



## **Vice Admiral Michelle J. Howard, USN**

### **Deputy Commander, United States Fleet Forces Command**

Vice Admiral Howard is a 1978 graduate of Gateway High School in Aurora, Colorado. She graduated from the United States Naval Academy in 1982 and from the Army's Command and General Staff College in 1998, with a Masters in Military Arts and Sciences.

Howard's initial sea tours were aboard USS *Hunley* (AS 31) and USS *Lexington* (AVT 16). While serving on board *Lexington*, she received the secretary of the Navy/Navy League Captain Winifred Collins award in May 1987. This award is given to one woman officer a year for outstanding leadership. She reported to USS *Mount Hood* (AE 29) as chief engineer in 1990 and served in Operations *Desert Shield* and *Desert Storm*. She assumed duties as first lieutenant on board the USS *Flint* (AE 32) in July 1992. In January 1996, she became the executive officer of USS *Tortuga* (LSD 46) and deployed to the Adriatic in support of Operation *Joint Endeavor*, a peacekeeping effort in the former Republic of Yugoslavia. Sixty days after returning from the Mediterranean deployment, *Tortuga* departed on a West African training cruise, where the ship's Sailors, with embarked Marines and U.S. Coast Guard detachment, operated with the naval services of seven African nations.

She took command of USS *Rushmore* (LSD 47) on March 12, 1999, becoming the first African American woman to command a ship in the U.S. Navy. Howard was the commander of Amphibious Squadron Seven from May 2004 to September 2005. Deploying with Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) 5, operations included tsunami relief efforts in Indonesia and maritime security operations in the North Arabian Gulf. She commanded Expeditionary Strike Group Two from April 2009 to July 2010. In 2009, she deployed to CENTCOM theater, where she commanded Task Force 151, Multi-national Counter-piracy effort, and Task Force 51, Expeditionary Forces. In 2010, she was the Maritime Task Force commander for BALTOPS, under 6th Fleet.

Her shore assignments include: J-3, Global Operations, Readiness, Joint Staff from 2001-2003; executive assistant to the Joint Staff director of Operations from February 2003 to February 2004; deputy director N3 on the OPNAV staff from December 2005 to July 2006, deputy director, Expeditionary Warfare Division, OPNAV staff from July 2006 to December 2006, senior military assistant to the secretary of the Navy from January 2007 to January 2009, and chief of staff to the director for Strategic Plans and Policy, J-5, Joint Staff from August 2010 to July 2012 .

She currently serves as deputy commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command.