Curtis Wilbur conducts change-of-command ceremony

Cmdr. Cristopher T. Monroe speaks at his change of command ceremony April 20. Monroe led the crew of the *USS Curtis Wilbur* (DDG 54) as commanding officer through 18 successful months as a forward delpoyed ship. Cmdr. Joseph D. Femino is releaving Monroe as the new commanding officer of *Curtis Wilbur*.

Official U.S. Navy photo

By Ensign Taylor Hamilton, USS Curtis Wilbur Public Affairs

Cmdr. Joseph D. Femino relieved Cmdr. Christopher T. Monroe as the 14th Commanding Officer of *USS Curtis Wilbur* (DDG 54) April 20.

"I credit the successful accomplishment of our ship's mission directly to the hard work and proficiency of our Sailors. I am continually amazed at the caliber of the men and women serving in 7th Fleet. I consider it a tremendous honor to have had the opportunity to serve with the best crew in the Navy," said Monroe during his closing remarks.

During his remarks, Femino also recognized and praised the work of the *Curtis Wilbur* crew.

"Your dedication, tenacity and innate capability have been incredible to witness and experience over the last year," he said, addressing the crew of the *Curtis Wilbur.* "Your ability to flex to changes, rise to challenges and excel at any mission or assessment is truly unmatched and the cornerstone of every success aboard. It is an incredible and humbling honor to fleet up today to continue operating with unwavering excellence at the tip of the spear."

A native of Maine, Monroe has served on five Aegis Combat System fitted cruisers and destroyers.

He holds graduate degrees from the Kellogg Graduate School of Management and a Masters in National Security and Strategic Studies from the U.S. Naval War College.

Ashore, he has previously served as an NROTC Instructor at Northwestern University, an action officer in the Pentagon (OPNAV N86), and as a special assistant to the Chief of the Naval Operations.

During Monroe's 18 month command tour, *Curtis Wilbur* played significant roles in real-world tasking while remaining fully mission ready.

Of note, the command's international engagements included humanitarian assistance and disaster relief during Operation Tomodachi in the aftermath of the Great East Japan earthquake in March 2011, as well as involvement in several multinational exercises with the navies of Japan, Australia, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Republic of Korea.

Femino is a native of Beverly, Mass. and was commissioned through the Cornell University NROTC program. He has served on frigates, destroyers and as destroyer squadron operations officer in Bahrain participating in combat and reconstruction phases of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Femino commanded the minesweepers *USS Dextrous* (MCM 13) and *USS Warrior* (MCM 10) operating in the 2nd, 3rd and 5th Fleets.

He has a Masters Degree in Business Administration from the University of Rhode Island and is a graduate of the Argentine Naval War College in Buenos Aires, and the National War College in Washington, D.C. with a degree in National Strategic Studies.

USS Blue Ridge NAVLEAD team forges future leaders

By MC3 Cale Hatch,
***USS Blue Ridge* Public Affairs**

Sailors aboard U.S. 7th Fleet flagship *USS Blue Ridge* (LCC 19) graduated from the ship's Petty Officer Second Class Selectee Leadership course April 19.

The POSCL course is one of three comprised in the ship's Navy Leader Development (NAVLEAD) program. The other courses are the Petty Officer Selectee and the Petty Officer First Class Leadership courses.

NAVLEAD courses, which are held onboard *Blue Ridge* several times each quarter and when advancement results are released, include an average of 20 students and seven to 10 volunteer facilitators. The three-day program is designed to develop Sailors for future leadership roles.

According to Chief Fire Controlman (SW/AW) Tim Esler, *Blue Ridge*'s NAVLEAD program coordinator, the success of the course onboard *Blue Ridge* can be attributed to the volunteer facilitators and the hands-on, scenario-based learning incorporated into the program.

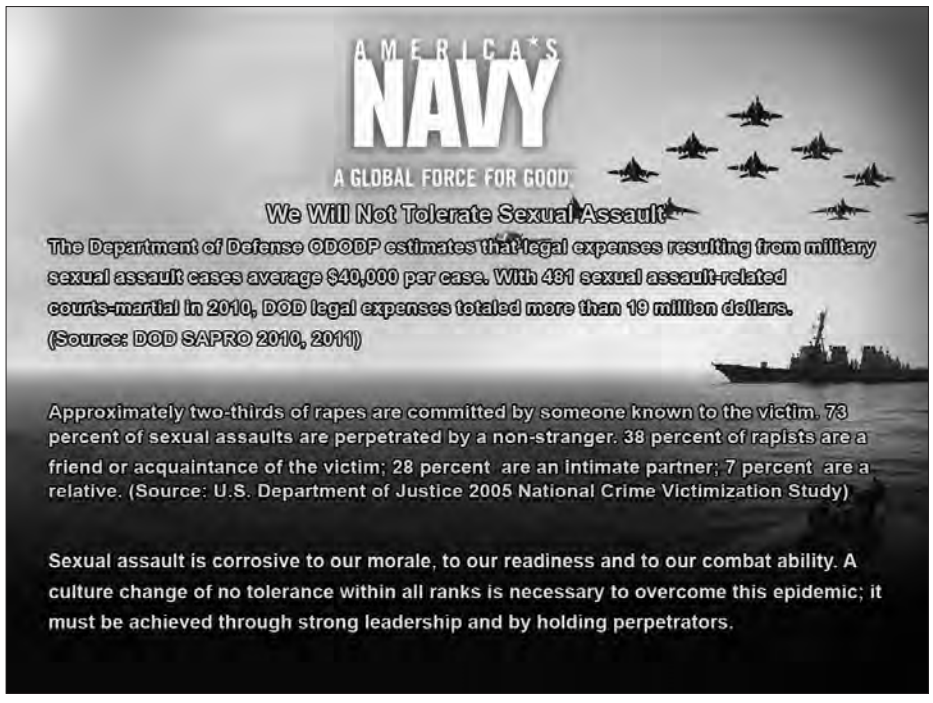
"In my opinion, the best leadership training doesn't take place in the classroom—it happens on the deckplates," Esler said. "That's why a great deal of the instruction includes real-life situations and issues built into scenarios that require the students to use critical thinking skills to solve them."

"The petty officers who volunteer to facilitate the courses really are the backbone of the program," Esler added. "They care about the subjects and the students enough that they choose to take the time out of their own busy schedules to ensure our Sailors get the right tools to help them grow into future leaders."

Some of the topics covered in NAVLEAD include professionalism, teamwork, command climate, communication, diversity and of course leadership.

Boatswain's Mate Petty Officer 1st Class (SW) George Glover, assistant coordinator and facilitator, said the scenario-based training helps students develop their own leadership styles.

"Having students act out real situations to see how they'll handle them brings out their leadership talents and gives them an opportunity to explore how they want to approach leadership on a more personal level," he said.

The curriculum taught Sailors how to use new leadership skills to tackle leadership issues and helps them develop new skills and ideas for future leadership roles.

"The class gave everyone different perspectives on how to deal with situations," said Culinary Specialist Petty Officer 2nd Class (SW) Kevin Carey a student. "It taught me different ways to approach and solve problems and gave me new insights on how to handle being in a leadership position."