

Vice Adm. Doug Perry Passes the Watch of U.S. 2nd Fleet and NATO's Joint Force Command Norfolk



NORFOLK, Va. – More than 500 distinguished guests, international military representatives, and family members attended the NATO's Joint Force Command Norfolk (JFCNF) Assumption of Command and U.S. 2nd Fleet (C2F) Change of Command Ceremony aboard the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz (CVN 68) on Sept. 24.

The day marked a historic military transition as Vice Adm. Doug Perry was relieved as the commander of both JFCNF and C2F, culminating in a profound retirement ceremony recognizing 37 years of honorable service to the nation.

Senior U.S. military leadership in attendance included U.S. Air Force Gen. Alexis Grynkewich, NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe; U.S. Navy Adm. Daryl Caudle, Chief of Naval Operations; and U.S. Navy Adm. Karl Thomas, U.S. Fleet Forces

Command.

"Today, we acknowledge the accomplishments of two distinct commands with separate missions," said Vice Adm. Perry. "The missions [of 2nd Fleet and JFC Norfolk] converge in the same strategic space through the western Atlantic through the Greenland, Iceland, United Kingdom gap and into the high north, the Arctic. Together, these commands ensure the United States and allied advantage in peace time is preserved and the rules-based international order as well; to sustain our readiness to respond in crisis and to defend, fight, and win in combat."

The NATO portion of the ceremony proceeded first. For the first time in the command's history, the blue-and-gold flag of JFCNF was passed to a European ally, UK Army Gen. Nick Perry.

Gen. Perry's assumption of command represented a powerful and symbolic leap forward for NATO's burden-sharing and transatlantic integration.

"I want to thank Doug Perry for his leadership," Gen. Nick Perry said. "Under his stewardship Joint Force Command Norfolk has matured, strengthened its relationships across the alliance, and developed into a vital element of NATO's collective security."

Gen. Perry briefly reflected on the last 250 years of the United States' history, from independence to global leadership, and commented on the ceremony's notable location.

"There is no greater example of both the generosity and the awesome military power [of the United States] as we are hosted today on the USS Nimitz," Perry stressed.

As the ceremony shifted focus from the JFCNF assumption of command, Adm. Thomas reflected on Vice Adm. Perry's tour as the dual-hatted commander with an emphasis on C2F.

“Under his command, 2nd Fleet revitalized maritime homeland defense, from Vigilant Shield and Austere Challenge to Steadfast Defender, Operation NANOOK and Cutlass Fury, Doug ensured that our forces were constantly tested in the most demanding environments and under the most challenging of circumstances,” said Thomas. “You strengthened our alliances and ensured that any platform flying the American flag in the Atlantic was ready to fight and win.”

Following the NATO transition, Rear Adm. Martin Muckian relieved Vice Adm. Perry as the acting C2F commander.

With the official command transfers completed, the atmosphere in the hangar bay shifted to the deeply personal retirement ceremony for Vice Adm. Perry.

The guest of honor, Adm. Caudle, reflected on Vice Adm. Perry’s leadership philosophy and service to the country.

“His infectious energy has always been directed outward toward people. And that to me is the defining characteristic of Doug Perry as a leader,” said Caudle. “Doug never allowed rank to create distance between himself and his Sailors. It’s the people who generate combat power. Know your people, invest in them, challenge them, develop them, hold them to high standards and make sure they understand what they do matters. Doug has been living that philosophy for 37 years and people remember it.”

During his final remarks, Vice Adm. Perry reflected on this military career that began at the U.S. Naval Academy in 1989. He expressed deep gratitude for his parents who established a foundation for him at a young age. He thanked his family, friends, classmates, mentors, leaders and Sailors who have guided him and experienced the Navy journey alongside him.

“When I look back at 37 years – chiefs, Sailors, commanders, generals, air marshals – I don’t think about anything but the people and our experiences,” said Perry. “The people who

raised me, people who taught me, challenged me, believed in me, and then stood the watch beside me, so we had that experience together. And most of all, I remember the Sailors and families who trusted me with the privilege of leading them ... Every chapter of this journey, of my journey, carries your fingerprints.

“Today, I have the privilege of passing the watch. Ships will continue to sail. New Sailors will stand the watch and that’s exactly how it should be. Leadership is never about holding the watch forever. It’s about making a difference while standing the watch and then preparing the next person to take it.”

At the end of the ceremony, Master Chief Information Systems Technician Louis DeCesare recited “The Watch.” As the words of the poem echoed through the Nimitz’s hangar bay, Vice Adm. Perry’s daughter, U.S. Marine Corps 2nd Lt. Elle Perry, stepped forward to assist in the presentation.

“For thirty-seven years, this Sailor has stood the watch,” DeCesare said. “Today we are here to say, Shipmate, the watch stands relieved. Relieved by those you have trained, guided, and led. Shipmate you stand relieved ... we have the watch.”

2nd Lt. Perry rendered a salute to her father symbolizing a generational passing of the watch.

The day marked both an end and a beginning – a passing of the watch ensures the waters of the Atlantic remain secure under the vigilant eyes of a united alliance.

U.S. 2nd Fleet, reestablished in 2018 in response to the changing global security environment, develops and employs maritime ready forces to fight across multiple domains in the Atlantic and Arctic in order to ensure access, deter aggression and defend U.S., allied, and partner interests.

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