Fleet Activities, Yokosuka, Japan

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Service members, civilians become U.S. citizens during ceremony

By MC2(SW/AW) John Smolinski, CFAY Public Affairs

Nearly 80 Service members and civilians, representing 33 different nationalities, received their certificates of citizenship during a naturalization ceremony in the Chapel of Hope on board Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka May 27.

U.S. naturalization ceremonies, also commonly referred to as a citizenship ceremonies, represents the final step in the process of becoming a naturalized, U.S. citizen. These ceremonies vary depending upon factors such as location and sponsorships. Guest speakers may include representatives from local immigrant organizations, city and state officials, or individuals who are about to be sworn in as new citizens. Attendees are usually given "new citizen" packets, which include literature regarding citizenship responsibilities, a copy of the U.S. Constitution, voter registration notification and a miniature American flag.

Keynote speaker Paul Fitzgerald, minister-counselor for the consul general at the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo addressed the dedication the service members showed for the United States.

"I'm honored and humbled to be a part of this process," said Fitzgerald. "Quite frankly, it's an awesome experience to swear in new citizens that add to the roles of great men and women who had arrived on American shores for the past 400 years.

"Thanks to CFAY for hosting the event and celebrating the military tradition of allowing those who serve this country to become citizens while doing so," added Fitzgerald.

The oath of allegiance was presented by Francis Leigh, acting field office director, Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. Naturalization ceremonies include an oath to be taken by all potential new citizens. The oath of allegiance is also officially referred to as the "U.S. Oath of Citizenship."

"As new Americans, you should take what is best from your old country and bring it to your new one," said Leigh. "As new citizens, you have the responsibility to make America better for the next generation."

The ceremony included the reciting of the pledge of allegiance and presentation of certificates of citizenship.

"It's official," said Personal Specialist Seaman Teulia Amoa, stationed here on board Yokosuka base. "We are Americans. This is a big stepping stone for me. I now can say that I fully serve my country."

SN Hengel Venancio, assigned to *USS Blue Ridge* (LCC 19), bows her head in prayer before taking the oath of allegiance during a naturalization ceremony at the CFAY Chapel of Hope May 27. During the ceremony, nearly 80 service members and civilians representing 33 different nationalities became the newest citizens of the United States.

U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Mikey Mulcare

Former master chief takes command of Destroyer Squadron 15

Story and photo by MC2 Devon Dow, Navy Public Affairs Support Element Japan

Capt. John Schultz relieved Capt. William T. Wagner as Commander Destroyer Squadron 15 (DESRON 15) during a change of command ceremony in the Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka headquarters building auditorium, June 10.

Enlisting in the Navy in 1972, Schultz served 14 years as a Sonar Technician earning the rank of master chief petty officer. In 1987 he accepted an officer commission through the Limited Duty Officer program.

"It is an honor and a privilege to assume this command," Schultz said during his remarks to the audience. "I look forward to the many days ahead leading our great DESRON 15 team forward-deployed in the 7th Fleet and working with our Japanese partners. I am very thankful for the support my family and I have received since our arrival in Yokosuka from the DESRON staff; you have put me on the right path."

Commander Task Force 70/ Commander Carrier Strike Group 5 Rear Adm. John R. Haley, was the guest speaker at the ceremony and gave encouraging and grateful remarks to Schultz.

The official party and guests rise during the presentation of the official colors during the 51st change of command ceremony for Destroyer Squadron 15 held at the CFAY headquarters building auditorium June 10. Capt. John Schultz relieved Capt. William T. Wagner as commanding officer.

"It's time for you take the reigns and carry DESRON 15 to new peaks," Haley said to Schultz. "Your unique background from E-1 to 0-6 says a lot about your commitment to our Navy and ensures that we will continue to have a great DESRON team. We are looking forward to the great things to come."

In Wagoner's farewell comments he said he was optimistic about the performance of Schultz during his tenure.

"I could not be any happier for him," he said. "He is already running on all cylinders and ready to be released on the 7th Fleet area of responsibility. I am confident that the squadron is being left in great hands. I wish him and everyone apart of DESRON 15 all the best."

DESRON 15 was first established in 1920 as a unit of the reserve fleet based at the Philadelphia Navy Yard. Although the squadron was disestablished IN 1922, an Atlantic Destroyer Squadron was redesignated DESRON 15 in 1928. Following patrol and training operations in the Pacific, DESRON 15 was redesignated DESRON 5 in 1931.

Following the declaration of war in 1941, DESRON 15 was again commissioned and fought in the battles for North Africa and Sicily. In 1945, the squadron converted to Destroyer Minesweepers (DMS), and was redesignated MINERON 21.

Reactivated in 1946 for service with the Pacific Fleet through 1949, the squadron was briefly disestablished in 1950. However, the squadron was again commissioned for service late that same year following the outbreak of the Korean War and continues in commission today.

DESRON 15 departed San Diego in 1971 for permanent forward deployment to Yokosuka, Japan as the destroyer squadron component of Battle Force 7th Fleet. Seven Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers and more than 2,000 Sailors comprise DESRON 15, which serves in the Western Pacific, Indian Ocean and the Arabian Gulf.

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Submarine Group 7 holds change of command ceremony

A change of command ceremony was held here June 6, where Capt. Phillip G. Sawyer relieved Rear Adm. Robert L. Thomas, Jr. as commander Submarine Group 7.

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Richard E. Byrd Elementary School recognizes volunteers

The staff at Richard E. Byrd Elementary School held a appreciation tea event June 1, to recognize volunteers for the help they provided to the school during the year.

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