

## Two FRCMA Sailors earn SECNAV innovation awards



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FLEET READINESS CENTER MID-ATLANTIC, OCEANA, Va. -- Across the Navy, talented Sailors, Marines and civilians are creating innovative solutions to the most complex problems. To acknowledge their initiative and self-starter mindset, Ray Mabus, Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV), recognizes these individuals and teams through the annual Innovation Awards Program in the following areas: Robotics/Autonomous Systems, Data Analytics, Additive Manufacturing, Innovation Leadership, Innovation Scholarship, Enlisted Innovator, Innovation Catalyst and Outside the Box.

Two Sailors from Fleet Readiness Center Mid-Atlantic (FRCMA) earned honorable mentions for the 2015 awards. Petty Officer Richard Walsh of FRCMA Oceana received an honorable mention in the “Enlisted Innovator” category for his work on developing the Navy’s Brightwork website and for his work as program manager and developer of the Statistically Driven Maintenance Analysis and Repair Technology (SMART). Senior Chief Ryan Balzer, also hailing from FRCMA Oceana, earned an honorable mention for his Universal Break-Out Box in the Outside the Box category.

“I cannot tell you how proud I am of our placement in the SECNAV Innovation Awards,” said Capt. Joe Rodriguez, FRCMA commander. “This only validates our initiatives within the Human Computer Interfacing (HCI) Junior Innovation Think Tank (JITT) and Senior Innovation Think Tank (SITT) concept. These honorable mentions are a testament to the vision, initiative and ‘can-do’ attitude of our command.”

Walsh partnered with the Navy Warfare Development Command in the development, design and coding for the Brightwork web interface that gives Sailors a place to submit their innovative ideas. Through Brightwork, Walsh has gathered and helped mature hundreds of suggestions from the fleet and has more than a thousand global members who are active contributors.

After being selected for the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Rapid Innovation Cell (CRIC) in 2014, Walsh began maturing SMART, a project he had been working on independently for nearly eight years. SMART, using an algorithm Walsh developed, has the potential to dramatically reduce the cost of rework within the Navy. While specific cost avoidance numbers have not yet been calculated, a SMART pilot program has been launched at FRCMA Oceana.

Prior to Brightwork and SMART, Walsh developed requirements for an active cooling vest for flight deck use and developed a crowd sourced digital phonebook for shipboard use, an electronic check-in/ check-out application and a shipboard caching RSS newsfeed reader. He has received several accolades for his work including being named by Bradley Morris Inc. as one of the “Top 40 Under 40 (Military)” and receiving the Naval Aviation Enterprise (NAE) “2011 Master Gunnery Sergeant John Evancho Innovator of the Year” award.

It was “Outside the Box” thinking that earned Balzer recognition in that awards category. Constructed for under \$3,000 using only readily available consumables from the Naval Supply System and commercial off-the-shelf technology, his Universal Break-Out Box has been employed in the troubleshooting and testing of over 1,000 Aviation Depot Level Repairables (AVDLR).

The avionics work centers at FRCMA Oceana regularly perform initial troubleshooting and maintenance on AVDLRs associated with F/A-18 A-D Legacy Hornets and F/A-18 E/F Super Hornets. Most AVDLRs have their own associated Individual Material Readiness List (IMRL) equipment to perform some of the testing and troubleshooting.

The unique switching matrix on Balzer’s Universal Break-Out Box reduces the run time associated with testing AVDLRs by eliminating the requirement to attach each AVDLR to the associated IMRL equipment. The box also meets the requirement of the Naval Air Systems Command’s (NAVAIR) technical manuals, has a method of self-test, has the ability to provide various power requirements and is reconfigurable and expandable for future equipment.

Once fully operational, the box has the potential to reduce man-hours by 50 percent by lessening manual switching and measurement of Weapon Replaceable Assemblies (WRA) test points, which can result in a 30 percent increase in production throughput and a 10 percent decrease in Time to Reliably Replenish (TRR).

In his role as Senior Innovation Think Tank (SITT) and Junior Innovation Think Tank (JITT) Leading Chief Petty Officer, Balzer acts as a catalyst for innovation team efforts and for breaking down barriers that often discourage Sailors from expressing their “outside the box” thinking. His efforts thus far have led to three innovative projects being fostered.