Fleet Activities, Yokosuka, Japan

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Community congratulates new chiefs during pinning ceremony

By Mark Elrod, CFAY Public Affairs

During a pinning ceremony here in the Fleet Theater Sept. 16, 26 chief selectees donned new uniforms, combination covers and fouled anchors, and became chief petty officers.

The new chiefs' rank and its insignia are steeped in years of pride and tradition. The chief petty officer rank was established nearly 120 years ago, in 1893.

According to the Naval History and Heritage website, the fouled anchor insignia they wear is a symbol at least 500 years old and has it origins in the British traditions adopted by the United States naval service.

"No other organization in the world instills the pride that we as chief petty officers have," said Command Master Chief (SS) Bob Shannon, who is Commander U.S. Naval Forces Japan regional master chief and served as guest speaker for the event. "No other careers that any of us will transition to will ever give us individually, or collectively, the pride that we all have.

"Being a chief is not what we do, it is what we are. We do what we do for the absolute pride of being a chief petty officer. When I look back on my naval career, I will tell you that no other event or achievement even mirrors that of being selected to and serving as a chief petty officer," Shannon continued. "Now *you* have been, selected, tested, tried and accepted."

However, simply being selected and promoted to the rank is only the beginning for the new chiefs. Now they will be expected to lead by example with knowledge and integrity.

"Our profession is one filled with dangers," said Shannon. "We fly aircraft from floating cities. We sail all the oceans of the world. We navigate the depths of water from pole-to-pole. We even build bridges and schools, wearing full body armor. We work side-by-side with other nations to bring relief to countries that are ravaged by nature. And because we are the military, sometimes we are attacked. When that attack occurs… your Sailors will now turn to you chief. They will turn to you and simply ask, 'What do I do chief?' So, each morning you need to ask yourself, 'what will today bring, and am I ready?'

"Today, more that ever, the chiefs must lead our Navy is a way that instills pride, professionalism and integrity. When you leave here today, there will be a seaman who will need your compassion, a first class who will need your mentorship, a young division officer who will need your guidance, a fellow chief who will need your shoulder and a commanding officer and command master chief, who will need your answer; all of them will need your leadership."

(Left) Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka Command Master Chief Gregory Vidaurri congratulates newly pinned chief CSC Rufino Valdez at the Chief Petty Officer Pinning Ceremony held in the Fleet Theater Sept. 16.

U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Dominique Pineiro

7th Fleet holds change of command ceremony aboard *Blue Ridge*

By U.S. 7th Fleet Public Affairs

Vice Adm. John M. Bird was relieved by Vice Adm. Scott R. Van Buskirk during the U.S. 7th Fleet change of command ceremony held on board the command ship, *USS Blue Ridge* (LCC 19) Sept. 10.

"I stand before you an exceptionally fortunate and profoundly grateful man," said Bird. "It is a deep honor to have been afforded the privilege to command the United States 7th Fleet."

Adm. Patrick M. Walsh, commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet, praised Bird for his "outstanding leadership of the U.S. 7th Fleet during the past two years."

"John applied his deep-rooted sense of responsibility and substantial intellectual prowess to ensuring the effectiveness of our naval forces in the region," said Walsh. "Today, our navy-to-navy relationship [with Japan] is more relevant and important than ever before - it is a bond characterized by maturity, respect and cooperation."

Bird led U.S. naval operations over the 7th Fleet area of responsibility, encompassing more than 48 million square miles from the Kuril Islands in the north to the Antarctic in the south, and from the International Date Line to the Indian Ocean. The area includes 35 maritime countries and the world's five largest foreign armed forces - China, Russia, India, North Korea and Republic of Korea (ROK). Five of the seven U.S. Mutual Defense Treaties are with countries in the area - Republic of the Philippines, Australia and New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Japan and Thailand.

During his tenure, Bird and his ROK navy counterpart Vice Adm. Park Jung-hwa, signed an Operational Plan for Korea to take a lead role in its wartime defense. Following the sinking of the ROK navy corvette Cheonan, Bird sent U.S. ships to assist with the recovery and salvage, and provided assistance to the international investigation team.

Bird also oversaw a series of events with the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force to mark the 50th anniversary of the U.S.-Japan Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security.

(Background, left) Commander U.S. Pacific Fleet Adm. Patrick M. Walsh, Commander U.S. 7th Fleet Vice Adm. John M. Bird and prospective Commander U.S. 7th Fleet Vice Adm. Scott R. Van Buskirk salute the colors during the change of command for U.S. 7th Fleet Sept. 10. Buskirk relieved Bird, becoming the 47th commander of the 7th Fleet.

U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Cynthia Griggs

"When I stood on this deck 27 months ago, I provided clear guidance to the fleet articulated in three persistent priorities: maximize warfighting readiness, maritime partnerships and force posture. These priorities are concisely captured by our motto: 'Ready power for peace,'" said Bird.

"This incredibly dynamic region has witnessed many difficult challenges over the last two years – natural disasters, provocations against ships on the high seas and the tragic sinking of an allied ship operating innocently in its own territorial waters," added Bird. "These events have served to strengthen my conviction that our mission is essential, that our priorities are right, and that our task will become even more challenging in the future."

Van Buskirk, a native of Petaluma, Calif., assumed command of U.S. 7th Fleet following a tour as deputy commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet.

"It is truly an honor and privilege to stand here today in command of the 7th Fleet," said Van Buskirk. "My orders are simple, push forward, aligned to our persistent priorities – warfighting readiness, maritime partnerships and force posture; engage with our allies and friends."

INSIDE

Red Cross promotes readiness during National Preparedness Month

The American Red Cross and CFAY Emergency Management Office set up outside the commissary Sept. 7 to bring the message of National Preparedness Month to base residents.

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