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New commander inherits newly-structured Air Force organization

By Susan A. Romano, AFTAC Public Affairs

PATRICK AIR FORCE BASE, Fla. - Through the tradition of military pomp and circumstance, members of the Air Force Technical Applications Center here witnessed the change of command between the center's outgoing and incoming commander today.

Col. Chad J. Hartman assumed command from Col. Steven M. Gorski under the authority of the presiding official, Maj. Gen. Mary F. O'Brien, commander of 25th Air Force.

With two formations of 48 Airmen serving as the formidable backdrop of the ceremony, more than 300 family members, base personnel and distinguished guests from the local community attended the event that took place at the nuclear treaty monitoring center's outdoor pavilion.

The early morning warm temperatures and high Florida humidity didn't appear to dampen the spirits of the members of the Department of Defense's sole nuclear treaty monitoring center as the unit's guidon was ceremoniously passed from one leader to the next.

An Air Force change of command ceremony is steeped in tradition and represents the formal transfer of authority and responsibility. It is also a way to recognize the achievements of an outgoing commander as well as welcome and introduce the new commander to the people he or she will be leading.

O'Brien, whose Numbered Air Force directly oversees the AFTAC mission, traveled from San Antonio to officiate the transfer and provide insight into Gorski's accomplishments since he took command of the center in July 2016.

"Colonel Gorski was destined to lead this organization," said O'Brien. "His academic credentials combined with his multiple operational assignments resulted in his ability to hit the ground running, directly impacting national policy. Even Secretary of the Air Force Heather Wilson noticed his leadership and AFTAC's culture of innovation at the 2018 Air Force Association conference in Orlando. She said, 'Here at Patrick Air Force Base, where Airmen do nuclear detection and treaty verification, the commander gives his Airmen 10 percent of their time to develop new things - sensors, software and other tools of their trade.'"

She added, "Steve oversaw a 'no-fail mission' and I congratulate him on flawlessly leading this enterprise."

As the attendees stood at attention, O'Brien presented Gorski with the prestigious Legion of Merit for exceptionally meritorious service.

During his tenure, Gorski led a \$3 billion, 1,000+ member enterprise tasked to operate the Air Force's largest multi-domain sensor network on every continent. At the helm, Gorski supervised the detection and reporting of two North Korean-declared nuclear tests, one in September 2016, and the second in September 2017, which ultimately shaped the U.S. government's strategic response and the issuance of United Nations sanctions against the North Korean regime.

Gorski's shining achievement was the implementation of the center's organizational restructure, which established two groups, two executive directorates and eight new squadrons, shaping more than \$400 million in acquisition strategy oversight, weapons of mass destruction threat monitoring capabilities, and interagency investments across the Department of Energy and civilian laboratory networks.

Following the medal presentation, Gorski expressed his gratitude to the men and women who worked for him for the past 24 months.

"To the squadron commanders, directors, superintendents, technical advisors, and senior civilians, the Air Force Chief of Staff says you lead at the level that is the beating heart of the Air Force, and you certainly hold the heart of AFTAC in your hands. Lead well, lead boldly, and set the example for our next generation of leaders by working together. To the center staff, thank you for entertaining all my wild ideas and humoring me - you are all true professionals."

Once the guidon was passed, AFTAC's new commander received his first salute from the Airmen in formation, led by AFTAC Vice Commander Col. Michael G. Sawyer.

Hartman, a career intelligence officer, is coming from Washington, D.C., where he recently served as the Chief of Strategic Studies for the Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force. He is an Army War College distinguished graduate with extensive combat experience in multiple overseas campaigns including Operations Iraqi Freedom, New Dawn, Inherent Resolve, Enduring Freedom, Allied Force and Deliberate Guard.

"Thank you for the opportunity to lead this outfit," Hartman said to O'Brien. "It is an honor to join this team - a team that started with an explosion way back in 1945 and brought about the dawn of a new age. From the development of the long range detection system grew this exceptional array of people and global sensors made up of fascinating technologies and intriguing capabilities. It is an incredible time of transition for AFTAC and I'm honored to join this team and become an AFTACer."

This will be Hartman's fourth command tour, but his first as a wing commander. Gorski is moving to the Pentagon to become the military assistant to the Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence.