Press Release

Capt. Smith relieves Capt. Patterson at NSWC Dahlgren Division Change of Command

DAHLGREN, Va. - Capt. Michael Smith assumed command of Naval Surface Warfare Center (NSWC) Dahlgren Division, relieving Capt. Sheila Patterson, July 9, 2010, as they stood beside a 16-inch naval gun during a Change of Command ceremony at the Naval Support Facility Dahlgren parade field.

“I pledge to do everything possible to support you as you do what you’ve proven to be so capable at doing – being the technical expertise and brain trust of the Navy's warfare systems,” Smith told over 700 employees watching the ceremony in person or on their computers via a live broadcast.

The ceremony also marked Patterson’s retirement following 28 years of naval service. Reflecting on the command’s accomplishments during her three-year tenure, she commended NSWC Dahlgren Division personnel for achievements impacting a wide-range of programs.

"The strength of Dahlgren Division lies in its people from the technical director and board of directors to the scientists, engineers and technicians in our technical departments to our business professionals throughout the command," said Patterson. "It lies in our relationships with our sponsors, our customers and partners, and our leadership."

NSWC Commander Rear Adm. James Shannon, the event’s principal speaker, compared Patterson’s career and her command of NSWC Dahlgren Division with the naval service of Rear Adm. John Dahlgren, the "Father of American naval ordnance“ and inventor of the Dahlgren gun.

“Similar to the Dahlgren Gun, Capt. Patterson opened the doors of the new Naval Directed Energy Center and successfully tracked, engaged and destroyed targets representative of potential threats, validating the military utility of Directed Energy,” said Shannon. “Just like Dahlgren conducted cannon firings across the Anacostia River, Sheila led the team in conducting record-setting firings of the Electromagnetic Railgun – next generation weaponry for our 21st century Sailors and Marines.”

The NSWC Commander also compared NSWC Dahlgren Division’s new commander with the legendary civil war admiral known for technological innovations that helped pave the way for today's maritime force.

“I look forward to your (Capt. Smith’s) dynamic leadership in taking the NSWC Dahlgren Team to new heights – delivering cutting edge science and engineering to our 21st century..."
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"warfighters," said Shannon. "You too, follow Commodore Dahlgren’s legacy. This is both an honor and privilege that few naval officers can claim."

Capt. Smith reports to NSWC Dahlgren Division from assignment as the deputy program manager for the Zumwalt Class (DDG-1000) Program at the Washington Navy Yard.

The new NSWC Dahlgren Division Commander first enlisted in the Navy in 1976, reaching the rank of Hospital Corpsman Second Class before attending Humboldt State University. He received a Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental Resource Engineering and his commission as an Engineering Duty Officer.