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# Florida Water Resources JOURNAL

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*Salute to Veterans in the Water and Wastewater Industry*

**Water Treatment**





Christopher I. Moss.

## Meet Christopher Isaiah Moss: Operations Group Shift Lead at Tampa Bay Water, Iraq and Afghanistan War Veteran, and Recipient of 2021 A.P. Black Award

Marta Madigan and Jay Madigan

Celebrating National Veterans and Military Families Month, we sat down with Christopher I. Moss, 39, whose family members served in the military fighting in every war since the Revolutionary War.

Before settling in Florida, Moss traveled the world, from New Jersey to Germany, Iraq, Afghanistan, and 20 other countries. Water meandered through each stop on his path, which began in Paterson, N.J., famous for its roaring Great Falls of the Passaic River. After joining the military in 2000, he became an Army water treatment specialist conducting water operations in Europe and Asia. Moss transitioned to his civilian career in water in 2016, the same year he retired from the Army.

This year, he received a bachelor's degree in water resources management from Florida Gateway College. On November 30, he will present his first paper, "Turn the Tide: Veterans and the Future of Water," at the FSAWWA Fall Conference in Orlando.

**Marta and Jay: You wear a cuff bracelet on your left wrist. Is there a story behind it?**

Christopher: I wear this band to honor one of my sisters in arms, Staff Sgt. LaQuita Shree Robinson, who passed away while in service. She was also a water treatment operator. Throughout my time in the service, I have lost several brothers and sisters. I try every day to provide the best quality water to honor them.

**You are a water operator. Where do you work?**

I have been employed at Tampa Bay Water since 2018. I have been an operations group shift lead there since October 2020.

**You sit in front of two large computer screens. Is all of your work computerized?**

As the operations lead the bulk of my daily duties requires me work on the computer. Ordering chemicals, monitoring supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA), completing daily reports, purchasing equipment, supervising operators, checking water quality, approving payments to vendors—the list goes on. Plus, every operator does some type of manual labor. Some days, it can be light; other days are heavier.

**Let's go back in time. You are from Paterson, New Jersey. Tell us about your hometown.**

Growing up in Paterson, I learned that my city was known for a lot of history. Paterson is the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution here

in the United States, promoted by Alexander Hamilton. His use of the Great Falls, one of the largest waterfalls in the country, is why they called Paterson "Silk City." It's also home to the boxer Rubin "Hurricane" Carter. In short, there is a lot of water and history in this town.

**When did your adventure with water begin, professionally?**

My water career began when I received orders to change my profession in the Army and to report to training in Fort Lee, Virginia, in 2004. A year later, I was in Iraq for a 12-month tour, then again in 2008 to 2009. Just a few months after I returned from Iraq, I went to Afghanistan. Germany was my home station for 12 years of my military career.

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Christopher I. Moss with Lt. Gen. Jack Stultz, Commander of U.S. Reserves Forces in Afghanistan.  
(photo: courtesy of Chris Moss)





Chris with his wife, Monica, and daughter, Rosa.

## Water Falls

*By Jim Jarmusch, from  
his 2016 movie "Paterson."*

Water falls from bright air  
It falls like hair  
Falling across a young girl's  
shoulders  
Water falls  
Making pools in the asphalt  
Dirty mirrors with clouds and  
buildings inside  
It falls on the roof of my house  
It falls on my mother and on my hair  
Most people call it rain.



Chris with his daughter, Rosa.

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**You were an Army water treatment specialist working alongside and training soldiers from other countries. What did you learn in the Army and how did it help you to transition to civilian life?**

I have conducted water operations in Germany, Poland, Iraq, and Afghanistan. The Army gave me many skills, including team building, conflict resolution, personnel management, ways on improvising to complete a task, and leadership. I learned how to successfully multitask.

**Are there many veteran operators?**

I have worked with several operators who are veterans in our industry. I would like to see more veterans working in water in the future.

**What does it take to transition from an Army water operator to a civilian water operator?**

The path of transition is not a direct route. People will generally consider military experience; however, there are specific requirements for each state certification. To become a licensed operator, 2080 hours of contact time or work experience are required. There is no policy yet in place in Florida that will help veterans with this process. As an American Water Works Association (AWWA) veteran liaison for the Tampa Bay area, I am working together with a team from every Florida Section AWWA region in the state to move forward with

an initiative that will bring veterans and hiring managers on the same page.

**Has anything changed in Tampa Bay Water since COVID-19?**

We adapted quickly to COVID changes. As a result, we were able to keep supplying water to our valued customers. One change was to keep social distancing.

**Thinking about the future, how can we protect utilities from hacking?**

Operation security, or OPSSEC, which is the military term, is crucial to the water industry. With the innovation of technology, preventing hacking is very important to providing safe drinking water to protect public health. I believe a closer partnership with information technology (IT) departments will help prevent hacking, as IT is no longer just the division that fixes computer issues and resets your password. It's a critical part of how we defend against terrorist attacks. Educating those in the water industry of this will help prevent hacking; not being complacent is another way.

**Congratulations on receiving the 2021 A.P. Black Award in the water treatment operator category. What's next?**

The FSAWWA Fall Conference. On November 30, at 9:40 a.m., I will present a paper on veterans and the future of water. It will outline how the experience of a veteran's return to civilian life can both benefit from and serve the urgent needs of the water industry. If you are

a vet reading this, please show up. Let's fill that room. You too can help tell our story.

**You have a 3-year-old daughter. What can you do to make sure she has an abundance of clean water when she grows up?**

Her name is Rosa or, as I like to call her, Lady Moss. This is one of the reasons I have elected to pursue a master's degree in water resources policy and management at East Central University. Throughout the country there is a challenge in sustaining water and making sure we will be able to meet future water demands. I hope to contribute to improving water efficiency and quality for the future.

Thank you Chris and your brothers and sisters in arms for your service!

*Marta Madigan pens articles about local and ethnic foods. She's contributed words and photos to Edible Orlando magazine for nearly a decade, previously working for the Polish edition of National Geographic. Jay Madigan serves as chair of the FSAWWA Membership Engagement and Development Council. He volunteers as executive director of the Lake Cane Restoration Society, a nonprofit dedicated to protecting Florida's raw water resources. He owns the for-profit JJMadigan LLC facilitating excellence of local and international, and public and private, water organizations.*

*Three photos of Moss and his family by Richard Lowe (evodesignphoto.com)*