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Submarine Development Squadron 12 Changes Commanders

Story Number: NNS120512-04

5/12/2012

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GROTON, Conn. (NNS) -- Submarine Development Squadron (DEVRON) 12 held a change of command ceremony May 11 aboard Los Angeles-class submarine USS San Juan (SSN 751) at Naval Submarine Base New London, Conn.

During the time-honored ceremony, Capt. William Merz turned over command to Capt. Vern Parks.

Vice Adm. John Richardson, commander, Submarine Forces Atlantic, served as guest speaker, and praised Merz for his leadership.

"It's always wonderful to be in Groton, the submarine capital. It's a special treat to be here to take a moment to pause and reflect on Commodore Bill Merz's superb tour in command of SUBDEVRON 12," said Richardson. "DEVRON 12 is unique in the Submarine Force, with a dual nature; there is the waterfront side, where Bill commanded the squadron of seven submarines, including deployments to the CENTCOM and EUCOM theaters of operation."

Richardson praised Merz for his leadership of the squadron's tactical development side, where he led a "team of top-notch analysts that study and define our intellectual warfighting base. In both areas, Bill was superb."

Richardson also reflected on Military Spouse Appreciation Day and recognized Merz's wife Martha.

"She has shared in the sacrifices and joys, doing her part while Bill did his," said Richardson. "Our Navy would not run without the very special teamwork between Sailor and spouse, and Bill and Martha have been a stellar example of how good that team can be."

Richardson added that the true legacy of Merz's leadership "will be the people you have trained and led. Our Sailors and their families are the most important part of our success; they have always been our secret weapon."

Richardson welcomed Parks to his new assignment as commodore of DEVRON 12.

"Capt. Vern Parks, welcome to the team. You are no stranger to leadership and command. You are perfectly suited to take this job, and we are all dedicated to your success," said Richardson.

Merz, a native of San Diego, will next serve as the Chief of Staff, Commander Submarine Force Atlantic and reflected on his time in command of DEVRON 12.

"It has been a once in a lifetime opportunity. The men and women we have the honor to serve, and to serve with, both ashore and afloat, are truly inspiring. DEVRON 12 represents the heartbeat of the submarine force and both the experience and the education have been incredibly enriching," said Merz.

Merz added that at no time during his 26 years in the submarine force has he felt more connected to the submarine community.

"What else could you ask for? I envy my relief, Capt. Vern Parks. He is just the right officer at just the right time to take over the helm, and I wish him the best," said Merz.

In addition to his role as commodore of DEVRON 12, Merz also served as chairman of the Submarine Tactical Requirements Group, in which he guided the Submarine Force Acquisition Community, ensuring

the Force remained focused and capable of delivering precision warfare technology to the fleet.

"My role as chairman was to bring together some of the best and brightest of the submarine force to not only learn from them, but to conceptualize how their multi-tasking capabilities can be applied to improve the future of the submarine force," said Merz.

Parks, who previously served as commanding officer of USS Santa Fe (SSN 763) and executive officer of USS Helena (SSN 725) is looking forward to taking the helm of DEVRON 12, which is to support the Navy's vision of the future by developing and evaluating submarine tactics, both war fighting and forward presence, and disseminating those tactics to the operating forces.

"I am honored by the opportunity to serve as the commander of Submarine Development Squadron Twelve, supporting the officers and crews of our submarines in all they do and continuing the 60-plus year legacy of my predecessors in tactical development for our submarine force," said Parks. "The team that Capt. Merz has led for the past 20 months, has excelled in all areas, and I am looking forward to the future with the outstanding men and women of DEVRON 12."

Parks graduated from the Pennsylvania State University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science holds a Master's of Business Administration from Brenau University and a Masters of Science degree in National Security Strategy from the National War College.

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