

Richard C. Asher
Deputy Director of Ocean Engineering
Supervisor of Salvage and Diving
Naval Sea Systems Command, Retired



- Richard Asher graduated from Florida Atlantic University in 1967 in their first class in Ocean Engineering.
- He started his career at the Atlantic Undersea Test and Evaluation Center in the Bahamas and on several Navy programs tested in St. Croix.
- He was heavily involved in the design, construction and operation of the R/V ALCOA SEAPROBE, which was an aluminum deep-sea research ship capable of recovering up to 1 million-pound objects from water depths to 18,000 feet. He supported numerous ocean engineering projects on that platform around the world.
- He worked on the development and operational implementation of a process to ensure that explosions were avoided on super tankers when they were being cleaned in preparation for dry-docking. This process was developed after several tankers exploded. Gulf Oil Corporation used the process for years.
- He managed the development and fabrication of the first commercial 1500-foot saturation diving system for Ocean Systems, Inc. and supervised the installation of that system on an oil drilling ship in Singapore.
- He joined the Navy as a civilian in 1977 where he supported and managed several underwater range installations at St. Croix and Ft. Lauderdale. The range in Ft. Lauderdale remained in operation for more than 20 years and set new standards for precision in underwater construction.
- He then moved to SUPSALV where he held the position of Deputy Director of Ocean Engineering and Supervisor of Salvage and Diving until his retirement in 2006.
- At SUPSALV, he has been involved in numerous ocean engineering projects including

- response to the EXXON VALDEZ oil spill where his staff, personnel and equipment were responsible for recovering more than 50% of the total oil recovered.
- he built up and sustained unique Navy capabilities that enhanced the nation's seapower and responsiveness during times of peace, conflict and natural disaster.
- his dynamic program leadership ensured on-demand capability to locate/recover downed aircraft in depths to 20,000 feet, enabling vital investigations that saved future lives and aircraft.
- he led in development of systems that formed the backbone of deep-water salvage: DEEP DRONE, ORION, CURV III and a Fly-Away Deep Ocean Salvage System. These systems have been involved in the salvage of over 100 deep-water objects including a Marine Corps helicopter in 17,230 feet depth off Wake Island.
- his foresight helped establish DoD's ongoing program of world-class heavy-lift asset utilization.
- under his program leadership, underwater ship husbandry techniques enhanced fleet and battlegroup readiness/effectiveness. The Navy is now able to make waterborne repairs to most ship and submarine classes using special tools and divers thereby saving significant resources including time and money.
- he provided the seasoned leadership and continuity to execute high-profile salvage operations – Air India 747, South African Airways 747, United Airlines 747, Dominican Republic 757, TWA Flight 800, AeroPeru Flight 603, ValuJet DC-9, Swissair MD-11, Egypt Air 767, Alaska Air MD-80, EHIME MARU, space shuttles CHALLENGER and COLUMBIA, USS MISSISSINEWA and efforts to rescue Russian sailors from the mini-sub PRIZ – operations that drew favorable media attention and praise from the NTSB, FBI, Congress, the White House and foreign governments.
- he coordinated programmatic elements of research, development and construction for a new Submarine Rescue Diving Recompression System that will revolutionize submarine rescue procedures for the US Navy.
- under his leadership the Navy regained valuable saturation diving capability, as well as maintained a network of salvage/pollution response equipment depots that proved invaluable in major incidents such as EXXON VALDEZ and in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.
- he was critical to the Navy's response to hurricanes Katrina and Rita by mobilizing and directing personnel and equipment for the largest salvage operation in history. He spent significant time in New Orleans working on the salvage of hundreds of ships and craft that blocked the waterways.
- he was one of two finalists in the first Environment, Science and Technology category of the Service to America Medals awards program presented by the Partnership for Public Service. This awards program was created by the Partnership for Public Service, Government Executive, National Journal and The Atlantic Monthly to recognize excellence in the federal government.
- he received the Navy's Distinguished Service Medal presented by the Secretary of the Navy for his accomplishments which had Navy-wide, DoD-wide and national impact over his Navy career.