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## USS Missouri Changes Commanders

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By Lt. Cmdr. Jennifer Cragg, Commander, Submarine Group 2 Public Affairs

GROTON, Conn. (NNS) -- Virginia-class attack submarine USS Missouri (SSN 780), held a change of command ceremony aboard the submarine at Naval Submarine Base New London in Groton April 20.



Official U.S. Navy file photo.

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Cmdr. Mike Lockett relieved Cmdr. Tim Rexrode during the time-honored ceremony.

"Today is about the Missouri officers and crew because they are the ones actually did everything over the past three years," said Rexrode. "The Submarine Force gave me the opportunity to lead a tremendously talented wardroom and crew - one that I think is the very best."

Capt. Mike Bernacchi, chief of staff, commander, Submarine Group 2 served as guest speaker and praised Rexrode for his accomplishments while in command of Missouri.

"Tim has been here since the commissioning and he leaves behind the most advanced warship," said Bernacchi. "Tim will be remembered for his leadership he has shown while in command of this marvelous warship."

Rexrode was also recognized for his place in history as the commissioning commanding officer of USS Missouri.

"As the commissioning commanding officer of one of the nation's premier warships, you have fulfilled the submarine force's rich and demanding tradition in bringing a ship to life. I am proud of you and your team's execution in accomplishing this demanding task," Vice Adm. John Richardson, commander, Submarine Forces Atlantic said in a naval message praising Rexrode for his achievements.

Rexrode, who first began his career as a submariner was stationed, at that time, on the oldest submarine USS Gato (SSN 615), and was proud to have served and commanded the newest Virginia-class submarine.

"While the capabilities and the mastery of technology may have changed, but the very essence of submarining hasn't changed," said Rexrode. "We all seek to serve the American people and submarines are designed to be at sea for the sole purpose of defending our nation and Missouri will fulfill that commitment under her new leadership."

While addressing his crew, Rexrode reminded them of the three lessons he shared with them since day one when he assumed command and thanked them for "buying into his principles."

"I asked only three things of you when I assumed command and told you these would define success," said Rexrode. "Do your best to do your job right; understand when you don't or can't do it right and tell someone, and treat each other right."

During the ceremony, Rexrode received a proclamation from the office of Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon's which recognized Rexrode's position as the submarine's first commanding officer.

"It's an honor that the state of Missouri has bestowed this recognition, I'm deeply humbled," said Rexrode. "I remain proud and honored to have been USS Missouri's newest namesake ship's first commanding officer."

Rexrode also received a flag that was flown over the Missouri capitol.

During Rexrode's tour as commanding officer, Missouri completed a post-shakedown availability sea trials and extended modernization a month ahead of schedule.

"While in command, USS Missouri was delivered early from PSA, which was a 'first ever' accomplishment in the Virginia-class program," said Rexrode.

Rexrode, born in West Virginia, he graduated with honors from West Virginia University in 1990 with a Bachelor of Science in Aerospace Engineering and was commissioned through Officer Candidate School. Rexrode's next assignment will be with a senior member of the Nuclear Propulsion Examining Board for Fleet Forces Command in Norfolk.

"You have the greatest group of Sailors and officers in the force and a fine submarine," said Rexrode to Luckett during the ceremony.

Luckett, a Banning, California native, has previously served as executive officer of USS Pennsylvania (GOLD) (SSBN 735) home ported in Bangor, Wash., looks forward to taking command.

"There's a huge amount of potential here," said Luckett. "Our next major milestone is to complete our readiness for warfighting and pick-up where Cmdr. Rexrode has left off and use it to get our crew ready to deploy."

Luckett added that taking command of Missouri is the highlight of his career.

"I'm ecstatic to be in command of such a great ship," said Luckett. "I'm proud and humbled to take her on her first deployment."

Luckett holds several degrees to include a Master of Science degree in Strategy and Joint Campaign Planning; Master of Science degree in Leadership and Human Resource Development from the Naval Postgraduate School and a Master of Engineering degree in Naval Architecture and Offshore Engineering from the University of California, Berkeley. He also graduated with distinction from United States Naval Academy in 1994 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Naval Architecture.

Missouri is the seventh submarine of the Virginia class. General Dynamics Electric Boat delivered the submarine to the U.S. Navy in July 2010. The submarine's crew consists of about 134 officers and enlisted personnel. Missouri is the fifth Navy ship to be named in honor of the people of the "Show Me State."

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