

Changes of Command

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provided by unit Public Affairs Officers

Carrier Strike Group 3 (CSG-3)

Rear Admiral J.T. Anderson was relieved by Rear Admiral Kevin Lenox as Commander, Carrier Strike Group 3 (CSG-3) during a Change of Command ceremony held on Naval Base Kitsap-Bremerton, Sept. 1. As Commander of CSG-3 from July 2021 to September 2022, Rear Admiral Anderson led more than 7,000 Sailors and Marines across three staffs, six ships and nine embarked Air Wing squadrons. He successfully led the Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group through Composite Training Unit Exercise and a seven-month deployment to U.S. 3rd and 7th Fleet Areas of Operations. Under his leadership, CSG-3 was the first to deploy with a U.S. Marine Corps F-35C Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter squadron aboard an aircraft carrier (VMFA-314), and the second to deploy with a Navy CMV-22 Osprey squadron; (VRM-30).

USS Ronald Reagan (CVN-76)

CAPT Fred Goldhammer passed command of the U.S. Navy's only forward-deployed aircraft carrier, USS Ronald Reagan (CVN-76), to CAPT Daryle Cardone during a Change of Command ceremony in the ship's hangar bay while underway in the Sea of Japan, Oct. 7. Keynote speaker, Vice Admiral Karl Thomas, Commander, U.S. 7th Fleet, expressed appreciation for Ronald Reagan's crew and for CAPT Goldhammer's leadership during his time as Commanding Officer. "Reagan is a good looking ship, but it is the Sailors that bring her to life," said VADM Thomas. "We ask a lot of our Sailors and families in Forward Deployed Naval Forces (FNDF) Japan. Not only do we ask you to be ready on a moment's notice, we often must change the plan, just like we did a few days ago when you sailed back into the Sea of Japan. That's what makes these magnificent ships such a flexible and powerful deterrent –you adapt to world events."

USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN-71)

USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN-71) held a Change of Command aboard ship Oct. 28 where CAPT Brian Schrum received command from CAPT Eric Anduze in a ceremony presided over by Vice Admiral Karl O. Thomas, Commander, U.S. 7th Fleet, with family, friends and other high-ranking officials, and officers in attendance. "I am ready to engage the challenges and celebrate the successes that lie ahead as Commanding Officer," said CAPT Schrum. "I will endeavor every day to lead this crew boldly and never forget my solemn responsibility to ensure the material and personnel readiness of this U.S. Navy warship. For when we are called to action, we must be ready, and we must respond. Our nation demands nothing less."

Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point

Col Mikel Huber relinquished command of MCAS Cherry Point to Col Brendan Burks during a Change of Command ceremony officially presided over by BrigGen Andrew Niebel, Marine Corps Installations East Commanding General, Aug. 5. Col Huber guided the air station through unique and unprecedented circumstances, providing continuous support to 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing and other tenant commands throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. BrigGen Niebel gave credit to Col Huber for having foresight in being in on planning and design of projects with Force Design impacts, such as the "purpose-built hangar" to facilitate unmanned aerial systems -- MQ-9 Reaper -- operations at MCAS Cherry Point.

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Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron 70 (HSM-70) "Saberhawks"

CDR Thaddeus Rusinek assumed command of HSM-70 from CDR Anthony J. Polo during a Change of Command ceremony onboard NAS Jacksonville on July 28. Under CDR Polo's leadership, HSM-70 scored 94% on their Organizational Maintenance Program Audit (OMPA) and sent out multiple detachments, with Detachment One operating in the 6th Fleet onboard the USS Gravelly (DDG-107) for just under 9 months, and the remainder of the Squadron called upon to support USS John C. Stennis (CVN-74) for F-18 and E-2 Carrier Qualifications. Other efforts included support for two Submarine Commanders Courses, for Exercise Trident Spectre, and Detachment Two preparing for deployment onboard USS Winston S. Churchill (DDG-81).

Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron 40 (HSM-40) "Airwolves"

CDR Justin Banz was relieved by CDR David Bizzarri during a Change of Command ceremony for the "Airwolves" of HSM-40 onboard Naval Station Mayport on Aug. 04. CDR Banz expressed his appreciation for the hard work of his Officers and Sailors during his tenure at HSM-40. "It has been a true pleasure working alongside you during these past 16 months. Every day, your efforts directly support the Fleet and serve as an example to Naval Aviation. Take pride in knowing your daily excellence builds upon the command's rich legacy and that your service matters!"

Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 3 (HSC-3) "Merlins"

The "Merlins" of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 3 (HSC-3) welcomed a new Commanding Officer during a Change of Command ceremony held aboard NAS North Island, Aug. 5, presided over by CAPT Edward Weiler, Commodore, Helicopter Sea Combat Wing, Pacific, as CAPT David Ayotte relieved CDR Loren Jacobi as the 46th Commanding Officer of HSC-3. "I'm honored to turn over command to my Naval Academy classmate, friend, and HSC community superstar Capt. Dave '3D' Ayotte," said CDR Jacobi, adding, "I look forward to seeing the "Merlins" continue to lead the HSC community during his command tour."

Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 5 (HSC-5) "Nightdippers"

CDR Erik "Gus" Gustafson relieved CDR Thomas "Princess" Van Hoozer as Commanding Officer of HSC-5 during an in-flight Change of Command Sept. 1, with CAPT Tomas Bodine, Commander, Carrier Air Wing 7 (CVW-7), presiding. "CDR Van Hoozer is leaving HSC-5 a better, more lethal fighting force," said CAPT Bodine, adding, "I have no doubt CDR Gustafson will further his predecessor's progress, and make the "Dippers", "Team Freedom", and the entire Strike Group a far more capable combat weapon system in the process." In his remarks CDR Van Hoozer stated, "Working alongside the men and women of HSC-5 and supporting their development has been the most rewarding tour of my career,"

Strike Fighter Squadron 86 (VFA-86) "Sidewinders"

CDR Daniel Krause relieved CDR Nelson "DC" Keyser as Commanding Officer of Strike Fighter VFA-86 during an in-flight Change of Command ceremony in the skies above USS George H.W. Bush (CVN-77) in the Adriatic Sea, Oct. 1, with CAPT Thomas Bodine, Commander, Carrier Air Wing 7 (CVW-7) presiding. "DC is a tremendous leader, aviator, and warrior. His vision and direction forged VFA-86 into a more lethal fighting force and I cannot thank him enough for his tremendous dedication to duty," said CAPT Bodine.

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U.S. Navy Flight Demonstration Squadron “Blue Angels”

The U.S. Navy Flight Demonstration Squadron, the “Blue Angels”, held a Change of Command ceremony Nov. 13 at the National Naval Aviation Museum at NAS Pensacola where CDR Alex Armatas relieved CAPT Brian Kesselring as the Commanding Officer of the U.S. Navy Flight Demonstration Squadron. “Serving alongside the phenomenal Sailors and Marines of the “Blue Angels” has been one of the greatest honors of my career,” said CAPT Kesselring in his remarks.

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Chief of Naval Air Training (CNATRA)

Rear Admiral Richard Brophy, Jr. relieved Rear Admiral Robert D. Westendorff as Chief of Naval Air Training (CNATRA) during a ceremony onboard USS Lexington (CV-16) in Corpus Christi Texas, July 19. Commander, U.S. Naval Air Forces Vice Admiral Kenneth Whitesell served as the presiding officer and guest speaker. He took a moment to acknowledge the venue of the ceremony and its historical significance to Naval Aviation. “This is a huge year for us with the Centennial of U.S. Navy Aircraft Carriers from 1922-2022 and there’s no more better place for us to be than USS Lexington,” said VADM Whitesell.

Carrier Strike Group 8 (CSG-8)

Rear Admiral Paul C. Spedero, Jr. relieved Rear Admiral Curt Renshaw as Commander, Carrier Strike Group 8 (CSG-8) during a Change of Command ceremony held in the hangar bay of USS Harry S. Truman (CVN-75), May 31. Rear Admiral Renshaw left this message: “It has truly been an honor to serve with this Strike Group and Staff, watching the group develop from the integrated training phase to a groundbreaking deployment,” adding, “This team has developed a deeper understanding of what it means to work with our European allies and partners, proving the inherent flexibility and mobility of Carrier Strike Groups in response to any crisis.”

Naval Air Facility El Centro

Naval Air Facility El Centro (NAFEC) held a Change of Command and Retirement Ceremony, May 10 where Captain Michael D. Lee relieved Captain William A. Perkins, who retired after 28 years of service. Guest speaker Rear Admiral Stephen Barnett, Commander, Navy Region Southwest (NRSW) spoke highly of CAPT Perkins and the crew and staff of NAFEC, “Team El Centro earned two awards for retention and three five star awards for the galley, was selected for the NRSW installation excellence award (small unit), and supported 208 U.S. and multi-national military detachments, encompassing over 1,500 aircraft and 29,000 personnel.” adding, “You make us proud.”

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Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 7 (HSC-7) “Dusty Dogs”

CDR Thomas Butts assumed all duties and responsibilities as the HSC-7 Commanding Officer from CDR Kevin Chambley onboard Naval Station Norfolk at a Change of Command ceremony Thursday, June 16th, during CDR Chambley’s time at HSC-7, the “Dusty Dogs” completed two back-to-back record-breaking deployments during a pandemic, with an unprecedented 206 continuous days at sea without any port calls. HSC-7 is currently starting another workup cycle in preparation for their next deployment. “This tour has been the highlight of my career, and I appreciate everyone’s hard work, dedication to mission success, and the outstanding culture that we have built,” CDR Chambley said in his remarks.

Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron 51 (HSM-51) “Warlords”

Commander M. E. Kawika Chang relieved Commander Timothy E. Rogers as the 25th Commanding Officer of the “Warlords” of Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron 51 (HSM-51) at a Change of Command ceremony held July 14, in the HSM-51 hangar bay on board Naval Air Facility (NAF) Atsugi in Ayase, Japan. CDR Rogers was honored for his service and successful tour in leading the “Warlords” by Commander, Helicopter Maritime Strike Wing, U.S. Pacific Fleet, CAPT Brannon S. Bickel.

Marine Aircraft Group 49 (MAG 49)

Marine Aircraft Group 49 held a change of command ceremony on 16 July, 2022, at Army Support Activity Fort Dix as Col Russell Rybka assumed Command of MAG 49 from Col Lonnie Cobb. “To the Marines of this Group, thank you for your unwavering commitment to excellence,” said Col Cobb. “To Col Rybka, they are poised to be taken to the next step and I’m excited to read reports of their continued improvements and success at my next assignment.”

Amphibious Squadron 6 (PHIBRON 6)

Captain Aaron Kelley relieved Captain David Guluzian as Commander of Kearsarge Amphibious Ready Group (KARG) and Commander of Amphibious Squadron 6 (PHIBRON 6) at a Change of Command ceremony aboard USS Kearsarge (LHD-3) held during a scheduled port visit in Stockholm, Sweden, June 3, 2022... MajGen Frank Donovan, Commanding General of the 2nd Marine Division and Commanding General, Task Force 61 Naval Amphibious Forces Europe/ 2d Marine Division (TF-61/2), was the presiding officer at the ceremony. “You produced a tough, resilient, and battle-ready amphibious force that has reassured allies and partners and deterred aggression while operating in the Norwegian, North, and Baltic Seas,” said MajGen Donovan regarding CAPT Guluzian’s leadership.

Amphibious Squadron 11 (PHIBRON 11)

Captain Greg E. Baker turned over Command of Amphibious Squadron 11 to Captain Kelly T. Fletcher in a ceremony aboard USS New Orleans (LPD-18), June 10. The ceremony was held in the ship’s hangar bay, with Rear Admiral Christopher M. Engdahl, Commander, Task Force 76, presiding. “This team, despite everything it had stacked against it, COVID or otherwise, did tremendous things across Seventh Fleet,” said CAPT Baker, adding “This team, combined with our partner nations, stands ready to defeat any aggressor or provide assistance anywhere in the region to those in need,” he added.

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USS George H.W. Bush (CVN-77)

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Captain David-Tavis M. Pollard relieved Captain George R. Aguilar as Commanding Officer of USS George H. W. Bush (CVN- 77), May 19. Rear Admiral Dennis Velez, Commander, Carrier Strike Group 10 (CSG-10) and Commander, George H.W. Bush CSG, presided over the ceremony. Rear Admiral Velez emphasized the importance of the capabilities the Aircraft Carrier brings to the Carrier Strike Group., stating “The mark of a strong team – the currency that really matters in the profession of arms – is trust.”

Electronic Attack Squadron 132 (VAQ-132) “Scorpions”

Commander Marcus “Oompa” Kephart was relieved by Commander James “Toadie” Charapich as the Commanding Officer of Electronic Attack Squadron 132 (VAQ-132) on 17 June 2022 During Commander Kephart’s tour with VAQ-132, the “Scorpions” received the Blue “H” and “M” awards for workplace health promotion policies, activities, and outcomes as well as the Battle Efficiency “E” Award and CNAF Safety “S” Award. “It was an absolute honor to have had the privilege of leading this amazing team over the past 15 months,” said CDR Kephart, adding, “Thank you, Scors, for your commitment to excellence. Continue to defend freedom and preserve dreams!”

Electronic Attack Squadron 140 (VAQ-140) "Gray Wolves"

Electronic Attack Squadron 142 (VAQ-142), "Gray Wolves," assigned to Carrier Air Wing 8 (CVW-8), held an airborne Change of Command Ceremony aboard USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN-78), April 14 where CDR Andrew Imperatore, was relieved by CDR. Andrew Thom as Commanding Officer. “Commander Imperatore is a passionate individual who has the ability to motivate people,” said CDR Thom, adding “He was very motivating and brought a group of Sailors toward a common purpose. I am excited to keep that up, and take the Squadron to the next step here on the USS Gerald R. Ford and CAG 8.”

Patrol Squadron 8 (VP-8) “Fighting Tigers”

The “Fighting Tigers” of Patrol Squadron 8 (VP-8) conducted an in-flight Change of Command ceremony over the skies of northern Japan. Change of Command aboard a P-8A Poseidon aircraft Japan, May 12, 2022, where CDR Matthew German relieved CDR Thomas Doran, becoming the 74th Commanding Officer of the “Fighting Tigers. CAPT James Imlah, Deputy Commander, Commander Task Force 72 (CTF-720, presided over the ceremony and awarded CDR Doran the Meritorious Service Medal on behalf of Commander, Patrol and Reconnaissance Group. “Despite the challenges and adversities, our Sailors have excelled in every aspect while making the VP-8 family stronger than before,” said CDR Doran.

Patrol Squadron 10 (VP-10) "Red Lancers"

CDR Marc Hines relieved CDR John Houston, becoming the 86th Commanding Officer of the "Red Lancers" of Patrol Squadron 10 (VP-10), during a Change of Command ceremony at NAS Jacksonville on May 6th. This ceremony marked the conclusion of a successful tour for CDR Houston. Over the course of his career, he accumulated over 2,600 flight hours in the P-3C Orion and P-8A Poseidon aircraft. While under CDR Houston’s command, VP-10 won the 2020 Battle “E”, the 2021 Safety “S” Award, and the VP Golden Wrench Award for Maintenance Excellence.

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Patrol Squadron 46 (VP-46) “Grey Knights”

The ‘Grey Knights’ of Patrol Squadron 46 (VP-46) welcomed a new Skipper during their Change of Command ceremony in Keflavik, Iceland, May 17 where CDR Frank P. Verducci III relieved CDR Joseph W. Snyder as the 87th Commanding Officer of VP-46 in the ceremony, presided over by CAPT Timothy Thompson, Commodore, Task Force 67. During his farewell speech, CDR Snyder praised the efforts of

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VP-46 and expressed his gratitude to the team. “Our legacy is known across this great community, and knowing that we serve a purpose greater than ourselves, it makes this squadron extraordinary.”

Training Squadron Six (VT-6) “Shooters”

CDR Stephen C. Harrington, USN relieved LtCol Jason N. Dale, USMC as the 58th Commanding Officer of the VT-6 “Shooters” in a ceremony at NAS Whiting Field, Apr. 22, 2021. During his time as Commanding Officer, LtCol Dale’s devoted emphasis on mission-focused, team-oriented training and a safety-first culture earned the “Shooters” the 2021 Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Safety Award. Serving as the Commanding Officer of VT-6 was Dale’s final tour after a successful career as a Marine aviator.

Training Squadron 27 (VT-27) “Boomers”

CDR Joseph Adams relinquished Command of the “Boomers” of Training Squadron 27 (VT-27) to CDR William Murphy in a ceremony aboard USS Lexington Museum on the Bay (CV-16) in Corpus Christi, May 5. Rear Admiral Scott Jones, Commander Naval Air Force Reserve; Deputy Commander, Naval Air Forces; Deputy Commander, Naval Air Forces, U.S. Pacific Fleet served as guest speaker, and CAPT Jeremy Rifas, Commodore, Training Air Wing 4 (TW-4) oversaw the transfer of command. “It’s my distinct honor to be here at the VT-27 Change of Command, as we continue this time-honored tradition of knocking off ship’s work, to make our spaces sparkle, put on our dress uniforms and celebrate the passing of Command from one Commander to the next,” Admiral Jones said.

Naval Air Station Sigonella, Italy

CAPT Aaron Shoemaker relieved CAPT Kevin Pickard Jr. as Commanding Officer, NAS Sigonella during a Change of Command ceremony onboard NAS Sigonella (Aeroporto Aeronautica Militare di Sigonella) on Thursday, April 29, 2022. Rear Admiral Scott Gray, Commander, Navy Region Europe, Africa, Southwest Asia (EURAFSWA) served as keynote speaker and praised Pickard for his hard work throughout his tenure, stating “Naval Air Station Sigonella has had quite a few unique challenges, and each time you and your team have risen to the occasion – I couldn’t be prouder of the work you all have done here.”

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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

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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

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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 forever be grateful to have served on this mighty warship, but most importantly to have served with all of you.”

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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

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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.

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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.”

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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”

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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.”

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,”

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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 “Mingo”

Changes of Command

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 Dleet 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."