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Center for Homeland Defense and Security

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Thirty-two earn security master's degrees from Naval Postgraduate School Center for Homeland Defense and Security

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Thirty-two professionals were awarded a [Master of Arts in Security Studies](#) during a ceremony at the Naval Postgraduate School Center for Homeland Defense and Security March 27.

The graduates comprise professionals from law enforcement, fire safety, homeland security, the military and public health. The first program in the nation of its kind, CHDS provides a cutting-edge, multi-disciplinary curriculum in its 18-month master's degree program. Graduates are required to write [theses](#) pertinent to their employing agencies.

Three students earned special honors:

- Captain John Milby of the Douglas County (Nevada) Sheriff's Office earned the Outstanding Thesis Award for his thesis, "[Preempting Mass Murder: Improving Law Enforcement Risk Assessments of Persons with Mental Illness.](#)" Theses were evaluated on: overall academic rigor; quality of the literature review; impact of the study on homeland security strategy and future research implications; quality of analysis and conclusions; quality of organization, writing and overall presentation of thesis.

- Gerilee Bennett of FEMA's Office of Response and Recovery earned the Curtis H. "Butch" Straub Award, which is based on grades, thesis and classroom leadership. The honor is in memory of one of CHDS' founders. This award is based on grades, thesis and classroom leadership.
- Detective Robert Runnels of the Los Angeles Police Department earned the Philip Zimbardo Award. This award honors a student who demonstrates the best understanding of the psychological aspects of terrorism and whose performance in the master's program best embodies the highest levels of academic achievement and outstanding leadership. The honor is named after Stanford University psychologist and professor emeritus Philip Zimbardo, who also formerly taught at CHDS.

Some 334 graduates from 17 countries earned advanced degrees during the ceremony in King Hall on the NPS campus. Retired Navy Cmdr. Everett Alvarez Jr. delivered the commencement address. Alvarez, a graduate of NPS' Department of Operations Research, was also inducted into the NPS Hall of Fame.

CHDS graduates include:

- Major Amy Bonanno, New York Army National Guard
- Gerilee Bennett, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Washington, D.C
- Jason Biermann, Snohomish County Department of Emergency Management, Everett, Washington
- Christa Brzozowski, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Washington, D.C.
- Chief Reginald Chappelle, California Highway Patrol, San Luis Obispo, California
- Assistant Fire Chief Philip A. Cocker, Los Angeles County Fire Department
- Jesse Cooper, Phoenix Police Department
- Captain John DeRousse, Everett Police Department, Washington
- Roxanne Pinaula Diaz, Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature, Saipan
- Thomas Dobson, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, Lee's Summit, Missouri
- Captain Anthony Douthitt, Tulsa Fire Department, Oklahoma
- Lieutenant Ryan Fields-Spack, city of Aurora Fire Department, Colorado
- Captain Frank Forman, Los Angeles County Fire Department
- Anja Freudenthal, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, California
- Lieutenant Brendan Gillen, New York City Fire Department
- Lieutenant James A. Hanlon, Massachusetts State Police
- William Hayes, Westchester Intelligence Center, White Plains, New York
- Lori R. Hodges; Larimer County Government, Fort Collins, Colorado
- Battalion Chief Jaime Lesinski; Los Angeles Fire Department, California
- Deputy Chief Michael McLaughlin New York City Fire Department
- Captain John Milby, Douglas County Sheriff's Office, Nevada
- Timothy Mulvihill, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, Chicago, Illinois
- Jeffrey Murray, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Albuquerque, New Mexico
- Andrew Natoli, New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services
- David O'Leary, U.S. Department of Homeland Security; Washington, D.C.
- Detective Robert Runnels, Los Angeles Police Department, California

- Keith Schenkel, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Phoenix, Arizona
- Lisa Schoenthal, California Emergency Medical Services Authority, Rancho Cordova
- Justin Schumacher, Oregon Health Authority, Pendleton, Oregon
- Karen Sims, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Washington, D.C.
- Fire Chief Randall Talifarro, city of East Lansing and city of Lansing, Michigan
- Valli Wasp, New Mexico Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, Santa Fe

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