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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

HONOURS AND AWARDS

NAVY DEPARTMENT

CENTRAL CHANCERY OF THE ORDERS
 OF KNIGHTHOOD

St. James's Palace, London S.W.1.
 6th May 1975.

The QUEEN has been graciously pleased to approve the award of the Queen's Gallantry Medal to the under-mentioned:

Acting Leading Aircrewman Peter Nicholas Andrew GIBBS,
 D129476X.

Acting Leading Aircrewman Gibbs was aircrew diver of a Whirlwind HAR Mk 9 helicopter which was launched from the Royal Naval Air Station Culdrose at first light on Saturday 25th January 1975 in response to a distress broadcast from the MV *Lovat*, twenty miles south-west of the Lizard.

The weather conditions for rescue were very bad indeed, particularly so for diver operations, with gale force winds and a very rough sea, large swell and thirty foot high waves.

When the helicopter arrived at the scene the ship had been abandoned by the crew and had then sunk. Four of the crew were alive in a liferaft. Two other merchant vessels in the area had been unable to recover the survivors. Gibbs made two initial attempts to rescue the survivors. During the first winching down, as he secured a survivor

in the strop the man started to struggle violently and pulled Gibbs underwater. A bight formed in the winch-wire and jammed on the weight; as the liferaft dropped into a trough and the winch-wire tightened the survivor fell out of the strop back into the raft. After the winch-wire was cleared Gibbs was lowered again and managed to fit the strop on a second man, during this second attempt the sea state and the proximity of another ship caused a dangerous situation to develop which resulted in the necessity to cut the rescue hoist wire.

Gibbs now found himself in the water with a struggling survivor and the rescue hoist weight and wire dragging him down. He nevertheless selflessly stayed with the survivor until he had towed him to the liferaft and assisted him aboard. Because of lack of fuel the helicopter was forced to leave the scene and return to base.

During the next forty minutes Gibbs was occupied continuously with attempting to keep the remaining four survivors alive. They were very weak and in constant danger of drowning in the water in the liferaft. One survivor died in Gibbs' arms and another became unconscious and subsequently died in spite of Gibbs' efforts. However, it was largely due to his presence, encouragement and physical effort that two men subsequently survived and were successfully rescued by a relief helicopter.

Throughout the operation Acting Leading Aircrewman Gibbs displayed bravery, determination, a high degree of professional skill for his inexperience and age and a complete disregard for his own personal safety in difficult and dangerous conditions. His conduct was in accordance with the highest traditions of the Service.

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