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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

HONOURS AND AWARDS

CENTRAL CHANCERY OF
THE ORDERS OF KNIGHTHOODSt. James's Palace, London S.W.1.
18th September 1973.

The QUEEN has been graciously pleased to approve the award of the George Medal to the undermentioned:

Petty Officer William John HUDSON, J89241K.

On 19th October 1972, H.M.S. LYNX, having intercepted an S.O.S. call, proceeded with all despatch to the almost deserted French Island "Europa", near Malagasy. At day-break on 20th October the Taiwanese trawler "Tung King" was discovered fast aground on a coral reef on the southern lee shore, being pounded by heavy breakers.

Nine members of the crew were immediately sighted in a covered liferaft and were rescued by LYNX's Whaler. It was established that a further thirteen survivors remained in the wreck, which had no more liferafts and was by now being buffeted by mountainous seas. A rescue operation was mounted from H.M.S. LYNX to save the remaining survivors. The ship's gemini dinghy, whaler and cutter were sent ashore to make an appraisal of the situation. Additionally the whaler towed in the liferaft that the nine survivors had used.

On arrival at the vicinity of the wreck many sharks were clearly visible. The whaler, cutter and liferaft laid off whilst the faster and more manoeuvrable gemini unsuccessfully sought out a safe passage through the surf. The gemini then returned to collect the liferaft, to attempt to float it on a line through the surf. Petty Officer Hudson transferred from the gemini to the liferaft. The liferaft was then towed towards the wreck and secured at the forward end to a float attached to a Kedge anchor, and at the after end to the gemini. The ship's First Lieutenant, Lieutenant Commander Hotchkiss, then transferred from the gemini to the liferaft. At that moment an exceptionally large breaker capsized both gemini and liferaft, cartwheeling them both several times. The liferaft eventually settled upside down on the surface with the two occupants, wearing lifejackets, inside. While the liferaft had been forcibly rotated Lieutenant Commander Hotchkiss had become entangled in the lengths of cordage which had been stowed on the liferaft's deck. There was a sizeable air pocket so that the two occupants were in no immediate danger.

On taking stock of the situation Lieutenant Commander Hotchkiss found that he was securely trapped by the cordage and asked Petty Officer Hudson to cut him free. Hudson

had mislaid his knife during the buffeting but having retrieved it was about to start cutting the cordage when a second very large breaker pounded the liferaft. This blow reduced the air pocket inside to a fraction of its former capacity and at this stage Lieutenant Commander Hotchkiss, although still trapped, ordered Petty Officer Hudson to get out whilst he could and leave him in the liferaft. However, Petty Officer Hudson, despite his natural fear and shock, refused to do so. He then submerged and proceeded to cut the ropes, well aware that the next large breaker would almost certainly force out the little air remaining in the liferaft, probably causing it to submerge and be dashed against the sharp coral. This could have occurred at any instant. It was sometime before he was able to cut away several pieces of cordage and so free Lieutenant Commander Hotchkiss. Both were then able to make good their escape to the surface, just as the next breaker swamped and totally engulfed the liferaft.

During the time he was trapped Lieutenant Commander Hotchkiss had been able to utilise his previous Submarine service knowledge of underwater escape and the use of air pockets. Petty Officer Hudson however had no such experience and was operating in a confined space in an unfamiliar and frightening environment. To keep his head in such conditions required great courage and a conscious decision to put his own safety last. His totally selfless attitude put his own life at considerable risk and his success at overcoming the instinct for self-preservation was undoubtedly responsible for saving the life of Lieutenant Commander Hotchkiss.

Both men insisted on continuing with the rescue operation and eventually the remaining thirteen members of the crew were saved.

Petty Officer Hudson's cool courage in very difficult conditions and in the face of considerable personal danger was in the best traditions of the Service.

Ministry of Defence,
Whitehall, London S.W.1.

The QUEEN has been graciously pleased to approve the award of The Queen's Commendation for Brave Conduct to the undermentioned:

QUEEN'S COMMENDATION FOR BRAVE CONDUCT

Ministry of Defence (Navy Department)

Lieutenant Commander Gordon Douglas HOTCHKISS,
M.B.E., Royal Navy.

On the 20th October 1972, after an intercepted S.O.S. call, H.M.S. LYNX undertook a rescue operation to save