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New Department Heads Graduate SWOS

NEWPORT, R.I. -- The Surface Warfare Officers School (SWOS) graduated Department Head Class 220 in Pringle Auditorium at the Naval War College Feb. 21.

The class, consisting of 43 Surface Warfare Officers, completed the 27-week course designed to prepare officers for duty as chief engineers, combat systems and weapons officers and operations officers on all classes of ships, and as first lieutenants on amphibious ships.

The course is divided into two major subdivisions –Tactical Action Officer (TAO) focuses on areas such as undersea warfare, air defense, and surface warfare, while Operations, Readiness, Training, and the Engineering (ORTE), explores the specifics of each student's prospective job assignments.

"The duties and responsibilities of the shipboard department head are significant and reflect a great degree of authority," said Capt. Richard A. Brown, SWOS commanding officer. "The length of the course is indicative of the investment the Navy has made in the future readiness of the students and in their importance to the mission of the ship."

The guest of honor for the ceremony, Rear Adm. Phil Davidson, director, Maritime Operations, U.S. Fleet Forces Command, thanked the families and friends of the graduates for witnessing this major achievement in their careers. After congratulating the graduates, Davidson reminded them of the

importance of the demanding roles they were about to undertake and how they will be relied-upon as leaders on their ships.

"I wish you all the very best," said Davidson. "You are part of the executive team that will make that ship go through the water. We are counting on you."

Lt. Christopher Vanloenen, prospective chief engineer for USS Porter (DDG 78) received the Arleigh Burke Award for the graduate recognized by classmates as the individual possessing the strongest leadership, industry and perseverance; best exemplifying the fighting spirit of Admiral Burke's famous squadron, the 'Little Beavers' – Destroyer Squadron 23.

"The class was extremely challenging. I worked with a lot of my classmates and I felt very proud that they nominated me for the Arleigh Burke award," said Vanloenen.

Lt. Kyle Hiscock, prospective operations officer for USS Germantown (LSD 42) received the City of Newport Award for demonstrating the highest qualities of professionalism and leadership, as reflected by his overall contributions to Class 220.

The other awardee honored during the graduation ceremony was Lt. Kyle Hickman, prospective chief engineer for USS Halsey (DDG 97). Hickman had the highest overall grade point averages for the tactical action officer and engineering curriculum, thus earning the 'Top Gunner' and 'Top Snipe' awards. Hickman also received the Newport Navy League award for academic excellence as the top graduate for department head class 220.

The graduates will report to their next assignments aboard ships around the world in the coming months.

After more than 50 years, the Department Head course remains the flagship course at SWOS. Approximately 275 students attend the course each year.

SWOS is headquartered in Newport, R.I. and oversees 9 learning sites, which provide more than 1,000 courses a year to more than 67,000 Sailors.

SWOS uses a mix of blended-learning techniques comprised of instructor-led classes, hands-on labs, simulation and computer-based training. Courses include specialized training supporting all enlisted engineering ratings, and Surface Warfare Officers at every level. Building maritime partnerships, the command also provides training to many international students.

For more information about Surface Warfare Officers School, visit <https://www.netc.navy.mil/centers/swos/>.

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To learn more about the Naval Education and Training Command, visit <https://www.netc.navy.mil>.

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