

SURFACE WARFARE OFFICER OF THE YEAR

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COMMANDER, NAVAL SURFACE FORCE ATLANTIC

LCDR BRIAN VAN METRE, USN

*USS MASON (DDG 87)
COMBAT SYSTEMS OFFICER*

Lieutenant Commander Brian Van Metre displayed unparalleled leadership and tactical mastery as Combat Systems Officer aboard USS Mason. His deep understanding of advanced warfighting concepts, strengthened by extensive WTI training, drove the ship's combat readiness and elevated watch team proficiency. He expertly led his department through a demanding certification cycle and complex availability, ensuring MASON's combat systems were fully prepared for future intense combat operations.

His tactical skill was proven during Operation PROSPERITY GUARDIAN. On March 9, 2024, serving as Force TAO and acting Air and Missile Defense Commander, he directed the defeat of a massive five hour drone attack, skillfully de-conflicting fires to coordinate the successful engagement of 22 unmanned aerial vehicles in the largest air engagement since World War II. Later, on April 9 and 11, as Tactical Action Officer, his decisive actions enabled the successful engagement of two inbound anti ship ballistic missiles, protecting more than 600 lives and critical FIFTH Fleet afloat assets.

He further advanced fleet lethality by developing innovative escort tactics and procedures now standard in FIFTH Fleet and embedded in SWATT training. A dedicated mentor and force multiplier, his leadership was central to MASON earning a fourth consecutive Battle "E" and his selection as the 2024 SWO of the Year.



COMMANDER, NAVAL SURFACE FORCE PACIFIC

LCDR CAROLYN BYSTROM, USN

*USS SPRUANCE (DDG 111)
PLANS AND TACTICS OFFICER*

Lieutenant Commander Bystrom was recognized for meritorious service while serving as Plans and Tactics Officer on USS SPRUANCE (DDG 111) from January 2024 to December 2024, culminating in her selection as the Commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet Surface Warfare Officer of the Year. Her skillful leadership, tactical excellence, and devotion to mission accomplishment enabled SPRUANCE to excel in all phases of operations; flawlessly executing duties as the Air and

Missile Defense Commander during Carrier Strike Group THREE's deployment and defending SPRUANCE during two heavily opposed Bab-al-Mandeb strait transits, engaging multiple ASBMs, ASCMS and UAVs. Lieutenant Commander Bystrom's unswerving determination, wise judgement, and complete dedication to duty reflected credit upon her and were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States naval service.