



HII DefenseTech

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Captain Randy C. Cruz

Commanding Officer, U.S. Naval Research Laboratory



Captain Randy C. Cruz assumed command of the U.S. Naval Research Laboratory as the 43rd commanding officer in June 2025.

He is a native of Pittsburg, California, and graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1997 with a Bachelor of Science degree in systems engineering. After commissioning, Cruz completed flight training in Pensacola, Florida, and chose to fly the E-2C Hawkeye, earning his wings of gold as a Naval Flight Officer in May 1999. He earned a Master of Science degree in aviation systems from the University of Tennessee and a Master of Business Administration degree from the University of California, Los Angeles.

His operational assignments include tours with Carrier Airborne Command and Control Squadron VAW-113 Black Eagles as a junior officer with VAW-112 Goldenhawks as a department head, and he has had the privilege of leading the VAW-117 Wallbangers as the executive and commanding officer.

A graduate of TOPGUN and the United States Naval Test Pilot School (USNTPS), he conducted developmental flight tests and managed numerous avionics and aircraft projects and programs, to include E-2C Foreign Military Sales for Taiwan and Egypt. He orchestrated the manpower, facilities, and training efforts to bring the game-changing E-2D Advanced Hawkeye to initial operational capability.

Shore and staff tours include duty as a project officer conducting development test flights at VX-20 in Patuxent River, a Tomahawk Land Attack Missile (TLAM) senior mission planner at NAVCENT, Kingdom of Bahrain, an advanced weapons and tactics instructor (WTI) at the Naval Strike and Air Warfare Center, and as the director for integrated air and missile defense at Tactical Training Group Pacific, Point Loma, California.

Cruz was selected by the NASA administrator to serve as his senior advisor in 2018. As the senior advisor, Cruz advised NASA leadership on all matters, to include aerospace and aeronautic operations, infrastructure, foreign and legislative affairs, communications, and risk management, allowing the safe launching of American astronauts on American rockets from American soil.

In 2021, he reported and served as executive assistant to the Chief of Naval Research and as the Assistant Chief of Naval Research.

Cruz has accumulated over 2,900 hours in 20 different aircraft and over 400 carrier arrested landings. His personal decorations include the Navy and Marine Corps Association Leadership Award, the Legion of Merit, the Meritorious Service Medal (five awards), the Strike/Flight Air Medal (three awards), the Navy Commendation Medal (four awards), the Naval Achievement Medal (two awards), and various unit and individual awards.