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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
27th July 1982

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

Acting Petty Officer Aircrewman John Pettinger SPENCER, Q.G.M., D125260S.

Acting Petty Officer Aircrewman Spencer was the Diver in Sea King helicopter 812 despatched from HMS DAEDALUS, Lee-on-Solent, on 13th December 1981 to rescue the crew of the Ecuadorian merchant vessel BENITA which was in distress off Portland Bill.

In severe weather conditions, and with the badly listing vessel rolling through approximately sixty degrees, it proved impracticable to winch survivors into the helicopter by normal techniques. At his own suggestion Acting Petty Officer Aircrewman Spencer was lowered on to the side of the ship. He then moved up to, and over, her guardrail to reach the survivors on deck. Although he had only seconds before the ship rolled back towards her beam ends he succeeded in securing the lifting strop to a survivor enabling both to be lifted clear. He repeated this most hazardous operation on four occasions, each time successfully lifting a crew member. Only shortage of fuel in the helicopter and failing light prevented him from making further attempts.

During each lift Acting Petty Officer Aircrewman Spencer sustained severe bruising and abrasions through repeated collisions with the ship's structure but he concealed the extent of his injuries until the completion of the mission. In carrying out this rescue he displayed outstanding courage and airmanship reflecting the finest traditions of the Service.

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