

Royal Maces Celebrate 36th Change of Command July 3

By: LT David Tarr, VFA-27 Public Affairs

PHILIPPINE SEA (July 3, 2012) Cmdr. Braden Briller relieved Cmdr. Steven Barr in a ceremony held airborne in two Royal Mace F/A-18E Super Hornets, above the USS George Washington (CVN 73) July 3.

Barr has served as commanding officer of the Royal Maces since March 2011, fleeting up from executive officer of the squadron.

During Barr's tours as executive officer and commanding officer of the Royal Maces, the squadron participated in numerous joint and combined exercises including TALISMAN SABER, KEEN SWORD, ANNUALEX, and VALIANT SHIELD. They also earned recognition for medical readiness, being awarded the Blue "M", as well as the Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet Retention Excellence Award in 2010 and 2011.

Before arriving with the Maces, Barr served as the Electronic Warfare Officer for the Iraq Assistance Group, 1st Infantry Division and the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division while participating in operation IRAQI FREEDOM. He also served as Department Head for the VFA-151 Vigilantes, Strike Operations Officer for Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 2, and Fleet Replacement Squadron Strike Syllabus Model Manager/Assistant Training Officer with the VFA-125 Rough Raiders in support of operation NOBLE EAGLE. He flew as a junior officer with the Valions of VFA-15 where he participated in operations ALLIED FORCE, NOBLE ANVIL, SOUTHERN WATCH and ENDURING FREEDOM.

While with the Broadsword team at CVW-2, CDR Barr also participated in operation UNIFIED ASSISTANCE, the Tsunami relief to Indonesia, and earned a Master's of Science degree from the University of San Diego. He received his commission as an officer in 1994 through the NROTC at the Ohio State University.

Barr's next assignment will be with the Defense Inspector General Office in Washington, D.C.

Briller is the 37th commanding officer of Strike Fighter Squadron 27.

"This is the most highly trained, combat ready squadron I have ever had the privilege to be part of," Briller noted while reflecting upon his assumption of command, "I look forward to continuing the tradition of greatness Cmdr. Barr has established."

Prior to joining the Maces, Briller served as the J-5 Western European Branch Chief and the J-3 Air Cell representative at the U.S. European Command in Stuttgart, Germany. He also served as the Training Officer and department head for the VFA-34 Blue Blasters where he deployed in support of OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM aboard the USS John F. Kennedy (CVN 63) and USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72).

A graduate of the U.S. Navy Fighter Weapons School (Top Gun), Briller served as an instructor at Strike Fighter Weapons School Atlantic, during which time he was called to detach for the commencement of OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM, serving as a F/A-18 representative for planning and operations. He received his commission via NROTC at the Virginia Military Institute in 1993.

Cmdr. Abbot is the incoming executive officer for the Royal Maces. He comes to the Maces from the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force Command and Staff College in Tokyo, Japan.

The VFA-27 Royal Maces are a part of Carrier Air Wing 5, forward deployed to Atsugi, Japan. As part of the Forward-Deployed Naval Forces, Japan. The Royal Maces are currently embarked on the USS George Washington (CVN 73) conducting routine exercises in the East China Sea.

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