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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

## HONOURS AND AWARDS

### AIR FORCE DEPARTMENT

Whitehall, London SW1A 2HB

9th November 1993

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

#### *Air Force Cross*

Squadron Leader Christopher Jeremy Spencer FYNES (4220300)  
Royal Air Force.

On 27th June 1993 at the height of Typhoon Koryn, the 12,500 ton ship *MV Lian Gang*, with 28 people on board, sank in heavy seas 85 nautical miles South East of Hong Kong. 28 (Army Co-Operation) Squadron was tasked to assist in the rescue and Squadron Leader Fynes was the winchman on the second aircraft.

Although a very experienced helicopter crewman, Squadron Leader Fynes has never served on a Search and Rescue squadron. However, in view of the urgency of the situation, he was the first to volunteer for the rescue.

On-scene weather conditions were atrocious with winds gusting to 80 knots and visibility at times reduced to 50 metres in torrential rain. However, a single survivor was sighted and Squadron Leader Fynes was lowered to effect a rescue. With 50 foot waves constantly battering him and debris posing a very real danger, the rescue was extremely hazardous and difficult. Despite being repeatedly swamped, he stuck tenaciously to his task and eventually brought the first of the survivors into the aircraft. Shortly afterwards, he rescued a second, badly injured survivor. Resuming the search, 3 men were seen clinging to a small piece of wreckage and Squadron Leader Fynes was again lowered into the water. By now suffering severe bouts of sickness from ingesting diesel-contaminated water and badly bruised from shielding the survivors from repeated collisions with the wreckage as the pilot fought to control the aircraft, Squadron Leader Fynes' weakened condition had become a serious cause for concern. Nevertheless, under these life threatening

conditions, Squadron Leader Fynes rescued 2 more survivors before collapsing from exhaustion on the cabin floor. Even in this weakened state, he was still able to assist in the recovery of the final survivor.

Throughout the 5 hour operation, Squadron Leader Fynes displayed determination, professionalism and bravery of the highest order.

Squadron Leader Steven Derek MURKIN (8098111) Royal Air Force.

On 27th June 1993, at the height of Typhoon Koryn, a Mayday call was relayed to the Hong Kong Rescue Coordination Centre and shortly thereafter, the 12,500 ton ship *MV Lian Gang* sank in heavy seas 85 nautical miles South East of the Colony. Initial reaction to the call was slow; the relayed message was garbled, and the crosswind at Kai Tak Airport well outside limits for the light aircraft responsible for investigating the emergency call. Nevertheless, as part of normal procedures, the information was passed to 28 (Army Cooperation) Squadron, which holds secondary responsibility for Search and Rescue in Hong Kong. Squadron Leader Murkin, the Officer Commanding, took the call and realising that lives could be in imminent danger, he immediately activated the launch of three aircraft. This prompt and decisive action, taken in spite of appalling weather and obvious risks, resulted in the activation of the entire rescue network and ultimately the recovery of 26 of the original 28 on board the ship.

Squadron Leader Murkin's subsequent performance as the leader of the rescue mission and pilot of the first Royal Air Force aircraft on scene was equally impressive. Weather conditions en route and in the search area were atrocious with winds gusting to 80 knots and visibility at times reduced to 50 metres in torrential rain. Conditions for winching were also at their most dangerous with 50 foot waves at 5 to 10 second intervals threatening to engulf the aircraft and making station-keeping above a survivor extremely difficult. In spite of these exceptionally hazardous conditions, Squadron Leader Murkin, displaying outstanding airmanship and immense courage, rescued a total of 7 survivors during 5 hours of flying.

The excellence of Squadron Leader Murkin's accomplishments on 27th June is quite unparalleled. A measure of his extra-ordinary performance comes from the Controller of the Government Flying

Service whose report singled out Squadron Leader Murkin's piloting skills, professionalism and bravery throughout the operation as being singularly impressive and in the very highest traditions of the Royal Air Force.

*Queen's Commendation for Valuable Service in the Air*

Flight Sergeant Michael William PEDRICK (8260168) Royal Air Force.

Sergeant (Acting Flight Sergeant) Richard Paul COOKE (S8210489) Royal Air Force.

Sergeant Grant ROBERTSON (E8260017) Royal Air Force.

For their valuable services in the air on 27th June 1993, in the Search and Rescue operation during typhoon 'KORYN' involving the *MV Lian Gang*.

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