



2021  
GUAM  
MISSILE DEFENDER  
*of the* YEAR  
AWARD CEREMONY

*October 28, 2021  
Andersen Air Force Base, Guam*



SEQUENCE OF EVENTS  
GUAM MISSILE DEFENDER *of the* YEAR AWARD CEREMONY

Call to Order

National Anthem

Invocation

Welcoming Remarks

Remarks

Presentation of Awards

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. 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.

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*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.*

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# 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.



## GUAM MISSILE DEFENDER of the YEAR



### **Specialist John-Anthony Aguon** Security Forces IV Awardee

SPC Aguon is assigned to Delta Company, 1-294th Infantry Regiment as a rifleman. He is currently attached to Security Forces (SECFOR) IV as a M240B machine gunner. SPC Aguon enables the missile defense mission by providing the highest level of security on Site Armadillo in order to allow our E-3 THAAD Soldiers to operate in a safe and secure environment. SPC Aguon's proficiency with Army Warrior Tasks and Drills were instrumental to a successful 2021 urban operations training exercise that sharpened the skills of his SECFOR IV team. His professionalism and dedication to the mission is beyond reproach as he ensures training for his crew of 15 infantrymen is tough, realistic, and conducted to standard. SPC Aguon's tactical proficiency with his assigned weapon is evident as he consistently scores expert on the M4 assault rifle. He demonstrates leadership skills and traits above that of his current rank and has become a role model for his peers to emulate. SPC Aguon further exemplifies his leadership by taking the lead in physical training for his platoon, challenging them with rigorous sessions that have had a positive impact on improving physical readiness for both SECFOR IV and E-3 THAAD. SPC Aguon was born to Katrina Cruz and Raymond Aguon on July 17, 1995 and raised in Dededo, Guam. He is the husband of Carly Rie Aguon and father of Blaise Anthony Aguon. SPC Aguon graduated from Simon Sanchez High school in 2013. After receiving his diploma, he immediately went into the work force to provide for his family. This contributed to his decision of enlisting into the Guam Army National Guard on October 30th, 2018. In April 2019, SPC Aguon graduated Basic Combat Training in Fort Benning, Georgia. SPC Aguon's awards include the Army Achievement Award for his outstanding performance during Annual Training with Delta Company SECFOR IV.





## GUAM MISSILE DEFENDER of the YEAR



### **Sergeant Timothy Barcinas** Security Forces IV Awardee

SGT Barcinas is a Squad Leader with 2nd Platoon, Delta Company, 1-294th Infantry Regiment attached to Security Forces (SECFOR) IV and also serves as the Base Defense Operations Center Noncommissioned Officer in Charge. SGT Barcinas enables the missile defense mission by providing the highest level of security on Site Armadillo in order to allow our E-3 THAAD Soldiers to operate in a safe and secure environment. SGT Barcinas exemplifies professionalism and continually provides accurate and timely reporting to both SECFOR IV and E-3 THAAD leadership at all times to ensure everyone understands the current force protection status on Site Armadillo. SGT Barcinas continually trains and educates junior Soldiers on the operation and deployment of the Windtalker and Skyview early detection unmanned aerial systems, as well as the Dronebuster counter unmanned aerial system. SGT Barcinas further exemplifies his leadership by taking the lead in physical training for his squad, challenging them with rigorous sessions that have had a positive impact on improving physical readiness for SECFOR IV. SGT Barcinas has over 11 years of service and has multiple deployments to include his current SECFOR assignment with Delta Company and Operation Enduring Freedom, Afghanistan with the 29th Support Battalion, F Company. SGT Barcinas is from the village of Ordot and is married to Kalanie Barcinas. They have four children together; Evorai, Elias, Emmianna and Essenna. SGT Barcinas' awards and decorations include the Army Accommodation, Army Achievement Award, Over Seas Training, Ribbon NATO Medal with M device, Afghanistan Service Ribbon with Star Device, Army Reserve Components Over Seas Training, Ribbon Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, and National Defense Service Ribbon.



## GUAM MISSILE DEFENDER of the YEAR



### **Specialist Brianna Brown** E-3 ADA Maintainer Awardee

SPC Brown is an Electronic Equipment Unit Operator with the E-3 Air Defense Artillery, 38th Air Defense Artillery Brigade. SPC Brown's troubleshooting techniques, impeccable record keeping, and superior attention to detail has directly increased E-3 THAAD's combat readiness over the last year. As a team leader, SPC Brown ensures her Soldiers are motivated and always place the mission first. In addition to successfully certifying Table VIII as an Electronic Equipment Unit Operator, she continues self-development by cross-training on the Cooling Equipment Unit and Prepare for movement and Emplacement Crews. As a direct result of SPC Brown's leadership and initiative, E-3 THAAD nominated her to represent the unit at Virtual Flag: a real-time tactical-to-operational level event using air, land, space, cyber, and maritime scenarios integrating live, virtual, and constructive elements to train warfighters. Her dedication, hard work, and ability to accomplish the mission ensures the Defense of Guam is always maintained and the U.S. Military maintains a lethal deterrent in the Indo-Pacific Command Theater. SPC Brown was born on November 7, 2000 in Memphis, Tennessee. She attended high school in Oxford, Mississippi and graduated earning her diploma in 2019. SPC Brown enlisted in the Army on the May 2, 2019. She attended basic combat training at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. Upon completion of basic combat training, she attended advanced individual training in Fort Sill, Oklahoma where she graduated and was awarded the primary military occupational specialty of 14E Patriot Fire Control Enhanced Operator / Maintainer.





## GUAM MISSILE DEFENDER of the YEAR



### Sergeant Keenan Thompson E-3 ADA Sustainer Awardee

SGT Thompson is a Field Maintenance Supervisor with the E-3 Air Defense Artillery, 38th Air Defense Artillery Brigade. SGT Thompson has fostered a culture of maintenance excellence within E-3 THAAD for the last two years. His leadership and dedication to mission accomplishment has been instrumental for several Site Armadillo improvement projects including the first certified potable water source on site. His creativity and resourcefulness enabled the fabrication and installation of an all-weather bulletin board to display EO, SHARP, Safety, and training calendar information for greater visibility for battery personnel. As a direct result of SGT Thompson's leadership, E-3 THAAD's overall readiness rating has improved by 14% in the last year and pacing item readiness has improved to meet the Army standard of over 90%. The processes that SGT Thompson has introduced to the battery's Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QAQC) and vehicle dispatching program continues to save hundreds of operator and maintainer labor-hours each month. His leadership initiative and ability to accomplish the mission ensures the Defense of Guam is always maintained and the U.S. Military maintains a lethal deterrent in the Indo-Pacific Command Theater. SGT Thompson was born on August 1, 1992 and raised in Saint Louis, Missouri. He grew up with seven brothers and seven sisters in one household and graduated from Vashon High School in 2010. SGT Thompson enlisted in the Army on November 12, 2013. After completing Basic Combat Training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina and Advanced Individual Training in Fort Lee, Virginia, his first Duty Station was Camp Casey, South Korea. During his yearlong assignment in South Korea with Bravo Company, 302 Brigade Support Battalion, he served as a 91B Wheel Vehicle Mechanic. SGT Thompson has a passion for fitness and during his first assignment, he increased his Army Physical Fitness Test score from 205 to 278. Seeking to build upon his success with his Army Combat Fitness Test, he then successfully completed the Army Combative Level 1 and 2 courses. After South Korea, SGT Thompson was stationed for four years as a 91B Wheel Vehicle Mechanic in Echo Forward Support Troop Pioneer Squadron, 3rd Cavalry Regiment at Fort Hood, Texas.





## GUAM MISSILE DEFENDER of the YEAR



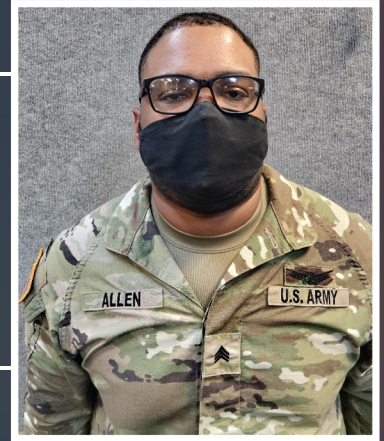
### **Specialist Austin Smith** E-3 ADA Junior Enlisted Soldier Awardee

SPC Smith is a THAAD Battery Command Post Operator and Tactical Control Assistant with the E-3 Air Defense Artillery, 38th Air Defense Artillery Brigade. SPC Smith has directly contributed to the combat readiness of E-3 THAAD by passing Table IV certifications as a Battery Command Post Operator and Tactical Control Assistant with first time 'GO's with near perfect scores. He continually promotes crew readiness and trains new E-3 Soldiers as future Tactical Control Assistants (TCA). SPC Smith displayed exceptional self-development by cross training as a Radar Operator and Maintainer to increase his knowledge and expertise of the THAAD weapon system. SPC Smith has been instrumental in training over four new Tactical Control Officers (TCO) in the last year on the THAAD gunnery certification process. SPC Smith's motivation and unparalleled performance in multiple typhoon readiness movements, Operation Orient Express, and Operation Iron Island has been invaluable and directly contributes to E-3 THAAD's overall mission readiness. SPC Smith's crew was awarded the Golden Coconut for achieving the greatest overall performance during the 2021 Table VIII evaluations, further distinguishing himself from his peers. SPC Smith is from Stokesdale, North Carolina. He graduated in the Top 20% from Northwest Guilford High School in June of 2018. He completed Basic Combat Training and Advanced Individual Training at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, where he earned the military occupational specialty of 14E Patriot Fire Control Enhanced Operator / Maintainer. He graduated the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) School in the Top 5% of his graduating class gaining the Additional Skill Identifier 7A THAAD Fire Control Communications/Radar Operator/Maintainer. SPC Smith's awards and decorations include the National Defense Service Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service, and Army Service Ribbon. SPC Smith's additional military education includes the Army Basic Space Course.





## GUAM MISSILE DEFENDER of the YEAR



### **Sergeant Nicholas Allen** E-3 ADA Noncommissioned Officer Awardee

SGT Allen is a System Maintenance Operator, Launcher Crew Member and Tactical Control Assistant with the E-3 Air Defense Artillery, 38th Air Defense Artillery Brigade. SGT Allen's system expertise on the THAAD weapons system is instrumental to the Battery's overall mission readiness. SGT Allen's technical and tactical prowess resulted in his crew successfully certifying in two Table VIII certifications as a Tactical Control Assistant (TCA) over the last 15 months. In addition to training and certifying as a TCA, SGT Allen has also certified as Hot Crew and Battery Logistics Operations Center (BLOC) Operator. SGT Allen's technical expertise has been invaluable in maintaining and operating the THAAD Fire Control and Communications (TFCC) resulting in one of the highest operational readiness rates in the battery. As a Noncommissioned officer, SGT Allen leads and trains future operators in both TCA and Battery Command Post (BCP) operations and was nominated to represent the battery in Operation Resilient Shield. His ability to accomplish the mission and train new Soldiers ensures the Defense of Guam is always maintained and the U.S. Military maintains a lethal deterrent in the Indo-Pacific Command Theater. SGT Allen is a native of Memphis, Tennessee. He graduated in the Top 10% of his class from Whitehaven High School in May of 2010. He completed Basic Combat Training and Advanced Individual Training at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, where he earned the military occupational specialty of 14E Patriot Fire Control Enhanced Operator / Maintainer. He graduated from Basic Leader's Course in the Top 20% of his graduating class, earning a spot on the Commandant's List. SGT Allen's previous assignment was a Radar Crew Member with the D-2 Air Defense Artillery, 35th Air Defense Artillery Brigade. He is the father of two children: Kevion and Landon. SPC Allen's awards and decorations include the Army Achievement Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Korean Defense Service Medal, Non-Commissioned Officer Professional Development Ribbon, Army Service Ribbon, Army Overseas Service Ribbon, and Army Basic Space Badge. SPC Allen's additional military education includes THAAD TFCC/Radar Operator/Maintainer, the Basic Leader's Course, and Digital Training Management System.





## GUAM MISSILE DEFENDER of the YEAR



### Sergeant James Copeland F-55 ADA Noncommissioned Officer Awardee

SGT Copeland is a Tactical Control Assistant, Team Leader, and Unit Armorer, of Fire Control Platoon, F-55 Air Defense Artillery, 2-43 Air Defense Artillery Battalion (ADA BN). SGT Copeland's expertise, motivation, and dedication to the mission resulted in major improvements to Iron Dome Defense System-Army's (IDDS-A) gunnery, operating procedures, and the system itself. SGT Copeland's tactical and technical knowledge allowed him the opportunity to make U.S. Army history in being the first Air Defender to engage a target with the IDDS-A in a live fire exercise. SGT Copeland's excellence in all facets of Soldiering drove his selection as 2-43 ADA BN Noncommissioned Officer (NCO) of the Quarter for the fourth quarter of Fiscal Year 2021. As the NCO of the Quarter, SGT Copeland demonstrated exceptional proficiency beyond his peers in physical fitness, Army knowledge, and warrior tasks. He also displayed his leadership skills, mentoring one of his Soldiers to win the same competition as Soldier of the Quarter. SGT Copeland is held in high regard as the most proficient Air Defense NCOs in 2-43 ADA. SGT Copeland was born in Lancaster, California on February 17, 1996. He graduated from California City High School and then entered the active U.S. Army on June 15, 2015. Upon joining the U.S. Army, SGT Copeland attended One Station Unit Training at Fort Benning, Georgia, graduating as an 11B Infantryman. He then reclassified in 2019 and went to Advanced Individual training (AIT) at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, graduating as a 14E Patriot Fire Control Operator and Maintainer. He is currently married with no children. SGT Copeland's previous duty assignments include serving as an Antiarmor Specialist in Bravo Company, 3-7 Infantry Battalion at Fort Stewart, Georgia from 2015 to 2017. He then served as a serving as an Antiarmor Specialist in Charlie Company, 3-67 Armor Battalion at Fort Stewart, Georgia until 2019. SGT Copeland then served as a Tactical Director Assistant, Section Sergeant, and Unit Armorer in HHB, 6-52 Air Defense Artillery Battalion at Suwon, South Korea until 2020. SGT Copeland's awards and decorations include the Army Achievement Medal (4-OLC), Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Korean Defense Service Medal, Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development Ribbon, Army Service Ribbon, and Army Overseas Ribbon.





## GUAM MISSILE DEFENDER of the YEAR



### Second Lieutenant Peter Gonsalves E-3 ADA Officer Awardee

2LT Gonsalves is a Fire Control Platoon Leader and the Tactical Control Officer for Crew 2 with the E-3 Air Defense Artillery, 38th Air Defense Artillery Brigade. As launcher platoon leader, 2LT Gonsalves spearheaded an aggressive training plan preparing 16 Soldiers for the Defense of Guam mission resulting in all launcher personnel and crews receiving a first time 'GO' for all Table VIII Evaluations. Additionally, the Prepare for Movement and Emplacement Crews set the standard with four out of five crews attaining perfect scores and record times during their drill evaluation. As Crew 2 Tactical Control Officer, 2LT Gonsalves' leadership and tactical prowess was instrumental to the overall success of Operation Orient Express and Operation Iron Island. 2LT Gonsalves' determination and dedication to the mission is further exemplified with his crew winning the Golden Coconut for achieving the greatest overall performance during the 2021 Table VIII evaluations, scoring a 98 percent on both the written test and ABM crew certifications. 2LT Gonsalves was born in Boston, Massachusetts. He commissioned as an Air Defense Artillery Officer in 2020, from the United States Military Academy (USMA) at West Point. After completion of the Air Defense Basic Officer Leaders Course (BOLC), 2LT Gonsalves completed the THAAD Follow-On Course at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. In his first assignment, he served as the Launcher Platoon Leader before moving to serve in his current role. 2LT Gonsalves' additional military education includes the Army Air Assault school. His civilian education includes a Bachelor of Science in International History from the United States Military Academy at West Point. 2LT Gonsalves' awards and decorations include the Army Achievement Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, and Air Assault Badge.





## GUAM MISSILE DEFENDER of the YEAR



### Lieutenant Colonel Tate Buntz Marine Corps Awardee

LtCol Buntz is the Operations Officer for Marine Corps Base Camp Blaz, where he oversees and coordinates construction efforts on Guam and works towards the establishment of Joint Basing Functional Areas. LtCol Buntz is responsible for enabling and projecting combat readiness through joint integration of Department of Defense assets. LtCol Buntz has spearheaded the establishment of the Joint Basing Functional Areas, directly enhancing Task Force Talon's operations by augmenting resource management and training deconfliction for operations on North West Field and Andersen Air Force Base. LtCol Buntz has been instrumental to the Defense of Guam Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) Mission. On multiple occasions with short notice, LtCol Buntz has provided hangar facilities and 7,000 square feet space for the 14 critical THAAD pieces of equipment in response to real-world typhoon contingencies. His facilitation of cross-communication ensures theater-level training exercises and real-world contingencies are deconflicted and the impact to the Guam BMD Mission is minimized; ensuring the U.S. Military maintains a lethal deterrent in the Indo-Pacific Command Theater. LtCol Buntz was born on September 22, 1970 and is a Chuluota, Florida native. He graduated Boot Camp from Parris Island, South Carolina in December 1988 and was assigned to 3rd Battalion, 9th Marines, 1st Marine Division, Camp Pendleton, California. Upon completion of his first enlistment, LtCol Buntz was honorably discharged in October 1992. After graduating the Platoon Leaders Course (PLC) combined program during the summer of 1998 and after completing his Bachelor's degree from the University of Central Florida, he was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in December of 1998. During his career, LtCol Buntz has participated in three major campaigns: Desert Shield/Desert Storm, Iraqi Freedom, Enduring Freedom and multiple contingencies ranging from Honduras to the Philippines. His educational degrees include a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice and a Master of Art in International Relations. LtCol Buntz has been a single Father since June of 2003, and has two sons, Tate & Torin, who are both attending college at Santa Fe State College in Gainesville, Florida.





## GUAM MISSILE DEFENDER of the YEAR



### Lieutenant Colonel Nathan Perry Air Force Awardee

Lt Col Perry is the Deputy Commander of the 36th Operations Group at Andersen Air Force Base (AFB), Guam. He is responsible for leading 85 members in enabling and projecting combat readiness and the joint integration of Department of Defense assets supporting Theater Support Packages within Pacific Command. His efforts include Bomber Task Force directives, Operation NOBLE EAGLE Homeland Defense, and responsibilities within Advance Programs leading Agile Combat Element initiatives throughout the Indo-Pacific region in support of Joint War at Sea. Lt Col Perry consistently enhances the air defense mission on Guam through his unwavering support by serving as the operational conduit between Task Force Talon and 36th WG. By facilitating direct communication, information, and resource management on Andersen AFB is streamlined and ensures E-3 THAAD's air defense mission is never compromised. Lt Col Perry's continued coordination efforts from the 36th WG Operations Group have directly enhanced the Defense of Guam Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) Mission. Lt Col Perry and the 36th WG Operations Group have been instrumental in advocating for the THAAD mission and Site Armadillo permanency. His facilitation of crosscommunication ensures theater-level training exercises are deconflicted and the impact to the Guam BMD mission is mitigated; ensuring the U.S. Military maintains a lethal deterrent in the Indo-Pacific Command Theater. Before this assignment, Lt Col Perry was formally the Commander, 8th Flying Training Squadron, Vance AFB, Oklahoma. The 8 FTS was the leading edge of innovation and change for the United States Air Force and undergraduate pilot training transformation creating a paradigm shift within Air Education and Training Command and the future of mixed-virtual reality pilot training. Lt Col Perry was commissioned in 2002 and was recently assigned to Air Force/A10 at The Pentagon, Washington DC, where he served as Chief, Bomber Modernization, Sustainment and Test managing B-21 Raider acquisition. He is a career pilot, having completed Undergraduate Pilot Training at Moody AFB, Georgia as well at Corpus Christi Naval Air Station, Texas. His service includes a variety of positions in Pacific Command, Central Command, Air Education and Training Command, Air Force Global Strike Command, Task Force North Africa, and the Air Force Air Staff. Lt Col Perry is a command pilot with more the 3,000 flight hours in the B-2A, T-6A, T-38A, TC-12, and C-130E/H.

**A very special thank you to Task Force Talon.**

