



THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
WASHINGTON

The Secretary of the Navy takes pleasure in presenting the
MERITORIOUS UNIT COMMENDATION to

817 SQUADRON, ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY

for service as set forth in the following

CITATION:

For meritorious achievement on 3 June 1969 while embarked in HMAS MELBOURNE. During the early morning hours, while engaged in a combined exercise in the South China Sea, MELBOURNE and USS FRANK E. EVANS were involved in a collision which resulted in the sinking of the forward half of the U. S. destroyer and the evacuation of the after portion. Thirty-eight of 111 men in the forward section of USS FRANK E. EVANS were able to escape or were thrown into the water. Within twenty-five minutes of the collision, all of these men had been returned to MELBOURNE. The helicopters and men of 817 Squadron were called upon for maximum effort, not only during these first critical minutes when survivors were being illuminated in the water by lights from the Squadron's helicopters, but also during the more than fifteen hours in which search operations continued. Two men were recovered by the Squadron within a short time after the collision, and many others were assisted by the directions and lights provided by the helicopters. The professional skill, tireless efforts, and alertness displayed by the officers and men of 817 Squadron, Royal Australian Navy, were in keeping with the highest traditions of the naval service.

John H. Chafee
Secretary of the Navy