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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

HONOURS AND AWARDS

AIR FORCE DEPARTMENT

Whitehall, London SW1A 2HB

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

Air Force Medal

Flight Sergeant Paul Leslie TRETHERWEY (H8119883) Royal Air Force.

Flight Sergeant Tretthewey was winchman of the SAR Sea King Helicopter crew from D Flight 202 Squadron which was scrambled from *HMS Gannet* at 0420 hours on 18th December 1991 to assist the Russian vessel *Kartli* which had been damaged by a freak wave 75 miles west of Prestwick. The weather in the area was appalling; heavy rain showers, a 50 knot westerly gale and sea state 8. The aircraft launched at 0505 hours and, during the transit, it became apparent that the *Kartli* was drifting without power, in danger of foundering, and that an unknown number of the crew had abandoned ship.

On arrival at the scene one crew member was discovered in a liferaft and, despite the appalling sea conditions, Flight Sergeant Tretthewey unhesitatingly volunteered to be lowered to the dinghy to recover him. Although he was submerged by heavy seas several times, Flight Sergeant Tretthewey managed to board the liferaft and bring the casualty to safety.

The aircraft then closed with the *Kartli* which was drifting beam on to the weather and moving violently in the extreme sea; the bow was pitching through 60 feet and the ship was rolling through 30 degrees. Again, Flight Sergeant Tretthewey unhesitatingly volunteered to be lowered to the deck to rescue the shocked and disorientated crew. A first attempt to lower him directly to the deck was foiled by the extreme motion of the ship. A further two attempts to steady his descent by use of a "hi-line" were frustrated by the inadvertent actions of the ship's crew; at one time, their frantic efforts pulled Flight Sergeant Tretthewey from the aircraft and he fell several feet before being arrested by the winch wire. Nevertheless, he insisted that a fourth, and successful, attempt be made. On reaching the deck he discovered several clearly shocked and frightened crew members and one casualty with severe head injuries. Flight Sergeant Tretthewey immediately began to administer first aid to the injured

man and prepare him for lift. At the same time, he was able to organise the dispatch of 8 uninjured crew to the *Sea King* before he and the casualty were lifted to the aircraft. The *Sea King* flew to Ballykelly to transfer the injured man to hospital and returned to the scene in daylight when, again, Flight Sergeant Tretthewey was lowered to a liferaft to recover a further 6 survivors.

Flight Sergeant Tretthewey has been an operational winchman for only 9 months. Despite the appalling conditions prevailing that night, he immediately volunteered to be lowered to both the vessel and liferafts, fully conscious of the very real risks to his own safety. By his personal courage and calm and professional actions Flight Sergeant Tretthewey was instrumental in the saving of 16 lives. His brave, selfless conduct throughout a long and physically exhausting sortie was in the very highest traditions of the Royal Air Force.

Queen's Commendation for Valuable Service in the Air

Flight Lieutenant Peter Adrian BELL, (5204248) Royal Air Force.

For his outstanding courage, leadership and flying skill resulting in the saving of the lives of 16 Russian seamen following the disabling of their stricken trawler in atrocious weather conditions.

Flight Lieutenant Robert Crispin James LEWIS (8027925) Royal Air Force.

For his exceptional captaincy, flying skills and courage in the rescue at night of a seriously injured serviceman from a mountainous area in appalling weather conditions.

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

Queen's Commendation for Brave Conduct

Squadron Leader Ashley David STEVENSON (8127986) Royal Air Force.

For his great bravery after a parachute descent caused by a bird strike to his aircraft, in rescuing his passenger who was on fire and badly injured lying in burning stubble, when fatigued and injured himself.