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Surface Warfare Officers School Holds Change of Command

By Lt. Matthew Gallagher, Surface Warfare Officers School Public Affairs

NEWPORT, R.I. – Friends, family, and staff looked on as Capt. David A. Welch turned over command of the Navy's Surface Warfare Officers School (SWOS) to Capt. Scott F. Robertson in Adm. Michael Mullen Auditorium September 9 in Newport, R.I.

Vice Adm. Thomas Rowden, Commander Naval Surface Forces, was the guest speaker for the event and spoke about the technology gap between the United States and potential adversaries.

"I am not worried," Rowden said. "Potential adversaries will never close the gap created by our fine officers, chief petty officers, and [enlisted] Sailors."

Welch thanked his family, friends and the SWOS staff for their support.

"The older I get, the more clearly I recognize that "my" accomplishments are the result of hard work by a lot of other people," Welch said. "The greatest satisfaction of command comes from watching those that I have been privileged to lead and teach achieve success after success. "Judging by those I have been privileged to lead and teach here at SWOS over the past 28 months, I will enjoy tremendous satisfaction for years."

Welch was commissioned through the United States Naval Academy in 1987. His previous command tours include the guided-missile destroyer USS Chung-Hoon (DDG 93) and Destroyer Squadron 31. He is headed to Washington D.C. to serve on chief of naval operations staff in the Plans and Strategy Directorate.

During the course of his tour as commanding officer, Welch guided the development of SWOS' training to support the ever-changing requirements of the fleet. He implemented the new continuum of professional training in the surface officer community, who now attend SWOS prior to every career milestone. He also

shepherded the restoral of enlisted engineering training, reinvigoration of the quartermaster rating, and investments of more than \$200 million dollars to modernize training sites across the SWOS domain, impacting over 70,000 officer and enlisted students annually.

In his remarks, Robertson praised Welch.

“It has become obvious to me that your complete commitment and precision guidance has positively influenced not only every officer heading out to a ship, but also the world-class staff assembled here at SWOS and distributed globally [through training],” Robertson said. “I feel extremely blessed by God for an opportunity to command again – especially here.”

Robertson explained his work priorities for the staff.

“I know for the SWOS team, this is a time of uncertainty about how I will command,” he said. “Rest assured, I am a complete believer in positive, appreciative leadership. I also believe in a warrior ethos and expectations of students and staff alike will be very high. Armor up – great work has been done at SWOS over the years, but we have endless work ahead to ensure students leave our learning sites unquestionably prepared to win in combat.”

Robertson attended boot camp at Naval Training Station San Diego in 1986 as a non-designated seaman. Shortly after graduation, he attended the Broadened Opportunity for Officer Selection and Training (BOOST) program, earning a four-year NROTC scholarship. He attended Norwich University where earned a bachelor’s degree in Mechanical Engineering and received his commission in 1991. At sea he commanded the frigate USS Rodney M. Davis (FFG 60) and the cruiser USS Normandy (CG 60).

For more information about Surface Warfare Officers School, visit

<https://www.netc.navy.mil/centers/swos/> .

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