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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

HONOURS AND AWARDS

AIR FORCE DEPARTMENT

Whitehall, London SW1A 2HB
1st August 1989

The QUEEN has been graciously pleased to approve the following award:

Air Force Medal

Flight Sergeant Vaughan Guy Scott DODSWORTH (F8141338),
Royal Air Force.

On the night of Sunday, 12th March 1989, Flight Sergeant Dodsworth was the winchman of the duty Search and Rescue helicopter crew at Royal Air Force Brawdy. At 2336 hours the helicopter was scrambled by the Plymouth Rescue Co-ordination Centre to assist the crew of the freighter "Secil Japan" which was in difficulties in St. Ives Bay. On arrival at the scene, at 0030 hours, the crew found the vessel to be hard aground on rocks at the base of 300 foot high cliffs, in mountainous seas, with green water completely submerging her central deck and waves constantly breaking over the forecastle and bridge.

A Royal Navy helicopter crew, which was also on the scene, had previously assessed the situation to be too dangerous to place their diver on the ship's deck. However, when the Brawdy helicopter moved into the hover overhead the vessel it became obvious that the ship's crew were in grave danger from the violent seas which continued to pound the wheelhouse in which they were sheltering. Flight Sergeant Dodsworth without delay and with complete disregard for his own personal safety volunteered to be lowered to the deck of the "Secil Japan". Despite being swamped several times by breaking waves, Flight Sergeant Dodsworth was eventually able to place himself on the bridge, deploy a hi-line and persuade a by now terrified group of seamen to abandon their vessel. Despite the danger to himself of being washed away he led the crew, in pairs, onto the flying bridge and placed them in strops to be winched to the helicopter. He did this six times, regardless of the danger to his own life from the violent seas, only returning to the aircraft on the final lift. Furthermore, before the final lift could be completed, he was forced to climb the ship's mast to free the helicopter's winch cable which had become entangled on the high frequency radio aerial.

Throughout this rescue, in which he selflessly placed his own life in great danger to save the lives of the 11 seamen, Flight Sergeant Dodsworth acted in the highest traditions of Search and Rescue and of the Royal Air Force.

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