are awarded to Coast Guard enlisted members and Auxiliaries, respectively, to recognize acts of extraordinary bravery during rescues at sea. The Geoff Pagels SAR Professionals of the Year awards recognize the outstanding contributions of Coast Guard SAR professionals.

2. 2023 Award Recipients.

a. AFRAS Gold Medal. The 2023 AFRAS Gold Medal is awarded to ME2 David Flores while serving at Maritime Safety and Security Team (MSST) Houston during the rescue of an infant child and two adults from the Rio Grande River on 02 June 2022, while deployed in McAllen, Texas.

(1) Just before daybreak, BM1 Jarrett Guerra, BM2 Corey Connolly, and ME2 Flores were patrolling an uncharted 49-mile section of the Rio Grande River when they received a report of an overloaded life raft with approximately nine people crossing the Rio Grande River. Once on scene, the crew observed two adult females and an infant in the water without life jackets, struggling to stay afloat.

(2) BM1 Guerra maneuvered the boat alongside the individuals in distress. Showcasing unmatched determination and without any hesitation ME2 Flores dove into the water to save the sinking child from drowning without regard for his own safety. After recovering the boy from the water, ME2 Flores quickly swam back to the boat and carefully handed the child to BM2 Connolly who began several cycles of cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) until the child regained consciousness and began to breath.

(3) ME2 Flores then swam back to recover the two adult females who were fighting to stay above the water. BM1 Guerra maneuvered the boat toward the location of ME2 Flores and the two women, put the boat in neutral and assisted ME2 Flores with bringing them onboard the boat. ME2 Flores' heroic response and calm demeanor under extreme pressure saved all three lives.

b. 2023 Geoff Pagels SAR Professionals of the Year awards.

(1) The 2023 Geoff Pagels SAR Professional of the Year Award for Outstanding Contribution to SAR Readiness has been awarded to Mr. Doug Samp, while serving as the Joint PACAREA/District 11 SAR

Program Manager. Mr. Samp's exceptional achievements have had enterprise-wide and National-level impacts, and his efforts went well beyond the requirements of his position.

(a) Mr. Samp managed the District 11 SAR program, providing invaluable planning, training, and oversight to the District's 2,400 active duty, reserve, and civilian employees. During 2022, District 11 managed over 2,065 SAR cases, resulting in 469 lives saved, 2,282 lives assisted, and \$2.6 million in property saved in the execution of the Coast Guard SAR mission.

(b) Mr. Samp's initiative, charisma, and infectious enthusiasm built external awareness and support for maritime SAR, which directly led to new partnerships across the Indo-Pacific, Latin America, various California civil agencies, and the broader maritime public. Partnering with the Ocean Rowing Society, he created the District 11 Ocean Adventure Task Force to develop reasonable and comprehensive safety requirements and regulations, and Coast Guard monitoring of these high-risk transoceanic voyages. He also collaborated with the National Weather Service to identify, forecast, and disseminate advisories where weather conditions can cause "sneaker waves," resulting in a 70 percent decrease in deaths.

(c) Mr. Samp served as the lead U.S. representative for SAR at the Pacific Partnership forum in the Philippines and conducted exercises with the Japan Coast Guard, Philippines Coast Guard, and Palawan civil authorities. Establishing the first-ever Eastern Pacific SAR Forum, he created a large-scale forum to share best practices and improve communications, reducing workload for the U.S. and improving relationships with Mexico, Panama, Ecuador, Costa Rica, and Chile.

(d) Mr. Samp's enduring legacy of accomplishments and influential contributions to the SAR program and superior mission execution will continue to resonate through those he has mentored and educated. He is regarded by his peers as one of the finest and most dedicated SAR professionals in our Service.

(2) The 2023 Geoff Pagels SAR Professional of the Year Award for Outstanding Professionalism in SAR Mission Planning and Coordination has been awarded to Joint Rescue Coordination Center (JRCC) Norfolk for the coordination and response to the German flagged Sailing Vessel (S/V) Faule Haut, 406 MHz distress beacon activation on 05 June 2022. Lieutenant Commander John Mast, Lieutenant Andrew Grady, Lieutenant Victoria Moon, Chief Operations Specialist Brian Gainey, Operations Specialist First Class Scott Dempsey, Operations Specialist First Class Starr Franklin, and Mr. Thomas Botzenhart demonstrated outstanding investigative work, coordination, and expert search planning in saving the lives of three people.

(a) On 05 June 2022, the S/V Faule Haut was 235 nautical miles west of Bermuda enroute to the Azores when the vessel was overtaken by Tropical Storm Alex. Winds exceeding 50 knots and worsening seas battered the 40-foot vessel and a rogue wave eventually caused it to capsized. The vessel rolled a full 360

degrees, rendering it demasted, partially swamped, and adrift. Unable to control the vessel, the crewmen on board activated their 406 distress beacon and took shelter in the vessel.

(b) In a case that showcased international and interagency cooperation, the JRCC Norfolk watch team worked quickly to coordinate a rescue that involved air assets from Air Station Elizabeth City, Air Station Clearwater, and through coordination with U.S. Fleet Forces Command, utilized the USS Bataan to refuel the Air Station Elizabeth City H-60T twice.

(c) After a 20-hour effort, and because of their outstanding search planning, investigative efforts, and never-ending coordination, all three crew members of sailing vessel were safely rescued and returned to the U.S. where they were met by the American Red Cross for further assistance to return home.

3. 2024 Award Recipients.

a. AFRAS Gold Medal. The 2024 AFRAS Gold Medal is awarded to BM2 Joshua A. Marzilli, while serving as the Coxswain of Station Maui's Response Boat-Medium (RB-M) during the response to the unprecedented Western Maui wildfires, 08 to 09 August 2023.

(1) Braving thick, dense smoke, flying embers, and navigating through burning vessels and debris, BM2 Marzilli and his crew rescued five individuals and assisted approximately 40 more with safely escaping the raging flames that engulfed the historic town of Lahaina, Maui.

(2) An urgent request for Coast Guard assistance was received, as local responders reported up to 100 people fleeing into the ocean to escape the dangerous conditions on land. BM2 Marzilli transited towards Lahaina in 30-knot winds, with gusts over 50, and three-foot seas to locate people stranded in the water along the shoreline.

(3) Once on scene and despite knowing the dangers, BM2 Marzilli volunteered to enter the perilous waters to swim to shore and render assistance to those in distress. Overcoming the winds, current and sharp coral, BM2 Marzilli teamed with an off-duty lifeguard and traversed the reef to shore with a surfboard provided by a Good Samaritan vessel. BM2 Marzilli and the off-duty lifeguard rescued two children by paddling them through the heavy surf break to an awaiting Good Samaritan vessel.

(4) Upon returning to shore a second time, BM2 Marzilli supported the Maui Fire Department's request to assist with evacuating approximately 40 people, including carrying three non-ambulatory evacuees through downed electrical poles and debris to a rescue vehicle. Once back onboard the RB-M, BM2 Marzilli led his crew on a final sweep of Lahaina Harbor, rescuing two more survivors.

(5) BM2 Marzilli's stamina, focus, and bravery in the face of imminent personal danger was vital to the Coast Guard's mass rescue efforts during the deadliest U.S. wildfire in more than a century.

b. AFRAS Silver Medal. The 2024 AFRAS Silver Medal is awarded to Auxiliarist Alfred Verdi, boat crewmember Auxiliarist Lori Barfield, and boat crew trainee Auxiliarist John Durrer of Auxiliary

Facility Adesso II for their rescue of five adults and two children from a 22-foot Bayliner that lost power near the rock jetty in Los Angeles Harbor, on 02 July 2023.

(1) Upon receiving the notification of distress, Adesso II immediately diverted to assist the threatened Bayliner, which had lost power and was adrift in 3-foot seas, with 10-15 knots of wind blowing the boat directly onto the rock jetty.

(2) Auxiliarist Barfield quickly threw a tow line to the pleasure craft, and Auxiliarist Durrer tended the slack in the tow line until the other end was safely secured to the pleasure craft's bow cleat. The Adesso II crew showcased their exemplary seamanship skills by relocating all persons to a safe location during the tow of the disabled vessel that was in grave danger of capsizing near the jetty. The actions of the Adesso II's crew saved the lives of everyone onboard.

c. 2024 Geoff Pagels SAR Professionals of the Year awards.

(1) The 2024 Geoff Pagels SAR Professional of the Year Award for Outstanding Contribution to SAR Readiness has been awarded to Mr. Scott Talbot. As the District 8 SAR Program Manager, Mr. Talbot manages one of the most robust District SAR plans for the largest District contiguous Area of Responsibility encompassing 26 states, over 11,500 miles of inland rivers and 1,200 miles of coastline. As a member of the National SAR Council, Mr. Talbot provides subject matter expertise to challenging cases across the Coast Guard.

(a) Mr. Talbot continuously demonstrates a strong dedication to the modernization of the Coast Guard SAR system. As a vital member of the National Personal Qualification Standard revitalization team, Mr. Talbot worked with Headquarters and provided sound recommendations targeted at training an improved SAR mission ready workforce. As a member of the National SAR School working group, tasked with updating SAR schoolhouse curriculum and modernizing training methodology, Mr. Talbot provided vital strategic recommendations to modernize the entire SAR training system, updating the legacy course of instruction to match future Coast Guard requirements. Mr. Talbot also served as a member of the Coast Guard Addendum revision team, contributing greatly to revitalizing SAR mission policy into a more agile and operator-friendly manual.

(b) Mr. Talbot was hand selected to be the board president and lead a team of five subject matter experts in conducting a SAR Case Study into the submersible TITAN's response in June 2023. The study included an innovative application of the Coast Guard's Human Factors Analysis system currently used in Mishap Analysis Boards. Mr. Talbot's leadership, SAR experience, and depth of knowledge have been invaluable to the analysis of the TITAN SAR case, providing recommendations that will lead to an overall improvement of the Coast Guard SAR system.

(c) As the District 8 SAR Coordinator's direct representative, Mr. Talbot personally reviewed and validated all SAR

Mission Coordinator (SMC) qualifications across seven Sectors, ensuring every member met the standard. To ensure continued professional growth of all members holding the SMC and Active Case Suspension (ACTSUS) authority, Mr. Talbot held quarterly conference calls, attended by Sector Commanders, Deputies, Air Station Commanding Officers, and all SMCs ensuring policy revisions were articulated, concerns were addressed, and unique cases discussed, resulting in a stronger and unified SAR system across the District.

(d) Serving as both SMC and ACTSUS Authority for District 8, Mr. Talbot greatly contributed to over 2,000 SAR cases prosecuted by D8 annually, leading to more than 700 lives saved and 3,000 lives assisted, as well as over \$100 million in property saved or assisted.

(2) The 2024 Geoff Pagels SAR Professional of the Year Award for Outstanding Professionalism in SAR Mission Planning and Coordination has been awarded to Sector Jacksonville for the rescue of a missing fisherman on 04 August 2023. CDR Nicholas Barrow, Mr. William (Tony) Wells, OS1 Blake Mann, Mr. Rex Walsingham, OS2 Adrian Gutierrez, and OS2 Steven Rivera Moreno demonstrated outstanding interagency coordination and search planning in the rescue of a fisherman that was swept out to sea.

(a) At 1700, Sector Jacksonville was notified by the mother of an overdue and missing person last seen at home at midnight, who had gone fishing in an eight-foot small boat sometime before 0700. Recognizing a diminishing three-hour window of daylight and the length of time the fisherman had been missing without contact, the Sector Jacksonville SAR Mission Coordinator (SMC) determined the case to be in the distress phase, dispatched Coast Guard air and surface assets, and initiated a multi-agency search.

(b) Due to outstanding partnerships built and maintained over many years, St. Augustine Fire and Police Departments, St. Johns Sheriff's Office, St. Johns County Fire Rescue, and Florida Fish and Wildlife joined the search with additional boats and aircraft. A local command post established at Lighthouse Boat Ramp enabled force integration and on scene tactical coordination for the Command Center watch team.

(c) In the first several hours of the search, the team developed and managed nearly 30 independent sorties involving eight boats and three aircraft in portions of the Intercoastal Waterway where the fisherman was known to operate. After sunset and with no sightings, the team paused to re-evaluate their search planning assumptions and theories used in search planning to account for the possibility that the boat may have been swept out to sea in the early morning hours. This was a critical juncture that put into motion a series of actions which ultimately saved the missing fisherman's life.

(d) Skillfully managing inter-agency resources to cover other plausible areas in the Tolomato, Matanzas, and San Sebastian Rivers, CGC Coho and an RB-M were dispatched for offshore searches

overnight. Prioritizing a larger air asset coverage area over track spacing more appropriate for a small search object, a first light search with multiple split patterns was generated for a C-130 aircraft.

(e) This search resulted in the missing fisherman being located at 1000 on 05 August, first by radar and then visually, in the northeastern portion of the C-130's assigned three-hour search, 12 miles offshore. CGC Coho was vectored to the fisherman's location, brought on board the cutter, and rushed to awaiting emergency medical services in St. Augustine. After being at sea for 30 hours, the rescued fisherman was severely dehydrated and suffering from sun poisoning; however, he made a full recovery.

(f) The mission excellence and unity of effort demonstrated in this case directly contributed to the rescue of the missing fisherman from his swamped eight-foot boat.

4. In addition to the Gold and Silver Medal and the Geoff Pagels SAR Professionals of the Year award recipients, all 2023 and 2024 award nominees demonstrated exceptional courage and professionalism. These outstanding nominees include:

a. 2023 Geoff Pagels SAR Professionals of the Year Awards.

(1) Outstanding Contribution to SAR Readiness:

(a) Mr. Christopher Eddy, District Seven.

(b) Mr. Matthew Brooks, District Five.

(2) Outstanding Professionalism in SAR Mission Planning and Coordination:

(a) OS3 Keiasia Arnold, Sector Maryland-NCR.

(b) Command Center Team, Sector Guam.

b. 2024 Awards.

(1) AFRAS Gold Medal:

(a) MKC Justin S. Thornton, CGC Beluga.

(b) MK2 Chad N. Rollins, CG Station Sabine.

(2) AFRAS Silver Medal: Auxiliarists Gary Kessler, Stephen Wyatt, Judith Gettmann, and Kelly Murray, Auxiliary Flotilla 070-0404.

(3) 2024 Geoff Pagels SAR Professionals of the Year Awards.

(a) Outstanding Contribution to SAR Readiness: CWO Michael Zapawa, Sector San Francisco.

(b) Outstanding Professionalism in SAR Mission Planning and Coordination:

i. CDR Nestor Lazu-Rivas, CW03 Daniel Capestany, OS1 Ligia Hutton, OS2 Bradley Salazar Colon, and OS3 Alejandro Martinez Melendez, Sector San Juan.

ii. Atlantic Area Command Center, District 5/JRCC Norfolk, Sector New York Command Center, and District 1/JRCC Boston teams.

4. Both the 2023 and 2024 AFRAS Gold and Silver Medals and the Geoff Pagels SAR Professionals of the Year awards will be honored at a ceremony hosted by AFRAS on 09 April 2024, at the Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C.

5. Congratulations to the award recipients and all nominees on a job

well done.

6. COMDT (CG-SAR) Awards POC: Mr. Mike Clarke (202) 372-2090;
email: michael.e.clarke@uscg.mil.

7. Ms. Dana S. Tulis, Director, Office of Emergency Management
(CG-5RI), sends.

8. Internet release is authorized.