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## DESRON 31 holds change of command ceremony

Story and photo by MC2 Robert Stirrup

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Capt. David Welch relieved Capt. Richard Clemmons as commander of Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 31 at a change of command ceremony at the DESRON 31 headquarters building on Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam on Jan. 21.

Vice Adm. Richard Hunt, commander of U.S. 3rd Fleet, served as the guest speaker and offered remarks to those in attendance.

"As the commodore of DESRON 31, Capt. Clemmons couldn't have done a better job than he has," Hunt noted. "If there is one thing that I would characterize about him, it is his great work ethic and leadership ability. It is something that can be counted on each and every day, and our Sailors and our Navy are clearly better for it."

Hunt also stated that he looked forward to what the future holds for Welch as the commander of DESRON 31.

"You have my full confidence, and I am looking forward to working with you in the near future," Hunt said. "You did an excellent job as the deputy commander of DESRON 31, and I'm sure you will do great things as the commodore."

During the ceremony, Clemmons thanked those involved during his tenure as commander.

"Ceremonies such as this are the very fabric of the Navy. They symbolize honor, courage and commitment, but more than anything, these ceremonies allow the outgoing commander to say 'thank you' and 'a job well done,'" Clemmons said. "I want to thank the more than 2,000 Sailors aboard the eight ships that comprise DESRON 31. You are truly making a difference in this world and your sacrifices have not gone unnoticed."

After the reading of orders and assuming command from Clemmons, Welch took the opportunity to address the audience.

“To the officers, chiefs and Sailors of DESRON 31, I have watched you in action and I am humbled to stand before you,” Welch said. “We are based in a strategic location and we must remain prepared to go forward at a moment’s notice. This forward thinking and forward mentality will permeate everything that we do.”

In May 2008, DESRON 31 assumed duties as immediate superior in command of all Pearl Harbor-based destroyers and frigates under an operational alignment to increase force presence and surge capacity in the western Pacific under Commander, Naval Surface Group Middle Pacific. DESRON 31 was also assigned as a Task Group Commander for bilateral naval exercises in Southeast Asia. DESRON 31 moved to Pearl Harbor from San Diego in 1991 and adopted the motto “ke koa o ke kai” (warriors from the sea).

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