

2021 IMO AWARD FOR EXCEPTIONAL BRAVERY AT SEA

Recipient of the Award

Mr. Tran Van Khoi, Search and Rescue Officer of the Regional Maritime Search and Rescue Coordination Center No.II, Viet Nam Maritime Administration, nominated by Viet Nam, for his extraordinary courage, determination and endurance displayed in rescuing four survivors from a sunken vessel, in the midst of extreme weather and heavy seas.

On 8 October 2020, the cargo vessel **Vietship 01** was swept away as it was docking at the Cua Viet Port, due to widespread flooding and wind gust of 74 km/h caused by typhoon Linfa. The heavy rains, strong winds and rough seas made it very difficult for rescue efforts and the vessel sank to the bottom in shallow waters, leaving its 12 crew members trapped on board and gathering on the roof of the cabin. Several rescue units were immediately deployed to the scene, but a viable rescue plan could not be found due to the severe weather and sea conditions.

On the early morning of 9 October, Mr. Khoi was on shore watch duty when he witnessed two crew members being washed off by strong waves into the sea. Without hesitation, he tied a rope to his body and swam hard through 5-metre waves and strong currents rescuing both of them. In the afternoon, two more crew members fell off into the water and were fortunately tossed ashore by the waves. The following day, although the weather continued to deteriorate, a fishing vessel tried to approach the **Vietship 01** but sank before it could reach it. One fisherman was swept ashore by rough waves but the other three had to climb onto the **Vietship 01** for safety.

On the afternoon of 10 October, Mr. Khoi volunteered to try a new approach on another fishing vessel with the intent of connecting the sunken ship to the shore using wire guns. While the rough sea conditions prevented once again the rescue attempt, two more crew members jumped into the water and Mr. Khoi risked his life yet again, swimming amidst the raging waves to help them board the fishing vessel. Later in the afternoon, despite exhaustion after more than two days working at the scene, he volunteered to steer a rib coach boat against the fierce seas at great risk of overturning the boat, after its engine stopped working momentarily due to significant flooding. Mr. Khoi and his crew quickly fixed the engine problem and continued trying to approach the **Vietship 01** to no avail. They were exhausted, it was dark and they were ordered to return to the shore. The final act of the rescue operation took place on 11 October 2020, after rescue helicopters were deployed to the scene and the rest of survivors were hoisted to safety.

Mr. Tran Van Khoi, through his courageous actions and tireless rescue attempts in a rescue operation that lasted over three days, demonstrated truly exceptional bravery and determination.



Certificates of Commendation

1. Captain Ritesh Madhusudan Bhamaria, marine pilot on board the M/T **Godam**, Torres Pilots, nominated by Australia and the International Transport Workers' Federation separately, for his decisiveness and extraordinary ship-handling expertise displayed during the rescue of two fishermen who had been clinging to a wooden plank for more than 15 hours, in treacherous sea conditions caused by adverse weather and the proximity to the coral reef. Captain Bhamaria skilfully navigated the vessel in the shallow, restricted waters and raced against time to save the fishermen from the rough seas, surrounding sharks and certain death.
2. The members of the diving rescue team of Guangzhou Rescue Base, Nan Hai Rescue Bureau, nominated by China, for their courage and diligence displayed in the underwater search and rescue operation of nine crew members of the capsized, 129-meter-long bulk cargo carrier **Hongxiang 819**. As a result of their professional actions, using the wreck as a working platform for their thorough search of survivors, and facing very challenging underwater conditions caused by turbulent currents, an unstable sinking vessel and hazardous obstacles, they managed to rescue the only survivor found in a very poor mental condition after being trapped for 20 hours in a cargo hold, and recovered the remains of four casualties.
3. Mr. Anton Muradyants, Mr. Gambik Asaturyan, Mr. Denis Nikolenko, Mr. Kirill Vikulov and Mr. Konstantin Kendigilyan, members of the Marine Rescue Service, Azovo-Chernomorsky Branch, nominated by the Russian Federation, for their remarkable courage and tenacity displayed during the emergency operation on board the M/V **April**, which was flooding while carrying dangerous cargo, under the constant threat of explosions and in heavy weather conditions. After the evacuation of the crew and a casualty, who had sadly died due to poisoning, the nominees identified the source of water ingress and efficiently performed the emergency works required, thus preventing the sinking of the M/V **April** and the spillage of tons of harmful chemicals into the sea.
4. The members of the DEGAK-20 diving safety, security, search and rescue team, Turkish Coast Guard Command, nominated by Turkey, for their courage and determination in the rescue of the crew of the capsized fishing boat **Kumsal-55**. After rescuing 10 survivors and locating an unconscious crew member, who was carefully brought up to the surface by the divers, they came up with – and successfully executed – a challenging plan to rescue, in complete darkness and very dangerous underwater conditions, including floating objects and diesel fuel, a crew member who was trapped in the cabin and unable to swim and also recovered the remains of a casualty.
5. Aviation Survival Technician First Class Joshua K. Mayfield, Coast Guard Air Station Elizabeth City, NC, United States Coast Guard, nominated by the United States, for his exceptional bravery and endurance during the challenging rescue, in complete darkness, crashing waves and gale force winds, of two mariners from a sailing vessel which had lost power. AST1 Mayfield spent 60 minutes in frigid waters, swimming constantly through the tumultuous seas to keep the survivors afloat and lift them into the swinging rescue basket to be hoisted to safety.

6. Petty Officer First Class Wallace Qual, Coast Guard Station Yaquina Bay, United States Coast Guard, nominated by the United States, for his remarkable courage, initiative and fortitude displayed in the rescue operation of the master of the sinking vessel **Legend** after all other rescue options were discarded due to extreme conditions caused by local wildfires and the vessel's proximity to the surf zone. BM1 Qual expertly led a beach crew in the midst of thick smoke, sandstorm and ash filled air to reach the scene. He then battled powerful currents when swimming 300 yards on two occasions and managed to rescue the master just in time to keep him from slipping below the surface.

7. Lieutenant Justin Neal, Lieutenant Jonathan Orthman, Avionics Electrical Technician Second Class James Schwader and Aviation Survival Technician Second Class Grant Roberts, Coast Guard Air Station Sitka, AK, United States Coast Guard, nominated by the United States, for their bravery, professionalism and endurance demonstrated during the search and rescue of the sole survivor of the sinking F/V **Irony**, who was found clinging to debris and in a state of panic. As a result of their exemplary team effort, they successfully completed their mission at the edge of the aircrafts effective range, employing all sensors to conduct the search and hoist the survivor in complete darkness, storm force winds and 12-foot waves.

8. The combined exceptional effort from everyone involved in the rescue operation of the M/T **New Diamond**, which caught fire and was drifting towards the coast laden with dangerous cargo:
 1. The rescue team members of the Indian Navy and the Indian Coast Guard and the master and crew of the tugboat **Ocean Bliss**, nominated by India, who skilfully towed the vessel away from the coast, brought the vessel under control and carried out effective firefighting, thus preventing a serious marine pollution incident; and

 2. Commander KRGRS Rantenna, psc, Lieutenant KGASM Wijerathne, Leading Engineering Mechanic DLK Mudiyanse and Able Seaman WGGU Senarathna, crew members of the patrol boat **SLNS Ranarisi**, Sri Lanka Navy, nominated by Sri Lanka, who bravely planned, coordinated and executed the challenging evacuation of one casualty and two crew members remaining on board of the vessel after the majority of the crew abandoned ship.

Letters of Commendation

1. The master and crew of the emergency rescue and response vessel **Esvagt Cantana**, nominated by Denmark, for their determination and perseverance in saving the life of a crew member following his sudden collapse on board, by carrying out cardiopulmonary resuscitation and defibrillation for a period of over three and a half hours, despite being told to give up.
2. The crews of the fishing vessels **Takaei-maru**, **Hisaei-maru**, **Eiko-maru** and **Tomo-maru**, nominated by Japan, for their great resolve displayed during the successful swift rescue of 62 crew members and passengers, including 52 elementary school students, of the sinking M/V **Shrimp of Art**, in darkness and strong currents.
3. Ensign José Luis Sandoval Estrada, Chief of the Speedboat Squadron, Puerto Cabezas Naval Base, Naval Force of the Nicaraguan Army, nominated by Nicaragua, for his exceptional skills and leadership in coordinating the evacuation of 2,800 people from the Miskito Keys and adjacent keys, as well as from several communities in the North Atlantic Autonomous Region, in extreme weather conditions caused by Hurricane Eta.
4. Capitan Bogdan Rusu, Master of M/V **Cosco Malaysia**, nominated by Romania, for his exceptional professionalism and seamanship during the rescue of four persons on board the sinking S/V **Yes Dear**, in difficult weather conditions due to tropical storm Sally.
5. The master and crew of the oil tanker **BW Rhine**, nominated by Singapore, for their courage and joint effort to combat fire following an explosion on board. The crew's prompt and brave actions prevented further damage and gasoline pollution to the marine environment, property and life.
6. Aviation Survival Technician Second Class Christopher A. Fisher, Coast Guard Air Station Elizabeth City, North Carolina, United States Coast Guard, nominated by the United States, for his professionalism and exceptional skill displayed in the deployment and recovery of a solo mariner on board the distressed S/V **Serena**, in the midst of heavy seas, strong winds and darkness.

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. The crew of the M/V **Ocean Ang**, nominated by China, for their display of bravery, professionalism and compassion in rescuing and assisting, on 25 August 2020, 41 migrants of a sinking boat in distress in the Aegean Sea, amidst Covid-19 pandemic.
2. Captain Volodymyr Yeroshkin and the crew of the oil tanker **Maersk Etienne**, nominated by the International Chamber of Shipping for their display of bravery, professionalism and compassion in rescuing and assisting, between 4 August and 11 September 2020, 27 persons of a sinking boat in distress in the Mediterranean.

Special recognition in connection with outstanding response during the COVID-19 pandemic

1. Captain Juan Feliu and Captain Rainiero Salas, pilots, and Mr. Edgar Gaskin and Mr. Lisardo Acosta, launch operators, Panama Canal Authority, nominated by Panama, were granted a tailored letter highlighting best practices in assisting vessels in need of assistance during the pandemic.
 2. Special recognition at the Awards ceremony to all seafarers for the outstanding response and endurance they continue to demonstrate during the pandemic crisis.
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