



News Release

NAVY ADMIRAL MICHELLE HOWARD TO RECEIVE LEADERSHIP AWARD AT INAUGURAL FREEDOM OF THE SEAS AWARDS GALA

SAN PEDRO, Calif., Aug. 06, 2021 – The [National Museum of the Surface Navy at the Battleship IOWA](#), the museum for America’s Surface Navy located aboard the historic Battleship USS Iowa Museum, today announced retired Navy Admiral Michelle Howard will receive the VADM Samuel L. Gravely, Jr. Leadership Award at the inaugural [Freedom of the Seas](#) Awards Gala on October 23, 2021. The award recognizes leaders who exemplify the trailblazing, courageous service of the late U.S. Surface Navy Vice Admiral.

Admiral Howard was a trailblazing leader throughout her 35-year career in the U.S. Navy. In 1999, she assumed command of USS Rushmore to become the first African American woman to command a ship in the U.S. Navy. Admiral Howard was the first African American to achieve two- and three-star rank and became the highest-ranking African American and woman in Navy history when she was promoted to Admiral and appointed Vice Chief of Naval Operations in 2014. She also became the first female four-star admiral to command operational forces when she assumed command of United States Naval Forces Europe and Naval Forces Africa.

“We are proud to name Admiral Howard the first recipient of the Freedom of the Seas VADM Samuel L. Gravely, Jr. Leadership Award and look forward to the honor of presenting the award to her at our inaugural awards gala,” explained retired Navy Rear Admiral Mike Shatynski, Chairman of the Board of the National Museum of the Surface Navy. “Admiral Howard’s history-making accomplishments and service as a senior leader in the Surface Navy is the embodiment of the spirit of this award.”

Attendance at the annual Freedom of the Seas Awards is by invitation only. For information on sponsorship opportunities, visit [Freedom of the Seas](#) or contact [Joleen Deatherage, Vice President of Development at jdeatherage@labattleship.com](mailto:jdeatherage@labattleship.com)

About the Freedom of the Seas Awards

The Freedom of the Seas Awards is the premiere annual event of the National Museum of the Surface Navy at the Battleship IOWA. The event is held in honor of the anniversary of the Battle of Leyte Gulf, the largest naval battle in the history of the world, which occurred during World War II. The Awards honors those that embody the core principles of the American Surface Navy's mission to protect and defend our oceans for the benefit of the free world.

About the National Museum of the Surface Navy

Scheduled to open in 2025 aboard the historic Battleship USS Iowa Museum, the National Museum of the Surface Navy is the museum for America's Surface Navy. The museum's mission is to raise America's awareness of the importance of the United States Surface Naval Forces' role in international relations, free trade, humanitarian assistance, and technological innovation, not just in the past but today and into the future.

Located in the Port of Los Angeles in San Pedro, Calif., Battleship USS Iowa Museum is one of the top five museums and attractions in Los Angeles, bringing the ship's history to life through in-person and virtual tours and educational programs for youth. In addition to providing a natural platform for veterans and patriotic civilians to come together as a community, Battleship USS Iowa Museum provides a wide array of impactful programs and resources that support the critical needs of our military and veterans.

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