

The 2012 IMO Award for Exceptional Bravery at Sea will go to members of rescue crews from Canada and Chile for their actions in saving the lives of persons in distress at sea. The IMO Council has decided that the award will go to Sergeant Janick Gilbert (posthumously), Master Corporal Max Lahaye-Lemay and Master Corporal Marco Journeyman, crew members of the Royal Canadian Air Force's 424 (Transport and Rescue) Squadron, nominated by the Government of Canada; and to Mr. César Flores Flores, a rescue swimmer in the aerial detachment of the Chilean Navy, nominated by the Government of Chile.

Sergeant Janick Gilbert (posthumously), Master Corporal Max Lahaye-Lemay and Master Corporal Marco Journeyman were nominated for saving the lives of two Inuit hunters, who were stranded in an open boat in icy waters near Igloolik, Nunavut, in freezing temperatures, strong winds and 20 to 30 foot (six to nine metre) swells, during an operation that lasted five hours, in October 2011.

424 Squadron was initially deployed to investigate the situation. The two hunters were found in a liferaft which had filled with cold water. They had stopped communicating by radio. Despite the adverse and extremely dangerous conditions, team leader Sergeant Janick Gilbert decided that a parachute jump was required. The sun had already set, leaving just 30 minutes until full darkness. Sergeant Gilbert, Master Corporal Max Lahaye-Lemay and Master Corporal Marco Journeyman parachuted from an aircraft from a height of some 2000 feet (around 600 metres) above their calculated release point. Master Corporal Lahaye-Lemay was able to swim to the raft where he provided assistance to the men until recovered by helicopter approximately five hours later. Master Corporal Journeyman swam until he was exhausted but, realizing he could not close the distance to the raft, finally deployed his personal one-man life raft, until he, too, was recovered by helicopter. Sergeant Janick Gilbert landed furthest from the raft and was later found floating in the sea; upon arrival ashore, he was pronounced dead.

Mr. César Flores Flores was selected for his role as rescue swimmer in the operation to rescue the crew of the motor launch Rosita V, undertaken by the Chilean Navy aerial detachment from Puerto Montt, Fifth Naval Zone, at Locos islet, in extremely dangerous, stormy conditions.

In a northerly wind of 55 knots, and with gusts of 75 knots, low cloud, high waves and reduced visibility owing to heavy rain, the rescue helicopter located the launch stranded between two rocks. Large waves passed over the half-sunken launch, battering it against the rocks and causing it to shift abruptly. Despite the severe turbulence, the pilot managed to position the aircraft over the launch, at a safe height to avoid the engines being cut off by the breaking waves, and the rescue swimmer was lowered by winch.

Mr Flores Flores rescued seven survivors, wounded and suffering from hypothermia. As he began raising the last one from the deck, a wave caused the vessel to lurch and the winch cable became entangled with the HF antenna and the signal mast, endangering both the swimmer

and the helicopter. But Mr Flores Flores was able to disentangle the cable and bring the last survivor up safely. After disembarking the crew members, the helicopter returned to the scene immediately to resume the search, using the last of its fuel. After recovering one lifeless body, the helicopter returned to refuel, took off again and recovered another body from the sea.

The Council of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) unanimously endorsed the decision of a Panel of Judges that these were the worthy recipients of the Bravery Award for 2012, from a total of 40 nominations from 15 Member States and one non-governmental organization in consultative status with IMO that were received. The Council also decided that, of the other nominees or groups of nominees, three should receive Certificates of Commendation and nine, Letters of Commendation.

The nominations were first considered by an Assessment Panel, which was chaired by Assistant Secretary-General Rosalie Balkin, on behalf of the IMO Secretary-General, and consisted of experts nominated by various international non-governmental organizations in consultative status with IMO. The Panel of Judges then met, on 8 June 2012, led by the Chairman of the IMO Council, with the participation of the Chairmen of the IMO's Maritime Safety Committee, Legal Committee and Facilitation Committee. The Chairmen of the Marine Environment Protection and Technical Co-operation Committees were unable to attend the meeting but had submitted their recommendations in advance.

The Awards ceremony will take place at IMO Headquarters, on Monday, 26 November 2012, at the end of the first day of the ninety-first session of the Maritime Safety Committee (MSC 91).