

Changes of Command

Spring 2022

provided by unit Public Affairs Officers

Marine Helicopter Squadron One (HMX-1)

Col Robert B. Fanning relinquished his duties as the Commanding Officer of Marine Helicopter Squadron One (HMX-1) to Col Bradley J. Harms, during a Change of Command ceremony at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia on Dec 9, 2021. During the ceremony, Col Fanning thanked everyone who contributed to the success of HMX-1 under his command. “Each day I was inspired by the level of professionalism and dedication our HMX-1 personnel displayed to complete our mission,” said Col Fanning. HMX-1’s missions include worldwide transportation for the President of the United States, transportation within the National Capital Region for the Vice President of the United States, members of the President’s Cabinet, and visiting heads of state.

Training Squadron 21 (VT-21) “Redhawks”

The “Redhawks” of VT-21 held a Change of Command ceremony aboard USS Lexington (CV-16), Dec 17 as CDR Matthew Starr relieved CDR Christopher Glandon as Commanding Officer. CDR William Rietveld assumed the duty of Executive Officer for the training squadron. “Ladies and gentlemen, I am here to tell you that this country still produces men and women of high caliber and character,” CDR Glandon said. “They are in the ranks behind you today. The Redhawks who have chosen aviation could have been doctors, lawyers, politicians, corporate executives, you name it. After three years of leading them, I know they share those same qualities of leadership and talent”.

Air Test and Evaluation Squadron Nine (VX-9) “Vampires”

VX-9 held an aerial Change of Command ceremony above Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake, March 10. During the change of command event, CAPT Todd Zentner assumed duties and responsibilities as the Commanding Officer of VX-9 from CAPT William McCombs whose command began in 2021. “I had the privilege of joining this squadron exactly four years ago. During this tour I have witnessed amazing things from Vampires. Your demonstrated expertise, hard work, and sweat is essential to ensuring our Warfighters can launch off the pointy end of the boat on dark nights, and fly into battle with confidence,” said CAPT McCombs.

NAS Pensacola

CAPT Terrence Shashaty assumed Command of Naval Air Station (NAS) Pensacola from CAPT Tim Kinsella during a Change of Command ceremony Jan 13 at the National Naval Aviation Museum. CAPT Kinsella served as the Commanding Officer since March 2019 and led the base following a terrorist attack that resulted in the death of three Sailors and injured eight individuals, a global pandemic that threatened the mission of NAS Pensacola, and a category II hurricane that caused extensive damages to the installation. “NAS Pensacola faced some difficult challenges over the past few years, but I am so proud of how everyone on base, active duty service members and civilian employees alike, came together and faced these challenges head on with grit and determination,” said CAPT Kinsella.

Changes of Command

Spring 2022

Carrier Air Wing Seven (CVW-7) “Freedom Fighters”

CVW-7 completed a Change of Command at NAS Key West, Boca Chica Field on Dec 14 where CAPT Thomas Bodine relieved CAPT Nathan Ballou during an airborne ceremony featuring an F/A-18E Super Hornet. CAPT Ballou joined the CVW-7 “Freedom Fighters” as Deputy Air Wing Commander in 2019 prior to completing a record-setting 295 day around-the-world deployment aboard USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN-72), and took command in July 2020 to lead CVW-7 in their integration with USS George H.W. Bush (CVN-77) in preparation for an upcoming deployment. “Freedom Fighter Family, thank you for an absolutely fantastic tour. Serving with each of you has been an honor and a privilege,” said CAPT Ballou.

Helicopter Maritime Strike 78 (HSM-8) “Blue Hawks”

The “Blue Hawks” of Helicopter Maritime Strike (HSM) 78 welcomed a new Commanding Officer, CDR Justin Eckhoff, as he relieved CDR Jeremiah Ragadio, during a Change of Command fly-over of USS Carl Vinson (CVN-70), Nov 29. CDR Ragadio assumed command of the “Blue Hawks” in September 2020, and beginning June 2021 led the squadron through a pre-deployment workup training cycle and into real-world contingency operations, including a current Western Pacific Deployment. “Leading the ‘Blue Hawks’ over these past 15 months, especially at sea where it matters the most, has been one of the greatest honors of my life,” said CDR Ragadio.

Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 25 (HSC-25) “Island Kings”

CDR James “Moose” Moore relieved CDR Thomas “Smokey” Butts as Commanding Officer of Guam-based HSC-25, Feb 17. CDR Butts commanded HSC 25 from November 2019 to February 2022. The ceremony featured a flyby with an aerial Change of Command followed by an in-person ceremony attended by immediate family, HSC-25 and key personnel. “I know you all left it out in the field and brought your best every single day, thank you. The “Island Knights” were always ready to fight!” said CDR Butts. CAPT Edward Weiler, Commodore, Helicopter Sea Combat Wing U.S. Pacific Fleet, presided over the ceremony. “HSC 25 operates in one of the most challenging environments at the highest optempo. The accolades the Squadron has achieved and earned are countless,” said CAPT Weiler.

Airborne Command and Control Squadron 121 (VAW-121) “Blue Tails”

VAW-121 held a Change of Command ceremony aboard NAS Norfolk January 7 as CDR Robert Whitmore assumed all duties and responsibilities as Commanding Officer from CDR Neil Fletcher. During his time at VAW-121 and Carrier Air Wing 7 (CVW-7), CDR Fletcher transferred the squadron to USS George H.W. Bush (CVN-77) and transitioned all assigned aircraft to the inflight-refueling capable E-2D Advanced Hawkeye. “In 2021, we seized opportunities to sharpen our sword – successfully employing aerial refueling for the first time and integrating the state-of-the-art technology and war fighting capability of the newest E-2D aircraft,” CDR Fletcher said.

Changes of Command

Spring 2022

Training Air Wing 5 (TW-5)

CAPT Jade Lepke relieved Col. Jeffrey Pavelko as Commodore of Training Air Wing 5 in a ceremony on board NAS Whiting Field, Florida, March 18. “The past three years have been the opportunity of a lifetime to serve at NAS Whiting Field as the Deputy and then the Commodore of Training Air Wing Five. It’s been great to be part of a tremendous team that has passion for their profession,” Col Pavelko said. The ceremony’s guest speaker was Rear Admiral Robert Westendorff, Chief of Naval Air Training (CNATRA). “Col Pavelko has been an outstanding leader during his tenure at TW-5, capitalizing on opportunities to modernize training and safely execute the primary mission of training future military leaders and combat aviators,” said Rear Admiral Westendorff.

Carrier Air Wing 5 (CVW-5) “Team Badman”

CAPT Brennan Sweeney relieved CAPT Adrian Calder as Commander, Carrier Air Wing Five (CVW-5) on Feb 14. CVW-5 is forward-deployed to MCAS Iwakuni, Japan and embarks aboard the USS Ronald Reagan (CVN-76). CAPT Calder took command on Nov 6, 2020 and led “Team Badman” through a deployment to the U.S. 5th and 7th Fleets. During their time in U.S. 5th Fleet, CVW-5 provided air support for U.S. troops and over 7,000 evacuees during the largest non-combatant evacuation operation in history, in support of Operations Allies Refuge and Freedom Sentinel. While under CAPT Calder’s leadership, CVW-5 participated alongside partners from France, Germany, India, Japan, Netherlands, Oman, Pakistan, and the United Kingdom, and in multiple multi-carrier operations in the Arabian and Philippine Seas with Carrier Strike Group 21 (CSG-21) and HMS Queen Elizabeth, as well as with the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) helicopter destroyer JS Ise (DDH 182) and the USS Carl Vinson (CVN-70) CSG.

Training Squadron 4 (VT-4) “Warbucks”

VT-4 Change of Command was held on 21 April where CDR Joshua P. Goodin relieved CDR Brett A. Whorley in a ceremony held at the National Museum of Naval Aviation, NAS Pensacola.

Strike Fighter Squadron 131 (VFA-131) “Wildcats”

The “Wildcats” of Strike Fighter Squadron 131 (VFA-131), stationed at NAS Oceana, Virginia, held an aerial Change of Command ceremony on Dec 2 where CDR Erin E. Flint assumed the duties and responsibilities of Commanding Officer from CDR Samuel P. Morrison. During CDR Samuel P. Morrison’s time at VFA-131, the “Wildcats” were part of back-to-back deployments aboard USS Dwight D. Eisenhower, and VFA-131 was the East Coast Strike Fighter Squadron Battle ‘E’ Award recipient for fiscal year 2021. . “Naval Aviation is the ultimate team sport,” said CDR Morrison, continuing, “The ‘Wildcats’ are an incredible team. It takes everyone within the squadron, from the most junior to the most senior, to accomplish that kind of maintenance, administrative and operational success during the year.”

USS Wasp (LHD-1)

CAPT Nakia Cooper assumed the helm of amphibious assault ship USS Wasp (LHD-1) from CAPT Kevin Zayac, Mar 11 during a Change of Command ceremony held in Norfolk in the ship's hangar bay. CAPT Zayac began his naval career in 1997 when he attended and graduated from Officer Candidate School, Pensacola, FL, and then went on to become a Naval Aviator. During his farewell speech, CAPT Zayac told the crew, “I will

Changes of Command

Spring 2022

USS America (LHA-6)

CAPT Ken Ward turned over command of the forward-deployed USS America (LHA-6) to CAPT Shockey Snyder on April 7 in a ceremony held on the ship's flight deck, with CAPT Greg Baker, Commodore of Amphibious Squadron 11, presiding. CAPT Ward's tour included major exercises and operations for America and embarked elements of the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, including *Talisman Sabre 21* (TS 21) and *Large Scale Global Exercise 21* (LSGE 21), as well as bilateral cooperative deployments with the JMSDF, the Royal Australian Navy, the Royal Netherlands Navy, and the UK Royal Navy. "The pace has been fast and furious, and I've asked a lot of the folks assembled in ranks here today ... but you rose to the occasion and exceeded expectations at every turn," said CAPT Ward.

Strike Fighter Squadron 102 (VFA-102) "Diamondbacks"

The "Diamondbacks" of Strike Fighter Squadron 102 (VFA-102) held a Change of Command ceremony on MCAS Iwakuni, Mar 8 where CDR Timothy "Sparky" Charlebois assumed all duties and responsibilities as Commanding Officer from CDR Daniel "Bunny" O'Hara. CDR O'Hara took command in October, 2020 and led the "Diamondbacks" through a deployment into the 5th and 7th Fleet Areas of Responsibility. While on deployment, the "Diamondbacks" supported Operations *Freedom's Sentinel* and *Allies Refuge* in support of the withdrawal of U.S. Forces from Afghanistan. "It has been an honor and the privilege of a lifetime to lead the finest fighter squadron in the U.S. Navy," said CDR O'Hara.

Changes of Command

Fall 2021 - Winter 2022

provided by unit Public Affairs Officers

Carrier Strike Group EIGHT (CSG-8)

RADM Ryan Scholl was relieved by RADM Curt Renshaw as Commander, Carrier Strike Group EIGHT (CSG-8), during a Change of Command ceremony held aboard the USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75), Aug 26. "To come back to sea with the Truman as the flagship was like coming home," said RADM Scholl. "The commitment and warrior spirit I have seen from these Sailors across the Strike Group continues to amaze me, and I know they will do great things for our Navy and our great nation."

USS Harry S. Truman (CVN-75)

CAPT Kavon Hakimzadeh was relieved by CAPT Gavin Duff as Commanding Officer of USS Harry S. Truman (CVN-75) at a Change for Command ceremony held Friday August 27 at NS Norfolk, VA, with RDML Ryan Scholl (CSG-8) as the guest speaker. "As we operate in these dynamic times, the Navy needs brilliant leaders like CAPT Hakimzadeh," said RDML Scholl. "With his focus on leadership and dedication to the mission, he has made a lasting positive impression on the Truman and the Strike Group as a whole."

Carrier Air Wing 8 (CVW-8)

Carrier Air Wing 8 (CVW-8) held an airborne Change of Command ceremony on Sept 30 onboard NAS Oceana, VA that saw CAPT Joshua A. Sager relinquish duties as Commander, CVW-8 to CAPT Daryl E. Trent. "In a little over a year, during COVID, our Air Wing detached 17 times across the country or out to sea, moving multiple squadrons and thousands of personnel. This Air Wing completed all tasking on time and with unparalleled results," said CAPT Sager in his remarks to the crowd.

Strike Fighter Squadron 37 (VFA-37) "Ragin' Bulls"

The "Ragin' Bulls" of Strike Fighter Squadron 37 (VFA-37) held a Change of Command ceremony on Oct 14 as CDR Patrick B. Bookey, assumed duties and responsibilities from CDR Jason S. Tarrant. "It's bittersweet. What we do in the military is we stay in some place for two, three, four years and then we form bonds and we have shared experiences," said CDR Tarrant, continuing, "You'll always have those memories and those shared experiences. That's what I will cherish walking away from this tour."

Carrier Air Wing 17 (CVW-17)

CAPT Christopher Hurst relieved CAPT Todd Cimicata, of Command of Carrier Air Wing 17 (CVW-17) during an airborne Change of Command ceremony onboard Naval Air Station Lemoore on December 16. CAPT Cimicata led CVW-17 on a successful and record-breaking 11-month deployment aboard USS NIMITZ (CVN-68) from March 2020-February 2021. CVW-17 is currently attached to USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN-71), homeported in San Diego, CA. CVW-17 is presently composed of the VFA-22 "Redcocks", VFA-113 "Stingers", VFA-94 "Mighty Shrikes", VMFA-312 "Checkerboards", VAQ-139 "Cougars", VAW-116 "Sun Kings" - HSM-73 "Battlecats", and HSC-6 "Indians and is currently attached to USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN-71), homeported in San Diego, CA. CVW-17 is currently attached to USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN-71), homeported in San Diego, CA.

Training Squadron 31 (VT-31) "Wise Owls"

The "Wise Owls" of Training Squadron 31 (VT-31) held a Change of Command ceremony at NAS Corpus Christi involving aerial flyover and a ground-based ceremony segments, November 18. CDR Joseph Karaffa relieved CDR Quinn Rhodes as Commanding Officer of VT-31 by taking the lead of a formation flight. "I am honored to have led the Wise Owls for the past 14 and a half months," CDR Rhodes said. "All of VT-31's success is a testament to the hard work and dedication of my IPs (Instructor Pilots) and civilian staff — they truly represent the best of the Navy."

Changes of Command

Fall 2021 - Winter 2022

provided by unit Public Affairs Officers

Helicopter Mine Countermeasures Squadron (HM-12) “Sea Dragons”

CDR Andrea M. Ragusa assumed the duties and responsibilities of HM-12 Commanding Officer from CAPT Patrick J. Murphy at a Change of Command ceremony held aboard NS Norfolk, July 22, “It has been an honor to work with the team at HM-12,” said CAPT Murphy. “They have come together and accomplished every goal that was set before them.” CDR Ragusa stated “I am confident that the Sailors of HM-12 will continue to be the very best Fleet Replacement Squadron in the United States Navy.”

Training Air Wing 2 (TW-2)

Training Air Wing 2 (TW-2) held a Change of Command ceremony July 30 at the Officers Club aboard NAS Kingsville, Texas as CAPT Raymond “Pancho” Barnes relieved CAPT Brett “Ned” Lassen as TW-2 Commodore. Chief of Naval Air Training RDML Robert Westendorff, guest speaker for the ceremony, noted of CAPT Lassen’s tour, “You have ensured that the best and brightest Naval Aviators are ready to win when they are called upon. Thanks to you and your family as you wrap up a great tour here.”

Training Air Wing 6 (TW-6)

Training Air Wing 6 (TW-6) held a Change of Command ceremony at the National Naval Aviation Museum at NAS Pensacola, Aug 5. CAPT Kenneth “Muscle” Russell relieved CAPT Scott “Mongo” Janik as TW-6 Commodore, the Navy’s undergraduate Naval Flight Officer (NFO) Training Air Wing. “We have been through a dizzying time, with hurricanes, a pandemic, and a variety of other challenges that we had to overcome to accomplish our mission”, said CAPT Janik in his remarks.

Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC-3) “Merlins”

Commander Loren M. Jacobi relieved Captain William G. Eastham as Commanding Officer of HSC-3 during a Change of Command ceremony held at Naval Air Station North Island on August 12. As Commanding Officer, CAPT Eastham led HSC-3 Sailors through the COVID 19 pandemic, during which HSC-3 was instrumental in assisting with aerial firefighting operations aboard USS Bonhomme Richard (LHD-6), and exceeded CNATRA’s highest production goal in the Squadron’s history, totaling 76 Fleet Replacement Pilots and 72 Fleet Replacement Air Crewmen.

USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN-72)

CAPT Walt “Sarge” Slaughter was relieved by CAPT Amy Bauernschmidt as Commanding Officer of USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN-72) at a Change of Command ceremony held on the ship’s flight deck. Aug 19. “What these Sailors have been able to accomplish over the past two years is more than I could have ever expected from a crew,” said CAPT Slaughter. “From an extended deployment, to combatting a global pandemic, only to head into an incredibly demanding operational schedule, Lincoln Nation has stepped up and overcome every challenge in their path.”

Joint Forces Command and U.S. 2nd Fleet

Joint Force Command Norfolk and U.S. 2nd Fleet held a Change of Command ceremony aboard USS Harry S. Truman (CVN-75), Aug. 20 as VADM Andrew L. Lewis passed command to VADM Daniel W. Dwyer. “I cannot overstate the amount of work that goes into building two commands of this nature. Hundreds, if not thousands, of people have supported both Second Fleet and Joint Force Command Norfolk since establishment, and a ‘thank you’ is truly not enough,” said VADM Lewis in his remarks. Nation has stepped up and overcome every challenge in their path.”

Changes of Command