

MATSS-1 changes command

By Penny Randall
Staff Writer

Marine Aviation Training Support Squadron One welcomed its 18th commanding officer during a ceremony on July 2.

Capt. Aaron Schnetzler, who served as the squadron commanding officer since November 2009, relinquished command to Maj. A.J. Brooks.

"Over the last few days I've reflected on my time at MATSS-1 and in Meridian," said Schnetzler who reports to Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 12 on board Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan. "Meridian has grown on me and it's a place I'll never forget. It's been a very rewarding experience."

Col. Joseph P. Richards, commanding officer, Marine Aviation Training Support Group 21 from Pensacola, Fla., was the guest speaker.

"There's no better place to be in the Marine Corps on this day than here in Meridian," Richards said. "MATSS-1 is in the business of making Marines and doing a great job. To the young privates and PFC's standing in ranks, this is the time to learn a skill and go forth and do great things."

Richards thanked Schnetzler for his hard work as the squadron's leader.

"I cannot thank you enough for the great job you have done. It is rare to take command as a captain, but it does happen sometimes in the Marine Corps. When the opportunity presented itself you seized it and have shown great leadership and excelled. You will be missed," Richards said.

Schnetzler, assigned to MATSS-1 from July 2007 to the present, served as the squadron's executive officer before becoming its commanding officer. The command far surpassed expectations by achieving more than 98 percent on each of two Marine Corps Administrative and Analysis team inspections.

The mission of MATSS-1 is to provide fully qualified Marines to the operating forces in four military occupation specialties: Aviation Supply, Aviation Operations, Aviation Maintenance Administration and IMRL Asset Management. Schnetzler ensured the highest technical acumen and best leadership qualities were instilled to those under his charge, and during his tour, more than

2,000 students graduated.

While assigned here, MATSS-1 Marines regularly participate in volunteer activities such as Toys for Tots, Special Olympics, Gaits to Greatness, and various other service projects in the local community.

Brooks, who began his career in the Marine Corps Reserve in 1996, was selected for Officer Candidate School in 1999. He was commissioned and after graduating from the Basic School in 2001, he reported to Aviation Supply Officer's course at the Navy Supply Corps School.

"I'm really excited to be here," Brooks said. "My mom is from Alabama and now I'm closer to home. Capt Schnetzler has done a wonderful job during our turnover making sure I'm well informed about MATSS-1."

Brooks' assignments include Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 14, Marine Aircraft Group 14, where he began preparing for his first deployment as the officer in charge for a 50-Marine MALS detachment deploying in support of VMAQ-1 as part of Operation Southern Watch.

In the summer of 2004, he was selected as an individual augment to serve as operations officer in the Interrogation Control Element, Joint Intel Group, Joint Task Force, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

In 2007, Brooks reported to the Security Cooperation Education Training Center in Quantico, Va., to prepare for his year-long assignment as an advisor to the Royal Saudi Marines and Royal Saudi Naval Special Forces in the Eastern Province of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. At the conclusion of this tour, he reported to Second Marine Aircraft Wing to serve with the Aviation Logistics Department.

In summer 2009, Brooks was sent to Operation Iraqi Freedom to serve with Second Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward) as the ALD Aviation Supply Officer (FWD). In November 2009, he was sent directly to Helmand Province to serve with the Marine Expeditionary Brigade-Afghanistan as the Marine Aircraft Group 40 Aviation Supply Officer, Operation Enduring Freedom.

"The Marine Corps has been good to me over the last 14 years and given me a lot," Brooks said. "I'm very humbled today as I look out at these young Marines on this grinder."