



Thirteenth Annual

U.S. MISSILE DEFENDER
of the YEAR
AWARD CEREMONY

January 20, 2023
Alexandria, Virginia



SEQUENCE OF EVENTS
U.S. MISSILE DEFENDER *of the* YEAR AWARD CEREMONY

Call to Order

National Anthem

Welcoming Remarks

Dinner

Remarks

Service Components Present their Defender *of the* Year

Closing Remarks by Mr. Riki Ellison

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. Each year the award is given to a United States Armed Forces service member from each branch that currently deploys a U.S. missile defense system for their outstanding work in the previous year. These selected individuals represent the best in leadership and personal effort, demonstrating their commitment to excellence and their critical role in missile defense. They are an inspiration to their subordinates, peers, and superiors.

The purpose of this award is to recognize exceptional individuals and their role in defending our homeland, armed forces, and allies. Recognizing them helps to educate the American public and inspire those they work with to defend our nation.

The Defenders of the Year are selected by their peers and commanding officers from the U.S. Army, U.S. Navy, U.S. Air Force, U.S. National Guard, and the U.S. Space Force.

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.



U.S. MISSILE DEFENDER of the YEAR



Specialist 4 Jonah Friese

Specialist 4 Jonah B. D. Friese serves as a Mission Crew Chief to the Second Space Warning Squadron (2SWS) Buckley SFB, Colorado. Specialist 4 Friese enables the time critical decisions to ensure 1st alert and early warning indications to US military, civilian, and allied forces across the globe. He enlisted into the Air Force on August 6th, 2019, at JBSA-Lackland Air Force Base. He completed Enlisted Undergraduate Space Training (EUST) at the 533rd Training Squadron, Vandenberg Space Force Base. Spc4 was assigned to the 2nd Space Warning Squadron as a Data Systems Operator. In September of 2020, Spc4 Friese transferred to the United States Space Force. In March of 2022, Spc4 Friese was selected to upgrade to the position of Mission Crew Chief as a result of his outstanding performance and dedication to the mission. Spc4 Friese has accumulated over 1,500 operational hours on the Space Based Infrared System as part of the Overhead Persistent Infrared Community. Spc4 Friese is nominated for the DOY award for the pivotal alert role he played in the USEUCOM support during the Russian attack on Ukraine where he supervised the collection, validation, and reporting of 1,651 missiles and 7,506 infrared events. Throughout the conflict, Spc4 Friese was charged with providing early warning of missile threats to USEUCOM, NATO's AIRCOM/BMDOC, and forty-three million Ukrainians. His outstanding leadership and performance were key to the unit winning Space Operations Command's Space Power Discipline Unit of the Year Award for 2021. Spc4 Friese is an inspiration to the unit as both a missile warning expert and outstanding leader. He led the world's #1 Missile Warning Unit by reporting 10,724 high priority infrared events and 1,972 missile events to 11 Combatant Commands and 345,000 United States and NATO personnel abroad. Spc4 Friese further highlighted his leadership by managing a 5-man mission cell during the Delta 4 & Delta 7's Small Force Exercise, his efforts led to the establishment of a new process to integrate the OPIR mission with ground-based early warning radars.



U.S. MISSILE DEFENDER of the YEAR



Airman First Class Garrett Tully

A1C Garrett F. Tully is an Air Tasking Order Production Technician for the 603rd Air Operation Center, Ramstein Air Base, Germany as of November 2022. His previous duty was a Tactical Datalink Manager for the Joint Interface Control Cell. He was the primary datalink maintainer in charge of ensuring situational awareness to US Forces and Allied nations across EUCOM, AFRICOM and the United States. Additionally, A1C Tully provides command and control data to various ballistic missile defense locations that require data to successfully track and destroy potential missiles and hostile aircraft that are threats to US Forces and our Allies. A1C Tully enlisted in the United States Air Force on 04 May 2021. Upon completion of Basic Military Training, he attended technical training at Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi and graduated as a Command and Control Battle Management Operation apprentice. Upon completion of technical training, he was assigned to the 603rd Air Operations Center, Ramstein Air Base, Germany. A1C Tully is nominated for the DOY award because he excelled among his peers by creating and implementing the twenty-four-hour coverage schedule as the AOC began crisis management operations in response to Russian aggression toward Ukraine. As Russian troops streamed across the Ukrainian border, A1C Tully manned the watch position coordinating with Joint Fires units across the "Eastern Flank" to enable data sharing and critical targeting between Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) aircraft and FCUs. These efforts resulted in over two-hundred tracks of interest and a complete air domain awareness picture for the AOC's Senior Air Defense Officer. Airman Tully managed the extremely complex hub of US and NATO alliance systems in the AOC, totaling over fifty-four unique data pathways across four domains and five physical terminals. As TDC, he executed troubleshooting techniques to restore information flow to US Army assets critical to the IAMD mission inherent to the Eastern Flank. Primarily coordinating through US Army Europe (USAREUR) and its subordinate units, A1C Tully managed to facilitate over ninety-five percent network uptime leading to non-stop missile defense coverage for NATO Allies.



U.S. MISSILE DEFENDER of the YEAR



Lieutenant Pasquale Cassese

Lieutenant Pasquale Cassese graduated from Saint Augustine College Preparatory School in May of 2014. He earned his commission through the Norwich University ROTC Program in 2018 and graduated from Norwich University with a Bachelors of Civil Engineering the same year. Following his commission, he reported to USS THE SULLIVANS (DDG 68), home-ported in Mayport, FL in May of 2018. He served as the Combat Electronics Officer from May 2018 to July 2020 where he completed one deployment and earned his Surface Warfare Officer Qualification. He was asked to fleet up as the Fire Control Officer in THE SULLIVANS and reported in December 2020, where he completed three challenging and dynamic deployments to FIFTH, SIXTH and SEVENTH Fleets, while also qualifying as Anti – Air Warfare Coordinator, Ballistic Missile Defense Officer and Tactical Action Officer. LT Cassese is nominated for the DOY award because he has conducted himself above and beyond all expectations in tactics, qualifications, and leadership. While onboard The Sullivans, he developed and prepared the ship's combat team for their operational deployments through Sixth and Fifth Fleet to include executing 38 IAMD scenarios, as well as the development, testing, and executing of combat system doctrine covering threats spanning two Fleet's areas of responsibility. His aggressive control and pursuit of casualty repairs ensured THE SULLIVANS maintained a peak performing Aegis Suite and was ready to answer each and every call. LT Cassese has personally pushed himself to achieve the highest qualifications and was the only Division Officer onboard The Sullivans to achieve a Tactical Action Officer designation letter in addition to his other advanced qualifications as Anti-Air Warfare Coordinator and Ballistic Missile Defense Officer. His energetic and inspirational leadership has guided his division through seven advancements and eight Combat Systems Officer of the Watch and Combat System Coordinator qualifications. After the successful completion of the ship's deployment, LT Cassese volunteered to support Commander, Carrier Strike Group Four as an IAMD assessor. His actions directly led to the successful deployment certification of the USS Farragut. His commitment to excellence and dedication highlights the tactical acumen that is the core of our Fleet Today.

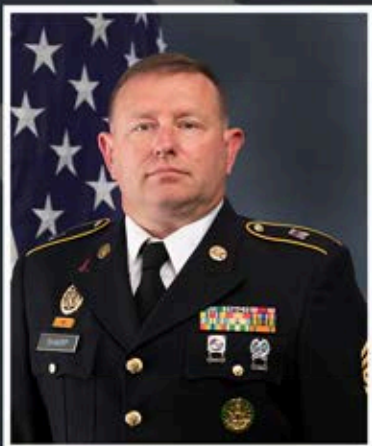


U.S. MISSILE DEFENDER of the YEAR



First Sergeant John O'Connor

1SG John M. O'Connor enlisted in the United States Army on 19 March 2002 where he was awarded the MOS of 14S Avenger Crew Member (later become the MOS 14P). His first duty assignment was with D/3-4 ADAR, 82ND ABN DIV; Fort Bragg, NC., where he deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Iraq. Upon return from deployment, he was assigned to Stinger PLT, CSC, 173rd ABN BDE; Vicenza, IT., where he deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom III (Combined Joint Task Force Bayonet); in Afghanistan. His next duty assignment was with A/5-5 ADAR, 11th ADA BDE; Fort Lewis (JBLM), WA, as a C-RAM Crewmember, and deployed to Iraq (OIF/OND). Upon return to JBLM, he was selected to assist with the creation of the Army's first C-RAM School with D/2-6 ADAR, 6TH Air Defense Brigade, Fort Sill, OK. 1SG O'Connor was assigned as a Platoon Sergeant with C/2-44 ADAR, 108th ADA BDE; Fort Campbell, KY., where he revived the battalions Avenger Program by conducting JRTC rotations. He was later selected for promotion to Master Sergeant in 2019 and was assigned as the First Sergeant for the 13th Missile Defense Battery, 10TH AAMDC, in Israel. After a successful year of uninterrupted operations, he served as the First Sergeant for A/5-4 ADAR; 10TH AAMDC, Ansbach DE. 1SG O'Connor is nominated for DOY award because he exemplifies servant leadership. He also made it his mission to increase the cohesiveness and morale of the headquarters, spearheading several initiatives to bring leaders and Soldiers together outside the work setting. He serves his subordinates as a standard bearer. His battery was the most well trained SHORAD unit in the EUCOM Theater, expertly performing in several Avenger Exercises, M-SHORAD fielding and training, and rapid deployment to NATO's eastern flank. 1SG O'Connor served his superiors by always accomplishing the mission. He remained a consummate professional, able to speak eloquently to senior leaders in order to influence the decision-making process. As 10th AAMDC, HHB First Sergeant, 1st Sergeant O'Connor served an abundance of field grade officers and continued to maintain standards and discipline within his ranks.



U.S. MISSILE DEFENDER of the YEAR



Sergeant First Class Patrick Sharp

Sergeant First Class Patrick Sharp's military career began in June of 2009 when he enlisted in the Florida Army National Guard as a 14J, Air Defense C41 Tactical Operations Center Enhanced Operator / Maintainer. SFC Sharp has served as a team chief, a Sentinel Section Sergeant, Sentinel Platoon Sergeant, Air Defense Instructor, Air Defense Course Manager, Air Defense Deputy Branch Manager, ADA School Quality Assurance NCO, and The ADA Subject Matter Expert for National Guard Bureau TRI Team. SFC Sharp has mobilized under Operation Enduring Freedom supporting the National Capital Region mission as a Tactical Control Assistant for the National Advanced Surface to Air Missile System (NASAMS) in 2010. Again in 2012 he also mobilized in support of the NCR-IADS mission supporting the Minimum Deployment Package (MDP) who is tasked with supporting the office of the President of the United States. SFC Sharp has completed Senior Leaders Course and was selected as the honor graduate of SLC class 301-17. He has also successfully completed the Army Space Cadre Basic Course, Mission Command Digital Master Gunner Course, and the Air Defense Airspace Management / Brigade Aviation Element Course. SFC Sharp holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Eastern Kentucky University. SFC Sharp is nominated for the DOY award because he has been an integral part to the continued success of 1st Battalion, 211 Regiment as an instructor, course developer, quality assurance NCO, leader, and mentor for the Regional Training Institute (RTI), Florida Army National Guard (FLARNG). SFC Sharp's scope of influence is not limited to those in his chain of command. He is known to develop and guide other Soldiers from adjacent FLARNG units to include individuals from external organizations. For all intents and purposes, SFC Patrick Sharp IS a FLARNG ADA SME. His dedication and commitment to excellence as a Non-commissioned Officer within the Air Defense community as well his service to his unit, is second to none. He is of the highest character and a quiet professional whose dedication to service and commitment to excellence has no equal.



Members of the Order of Missile Defender of the Year

2021

Army
SFC Matthew Crain

Navy
LT Kristen Ringwall

Air Force
Maj Robert Heath Matthews

National Guard
CW2 Jeremy Howard

Space Force
TSgt X. Victor Kearney

2018

Army
CW3 Lucas Watterson

Navy
LTJG McKenzie Anderson

Air Force
Capt Rex Villa

National Guard
CW4 Jacob Moore

2020

Army
SFC Johnny Washington

Navy
FCA1 John Long

Air Force
Capt Marco Catanese

National Guard
SGM Jason Junkins

Space Operations Command
1st Lt Eryn Daman

2017

Army
1LT Benjamin Schiff

Navy
CPO Zachary Quirk

Air Force
Lt Col Rocco Angiolelli

National Guard
CPT Jason Brewer

2019

Army
CPT Cody Williams

Navy
FCA1 Mario Amaro

Air Force
Capt Nolan Hebein

National Guard
CPT Eric Grant

2016

Army
CW2 Kevin Kruthers

Navy
PO1 Nathaniel Lynch

Air Force
Lt Col Anthony Owens

National Guard
SSG Caroline Domenech



Members of the Order of Missile Defender of the Year

2015

Army

CPT Jason Roberts

Navy

FC1 Elizabeth Clark

Air Force

Maj Michael Sward

National Guard

SSG Trampas Vojtasek

2014

Army

SSG Michael McSherry

Navy

FC2 Bartholomew Ringer

Air Force

Lt Col Jerry Frazier

National Guard

SSG Norman Perkins III

2013

Army

SSG Nancy Wingo

Navy

LT Brandon Bridges

Air Force

Capt Benjamin Szutar

National Guard

SSG Nicholas Power

2012

Army

CPT Kyle Kirkpatrick

Navy

FC2 Ronald Barbee

Air Force

Capt Gregory Tengco

National Guard

SGT Aric Wilkins

2011

Army

CPT Will Andrews

Navy

FC2 Mathieu McIntosh

National Guard

SSG Craig Davis

2010

Army

1LT Ted Kimmey, Jr.

Navy

FC1 (SW) Shawn Walker

Air Force

1st Lt Brian Yoakam

National Guard

MAJ Michael Tobe



A VERY SPECIAL THANK YOU

To the National Guard Bureau, Department of the Army, Department of the Navy,
Department of the Air Force, and United States Space Force.

