



2020
INDO-PACIFIC AIR &
MISSILE DEFENDER
of the YEAR
AWARD CEREMONY

April 15, 2021
Pearl Harbor-Hickam, HI - Virtual



AWARD HISTORY



Defender of the Year

January 14, 2011 marked the inaugural Defender of the Year Award Ceremony, recognizing and honoring members of our military who command fully operational and deployed missile defense systems. The event recognized a United States Armed Forces server member from each branch, that currently deploys a U.S. missile defense system, for their outstanding work in the previous year. The event has since become an annual tradition and has been expanded to include the NORAD & USNORTHCOM Missile Warning and Defender of the Year in Colorado, established in 2013; the Alaska Missile Defender of the Year, established in 2014; the Guam Missile Defender of the Year, established in 2015; and the National Capital Region Air and Missile Defender of the Year, established in 2019.

Defender of the Year Award Ceremonies have also expanded beyond the U.S. homeland to recognize the best regional missile defender from the U.S. and U.S. allies to include the Peninsula Defender of the Year, established in 2012 with our allies in the Republic of Korea; the Okinawa Missile Defender of the Year, established in 2013 with our allies in Okinawa, Japan; the Gulf Cooperation Council Air and Missile Defender of the Year, established in 2014 with our allies in the Gulf Cooperation Council; the European Missile Defender of the Year, established in 2014 with our allies in Europe; the Japan Missile Defender of the Year, established in 2015 with our allies in Japan; and the Dutch Missile Defender of the Year, established in 2017 with our allies in the Netherlands.

We want to thank all those who have supported MDAA for over a decade to fulfill its mission to educate the American public on the need for our nation to develop and deploy missile defense.

ABOUT MDAA



The Missile Defense Advocacy Alliance

MDAA's mission is to make the world safer by advocating for the development and deployment of missile defense systems to defend the United States, its armed forces, and its allies against missile threats.

MDAA is the only organization in existence whose primary mission is to educate the American public about missile defense issues and to recruit, organize, and mobilize citizens to advocate for the critical need of missile defense. We are a non-profit organization that does not advocate on behalf of any specific system, technology, architecture, or entity.

MDAA was founded by Riki Ellison in 2002 to generate public support through education for the continued testing, development, and deployment of missile defense systems.



INDO-PACIFIC AIR & MISSILE DEFENDER of the YEAR



Captain Ryan Vath

Capt Vath is the Deputy Chief, Space & Missile Warning at the 613th Air Operations Center (AOC), at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam (JBPHH), Hawaii. Capt Vath leads an eight-member team of space experts that plan and execute theater space operations and missile warning into the Joint Forces Air Component Commanders Air Tasking Order. Capt Vath is also responsible for ensuring Space Domain Awareness, Personnel Recovery actions, and Dynamic Targeting space support within the Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) area of responsibility. During this period, Capt Vath's aptitude, professionalism, and dedication to the mission yielded 185+ hours of missile defense operations through the 24/7/365 utilization and monitoring of the Missile Defense System, Processing and Display Subsystem-Mitigation. His actions directly contributed to the successful missile defense of 36 nations and the United States homeland. Capt Vath ensured PACAF and U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) senior leaders were provided with timely missile warning and attack assessment information for 165 ballistic missile activities across the DoD's largest area of responsibility. Additionally, Capt Vath's commitment to excellence in missile defense drove the establishment of an unprecedented multi-site resiliency plan for intelligence collection systems valued over \$25 billion. A significant result of this plan enabled the collection and distribution of three million intelligence products, some of which were used for battle damage assessment of a Presidential directed strike on weapons of mass destruction. Finally, Capt Vath's exemplary work in missile defense was distinguishable when he overhauled his units' mission qualification training program. Capt Vath aligned 17 chapters and 600 pages of material with the DoD instruction systems development model. This alignment was subsequently used to train 700+ operators/engineers and remains vital to missile defense preparation. Captain Vath entered the Air Force in September 2012 through Officer Training School from Sierra Vista, Arizona. Capt Vath completed Officer Undergraduate Space Training in Aug 2013 and since then has held a variety of Space and Missile Defense positions. In his previous position, Capt Vath was the Assistant Director of Operations, National Reconnaissance Office, White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico. Prior to this, Capt Vath also held the position of Chief, Wing Contingency Operations at the 50th Operations Support Squadron, Schriever Air Force Base, Colorado leading assessments of unit combat capability, training, and procedure development.



INDO-PACIFIC AIR & MISSILE DEFENDER of the YEAR



Lieutenant Simon Mansonhing

LT Mansonhing is the USS John Finn's (DDG 114) resident subject matter expert in Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD). He expertly led two BMD watch teams through two rigorous and highly successful Missile Defense Agency (MDA) events, one multi-national missile defense exercise, and four Tactical Training Group Pacific (TTGP) BMD exercises. LT Mansonhing's enthusiasm for training, attention to detail, and infectious positive attitude were the cornerstone to John Finn achieving outstanding success and meeting all mission objectives for a Navy strategic systems flight experiment. John Finn successfully detected the hypersonic glide vehicle (HGV) using unique SPY settings during the live flight. Data extracted from this event played a significant role in the development of a capability against the HGV threat and delivery of capability to the Fleet by 2024. Additionally, LT Mansonhing led the John Finn missile defense team and ensured all objectives were achieved during the multi-national missile defense exercise, Pacific Dragon 2020. LT Mansonhing served as the BMD liaison officer for TTGP onboard John Finn as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and achieved flawless execution across four BMD exercises in 2020. He provided critical oversight of SPY-1 phased array radar maintenance directly resulting in John Finn earning the Navy Surface Warfare Center Dahlgren Division SPY honor roll for 26 consecutive months – a Navy record. LT Mansonhing's career as Fire Control Officer culminated with the execution of FTM-44. The Aegis Weapon System in John Finn used track data to consummate an SM-3 Block IIA engagement of the ICBM target leveraging the Engage on Remote capability. LT Mansonhing was born and raised in Santa Barbara, California. LT Mansonhing earned his B.S. in Finance from Cal Poly. He worked as an EMT auxiliary sheriff deputy at the San Luis Obispo County Sheriff's Office before he commissioned from Officer Candidate Scholl in July of 2016. LT Mansonhing reported to the USS John Finn in July 2016 as the Main Propulsion Officer and commissioned the ship as a plankowner in June 2017. LT Mansonhing later fleeted up on USS John Finn (DDG 113) and completed his second tour as Fire Control Officer. During this tour, he served as Assistant Board of Inspection and Survey (INSURV) Coordinator for John Finn's INSURV inspection and served as Assistant Senior Watch Officer.



INDO-PACIFIC AIR & MISSILE DEFENDER of the YEAR



Lieutenant Colonel William Hunter III

LTC Hunter is the Deputy Chief of Staff for 94th Army Air and Missile Defense Command (AAMDC) at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii. He previously served as the Current Operations Chief for the 94th AAMDC, serving as the Command's senior representative to the Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) 613th Air Operations Center (AOC) on a day-to-day basis. LTC Hunter serves as the Command's main briefer to the Area Air Defense Commander and U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) Commander in exercises and in frequent real-world updates. He oversaw the execution of weekly Joint Theater Air and Missile Defense (JTAMD) working groups and boards to posture Integrated Air and Missile Defense (IAMD) forces from the Army, Air Force, and Navy for real-world contingencies, exercises, and in response to numerous real-world provocations by North Korea. During these provocations, LTC Hunter played a crucial role in helping the 94th AAMDC Commanding General provide immediate recommendations to the PACAF and USINDOPACOM Commanders on how to respond. LTC Hunter served as the chief of operations for bilateral exercise Keen Edge 20. He oversaw the current operations set up and execution of the exercise, combining AAMDC, Joint, and Allied inputs to ensure the 94th AAMDC leadership had the information required to make necessary decisions. LTC Hunter's outstanding contributions during the first half of 2020 were critical to this Command's success to deter North Korean aggression and grapple with the onset of the Coronavirus pandemic. He oversaw the efforts of nearly 70 Officers, NCOs, and Soldiers as they conducted daily operations to track the status of air and missile defense units, sensors, interceptors, and communication links across the USINDOPACOM area of responsibility. Most vital to these efforts were 25-odd Soldiers from the 10th and 14th Missile Defense Battery Sensor Manager Cells, who stood watch 24-7 to ensure their AN/TPY-2 radars provided early warning of any missile attacks against U.S. forces and territory across the Pacific and in North America. LTC Hunter has served nearly 20 years as an Army Air Defender. LTC Hunter's combat deployments include Operation Iraqi Freedom (2003-2004) and Operation New Dawn (2011) in Iraq. LTC Hunter's civilian education includes two Bachelor degrees from Michigan State University and a Masters of Arts in Leadership and Management from Webster University.



INDO-PACIFIC AIR & MISSILE DEFENDER of the YEAR



Chief Warrant Officer 3 Robert Finley

CW3 Finley is the Command and Control (C2) System Integrator for the 14th Missile Defense Battery (MDB) Management Cell at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii. CW3 Finley integrated the Sensor Manager Cell into reoccurring 94th Army Air and Missile Defense Command (AAMDC) exercises and developed the communication architecture and tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) for the Sensor Managers to participate in Resilient Shield 20 and Keen Sword 20 for the first time. CW3 Finley petitioned to add Top Secret billets and D4 Additional Skill Identifier billets to the Sensor Manager Cell through Space & Missile Defense Command working groups across the year to optimize performance when there was a reduction of personnel in the cell. This realignment allows less people to do more and continue to support Joint Service exercises and support. In addition, he developed and updated TTPs for daily operations in response to emerging threats and capabilities. The Sensor Manager Cell's involvement in Space Domain Awareness was monumental as the first time the AN/TPY-2 radar supported satellite tracking operations. CW3 Finley's coordination for the 8.2-5 upgrade allows for better operations through the Command and Control, Battle Management, and Communications (C2BMC) in conjunction with Joint Service systems for better support to training and real-world operations. He effortlessly navigated the challenges of the Air Operation Center's contractors, fiber criteria, networking compatibilities, and during a simultaneous relocation to another workspace over COVID-19 minimum manning restrictions. CW3 Finley was born in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania and graduated from Phoenixville Area High School in June of 1993. Immediately upon graduation, he enlisted in the U.S. Army and trained to be a MANPADS Crewmember. His deployments include NATO's Peace Implementation Force in the former Yugoslav Republic of Bosnia, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and twice as part of Operation Enduring Freedom. CW3 Finley was appointed to Warrant Officer after completing Warrant Officer Candidate School in 2011. CW3 Finley has an Associate Degree in Psychology from Troy University and is currently pursuing a Bachelor Degree in Emergency and Disaster Management from Upper Iowa University. CW3 Finley is married to the former Robin McBee of Jesup, Georgia. They have two children, Shelby who has served six years in the U.S. Army and Christian who is a sophomore in at Admiral W. Radford High School.



INDO-PACIFIC AIR & MISSILE DEFENDER of the YEAR



Technical Sergeant Jeremiah Tillery

TSgt Tillery is the Non-Commissioned Officer In Charge (NCOIC) of Theater Missile Warning, Space Cell, at the 613th Air Operations Center (AOC) at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii. TSgt Tillery is a member of a Joint 20-member team in the execution of defensive operations, theater contingencies, and exercises in support of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) objectives. He is also responsible for interpreting, advising, and briefing near real-time satellite and radar data to AOC leadership. TSgt Tillery led a team of seven personnel which resulted in 1,300+ hours of missile defense operations through the 24/7/365 utilization and monitoring of the Missile Defense System, Processing and Display Subsystem-Migration (PDSM). TSgt Tillery ensured Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) and USINDOPACOM senior leaders were provided with timely missile warning and attack assessment information for over 350 ballistic missile activities across the DoD's largest area of responsibility. Additionally, TSgt Tillery orchestrated a missile defense communications monitoring strategy that enabled U.S. naval assets within USINDOPACOM to remain situationally aware of weapons systems capabilities. This newly integrated strategy facilitated synchronization of on-orbit and terrestrial missile warning assets and it directly supported the safeguarding of 36 nations, 50% of the world's population, and the United States homeland from ballistic missile threats. TSgt Tillery's excellence in missile defense drove his selection to senior instructor within the 613th AOC Combat Operations-Space section. As the senior instructor, TSgt Tillery vastly improved the mission qualification training program through the addition of 18 critical updates. These efforts led to the certification of five missile defense operators and greatly improved missile defense capability for the Pacific area of responsibility. TSgt Tillery grew up in Washington D.C. and enlisted in the Air Force in 2002. His previous experience includes AC130U Gunship Comm/Nav maintenance, deficiency analyst, GPS Command & Control, strategic and theater missile warning, space battle manager, aerospace control officer, and supported the Joint Forces Air Component Commander on the Director of Space Forces staff. He was a key worker on three aircraft returning from Operation Iraqi Freedom and was handpicked by the Joint Task Force Armed Forces Inaugural Committee to support the 55th Presidential Inauguration. He has deployed to a host nation to provide missile defense as a Command & Control, Battle Management, & Communications (C2BMC) Sensor Manager.

A VERY SPECIAL THANK YOU

To the Indo-Pacific Command, the U.S. Pacific Fleet, the Pacific Air Forces, the U.S. Army Pacific, and the U.S. Space Force.

