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Contact: Robert A. Fabich, Sr.
Public Affairs Specialist

Christiansted St. Croix, USVI
340-201-2555

Email: AuxBob@Robich.com

<http://a0701601.wow.uscgaux.info>

News Release

Air Station Borinquen Change Of Command Supported By Auxiliary

AGUADILLA, Puerto Rico - Captain Robert D. Phillips, United States Coast Guard was relieved by Captain Patricia A. McFetridge, USCG, at a time-honored traditional Change of Command ceremony June 4, 2013. Rear Admiral William D. Baumgartner, Commander of the Seventh Coast Guard District headquartered in Miami, Florida, presided over the formal ritual held at Air Station Borinquen (BQN).

"It has been the highlight of my 32-year military career to serve and support the good men and women of Coast Guard Air Station Borinquen as their commanding officer," said Capt. Phillips.



AGUADILLA, Puerto Rico - U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary aircrew prepare to hold a salute for the Presentation Of The Colors during the Change of Command ceremony held at Air Station Borinquen June 4, 2013. USCGAUX photo by Robert A. Fabich, Sr.



Capt. Phillips achieved command of BQN in June 2011, an area of responsibility of 1.3 million square miles which encompasses Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. As commanding officer, he led 244 active duty, civilians, and Auxiliary (USCGAUX) members supporting aviation services for USCG missions in the Eastern Caribbean.

AGUADILLA, Puerto Rico - Capt. Phillips presents a final salute after 32 years of service during his retirement ceremony following the Change of Command June 4, 2013 at Air Station Borinquen. USCGAUX photo by Robert A. Fabich, Sr.

Capt. Phillips' preceding responsibilities consisted of serving as the Chief of the 7th District Coast Guard District's Incident Management Branch; Executive Officer at USCG Air Station

Clearwater, Florida; Operations Officer at Air Station Kodiak, Alaska; two tours at Air Station Houston, Texas; and as an Instructor Pilot in the HH-65 helicopter at the Aviation Training Center in Mobile, Alabama. He has been credited with more than 6000 flight hours in the HH-65 and HC-130H Hercules aircraft.

When asked what his plans were for retirement, Capt. Phillips said, "fixing fences, raising a few horses for my grandchildren, and thinking about joining the Auxiliary. Maybe some small aircraft flying, assisting the local flotilla, and definitely enjoying family times." Capt. Phillips and his wife Lorie, married for 32 years, have plans to return to the Midwest where they grew up. Capt. Phillips earned an Associate of Science Degree at Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College; Bachelor of Science Degree at Kansas State University; and a Master of Science Degree in Instructional Design at the University of South Alabama. His personal awards comprise of three Meritorious Service Medals, three Coast Guard Commendation Medals, the Coast Guard Achievement Medal and two Commandant's Letters of Commendation.

Upholding a profound military heritage amongst an assembly of command, honored guests, dignitaries, and USCGAUX aircrew, Capt. Phillips read aloud his orders of detachment entrusting command to Capt. Patricia A. McFetridge. As the successor, Capt. McFetridge read her orders and assumed command.

"Commanding an Air Station is an absolute dream come true for me, and I am extremely humbled to have been selected for this rare opportunity," articulated Capt. McFetridge, as she acquired the continuity and authority of command. "I am excited to be back at Air Station Borinquen and in the beautiful Caribbean once again."

Capt. McFetridge becomes BQN's 19th commander subsequent to serving as Project Manager of Rescue 21, where she was responsible for managing a one billion dollar Informational Technology acquisition investment to modernize the National Distress and Response System. Her prior assignments included Logistics and Engineering Division Chief for the Deployable Operations Group; Engineering and Executive Officer at BQN; Assistant Engineering Officer at Air Station Elizabeth City, North Carolina; Engineering Officer at Air Station Los Angeles, California; flying tours at Air Station Clearwater, Florida, and Air Station Kodiak, Alaska.

Having joined the Coast Guard in 1989, Capt. McFetridge is a career military aviator. A native of California, she has earned a Bachelor of Science Degree at San Jose State University in Aeronautical Operations; Master of Science Degree in Quality Systems Management from the National Graduate School of Quality Management in Falmouth, Massachusetts, and earned a Six Sigma Green Belt certification. Her personal awards include the Distinguished Flying Cross, Meritorious Service Medal, and Coast Guard Achievement Medal.

The venue for the change of command, inside the BQN hanger, was exhibited with a MH-65C Dolphin helicopter and four USCGAUX aircraft. The airplanes are privately owned and operated by USCGAUX aviation pilots. The USCGAUX air operations team supports BQN with ten private airplanes utilized for Search and Rescue, Maritime Observations Missions, Logistic Missions,



AGUADILLA, Puerto Rico - Capt. McFetridge (right) assumes command from Capt. Phillips (left) at Air Station Borinquen June 4, 2013. Rear Adm. Baumgartner presided over the Change of Command ceremony. USCGAUX photo by Robert A. Fabich, Sr.



AGUADILLA, Puerto Rico - USCG Auxiliary airplanes set the backdrop at the Change Of Command held inside the hanger at Air Station Borinquen June 4, 2013. Officers march toward the stage for the "Piping Ashore," a historical and traditional portion of the ceremony honoring Capt. Phillips who retired after 32 years of service. USCGAUX photo by Robert A. Fabich, Sr.

Initial Pollution Response Missions, Living Marine Resource, Aids to Navigation Patrols, and Marine Environmental Protection. Charles "Chuck" Fischer, Jr., Auxiliary Aviation Coordinator, BQN, directed the assembly of aircraft which were also used to transport dignitaries to and from the ceremony.

Following the change of command, Rear Adm. Baumgartner, Capt. Drew W. Pearson, USCG, commander of Sector San Juan, and their staff took the opportunity to join Lieutenant Roger Bogert, USCG, supervisor of the Resident Inspection Office St. Croix, for an all hands assembly held at The Palms At Pelican Cove on St. Croix. Lt. Bogert oversees the USCG Prevention and Boat Forces operations.

The Palms At Pelican Cove, an island resort owned and operated by Mr. Fischer, member of Christiansted Flotilla 16-01, was the site for an evening dinner reception recognizing Rear Adm. Baumgartner.

"This is our show of support to Rear Adm. Baumgartner, Capt. Pearson, Lt. Cmdr. Dill, Lt. Kim, Lt. Bogert, Lt.j.g. Skordinski, and all the other Active Duty members. They do so much to help us make our missions that much more successful," said Mr. Fischer.

More than 60 USCG active duty and Auxiliary members from St. Croix, San Juan and the 7th District enjoyed a local Caribbean lobster feast compliments of The Palms At Pelican Cove. In recognition for his support to the Auxiliary, Mr. Fischer presented Rear Adm. Baumgartner a commemorative plaque. The plaque was hand-painted by a local artist whose work includes ornaments for the White House Christmas tree.

Rear Adm. Baumgartner's speech to the attendees highlighted the achievements of the 7th District's USCGAUX air operations program, Divisions 16 and 01 team participation with active duty, and overall importance of the Auxiliary as part of Team Coast Guard for both surface and air operations. Capt. Pearson read aloud the content of two Auxiliary Commandant's Letters Of Commendation as Rear Adm. Baumgartner presented the awards to Duane R. Minton, Flotilla Commander 16-01 and Robert A. Fabich, Sr., Public Affairs Specialist 16-01. Mr. Minton and Mr. Fabich were also honored with the USCG 7th District, Awarded For Excellence, challenge coin.



LaGRANDE PRINCESSE, St. Croix - Coast Guard Rear Admiral William Baumgartner (left) accepts a handcrafted plaque from Charles "Chuck" Fischer, Auxiliary Aviation Coordinator, during a dinner reception held at The Palms At Pelican Cove June 4, 2013. Rear Adm. Baumgartner was recognized for his years of support to the Auxiliary. USCGAUX photo by Robert A. Fabich, Sr.

The reception was only part of the three-day activities. Prior to, and after the change of command, members of Flotilla 16-01 feverishly coordinated the logistics to include USCGAUX air transportation, a social gathering at BQN, and a St. Croix farewell breakfast.



LaGRANDE PRINCESSE, St. Croix - Coast Guard Rear Admiral William Baumgartner (left) reacts with a smile during conversation after dinner with Wilson Riggan, Auxiliary Division Chief Aviation. The Palms At Pelican Cove hosted a Caribbean lobster feast in recognition of Rear Adm. Baumgartner's support to the Auxiliary. USCGAUX photo by Robert A. Fabich, Sr.

"As the DSO-AV, I cannot tell you how impressed I am at the professionalism and the camaraderie of Team BQN. You are the model for other Air Stations in D7 to emulate... and D7 is the model for AUXAIR nationwide," said Ken Plesser as he reflected on the events. AUXAIR is an Auxiliary operational program that is organized on a district level rather than on a flotilla or division basis.

Wilson Riggan, Division Chief Aviation, member of the Auxiliary National Response Directorate, simply stated, "I am proud to be associated with such people as this group. These events and the efforts of everyone involved have done the Auxiliary proud and have significantly advanced our relationship with the active duty."

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