

NRL Receives Secretary of the Navy Innovation Award, Honorable Mention

By Daniel Parry, U.S. Naval Research Laboratory

Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV) Ray Mabus honors four U.S. Naval Research Laboratory (NRL) researchers, Feb. 9, in first-year SECNAV Innovation Awards Program. The institution of the program is part of a broader Department of the Navy (DoN) effort to empower and reward Sailors, Marines and civilian innovators who made significant innovative achievements in any of eight designated categories within the calendar year.

"NRL fosters a unique environment that nurtures unconstrained ideas and advancements in innovative thinking that is reflected in this prestigious and rewarding honor," said CAPT. Mark Bruington, Commanding Officer, Naval Research Laboratory. "Bravo Zulu to the women and men of the NRL research teams for their commitment to excellence and innovation."

In the category of 'Outside the Box,' Mr. Daniel Robison, NRL Tactical Electronic Warfare Division, is named winner for the development of Electronic Warfare Battle Management Software. This category seeks to identify contributions that are cross-cutting and represent a change in thinking. The novel software and system architecture, developed by Robinson, enables for the first time an interconnection between a tactical electronic warfare system and intelligence assets to provide advanced warning critical to defeating modern anti-ship threats. The successful widespread adoption of the Electronic Warfare Battle Management software and architecture is a testimony to its effectiveness and simplistic adaptation to existing electronic warfare (EW) systems utilized by the Navy and U.S. Marine Corps.

In the category of 'Robotics and Autonomous Systems,' Dr. Charlie Barron and Ms. Lucy Smedstad, NRL Oceanography Division, receive honorable mention for the Glider Observation Strategy (GOST) project. This honor is bestowed to the team for distinguished advances to these emergent and vital fields, and recognizes contributions in robotics and autonomous systems within the science and technology community. GOST is an automated system designed to optimize planned waypoints and navigation objectives for unmanned gliders and underwater vehicles (UAVs/UUVs) and allows networking across autonomous platforms. The team led the technical development, system integration, and implementation of the operational control systems to the operational environment - allowing the Navy to extend its unmanned presence further and forecast the battlespace in areas it previously could not.

Honorable mention also goes to Ms. Pamela Posey, NRL Oceanography Division, in the category of 'Data Analytics,' for the development and demonstration of the Fractures, Leads and Polynyas (FLAP) Analytic and Forecast Modeling. This award recognizes members of the data savvy workforce that implemented new approaches to using data analytics to improve performance, support decision making, or provide meaningful insight to existing processes.

Posey receives this honor for this new innovation that captures and predicts opening of sea ice areas (fractures and leads) and polynyas (unfrozen openings) in Arctic ice by calculating areas of ice convergence and divergence, ice opening rates, ice ridging, and ice shear - an invaluable asset to Naval Arctic operations.

The SECNAV Innovation Awards recognize the top innovators within the DoN and serve as inspiration for the entire workforce to think boldly to solve the most challenging problems. Awards in the eight categories represent a distinguished testament to the outstanding ingenuity and significant accomplishments and professionalism of the DoN workforce. The remaining Innovation Award categories include: Additive Manufacturing; Innovation Leadership; Innovation Scholarship; Enlisted Innovator; and Innovation Catalyst. The Office of Strategy and Innovation is the responsible organization for this program.