No. 47278 9363

SECOND SUPPLEMENT TO

The London Gazette

of Monday, 18th July 1977

Published by Authority

Registered as a Newspaper

TUESDAY, 19TH JULY 1977

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

HONOURS AND AWARDS

NAVY DEPARTMENT

CENTRAL CHANCERY OF
THE ORDERS OF KNIGHTHOOD

St. James's Palace, London S.W.1.
19th July 1977.

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

Lieutenant Commander John Antony Knowles GREEN, Royal Navy.

Petty Officer Marine Engineering Mechanic Peter Francis TOMS, K979234V.

On the night of 8th February [the Ocean Survey Ship] H.M.S. *Herald* was in the Milford Haven approaches when a nearby motor vessel, the *El Tambo* reported that she was stopped with a major engine room fire. H.M.S. *Herald* went to her assistance and on arrival found that she had been abandoned by her crew and taken on tow by an oil rig tender. The fire had spread upwards, unchecked, through three decks and was still spreading. After preliminary attempts to control the fire from *Herald* had failed, fire-fighting parties were put on board the *El Tambo* at 0130 on 9th February.

Lieutenant Commander J. A. K. Green, Royal Navy

Lieutenant Commander Green directed the fire-fighting and salvage operations on-board the *El Tambo*. In doing this he had to strike a correct balance between attacking the fire, ensuring the safety of his men and preventing re-ignition in areas where fires had been extinguished. To make these judgements he had to move over large sections of an unfamiliar and blazing ship.

Once the upper deck fires were tackled and extinguished and he had decided that re-entry was possible, Lieutenant Commander Green went below repeatedly to control operations. Conditions were extremely bad due to heat, very low visibility, smoke and steam and the fact that many ladders had been destroyed or severely distorted by the fire. The task was made all the more dangerous because of the high risk of explosions from acetylene bottles, high pressure air cylinders and the ship's fuel tanks which were adjacent to the heart of the fire. In view of the likelihood of burning fuel being present Lieutenant Commander Green decided to use foam to extinguish the engine room fires. This proved effective and by 0610 the fires had been brought under control. Following this the fire party was relieved by a fresh team from H.M.S. *Herald* but Lieutenant Commander Green remained on board until the fire was finally extinguished at 0940.

For some eight hours Lieutenant Commander Green fought a major fire on board a strange ship in extremely adverse and hazardous conditions. His calm manner, initiative, leadership and courage were as much an inspiration to the fire parties during a time of considerable personal danger as his professional knowledge was a prime factor in saving the ship and her cargo.

Petty Officer Marine Engineering Mechanic P. F. Toms

Petty Officer Toms led the initial fire attack party and was subsequently responsible for directing the efforts of all successive fire-fighting teams on board the *El Tambo*.

During the entire operation, which lasted eight hours, he worked in a smoke and steam laden atmosphere without the benefit of a personal breathing apparatus. All the time he was in a darkened and unfamiliar vessel, in which many of the ladders were destroyed or distorted. He knew that there were acetylene bottles and high pressure air cylinders on board and that the heart of the fire was believed to be adjacent to the ship's fuel tanks. Nevertheless he took charge of the re-entry below decks leading the fire-fighters to the heart of the fire and personally supervising the spraying of the engine room with foam. On several occasions when the portable pumps lost suction and the men at the scene of the fire were left with uncharged hoses, Toms supervised their withdrawal and subsequent re-entry.

Although the members of his fire-fighting parties were rotated at regular intervals and were eventually relieved by a fresh team, Toms himself remained at the scene of the fire until it was finally extinguished.

Undeterred by the difficulties he faced Petty Officer Toms led his men with great resource and determination, displaying a very high degree of personal courage and professional knowledge. His actions were not only instrumental in saving the ship and her cargo but were also in the finest traditions of the Service.

LONDON
Printed and published by HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE: 1977
PRINTED IN ENGLAND Price 10p net ISBN 0 11 657278 7