

2022 IMO AWARD FOR EXCEPTIONAL BRAVERY AT SEA

Recipient of the Award

Mr. Bo Xu, Chief Officer of the M/T **Jian Qiao 502**, nominated by China, for his exceptional bravery, determination and endurance displayed in the rescue of two survivors, found in a liferaft, of the sunken cargo vessel **Tian Feng 369**, in severe weather and heavy seas.

On 12 December 2021, cold air from Siberia was sweeping across northern China. Before dawn, **Tian Feng 369** began to sink 30 nautical miles (nm) northeast of Zhifu Bay due to widespread flooding and gusty wind. M/T **Jian Qiao 502**, which was then on her voyage to Port of Dongguan, changed course without delay to assist the vessel in distress.

On arrival at the incident scene, they found the sunken vessel and immediately commenced searching for survivors. After one and a half hours of exhaustive search, Mr. Bo Xu spotted a drifting liferaft filled with seawater and carrying two survivors. M/T **Jian Qiao 502** headed for the raft and quickly realized that both survivors were too weak to securely tie a rope to themselves.

Without hesitation, Mr. Xu jumped into the freezing waters and swam relentlessly towards the raft, battling high waves and strong currents. After several attempts, he reached and pulled himself to the liferaft and tied the ropes to the survivors, who were successfully transferred to the deck with the help of other crew members. On his return to the ship, Mr. Bo Xu immediately performed emergency resuscitation on both survivors, regardless of the fatigue and cold he still suffered. Eventually, one of the rescued survived and the other, regrettably, passed away due to hypothermia.

Mr. Bo Xu played a key role in the critical moments of the rescue and fought through severe weather conditions, as well as physical and mental exhaustion, demonstrating exceptional bravery and determination.

Certificates of Commendation

1. The crew of SAR helicopter Rescue Cyclone Victor, Flotilla 33F, Lanvéoc Naval Air Base, French Navy, nominated by France, for their outstanding professionalism and determination displayed during the rescue of the sailing vessel **Don Quijote**, which was badly damaged, in severe weather conditions and heavy seas. After lowering the helicopter diver to the vessel's raft, a crashing wave threw all the occupants into the sea and triggered a breakage of the winch cable and a shock to the helicopter, forcing the crew to return to base and leave the diver with the survivors, for two hours, on board a new raft dropped by the helicopter. On arrival of the crew in a new helicopter and deployment of another diver, all survivors were recovered, despite continued extreme weather conditions and injury to the second diver.
2. When considering the three nominations submitted by India, which all pertain to the same incident, the Panel decided that the combined exceptional effort in the rescue operation of the accommodation barge **P-305**, following its collision with an oil rig caused by cyclone Tauktae, and with 261 personnel on board, was worthy of a certificate. The roles of the nominated candidates are described below:
 1. Captain Sachin Sequira and the crew of the INS **Kochi**, Indian Navy, skilfully manoeuvred their ship in raging seas and extreme weather conditions, in order to approach the **P-305** and deploy 14 of the warship's own liferafts in a limited time window before the barge sank. As a result of their determined and tireless efforts for over 36 hours, 125 crew members of the barge were brought to safety;
 2. Captain Sushil Kumar Singh and the crew of the tug/supply vessel **Greatship Ahalya**, in spite of heavy rolling and pitching of their vessel caused by severe weather conditions and near-zero visibility, continued to keep minimum speed and stayed determined to look out for survivors in the water, thus saving 19 crew members of the **P-305** from the rough seas; and
 3. Captain Prashant Handu and the crew of INS **Kolkata**, Indian Navy, firstly ensured the safe airlifting of all 137 lives on board M/V **Gal Constructor** and, as a result of their further continued efforts over the next 36 hours, two crew members of M/V **Varaprada** and three crew members of the barge **P-305** were rescued and the remains of 18 casualties were recovered.
3. The crew of the fishing vessel **Fukuseki-maru No.15**, nominated by Japan, for the courage, decisiveness and tenacity displayed in the search and rescue, in pitch darkness, heavy seas and gale force winds, of the half-sunken fishing vessel **Bandar Nelayan 188**, which had been drifting for over 24 hours, together with two liferafts, off the west coast of Australia. Without hesitation, **Fukuseki-maru No.15** diverted 200 nm to go to their rescue as fast as they could and their outstanding manoeuvring skills enabled a successful approach to the vessel in distress, despite dangerous floating debris and deteriorating severe weather. The crew's selfless and tireless actions resulted in the successful rescue of all 20 lives on board.

4. Three crews of the Coast Guard Air Station Cape Cod, MA, United States Coast Guard; three crews of the 413 Transport and Rescue Squadron, Greenwood NS, Royal Canadian Air Force; and the crew of CGCC **Cape Roger**, Canadian Coast Guard, nominated by the United States, for their bravery, professionalism and great resolve in the exemplary international rescue operation of all 31 crew members of the fishing vessel **Atlantic Destiny**, which was on fire, unpowered, flooding and violently pitching and rolling, frequently beyond the speed capability of the helicopters' hoist, at night time. The extreme sea and weather conditions caused three hoist cables to part in the course of the rescue, leaving two SAR Technicians on board the sinking vessel for the duration of the operation at great risk to their own lives.

5. Aviation Survival Technician Second Class Juan Espinosa Gomez, Coast Guard Air Station Sitka, AK, United States Coast Guard, nominated by the United States for his exceptional courage, endurance and technical skills displayed in the rescue of a mariner of the sailing vessel **Ananda**, amidst heavy seas and limited visibility caused by a powerful Alaskan storm. After AST2 Espinosa expertly interpreted the faint infrared camera image, which was constantly disappearing behind 30-foot waves, and located the mariner, he was deployed into the freezing water, swam through heavily fuel-laden water and hoisted the survivor executing a demanding physical grip recovery.

Letters of Commendation

1. The crew of rescue helicopter B-7309, Beihai Rescue Bureau, nominated by China, for their courage and determination displayed during the search and rescue operation of five fishermen of the capsized fishing vessel **Liao Zhuang Yu 65558**, who were gathered on a small area remaining above water and tied with ropes to the sinking vessel, in the midst of heavy seas, strong winds and icy waters.
2. The crew of the fishing vessel **Zhe Yu Yu 82085**, nominated by China, for their bravery and great resolve in rescuing, with limited equipment and in severe weather and sea conditions, the five surviving fishermen of the sinking vessel **Shen Lian Cheng 707**, who were found exhausted floating in the water, without lifejackets, by holding fishing floats for over three hours. Despite continued efforts, sadly, they could not find more survivors.
3. Captain François Lebon, a fire-fighter with the Hazardous Environment Intervention Group (GRIMP), Departmental Fire and Rescue Service of Reunion (SDIS 974), nominated by France, for his courageous and selfless actions during the coordinated rescue of 11 crew members of the grounded tanker **Tresta Star**, in perilous weather conditions caused by cyclone Batsirai, who did not hesitate to board the grounded tanker to help the crew put on the rescue gear and explain the procedure for transfer ashore.
4. Captain Kakha Bezhanidze, Master of the M/T **Elan Vital**, nominated by Georgia, for his exceptional professionalism and determination displayed in the coordinated search and rescue operation of the sinking M/T **Suvari H**, in gale force winds and 8-metre seas. As a result of his tireless efforts, the M/T **Elan Vital** saved the lives of 10 survivors found in three separate life rafts.
5. Aviation Survival Technician First Class Newsward K. Marfil, Coast Guard Air Station Barbers Point, HI, United States Coast Guard, nominated by the United States, for his professionalism and exceptional skills demonstrated during the rescue, in fuel and debris-laden waters, of two pilots forced to ditch their cargo aircraft into the Pacific Ocean. AST1 Marfil effectively assessed the critical situation and managed to save the lives of both survivors.
6. Mr. Nguyen Van Hoa, Leader of the Anti-Drugs and Crime Team, Tan Thanh Border Guard Post, Provincial Border Guard Command of Binh Thuan, nominated by Viet Nam, for risking his own life, while patrolling the shore, to rescue a swimmer swept away by fast-flowing currents, despite exhaustion and severe pain from a cramp caused by the long-distance swim and strong currents.

In addition, the Panel of Judges decided to award the following recognitions:

Special recognition for merchant vessels and their crew involved in the rescue of mixed migrants at sea (information about this recognition can be found [here](#))

1. Captain Alen Gospić and the crew of the LNG carrier GasLog Glasgow, nominated by Croatia, for the crucial role everyone on board played in rescuing and assisting 17 migrants from a sinking boat in the Yucatan Channel.
 2. Captain Jonathan G. Funa and the crew of the bulk carrier Cape Taweelah, nominated by the Philippines, for their vital role in rescuing and assisting 35 migrants from a sinking boat south of the Gran Canaria Island, in the Atlantic Ocean, and
 3. Captain Neil Circulado and the crew of the oil/chemical tanker Hellas Revenger, nominated by INTERTANKO, for their critical role in rescuing and assisting 200 migrants from a fishing boat in distress in the Ionian Sea.
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