



June 16, 2016

COMFRC celebrates Sohl's legacy; welcomes new commander



Capt. Mike Zarkowski (far left) assumes the position of Commander, Fleet Readiness Centers (COMFRC), at the Change of Command ceremony June 16. Rear Adm. Sohl (second from right) now continues to his next assignment as Commander, Operational Test and Evaluation Force in Norfolk, Virginia. Vice Adm. Paul Grosklags (second from left) Commander, Naval Air Systems Command, served as the presiding official and Vice Adm. Mike Shoemaker (right), Commander, Naval Air Forces and Commander, Naval Air Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet, was the guest speaker. (U.S. Navy photo)

NAVAL AIR SYSTEMS COMMAND, PATUXENT RIVER, Md. — It is not prescribed specifically by U.S. Navy regulations, but it is one of the Navy's oldest traditions: the Change of Command ceremony.

Nearly 400 guests gathered June 16 in the U.S. Naval Test Pilot School hangar to honor and to bid farewell to Rear Adm. Paul "LJ" Sohl, Commander, Fleet Readiness Centers (COMFRC), as he handed over the helm to Vice Commander Capt. Mike Zarkowski.

Vice Adm. Paul Grosklags, Commander, Naval Air Systems Command, served as the presiding official and credited Sohl with maturing the focus and internal structure of COMFRC and the eight Fleet Readiness Centers (FRCs).

Sohl "has made a tremendous, positive impact and will leave a lasting legacy of commitment to his people of the FRC enterprise and to the fleet," Grosklags said.



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Grosklags, who eight years ago led COMFRC, congratulated Zarkowski on assuming command. "I have complete confidence in your leadership and ability to keep this command moving forward."

Vice Adm. Mike Shoemaker, Commander, Naval Air Forces and Commander, Naval Air Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet provided remarks as the guest speaker.

"The FRCs clearly play an absolutely critical role to recover readiness across the force and to improve the way we continue to generate that readiness," Shoemaker stated. "LJ, thank you for the ongoing work to deliver your FRC Vision 2020, which I am confident will give us a more streamlined, agile and responsive organization in the future."

Sohl came on board at COMFRC in August 2013 facing the challenges of budget shortfalls, sequestration and a high operating tempo. To combat those challenges and optimize capability and capacity, Vision 2020 -- the strategic plan for regaining readiness across naval aviation -- was implemented. The ultimate achievement of Vision 2020 will be the inception of a global maintenance management system. The system will recognize a failing aircraft as soon as it happens and parts, materials, artisan, equipment, testing can be moved to the aircraft to fix it in real time.

In a message to the FRC workforce, Sohl emphasized the need to keep focused on the mission:

"Your jobs are crucial to naval aviation readiness," Sohl said. "Without you, nothing happens. We need your skill sets to help continue deploying our assets worldwide and keep our missions growing. Thanks for what you do each and every day. You are making a difference to our fleet."

In his remarks to the audience, Zarkowski stressed that even though this is a time of transition, the mission of COMFRC remains the same: to provide aircraft ready for tasking.

"We have complex challenges we must continue to address," Zarkowski said. "We must continue to commit the necessary resources to stay the course with Vision 2020. With this Vision, the naval aviation force of the future will be able to quickly adapt to emergent maintenance requirements and the Fleet Readiness Centers will be faster, more agile, more geographically independent and cost less."

Notable COMFRC accomplishments under Sohl include:

- Leadership of 16,000 civilian, military and contractor personnel at eight Fleet Readiness Centers and management of a budget of \$4.3 billion in maintenance, repair and overhaul.
- With a total of 8,483,281 labor force hours and \$1.16 billion in cost, his emphasis on



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process improvement and maintenance integration resulted in the delivery of 1,434 airframes, 4,294 engines and modules, 155,255 components, 2,151 pieces of support equipment and 9,060 airframe in-service repairs, which achieved a 35 percent reduction in backorders from fiscal year 2014 to 2015 and improved weapon system availability for eight Type/Model aircraft.

- His involvement in the Commander, Fleet Readiness Centers Aviation Rapid Action Team ensured the development and improvement of more than 100 repair processes, enhanced Fleet Readiness Center capabilities and resulted in \$13.1 million in cost avoidance while improving readiness and lowering cost per flight hours.

The Waterloo, Iowa, native earned his bachelor's degree in aeronautical engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and his master's in aeronautical and astronautical engineering from Stanford University. He deployed as part of Operation Desert Shield and Operation Enduring Freedom, tallying over 3,200 flight hours in 30 different aircraft.

In August, Sohl is slated to become Commander, Operational Test and Evaluation Force in Norfolk, Virginia.

The Navy's eight Fleet Readiness Centers (FRCs), with locations on the U.S. east and west coasts and in Japan, conduct maintenance, repair, and overhaul of U.S. Navy aircraft, engines, components and support equipment. Each year, roughly 6,500 Sailors and Marines, along with more than 9,500 depot artisans at the FRCs overhaul and repair nearly 1,000 aircraft, thousands of engines and several hundred thousand components valued at over \$4 billion.