Fleet Anti-Terrorism Security Team Company Pacific holds change of command

By YN1 Chante' M. Rodriguez, U.S. 7th Fleet Public Affairs

YOKOSUKA, Japan - Fleet Anti-Terrorism Security Team Company Pacific (FASTPAC) held a change of command ceremony on board the U.S. 7th Fleet command flagship *USS Blue Ridge* (LCC 19) at Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka, April 27.

Maj. Marc H. Foster relieved Maj. Thomas E. Elders as the commanding officer of FASTPAC.

"The success that this company has endured over the years is not because of me, but the crew and those before them," said Elders. "They are the ones that go out and get dirty. I've never had a better opportunity to work with some of the best Marines than here at FAST. Thank you, God bless and Semper Fi."

U.S. 7th Fleet Chief of Staff Capt. Charles Williams gave his best wishes to both Elders and Foster and shared his appreciation for FASTPAC.

"Your efforts have been greatly exhibited over the last six weeks during Operation Tomodachi and our appreciation has been expressed daily," said Williams. "The chain of command, [our] host nation and [the] Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force thank you for your support."

Foster said he greatly appreciated assuming command and is looking forward to his new company.

Foster was the former liaison officer and executive officer of Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force for African Partnership Station 2010 on board the dock landing ship *USS Guston Hall* (LSD 44).

Elders' next command will be at 2nd Fleet Anti-Terrorism Security Team Company, Marine Corps Security Forces Regiment in Yorktown, Va.

(Center) FASTPAC Commanding Officer Maj. Thomas E. Elders passes the guidon to Maj. Marc Foster, during a change of command ceremony held aboard U.S. 7th Fleet command flagship *USS Blue Ridge* (LCC 19) at Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka April 27. Foster relieved Elders as FASTPAC commanding officer. U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Kenneth R. Hendrix

Enlisted Retention Board provides some benefits for fleet

From Chief of Naval Personnel Public Affairs

WASHINGTON - The recently announced enlisted retention board (ERB) will help the Navy achieve mandated end strength, the chief of naval personnel said in an April 25 interview.

The ERB will eliminate overmanning in 31 ratings and will benefit high-performing Sailors in the long run by improving advancement opportunities. The Navy has witnessed improved retention during the past decade which can be attributed to factors such as work-life balance initiatives and improved recruiting. Additionally, the slow economic recovery has influenced many Sailors to re-enlist.

"We are attracting and retaining the highest quality force we've ever had and these Sailors are increasingly looking at the Navy as a great long-term career choice," said Chief of Naval Personnel Vice Adm. Mark Ferguson. "With this sustained high retention, systems designed to help maintain the balance in our Force, particularly Perform-to-Serve, have become over-burdened. As a result, re-enlistment and advancement opportunities for our high-performing Sailors are being negatively impacted fleetwide."

The ERB will review Sailors in 31 of the most overmanned ratings and will look at performance to fill a specific number of retention quotas within competitive groups broken down by rating, pay grade and years of service. The board will value Sailors with proven performance in challenging billets, while Sailors with negative performance indicators such as convictions for drunk driving, declining performance evaluations, lost security clearances and non-judicial punishments will be less competitive for retention quotas.

By focusing on performance in addition to quotas, Navy reinforces its strategy to retain the best and brightest.

"In designing this board, we were determined to separate only those Sailors in ratings needed to rebalance the force and stay within our congressionally mandated manpower limits," Ferguson said.

Although the number directly affected by the ERB represents a small percentage of Sailors, the impacts will be felt across the force.

While Navy-wide advancement opportunities to E-5 declined modestly over the past several advancement cycles and E-6 opportunities remained relatively stable over the same period, opportunities to both E-5 and E-6 in the 31 ratings being considered have dropped steadily. Reducing overmanning in these ratings will result in career stability and will likely result in increased advancements in these ratings.

Not only will the ERB help stabilize advancement opportunity in the 31 ratings, currently undermanned ratings will benefit from the expanded conversion opportunity Navy leaders approved in advance of the board. Several factors that are normally mandatory for rating conversion, including maximum years of service, maximum paygrade, and minimum activity tour requirements, are being waived. This will allow the greatest opportunity for Sailors who would otherwise be board-eligible to ensure their continued service, while increasing manning in ratings that the Navy has been challenged to fill.

"Our Sailors are dedicated to serving their country, and this is why we are providing additional opportunities for them to convert into undermanned ratings ahead of the board," Ferguson said. "Sailors will see the benefits of increased manpower support in some critical areas.

"Sailors chosen for conversion into the undermanned ratings listed in Naval Administrative Message NAVADMIN 129/11 will be exempt from the board and will be given an opportunity to continue serving in areas of need for the Navy. The procedures for requesting conversion will be released by the beginning of May and applications will need to be received by June 15 to be considered.

A more balanced force - the goal of the ERB - will benefit the entire Fleet, Ferguson said.

"Improved advancement opportunities, expanded PTS re-enlistment quotas, and increased manpower support in needed ratings over the long term - these are the positive results," he said.

For more information on the ERB, as well as overmanned and undermanned ratings, read NAVADMIN 129/11 at http://www.public.navy.mil/bupers-npc/reference/messages/Documents/NAVADMINS/NAV2011/NAV11129.txt.

For more news from Chief of Naval Personnel, visit www.navy.mil/local/cnp/.