



## **ADMIRAL ARLEIGH BURKE SURFACE WARFARE OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE AWARD**

The Admiral Arleigh Burke Surface Warfare Operational Excellence Award recognizes the top Surface Warfare Officer and Enlisted Surface Warfare Specialist from an Atlantic and a Pacific Command, who have demonstrated superior achievements in the operational aspects of Surface Warfare during a deployment.

# ADMIRAL ARLEIGH BURKE SURFACE WARFARE OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE AWARD



## OFFICER EAST

### **LCDR BRIAN HOWELL, USN**

*USS STOUT (DDG 55)  
COMBAT SYSTEMS OFFICER*

Lieutenant Commander Brian Howell's unrivaled tactical expertise, operational excellence, and command-wide leadership were pivotal to USS Stout's (DDG 55) warfighting dominance during a historic deployment to SIXTH and FIFTH Fleet. As Stout's senior Tactical Action Officer and Combat Systems Training Team Leader, he forged a lethal combat team that executed multiple successful SM-3, SM-2, Gun Weapon System, and MH-60R engagements in defense of the Carrier Strike Group. Under immense pressure in a sustained weapons engagement zone, he ensured flawless combat system performance across all assigned U.S. Central Command missions, culminating in Stout's earning the Battle Effectiveness Award ("Battle E") and execution of more than six named operations, including the most Tomahawk Land Attack Missile (TLAM) strikes ever launched by a U.S. Navy ship.

As Combat Systems Officer and Action Officer for Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) Commander and Alternate Air Defense Commander duties, LCDR Howell synchronized efforts with U.S. Naval Forces Central Command and Surface and Mine Warfare Development Center to execute cutting-edge tactics, techniques, and procedures that enabled Stout's successful SM-3 engagement. His after-action analysis and doctrine refinement directly informed updates to fleet guidance for integrated defense of the Arabian Peninsula.

As Senior Watch Officer, he drove an ambitious and disciplined ship-wide training program that sustained Stout's unmatched combat readiness. Demonstrating the full breadth of Surface Warfare skill, he guided bridge teams through complex special evolutions while seamlessly transitioning to execution of Carrier Strike Group-wide BMD, Air Defense, Surface Warfare, and Surface Action Group missions. LCDR Howell's extraordinary performance, leadership, and tactical acumen embody the spirit of the Admiral Arleigh Burke Surface Warfare Operational Excellence Award.

# ADMIRAL ARLEIGH BURKE SURFACE WARFARE OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE AWARD



**OFFICER WEST**

**LT HAYDEN GREENE, USN**

*USS STOCKDALE (DDG 106)  
FIRE CONTROL OFFICER*

Lieutenant Hayden Greene distinguished himself as the top-performing officer during USS Stockdale's (DDG 106) overseas deployment from July 2024 to February 2025. As leader of Combat Fire Control Division, he guided the combat team's exceptional performance throughout FIFTH and SEVENTH Fleet operations during a deployment marked by more combat activity than any U.S. ship has faced since World War II.

Serving as Stockdale's lead Anti-Air Warfare Coordinator and Planner, LT Greene conducted extensive research and worked closely with the Surface and Mine Warfare Development Center to refine innovative doctrine development that kept the ship and crew safe during demanding Red Sea and Gulf of Aden operations. His leadership enabled the successful engagement of dozens of inbound air threats. He trained and mentored the entire Air Warfare team—from Radar System Controllers to Tactical Action Officers—and became the only Division Officer in recent history to qualify as TAO onboard Stockdale.

LT Greene's relentless drive and problem-solving ability ensured Stockdale's SPY radar remained fully operational for every combat mission. Throughout the seven-month deployment, he led rapid restoration of multiple AEGIS and combat system casualties, coordinating seamlessly with off-ship experts to keep the ship 100 percent mission-ready. His technical mastery and commitment to readiness played a critical role in safeguarding the entire force.

An exceptional tactician and visionary leader, LT Greene exemplifies the operational excellence and fighting spirit of Admiral Arleigh Burke and is highly deserving of the Admiral Arleigh Burke Surface Warfare Operational Excellence Award.

**ARLEIGH BURKE &  
ADMIRAL ZUMWALT AWARDS**

**SUBMIT ALL ENTRIES BY:  
OCTOBER 1<sup>ST</sup> 2026**

<https://surfacewarfare.org/programs/awards/>

# ADMIRAL ARLEIGH BURKE SURFACE WARFARE OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE AWARD



**ENLISTED EAST**

**FCC(SW/AW) CLAY HERNANDEZ, USN**

*USS STOUT (DDG 55)*

*CM DIVISION LEADING CHIEF PETTY OFFICER*

Chief Hernandez's exceptional tactical leadership and technical mastery were indispensable to USS Stout (DDG 55) historic contributions to Strike Warfare throughout the FIFTH and SIXTH Fleet. As Tomahawk Strike Manager, he led nine Sailors through 127 strike scenarios, coordinating 1,386 simulated Tomahawk Land Attack Missile launches with an average score of T-1, the highest exercise score within the Harry S. Truman Carrier Strike Group. His efforts ensured Stout was fully prepared for real-world operations.

In direct support to national objectives during contingency operations POSEIDON ARCHER and ROUGH RIDER, he expertly prepared and executed the launch of 37 TLAMs in U.S. Central Command, delivering long-range precision fires against high-value Houthi targets in Yemen. His technical acumen and calm under pressure were vital to degrading enemy command-and-control networks, protecting Red Sea and Bab al-Mandeb maritime routes, and reinforcing U.S. regional security. As Combat Systems Coordinator (CSC), he also led Stout's first force defense SM-2 surface-to-air missile engagement, demonstrating exceptional versatility in multi-domain warfare and embodying Admiral Burke's standard of "knowing how to fight the ship."

Beyond tactical execution, Chief Hernandez coordinated three expeditionary vertical launch system onloads—including a proof-of-concept evolution with the French Navy—ensuring Stout remained fully mission-ready in a high-threat environment. Working alongside the Surface and Mine Warfare Development Center, his role as CSC contributed to the development of new Air and Missile Defense doctrine, shaping updated guidance for the fleet.

Chief Hernandez's technical excellence, decisive warfighting leadership, and relentless pursuit of mission success make him most deserving of the Admiral Arleigh Burke Surface Warfare Operational Excellence Award.

# ADMIRAL ARLEIGH BURKE SURFACE WARFARE OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE AWARD



**ENLISTED WEST**

**QM1(SW) CHRISTINE JONES, USN**

*USS NIMITZ (CVN 68)  
NAVIGATION DEPARTMENT LEADING PETTY OFFICER*

Quartermaster Second Class Christine Jones elevates everyone around her through exceptional leadership, technical skill, and unwavering commitment to the ship and crew. Cilling a critical gapped E-6 billet as Navigation Department Leading Petty Officer, QM2 Jones led 16 Sailors through advanced workups, COMPTUEX Final Battle Problems, and a demanding FIFTH and SEVENTH Fleet deployment, ensuring more than 83,000 nautical miles of safe steaming for USS Nimitz (CVN 68).

Renowned ship-wide for her high standards and expert navigation proficiency, she excelled as Quartermaster of the Watch and supervised the qualification of six Bearing Takers, four Voyage Management System Operators, five Bearing Book Recorders, eight Fathometer Operators, and an additional QMOW. As a member of the ESWS board, she trained 67 candidates across all ratings. A leader on the Seamanship and Navigation Training Team, she oversaw all General Quarters drills and Strike Group evaluation events, earning a 95 percent ISIC assessment and maintaining over 90 percent SHARP/TACTS compliance.

Her leadership extends beyond navigation. As Work Center Supervisor and Berthing Petty Officer for a 60-Sailor compartment, she maintained exemplary safety and habitability standards, setting the benchmark for other departments. As Department Career Counselor, she ensured every Sailor received proper support and advocacy, conducting 13 Career Development Boards and completing four extremely short notice transfer packages, including three medical cases.

QM2 Jones embodies the core principles of seamanship, navigation, mentorship, and enlisted warfighting excellence. Already selected as Nimitz's Sailor of the Quarter, her exceptional impact while serving above her paygrade is a key factor in the safe and successful execution of Nimitz's global operations. She is highly deserving of the Admiral Arleigh Burke Surface Warfare Operational Excellence Award.