

THE NEW ZEALAND BRAVERY MEDAL (N.Z.B.M.)

Michael James CANNON (D992039)

Flight Sergeant Helicopter Crewman, Royal New Zealand Air Force

Date of action: 10 July 1994

Date of award: 23 October 1999

Citation

On 10 July 1994 a crippled Taiwanese fishing vessel, the long liner Kin Sin II, which had suffered an ammonia explosion, was located 25 nautical miles south of Viti Levu in the Fiji group. The explosion and resultant fire had destroyed the ship's only life-raft and not all the 23 crew members were equipped with life jackets. Two Iroquois helicopters from a Number 3 Squadron Detachment, RNZAF, based in Fiji were tasked with carrying out a rescue mission. Flight Sergeant Helicopter Crewman Cannon and Sergeant Helicopter Crewman Franken were winched onboard the Kin Sin II to take charge of the rescue. Their efforts were hampered by the rolling deck of a burning and sinking ship, no communications with the Iroquois and an inability to communicate with the seamen, only one of whom was discovered to speak English late in the rescue. The vessel sank soon after the successful rescue of all 23 seamen. Both rescuers had only graduated as Helicopter Crew Members one month prior to this incident and were on their first search and rescue mission. In unfamiliar and difficult conditions they displayed courage and professionalism.