

Changes of Command

Winter 2022 - Spring 2023

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Amphibious Squadron 1 (CPR-1)

CAPT Tate Robinson relieved CAPT DeWayne Sanders to become the 30th Commodore of Amphibious Squadron 1 (CPR-1) during a ceremony held on the flight deck aboard amphibious transport dock USS Portland (LPD-27) on November 17, 2022. Rear Admiral Wayne Baze, Commander, Expeditionary Strike Group 3 (ESG-3), presided over the ceremony and presented CAPT Sanders with a Legion of Merit before thanking the staff of CPR-1 for their hard work. "We're here today to celebrate DeWayne's great leadership and one of the nation's highest performing amphibious squadrons," said Rear Admiral Baze, "It's a team effort. To the Sailors and Marines of Amphibious Squadron 1, you've made your leadership proud, and your personal readiness to do your part makes a difference, whether you know it or not."

Marine Tiltrotor Squadron 268 (VMM-268) "Red Dragons"

LtCol Vanessa M. Clark relinquished command of Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 268 (VMM-268) to LtCol Brandon S. Pope in a Change of Command Ceremony December 8, 2022. LtCol Clark took Command of the squadron in December 2020, and successfully led the unit through numerous training events, a successful deployment as the Aviation Combat Element for Marine Rotational Force – Darwin 22.2, and the global COVID-19 pandemic. During her time in command, the squadron achieved 6,200 mishap-free flight hours covering 4,500 sorties while transporting over 6,800 passengers and 580,000 pounds of cargo in support of service-level initiatives. "To be a successful Squadron Commander, you have to be good at three things. You have to be a good pilot, good at your ground job, and a good person," said Col Manlee J. Herrington, Commanding Officer of Marine Aircraft Group 24 (MAG 24). "In these terms, LtCol Clark is all three."

USS Savannah (LCS-28) Blue Crew

Commander Daniel Sledz relieved Commander Kevin Ray as the Commanding Officer of littoral combat ship USS Savannah (LCS-28) Blue Crew at a Change of Command ceremony aboard the ship, December 16, 2022. While under CDR Ray's command, USS Savannah's crew moved aboard the ship at Austal USA's Gulf Coast shipyard in Mobile, AL, supported the ship's commissioning in Brunswick, GA, and sailed the ship to their homeport of Naval Base San Diego. Most recently, Savannah Blue crew conducted a mine warfare live-fire exercise off the coast of San Diego. "To the crew of Savannah – It was a pleasure working with each and every one of you and watching you grow together throughout this tour," said CDR Ray during his change of command. "I can't leave without saying it one last time, I appreciate you. As individuals, as Sailors, and as a crew." CDR Sledz, a native of Long Island, NY, previously served as the Executive Officer of USS Savannah and is a 2006 graduate of Purdue University.

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United States Naval Test Pilot School (USNTPS)

U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel Aaron Kia relieved U.S. Navy Commander Jeremy DeBons during an airborne Change of Command ceremony officiated by Naval Test Wing Atlantic Commodore, Captain Elizabeth Somerville on January 12, 2023. During the ceremony, CDR DeBons flew a U-6A *Beaver* with CAPT Somerville while LTC Kia flew a UH-72 *Lakota*. LTC Kia is the school's 51st headmaster and the third U.S. Army Commander in the school's history. LTC Kia is rated in several helicopters including the UH-60 *Blackhawk*, UH-72, and the AH-64 *Apache*. The USNTPS Class 145 alum now commands more than 300 personnel, including members from the U.S. Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Department of Defense civilians, contractors, and foreign service members.



U.S. Navy U-6A *Beaver* participating in the U.S. Naval Test Pilot School Change of Command ceremony at NAS Patuxent River, MD, Jan. 12 (U.S. Navy photo by Jonathan Bass)

Strike Fighter Squadron 103 (VFA-103) “Jolly Rogers”

CDR Jeffrey “Creature” Creighan relieved CDR Jason “Fisheye” Papadopoulos as Commanding Officer of Strike Fighter Squadron 103 (VFA-103) in a Change of Command Ceremony took place in the skies above USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77), January 15th, 2023, in the Adriatic Sea, with CAPT Thomas Bodine, Commander, Carrier Air Wing 7 (CVW-7), presiding. “Fisheye is a tremendous leader and aviator. His vision and direction led VFA-103 through the toughest moments of deployment, and I know his positive influence will continue long after he leaves. I cannot thank him enough for his tremendous professionalism dedication to duty,” said CAPT Bodine.



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USS Iwo Jima (LHD-7)

Amphibious assault ship USS Iwo Jima (LHD-7) held a Change of Command ceremony, January 20, 2023, where CAPT Stephen Froehlich relieved CAPT Judd Krier as Commanding Officer. “I’m excited to continue the next phase of our Iwo experience together,” said CAPT Froehlich. “I’m inspired and encouraged by our potential to continue our climb, and there’s no team of professionals I’d rather be doing this with.” The guest speaker was Rear Admiral Brendan McLane, Commander, Naval Surface Forces Atlantic. “Captain Krier’s leadership was instrumental in developing Iwo Jima, not only into a crew of Warfighters, but also into a tight-knit family,” said Rear Admiral McLane during the ceremony.

Tactical Support Wing (TSW)

Tactical Support Wing (TSW) held a Change of Command and Retirement Ceremony, 10 Feb 23, where Captain Geoff “Frogger” Hughes relieved Captain Billy “Kid” Fraser, who led more than 1,400 personnel across five Squadrons and seven Squadron Augment Units and prepared TSW for the future by overseeing three Type/Model/Series transitions during his tenure, with VFC-12’s transition from the FA-18C/D to FA-18E/F, VFC-204’s transition from FA-18C to F-5N, and VFC-13’s transition from F-5N to F-16C. Additionally, under his leadership, VAQ-209 forward deployed in the USINDOPACOM Area of Responsibility in support of Global Force Management Allocation Plan tasking.

Training Squadron 21 (VT-21) “Redhawks”

The “Redhawks” of Training Squadron (VT) 21, stationed aboard NAS Kingsville, Texas, held a Change of Command ceremony, March 3, 2023 where Commander William Rietveld assumed all duties and responsibilities as VT-21 Commanding Officer from Commander Matthew Starr. VT-21 conducts Intermediate and Advanced Flight Training for Navy and Marine Corps Student Naval Aviators (SNA) in the T-45C *Goshawk*. During his time at VT-21 and Training Air Wing 2 (CTW-2), CDR Starr’s squadron flew over 13,000 hours, while producing a total of 69 newly winged Navy and Marine Corps Naval Aviators for the Fleet.



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Carrier Airborne Command and Control Squadron 121 (VAW-121) “Bluetails”

Commander Matthew “Toe” Campbell relieved Commander Robert “Sluggo” Whitmore as Commanding Officer of Carrier Airborne Command and Control Squadron 121 (VAW-121) during a Change of Command ceremony above USS George H. W. Bush (CVN-77) while on deployment in the U.S. Sixth Fleet Area of Operations, March 16, 2023. Captain Alex “Waldo” Hampton, Commander, Carrier Air Wing 7 (CVW-7), presided. “CDR Whitmore did an amazing job leading our most valuable asset – our people – through a rigorous pre-deployment work up cycle and for the duration of the 2022 to 2023 deployment,” said CAPT Hampton. During CDR Whitmore’s tenure, the Squadron completed a vigorous work-up cycle culminating in a 2022-2023 deployment in support of priority U.S. Sixth Fleet tasking. In total, they accumulated 1,530 total flight hours, 565 carrier landings, and 503 sorties.



Sailors assigned to VAW-121 splash CDR Robert Whitmore after the Change of Command ceremony on March 8, 2023 (U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Nicholas Avis)



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Fleet Logistics Multi-Mission Wing (VRMW)

Captain Justin McCaffree relieved Captain Samuel Bryant as Commander, Fleet Logistics Multi-Mission Wing (VRMW) during a Change of Command ceremony onboard NAS North Island, CA, March 16, 2023. CAPT Bryant thanked the men and women of the entire VRM community, including the “Titans” of VRM-30, the “Mighty Bisons” of VRM-40, and the “Sunhawks” of VRM-50. “It’s been my personal honor to lead this amazing team of Sailors,” said CAPT Bryant. At the ceremony, Vice Admiral Kenneth Whitesell, Commander, Naval Air Forces, acknowledged the increased capabilities of the *Osprey* and its impact on recent and future Carrier Strike Group operations. “We have seen two safe and successful *Osprey* deployments with both the Carl Vinson and Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Groups, with the ‘Air Wing of the Future’ (AWOTF) featuring the *Osprey* and F-35C Joint Strike Fighter, and a third heading out again with Carl Vinson later this year,” said VADM Whitesell.

Electronic Attack Squadron 140 (VAQ-140) “Patriots”

Commander Erik “Squanch” Halvorson relieved Commander Alan “Carl” Carlson as Commanding Officer of Electronic Attack Squadron 140 (VAQ-140) on March 22, 2023 during a Change of Command ceremony above USS George H.W. Bush (CVN-77) at sea on deployment in the U.S. Sixth Fleet Area of Operations. “Our most valuable asset we have is our people, and CDR Carlson led his team of professionals, his people, honorably through a rigorous pre-deployment cycle and deployment,” said Captain Alex “Waldo” Hampton, Commander Carrier Air Wing 7 (CVW-7). During CDR Carlson’s tenure, VAQ-140 accumulated 3,400 total flight hours executed more than 1,000 carrier landings and conducted over 2,000 sorties.

USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN-69)

USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN-69) held a Change of Command ceremony aboard ship on March 23, 2023. Captain Christopher “Chowdah” Hill assumed command from Captain Paul Campagna in a ceremony presided over by Rear Admiral Marc Miguez, Commander, Carrier Strike Group Two. “Your contributions to IKE, our nation, and our Navy are truly notable and we thank you and your leadership” said RADM Miguez in his remarks. CAPT Campagna, a graduate of the United States Military Academy, has spent his career as an aviator in both the Army and Navy. He commanded USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69) during the 2021 deployment after which IKE was awarded the Navy Unit Commendation, 2021 Retention Excellence Award, Naval Air Forces Atlantic Battle ‘E’, and the “Jig Dog” Ramage Award with CAG-3. “To the crew, you displayed the content of character and quality of work that I asked of you, and you did it every time,” said CAPT Campagna.