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Curtis
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UNCLAS E F T O //N01650//SECTION ONE OF TWO SECTIONS
FAST ACTION AWARD RECOMMENDATION

- A. COMNAVFORVINST 1650.3B
- B. CINCPACFLTINST 1650.1 SERIES
- I. IAW REF A AND B RECOMMEND
- A. JAMES ALBERT CURTIS, LTJG, 734199, [REDACTED], USNR
- B. HELIKOPTERON THREE
- C. NAVY CROSS

D. ON THE NIGHT OF 3 OCTOBER 1970, LTJG CURTIS WAS THE LEADER OF A
UH-1B LIGHT HELICOPTER FIRE TEAM WHICH SCRAMBLED TO THE ASSISTANCE OF
UNITS OF RIVER PATROL DIVISION FIFTY EIGHT. ARRIVING OVERHEAD, HE
IMMEDIATELY AND AGGRESSIVELY LED HIS FIRE TEAM IN SEVERAL FIRING

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RUNS AT ENEMY POSITIONS. HIS AIRCRAFT WAS SUBJECTED TO HEAVY RETU
N FIRE

YET HE CONTINUED TO PRESS HIS ATTACKS. EARLY IN THE ENGAGEMENT,
A VIETNAMESE SAILOR WAS CRITICALLY WOUNDED IN THE HEAD BY ENEMY
SHRAPNEL AND WAS BLEEDING PROFUSELY. AMIDST INTENSE HOSTILE FIRE,
LTJG CURTIS ELECTED TO EVACUATE THE WOUNDED SAILOR, FULLY AWARE OF
THE GRAVE DANGER THAT EXISTED AND WITH TOTAL DISREGARD FOR HIS
OWN PERSONAL SAFETY. AS HE APPROACHED THE CONFINED AND OBSTACLE LADEN
PICKUP ZONE, HIS AIRCRAFT WAS SUBJECTED TO INTENSE ENEMY AUTOMATIC
WEAPONS FIRE AND HE WAS FORCED TO MAKE THE DIFFICULT LANDING INTO
A RICE PADDY WITHOUT THE USE OF ANY LIGHTS SO AS NOT TO FURTHER
COMPROMISE HIS POSITION. WHILE PICKING UP THE WOUNDED SAILOR, HIS
AIRCRAFT WAS CONTINUALLY UNDER FIRE. ALTHOUGH HE COULD HAVE
JUSTIFIABLY ABORTED HIS MISSION, HE ENDURED THE HEAVY FIRE TO EVACUATE
THE WOUNDED ALLY. DURING THE EVACUATION, THE TRAIL AIRCRAFT
DELIVERED CONSTANT AIR STRIKES AT THE NUMEROUS SOURCES OF ENEMY FIRE.
LIFTING OFF, HIS HELICOPTER CAME UNDER AN ATTACK OF INCREASED
INTENSITY. HE RESOLUTELY CONTINUED TO EXTRACT FROM THE AREA WHILE
HIS CREW AND CO-PILOT LAID DOWN INTENSE SUPPRESSIVE FIRE. HE BROUGHT
THE WOUNDED SAILOR TO A NEARBY AIRSTRIP WHERE MEDICAL ASSISTANCE
WAS WAITING AND LEFT TO REFUEL AND REARM. EXPEDITIOUSLY RETURNING TO

THE CONTACT AREA, HE LED AN ADDITIONAL SERIES OF TREMENDOUSLY EFFECTIVE AIR STRIKES ON SEVERAL ENEMY FIRING EMPLACEMENTS. DESPITE LOW CLOUD COVERAGE AND AN ABSENCE OF MOONLIGHT, HIS STRIKES WERE HIGHLY ACCURATE. HIS FIRE TEAM WAS CONTINUALLY IN AND OUT OF A CLOUD LAYER WHICH WAS BECOMING INCREASINGLY DENSE. A THIRD STRIKE WAS REQUESTED AND DESPITE DETERIORATING WEATHER CONDITIONS, HE REARMED, REFUELED, AND RETURNED TO PROVIDE THE REQUESTED AIR SUPPORT. AFTER NUMEROUS ENGAGEMENTS, ENEMY FIRE DIMINISHED UNTIL VIRTUALLY ALL GROUND FIRE WAS SUPPRESSED AND THE SAFETY OF THE RIVER UNIT WAS NO LONGER IN QUESTION. EXPENDING ALL ORDNANCE, HE REMAINED OVERHEAD TO DIRECT A NAVY OV-10 (BLACK PONY) AIR STRIKE. ALL ENEMY FIRE WAS ULTIMATELY SUPPRESSED. LTJG CURTIS PLAYED A VITAL ROLE IN THIS SUPERLATIVE ALLIED ACCOMPLISHMENT. HIS LAUDABLE PERFORMANCE IN THIS PROLONGED FIREFIGHT RESCUED THE RIVER UNIT FROM A VIRTUALLY UNWONNABLE POSITION, SAVED THE LIFE OF A VIETNAMESE SAILOR, AND CONTRIBUTED TO THE SIGNIFICANT DESTRUCTION OF THE ATTACKING ENEMY FORCE. THIRTY VIET CONG/NORTH VIETNAMESE WERE REPORTED BY RELIABLE INTELLIGENCE SOURCES TO BE KILLED IN THE ACTION. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT LTJG CURTIS'S BOLD AND COURAGEOUS ACTIONS PREVENTED FURTHER PERSONNEL CASUALTIES AND PROVED TO BE A MAJOR FACTOR IN THIS ENVIABLE NAVAL VICTORY.

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E. "FOR EXTRAORDINARY HEROISM WHILE SERVING WITH HELICOPTER ATTACK (LIGHT) SQUADRON THREE ENGAGED IN ARMED CONFLICT AGAINST NORTH VIETNAMESE AND VIET CONG COMMUNIST AGGRESSORS IN THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM. ON THE NIGHT OF 3 OCTOBER 1970, LTJG CURTIS WAS THE LEADER OF A

LIGHT HELICOPTER FIRE TEAM WHICH SCRAMbled TO ASSIST UNITS OF RIVER PATROL DIVISION FIFTY-EIGHT. ARRIVING OVERHEAD, HE IMMEDIATELY AND AGGRESSIVELY LED HIS FIRE TEAM IN SEVERAL ATTACKS ON ENEMY FIRING EMPLACEMENTS. ALTHOUGH HIS AIRCRAFT WAS SUBJECTED TO HEAVY RETURN FIRE, HE UNHESITATINGLY PRESSED HIS ATTACKS. EARLY IN THE ENGAGEMENT, A VIETNAMESE SAILOR WAS CRITICALLY WOUNDED IN THE HEAD BY ENEMY SHRAPNEL AND WAS BLEEDING PROFUSELY. AMIDST INTENSE HOSTILE FIRE, HE ELECTED TO EVACUATE THE WOUNDED SAILOR, FULLY AWARE OF THE GRAVE DANGER THAT EXISTED AND WITHOUT REGARD FOR HIS OWN PERSONAL SAFETY. APPROACHING THE PICKUP ZONE, HE WAS SUBJECTED TO INTENSE ENEMY AUTOMATIC WEAPONS FIRE AND WAS FORCED TO PERFORM A HIGHLY DIFFICULT LANDING WITHOUT ANY LIGHTS SO AS NOT TO FURTHER COMPROMISE HIS POSITION. WHILE PICKING UP THE WOUNDED SAILOR, HIS AIRCRAFT WAS CONTINUALLY UNDER FIRE. ALTHOUGH HE COULD HAVE JUSTIFIABLY ABORTED HIS MISSION, HE ENDURED THE HEAVY FIRE TO EVACUATE THE WOUNDED SAILOR. HE RESOLUTELY EXTRACTED FROM THE AREA UNDER CONCERTED ENEMY

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FIRE AS HIS AIRCRAFT LAID DOWN INTENSE SUPPRESSIVE FIRE. HE BROUGHT THE WOUNDED SAILOR TO A NEARBY AIRSTRIP WHERE MEDICAL ASSISTANCE WAS WAITING. REARMING, REFUELING, AND EXPEDITIOUSLY RETURNING TO THE CONTACT AREA, HE LED AN ADDITIONAL SERIES OF TREMENDOUSLY EFFECTIVE AIR STRIKES ON SEVERAL ENEMY FIRING EMPLACEMENTS. AFTER ALL ORDNANCE WAS EXPENDED, A THIRD STRIKE WAS REQUESTED. DESPITE SEVERELY DETERIORATING WEATHER CONDITIONS, HIS FIRE TEAM REFUELED, REARMED, AND RETURNED TO PROVIDE AIR SUPPORT UNTIL ALL GROUND FIRE WAS SUPPRESSED AND THE SAFETY OF THE RIVER UNIT WAS NO LONGER IN QUESTION. LTJG CURTIS PLAYED A MOST VITAL ROLE IN THIS SUPERLATIVE ALLIED ACCOMPLISHMENT. HIS LAUDABLE PERFORMANCE IN THIS SUSTAINED FIRE FIGHT RESCUED THE RIVER UNIT FROM VIRTUALLY UNTENABLE POSITION, SAVED THE LIFE OF A VIETNAMESE SAILOR, AND CONTRIBUTED TO THE SIGNIFICANT DESTRUCTION OF THE ATTACKING ENEMY FORCE. LTJG CURTIS'S LOYAL DEVOTION TO DUTY, COURAGE UNDER FIRE, AND EXEMPLARY PROFESSIONALISM WERE IN KEEPING WITH THE HIGHEST TRADITIONS OF THE UNITED STATES NAVAL SERVICE."

F. SINGLE ACTION AIR MEDAL, NAVY COMMENDATION MEDAL, 1ST S/F
AIR MEDAL VIETNAMESE CROSS OF GALLANTRY

G. JAN 71

H. STATEMENT OF LT HUGH M. HUGLAND, USNR, 711111/1105, SENIOR

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UNCLAS E F T O //N01650//SECTION TWO OF TWO SECTIONS

ADVISOR, RIVER PATROL DIVISION FIVE EIGHT AND RDI DONALD D. WATERS, USN, 478 29 66, ADVISOR, RIVER PATROL DIVISION FIVE EIGHT CONCERNING THE ACTIONS OF LTJG JAMES A. CURTIS, USNR, 734199, ON THE EVENING OF 3 OCTOBER 1970. BOTH ORIGINATOR'S WERE ACTING AS ADVISORS ABOARD RIVER PATROL BOATS OF RIVER PATROL DIVISION FIFTY EIGHT ON THE NIGHT OF 3-4 OCTOBER 1970. AT 032100H, HEAVY MOVEMENT WAS SIGHTED BY THE BOATS AND WE REQUESTED SEAWOLVES. LTJG CURTIS WAS FLIGHT LEADER AND IMMEDIATELY VECTORED HIS HELICOPTERS TO THE CONTACT AREA. HE DIRECTED IMMEDIATE AND DEADLY ACCURATE FIRE UPON THE ENEMY POSITIONS DESPITE THE HEAVY RETURN FIRE AT BOTH BOATS AND AIRCRAFT. EARLY IN THE CONTACT A VIETNAMESE SAILOR

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WAS SERIOUSLY WOUNDED IN THE HEAD BY ENEMY SHRAPNEL. LTJG CURTIS DIRECTED HIS TRAIL CRAFT TO COVER HIM AND DESPITE RECEIVING HEAVY AUTOMATIC WEAPONS FIRE DURING HIS APPROACH, HE UNHESITATINGLY SET HIS CRAFT DOWN IN AN UNMARKED AREA THAT WAS VIRTUALLY SURROUNDED BY THE ENEMY. LTJG CURTIS THEN RETURNED TO THE RACH GIA HELICOPTER PAD AT TOP SPEED AND WITHIN TWENTY MINUTES OF THE INFLECTION OF THE WOUND THE VIETNAMESE SAILOR WAS BEING TREATED BY A DOCTOR. THE INSTANTANEOUS RESPONSE OF LTJG CURTIS IN THIS ACTION SAVED THE LIFE OF THE SAILOR, WHO, UNTIL HE WAS OPERATED ON, BLED HEAVILY. LTJG CURTIS, UPON FINISHING THE MEDICAL EVACUATION, REARMED HIS CRAFT AND RETURNED TO THE SCENE OF THE CONTINUING PBR CONTACT. AGAIN LTJG CURTIS' FIRE TEAM PLACED A SERIES

OF TREMENDOUSLY EFFECTIVE AIR-STRIKES THAT TEMPORARILY SUPPRESSED THE ENEMY'S RECOILLESS RIFLE, MACHINE GUN AND SMALL ARMS WEAPONS FIRE. WHEN THE ENEMY, A SHORT TIME LATER CONTINUED THEIR ATTEMPT TO BREACH THE PBR POSITIONS, LTJG CURTIS, DESPITE SERIOUSLY DETERIORATING WEATHER CONDITIONS, AGAIN REARMED HIS FIRE TEAM AND PLACED A THIRD ATTACK ON THE ENEMY POSITIONS. AFTER HIS UNITS HAD EXPENDED ALL ORDNANCE, LTJG CURTIS REMAINED ON STATION TO ASSIST IN CONTROLLING A BLACK PONY PATROL IN PLACING THEIR STRIKES. THESE FINAL SEAWOLF AND BLACK PONY STRIKES, IN WHICH LTJG CURTIS PLAYED SUCH A VITAL ROLE, FINALLY SUPPRESSED ENEMY FIRE AND RELIEVED THE PBR'S FROM THEIR VIRTUALLY UNENABLE POSITION.

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LTJG CURTIS PERFORMANCE IN THIS PROLONGED FIREFIGHT NOT ONLY SAVE THE LIFE OF ONE VIETNAMESE SAILOR, BUT CONTRIBUTED GREATLY TOWARD ACHIEVING THE COUNT OF THIRTY VIET CONG/NORTH VIETNAMESE ARMY KIA (PROB) THAT WAS REPORTED BY SEVERAL DIFFERENT INTELLIGENCE SOURCES. OF PARTICULAR NOTE WAS THE HUMANITY OF LTJG CURTIS IN NOT CONSIDERING RPD 58'S WOUNDED "LITTLE LOOIE" AS ANOTHER "DINK" AND SOMEONE TO BE RESCUED WHEN THE DANGER WAS REDUCED. INSTEAD HE RISKED AND IMMEDIATE AND EXTRAORDINARILY DANGEROUS MEDEVAC IN ORDER TO SAVE THE LIFE OF A SERIOUSLY WOUNDED ALLY. CERTAINLY IT WAS AN EXTENSION OF THE GOLDEN RULE

THAT NO U.S. ADVISOR OR VIETNAMESE SAILOR OF RIVER PATROL DIVISION FIVE EIGHT WILL EVER FORGET. TACTICALLY, LTJG CURTIS' SUPPORT OF THE SURROUNDED PBR'S WAS THE ONLY THING THAT SAVED FURTHER PERSONNEL CASUAL

TIES (AND NO DOUBT HEAVY MATERIAL CASUALTIES AS WELL) FROM RESULTING. IN FACT THE BOATS WOULD PROBABLY HAVE HAD TO HAVE CLEARED THE AREA AND TO HAVE ALLOWED THE ENEMY CROSSING TO OCCUR HAD SUCH MAGNIFICENT AND CONTINUOUS AIR SUPPORT NOT BEEN RENDERED. THROUGHOUT THE FIVE HOUR ENGAGEMENT, LTJG CURTIS DISPLAYED THE HIGHEST IMAGINABLE QUALITIES OF AIRMANSHIP AND COMBAT EFFICIENCY AS WELL AS CONSUMMATE COURAGE AND DARING RARELY ENCOUNTERED AT ANY LEVEL. ALSO WORTHY OF MENTION WAS THE SANGFROID MANNER IN WHICH HE HANDLED THE ENTIRE SITUATION. HIS

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RADIO TRANSMISSIONS, GIVEN IN HIS CALM, EASY SOUTHERN DRAWL AT THE TIMES OF UTMOST CRISIS AND DANGER DID MUCH TO INSPIRE BOTH HIS AIRCREWS AND THE PBR ADVISORS DURING THE LONG CONTACT. IT IS REQUESTED THAT LTJG CURTIS BE RECOMMENDED FOR THE NAVY CROSS FOR THIS SUSTAINED, BRILLIANT AND COURAGEOUS PERFORMANCE.

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