

USS Missouri Changes Commanders

By Lt. Cmdr. Jennifer Cragg, Submarine Group 2 Public Affairs

GROTON, Conn. – Virginia-Class attack submarine USS Missouri (SSN 780), held a change of command ceremony aboard the submarine at Naval Submarine Base Groton in Groton April 20.

Cmdr. Mike Luckett relieved Cmdr. Tim Rexrode during the time-honored ceremony.

“Today is about the Missouri officers and crew because they are the ones actually did everything over the past three years,” said Rexrode. “The Submarine Force gave me the opportunity to lead a tremendously talented wardroom and crew – one that I think is the very best.”

Capt. Mike Bernacchi, Chief of Staff, Commander, Submarine Group 2 served as guest speaker and praised Rexrode for his accomplishments while in command of USS Missouri.

“Tim has been here since the commissioning and he leaves behind the most advanced warship,” said Bernacchi. “Tim will be remembered for his leadership he has shown while in command of this marvelous warship.”

Rexrode was also recognized for his place in history as the commissioning commanding officer of USS Missouri.

“As the commissioning commanding officer of one of the nation’s premier warships, you have fulfilled the submarine force’s rich and demanding tradition in bringing a ship to life. I am proud of you and your team’s execution in accomplishing this demanding task,” Vice Adm. John Richardson, commander, Submarine Forces Atlantic said via a naval message.

Rexrode, who first began his career as a submariner, was stationed at that time on the oldest submarine, USS Gato (SSN 615), and was proud to have served and commanded the newest Virginia-Class submarine.

“While the capabilities and the mastery of technology may have changed, but the very essence of submarining hasn’t changed,” said Rexrode. “We all seek to serve the American people and submarines are designed to be at sea for the sole purpose of defending our nation and Missouri will fulfill that commitment under her new leadership.”

While addressing his crew, Rexrode reminded them of the three lessons he shared with them since day one when he assumed command and thanked them for “buying into his principles.”

“I asked only three things of you when I assumed command and told you these would define success,” said Rexrode. “Do your best to do your job right; understand when you don’t or can’t do it right and tell someone, and treat each other right.”

During the ceremony, Rexrode received a proclamation from the office of Missouri’s Governor. Governor Jay Nixon’s proclamation recognized Rexrode’s position as the submarine’s first commanding officer.



Cmdr Tim Rexrode receives Governor Jay Nixon's Proclamation from Cmdr Louis J. DiGusto III, USCG. Cmdr DiGusto is a member of the U.S.S. Missouri SSN-780 Commissioning Committee and represented Chairman Sam Bushman at the Change of Command

“It’s an honor that the state of Missouri has bestowed this recognition, I’m deeply humbled,” said Rexrode. "I remain proud and honored to have been USS Missouri’s newest namesake ship’s first commanding officer."

Rexrode also received a flag that was flown over the Missouri capitol.

During Rexrode’s tour as commanding officer, Missouri completed a post-shakedown availability sea trials and extended modernization a month ahead of schedule.

“While in command, USS Missouri was delivered early from PSA, which was a ‘first ever’ accomplishment in the Virginia-Class program,” said Rexrode.

Rexrode, born in West Virginia, he graduated with honors from West Virginia University in 1990 with a Bachelor of Science in Aerospace Engineering and was commissioned through Officer Candidate School. Rexrode’s next assignment will be with a senior member of the Nuclear Propulsion Examining Board for Fleet Forces Command in Norfolk.

Rexrode told the Luckett during the ceremony, “You have the greatest group of Sailors and officers in the force and a fine submarine,” said Rexrode.

Luckett, a Banning, Calif.-native, has previously served as executive officer of USS Pennsylvania (GOLD) (SSBN 735) home ported in Bangor, Wash., looks forward to taking command.

“There’s a huge amount of potential here,” said Luckett. Our next major milestone is to complete our readiness for warfighting and pick-up where Cmdr. Rexrode has left off and use it to get our crew ready to deploy.”

Luckett added that taking command of Missouri is the highlight of his career. “I’m ecstatic to be in command of such a great ship,” said Luckett. “I’m proud and humbled to take her on her first deployment.”

Luckett holds several degrees to include a Master of Science degree in Strategy and Joint Campaign Planning; Master of Science degree in Leadership and Human Resource Development from the Naval Postgraduate School and a Master of Engineering degree in Naval Architecture and Offshore Engineering from the University of California, Berkeley. He also graduated with distinction from United States Naval Academy in 1994 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Naval Architecture.

Missouri is the seventh submarine of the Virginia class. General Dynamics Electric Boat delivered the submarine to the U.S. Navy in July 2010. The submarine's crew consists of about 134 officers and enlisted personnel. Missouri is the fifth Navy ship to be named in honor of the people of the "Show Me State."

Ed's Note: As the Commanding Officer of the U.S.S. Missouri, Cmdr Tim Rexrode set a 'high bar' for all of his successors. He and his wife, were exceptional people and the Commissioning Committee wishes them both all the best in the year's to come.

We would also like to welcome Cmdr Michael Lockett as the new C.O. of U.S.S. Missouri. Chairman Sam was very pleased that Mr. Lockett's Submarine career has included a tour of duty on the U.S.S. Jefferson City SSN-759. Since Sam was born and raised in Jefferson City, he thought it was wonderful!!!!

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the retirement, of 'Chevy' Brown, First Chief of the Boat (COB) of the new U.S.S. Missouri. He worked tirelessly to bring the Boat's crew up to speed and was very instrumental in making this vessel one of the best in the Navy. Good Luck and Godspeed in that treacherous world of civilian life!