



**Captain  
Valerie K. Smith**

HMH-465, MAG-16,  
3D MAW

## MARINE AVIATOR OF THE YEAR

*For professional achievement in the superior performance of her duties as CH-53E Helicopter Aircraft Commander, HMH-465, MAG-16, 3D MAW from 1 January to 31 December 2019. Captain Smith completed over 225 flight hours and 175 sorties, while carrying over 400 passengers and 250,000 pounds of cargo. As the Pilot Training Officer and Weapons and Tactics Instructor, she instructed over 100 Training and Readiness codes, which contributed to the accomplishment of over 80 advanced qualifications and designations for pilots and aircrew. Furthermore, she demonstrated her expertise in pre-flight planning and superior judgment while acting as the Assault Flight Lead for an external-lift involving an 11,000 pound AH-1Z helicopter located on a remote island situated over 34 miles from Okinawa, Japan. She conducted the first forward arming and refueling point operations with the F-35B Joint Strike Fighter in the Pacific Theater. Captain Smith's superior performance, outstanding leadership, and steadfast devotion to duty reflected great credit upon herself and upheld the highest traditions of the United States Marine Corps and the United States Naval Service.*

### ALFRED A. CUNNINGHAM AWARD



*Established in honor of Lieutenant Colonel Alfred A. Cunningham, the first Marine aviator, by the First Marine Aviation Veterans' Association for the most outstanding contribution to Marine aviation by a Marine aviator.*

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