

VT-9 welcomes Snyder, farewells Sheehan

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A new commanding officer took the controls of Training Squadron Nine on June 2, following the official change of command ceremony on board Naval Air Station Meridian.

Military and civilian personnel along with members of the community bid farewell to Cmdr. William Sheehan, and welcomed Cmdr. Craig Snyder as the squadron's new leader.

Capt. Keith Taylor, commodore of Training Air Wing One, was the guest speaker.

"Changes of command are part of a tradition and pre-dated U.S. Navy itself. It serves as the official transition of managerial leadership and gives us all the opportunity to honor and recognize the achievements of the outgoing skipper. Most times we hear statistics of how well the squadron performed. Today is no different because they tell a story of VT-9 -- a story of success," Taylor said.

Taylor described the squadron's performance during the past year.

"This squadron flies over 100 sorties a day many times almost triple sided -- that's

a lot of flying. They do it professionally...they do it safely. That is a tough responsibility," Taylor said. "It is also recognition of the organization that conducts the high risk mission with extremely high altitude in a very safe and professional manner."

During Sheehan's tour, the squadron trained 95 Navy, Marine and international pilots. The squadron amassed more than 17,477 sorties and over 22,223 training flight hours in the T-45C Goshawk.

"What a great ride it has been," said Sheehan who transfers to Corpus Christi, Texas, to work for the Chief of Naval Air Training. "Thirteen years as a Goshawk instructor, (then) CO of VT-9 -- it's all been an honor and privilege."

Snyder, a 1993 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, earned his wings in 1995 at NAS Meridian. He reported to NAS Oceana for initial training in the F-14 Tomcat. His first fleet tour was with the SWORDSMEN of VF-32. He flew both the F-14A and F-14B (U) in support of Operations Deliberate Forge, Southern Watch, and Desert Fox.

Snyder did a tour as a TOPGUN instructor pilot. He was the staff expert on A/A Shot Validation and Surface-to-Air

Threats and Countertactics. Following TOPGUN, he joined the TOMCATTERS of VF-31 for a tour as the squadron Training Officer flying F-14Ds. After that, he joined the VF-213 BLACKLIONS as a Department Head. He had the opportunity to serve as the Maintenance Officer for the last Tomcat deployment in 2005-6.

In November 2006, he transferred to the Joint Staff, J-3 at the Pentagon. He served as assistant deputy director for operations and nuclear strike advisor.

He reported as executive officer of VT-9 in March 2010. Snyder has more than 3,300 flight hours and over 500 traps.

"It's good to remember what makes an organization great, it's not the CO who does it... it's the officers, Sailors and Marines that you see standing here -- they are the ones who make this squadron great. It's a top notch organization with top notch instructors," Snyder said. "I couldn't ask for anything better. I am going to set the tone for the next 15 months with a single one liner I learned from an old CO of mine. He said, 'Set the bar high and get the hell out of the way.' I look forward to being your CO."