

2023 IMO HONOURS FOR EXCEPTIONAL BRAVERY AT SEA

Recipient of the Award

Aviation Survival Technician Second Class Caleb Halle, Coast Guard Air Station Atlantic City, United States Coast Guard (USCG), nominated by the United States, for his outstanding courage, endurance and determination displayed in the rescue of seven crew members of the tugboat **Legacy**, which was disabled and adrift, in rough weather and heavy seas.

On 14 January 2023, the **Legacy** was en route towing a barge when its tow lines snapped due to strong winds and heavy swells and fouled the propellers, leaving the vessel and its crew adrift and subject to violent rolling, 35 nautical miles (nm) off the coast of Ocean City, Maryland. Following several unsuccessful rescue attempts by a USCG cutter, the crew of helicopter CG-6566 quickly launched from the Air Station and, considering the severe weather and sea conditions, formulated a rescue plan led by AST2 Halle.

On arrival at the incident scene, the crew identified a raised platform near the stern of the vessel as the best winching area and conducted a challenging hoist of AST2 Halle to the heavily rolling vessel. With great difficulty, AST2 Halle helped the first survivor to reach the rescue basket unharmed and determined that the area had become too dangerous for hoisting operations, thus, locating a safer option on the main deck and notifying his crew to shift their recovery operations. AST2 Halle then ensured the safe recovery of the second and third survivors into the helicopter, which, at that point, had to depart the scene due to lack of fuel. AST2 Halle, however, volunteered to remain behind to reassure the four remaining survivors and assist the crew of a second Coast Guard helicopter which was on its way.

Shortly after, the CG-6024 arrived on-scene as darkness began to set in. Despite losing communications with the second helicopter and after several failed attempts to deploy its rescue swimmer, AST2 Halle assisted him safely to the violently pitching main deck. Battling the deteriorating conditions, both rescue swimmers worked flawlessly in tandem to hoist the four remaining survivors successfully. AST2 Halle then decided to conduct a final search inside the vessel, damaging the water-tight seal of his survival suit in the process after a large wave hit the tugboat.

After ensuring the **Legacy** was clear of survivors, both rescue swimmers regrouped on the main deck and, struggling against the elements, attached to the hoist hook for joint recovery. Just at that moment, the vessel violently pitched upwards, throwing them overboard into the tumultuous, frigid water mere feet away from the propellers of the tugboat. As the helicopter moved to regain position, AST2 Halle's survival suit began flooding and, noting the perilous danger of the swimmers, the helicopter crew was able to expedite the recovery of both rescue swimmers back to safety.

Throughout the entire operation, despite the extreme conditions and the complexities of a multi-unit rescue, coupled with communications failures, AST2 Halle remained calm and collected while risking his life to ensure the survival of seven mariners in distress, demonstrating exceptional bravery and determination.

Certificates of Commendation

1. The crew of the tug vessel **SL Diamantina**, nominated by Australia and singled out among the other tugs involved, for their crucial role during the three-day-long coordinated rescue of the bulk carrier **Portland Bay**, laden with 1,000 tons of fuel oil, which had lost propulsion and was rapidly drifting towards the coast, in gale force winds and high seas, and at risk of running aground. After a helicopter rescue was aborted due to the extreme weather, the **SL Diamantina**, a 500 tonne and 30-meter towage tug with three crew, did not hesitate to respond and try to hold, alone and for four hours, the 60,000 tonne and 169-metre bulk carrier, until the arrival of salvage tugs. As a result of the crew's courageous and decisive initial response, the lives of 21 crew members were saved, and a marine pollution incident and catastrophic damage to the environment were prevented.
2. Mr. José Cardoso Lemos, subsistence fisherman, nominated by Brazil, for his bravery, selfless actions and determination in rescuing survivors of the sunken passenger vessel **Dona Lourdes II**. Upon arrival at the scene, Mr. Lemos witnessed more than 80 people screaming for help in the water and did not hesitate to jettison his fishing gear to make as much room as possible in his 9-meter-long and 2-meter-wide vessel. Despite a physical disability and no technical training, he singlehandedly pulled 25 survivors out of the water and took them ashore in two trips. Sadly, when he returned a third time, the remaining passengers had already drowned and he then proceeded to help recover bodies and personal belongings.
3. The crew of the fishing vessel **Zhe Long Gang Yu 05668**, nominated by China, for their outstanding courage and tireless efforts during the challenging rescue of the fishing vessel **Zhe Ling Yu Yun 30058**, which had caught fire that was quickly spreading due to strong winds. After several arduous attempts that caused collisions and serious damage to both hulls, the **Zhe Long Gang Yu 05668** got close to the burning vessel, by which time the entire bridge and the engine room were engulfed in flames. The rescuing crew, seizing the brief periods when the two vessels were closest, transferred 12 survivors into their vessel with just their bare hands. Sadly, one fisherman lost his life to the raging fire.
4. Aviation Survival Technician Third Class John Walton, rescue swimmer on board helicopter CG-6009, Aviation Training Centre Mobile, Sector North Bend, United States Coast Guard, nominated by the United States and singled out among his rescue colleagues, for his crucial role during the coordinated rescue of a person on board the motor yacht **Sandpiper**, which was taking on water and turning erratically in very high seas. On deployment, as AST3 Walton was swimming towards the vessel, a massive breaking wave capsized the **Sandpiper**, throwing the yachtsman into the treacherous waters and leaving AST3 Walton with just enough time to duck dive beneath the surface. After he was recovered from the water, his crew of CG-6009 saw the survivor seemingly lifeless and AST3 Walton was quickly deployed again to prepare him for a challenging hoist, thus, saving the yachtsman's life, who had to be treated for hypothermia and an apparent head injury.

Letters of Commendation

1. The Master and crew of the M/V **Guo Yuan 8**, nominated by China, for their bravery, skill and determination displayed during the rescue, in severe weather and sea conditions caused by a powerful snowstorm, of the capsized cargo vessel **Jin Tian**. As a result of their tireless searching efforts for more than 20 hours, the only five survivors of the 22 crew members of the vessel in distress were brought to safety.
2. The Master and crew of the M/T **Liao You 123**, nominated by China, for their courage and great resolve demonstrated in the rescue, in strong winds and freezing temperature, of the three crew of the fishing vessel **Liao Ying 35419**, by boarding the sinking vessel to assist the exhausted fishermen, who were suffering from hypothermia, putting on lifejackets and safety belts and climbing the ladder to safety.
3. LV Pierre Bonneau, MP Vanessa Legall and MT Guillaume Colin, helicopter detachment of the Flotilla 34F on board the patrol frigate **Prairial**, French Navy, nominated by France, for their exceptional skills demonstrated during the exemplary international rescue operation of the Peruvian Navy vessel **BAP Guise**, which had caught fire. The helicopter crew successfully delivered twice fire-fighting equipment to the vessel and retrieved two severely burnt sailors, in the face of challenging winching conditions, intense and rapidly spreading fire.
4. Mr. Louis Vasseur, volunteer rescue swimmer and crew member on board the all-weather boat SNS 086 **Cap Fagnet**, Fécamp Rescue Station, National Sea Rescue Society, nominated by France, for his courageous actions in the rescue of two crew members of the disabled sailing vessel **Appollonia** in the midst of a storm. After Mr. Vasseur boarded the vessel to help with a towing operation that failed, the **Appollonia** started drifting rapidly towards cliffs, resulting in a helicopter evacuation where he prepared and assisted both survivors.
5. Mr. Clément Belin and Mr. Nino Verlie, crew members of the intervention, assistance and rescue tug **Abeille Normandie**, nominated by France, for their bravery and decisiveness during a risky and challenging rescue on board a zodiac, in very rough seas, of two persons who were being swept away by huge waves on a dyke, one of whom was close to drowning, as he had fallen in the water and was located motionless and recovered with great difficulty.
6. Mr. Diego D. Sachs, Mr. Sascha Kümpel, Mr. Nick Tamm and Mr. Marek Möckel, members of a Towing Assistance Team of the Federal Waterways and Shipping Administration, nominated by Germany, for their courage and tenacity displayed during the rescue of the cargo vessel **Royal II**, which was disabled and drifting towards the coast and at risk of grounding or collision. Their professional actions prevented loss of life, and damage to property and the environment, and a serious marine pollution incident was avoided.
7. Captain Anil Choudhary and the crew of the M/V **Helios Leader**, nominated by India and Singapore, for their ship-handling expertise and great resolve during the rescue operation of over 300 persons on board the wooden boat **Lady R3**, which was adrift, moving violently in the rough sea and taking in water, by manoeuvring their cargo ship for 4 four long hours to maintain position alongside the small boat and manually haul up survivors to safety.

8. The crew of the patrol vessel **3016**, Coast Guard Station Donghae, Republic of Korea Coast Guard, nominated by the Republic of Korea, for their determination and perseverance displayed during a 63-hour long rescue operation of the fishing vessel **133 Samhwa**, with 10 crew members on board, after it suffered engine failure and lost communication, amidst extreme weather and sea conditions, causing serious injuries to two coastguards, who had to be transferred to another patrol vessel for assistance.
9. Captain Yeonghwan Park, Master of the fishing vessel **2016 Sinaesan**, nominated by the Republic of Korea, for his leadership and great resolve demonstrated in the successful rescue of the nine crew members of the sinking cargo vessel **Hyundai Fashion**, who had abandoned ship in dangerous waters and deteriorating weather conditions, including low visibility.
10. Captain Anatoliy Golev and the crew of the tanker **NCC Najem**, nominated by Saudi Arabia and ITF, for their professionalism and outstanding seamanship skills demonstrated during the rescue of 35 survivors from a capsized vessel, who were floating in the water with buoys, amidst strong currents and high waves, and brought back to safety through the accommodation ladder. Sadly, they also recovered the remains of a casualty.
11. The team of the Fene Strategic Base for SAR and pollution response operations (A Coruña), comprising the officer responsible for SAR and pollution response operations and the diving intervention unit of Ardentia Marine, Maritime Rescue and Safety Agency, nominated by Spain, for their tenacity and expertise displayed during the night-time rescue, in rough seas, of the only crew member of the sailing vessel **Jeanne Solo Sailor**, who was found inside his capsized vessel with floating ropes blocking the entrance and hardly any visibility.
12. DCC Michael A. Filippone, DC1 Rilee E. Williams, DC2 William J. Parker and DC2 Kevin B. Smith, Damage Control Division of the USCGC **Midgett**, United States Coast Guard, nominated by the United States, for their professionalism and diligence during the exemplary international rescue operation of the Peruvian naval vessel **BAP Guise**, which had caught fire. They provided effective fire-fighting equipment while sharing their expertise with the crew and remained on the scene until the fire was fully extinguished, overhauled and inspected.
13. Captain Sergey Vasiliev, Master of the M/V **Nordic Qinngua**, nominated by the Faroes, for his ship-handling expertise and perseverance displayed during the rescue, in heavy seas and strong winds, of two persons who had abandoned their capsized rowing boat and were found in a life raft, and were recovered one at a time and one and a half hours apart, due to challenging manoeuvring conditions.

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, for the crucial role everyone on board their vessels played in rescuing and assisting persons in distress at sea (information about this recognition can be found [here](#)).

1. Captain Omer Sheker and the crew of the M/V **Sen Arche**, nominated by Georgia;
2. Captain Shalay Andrey and the crew of the M/V **Front Samara**, nominated by Georgia;
3. Captain Leo Malunes Sacmar Jr. and the crew of the M/V **Christina V**, nominated by the Marshall Islands;
4. Captain Oleg Gudkov and the crew of the oil/chemical tanker **Broadway**, nominated by the Marshall Islands;
5. Captain Gladnick Savio Cabral and the crew of the M/V **Leda Maersk**, nominated by ICS;
6. Captain Mariusz Miszczak and the crew of the M/V **Santa Isabel**, nominated by ICS;
7. Captain Ioannis Kasimatis and the crew of the M/S **Celebrity Infinity**, nominated by CLIA;
8. Captain Andrea Catalani and the crew of the M/S **Carnival Celebration**, nominated by CLIA;
9. Captain Panagiotis Panagopoulos and the crew of the M/S **Mariner of the Seas**, nominated by CLIA;
10. Captain Massimiliano Roja and the crew of the M/S **Carnival Paradise**, nominated twice by CLIA;
11. Captain Sindre Borsheim and the crew of the M/S **Odyssey of the Seas**, nominated by CLIA;
12. Captain Niccolo' De Ranieri and the crew of the M/S **Carnival Mardi Gras**, nominated by CLIA;
13. Captain Gianmario Sanguineti and the crew of the M/S **Azamara Journey**, nominated by CLIA;
14. Captain Kate McCue and the crew of the M/S **Celebrity Beyond**, nominated by CLIA;

15. The Master and crew of the M/V **Jolly Quarzo**, nominated by UNHRC; and
 16. The Master and crew of the M/V **Zagara**, nominated by India and UNHRC.
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