



**Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet  
Naval Facilities Engineering Command Pacific  
Change of Command Speech  
Pearl Harbor, Hawaii  
Admiral Patrick M. Walsh  
7 July 2010**

Distinguished guests, fellow Flag and General officers, family and friends... Good morning and Aloha.

A special welcome to those of you who have traveled to celebrate this wonderful occasion: the Naval Facilities Engineering Command Pacific Change of Command. Together we will recognize the Giorgione family and welcome Rear Admiral Kate Gregory to the NAVFAC Pacific ohana.

I am grateful for the opportunity to express my gratitude for all that you, the NAVFAC community, have done to support our Navy.

The work here is especially important and the engineering, construction, expeditionary, and infrastructure required by a naval force operating over the 100-million-square-mile expanse of the Pacific Ocean is immense. Without the support of Naval Facilities Engineering Command Pacific, our ships, submarines, aircraft simply could not operate.

Like the foundation of a sturdy house, the NAVFAC Pacific contribution is essential to the Pacific Fleet mission. In addition to strengthening Navy and Marine Corps combat readiness worldwide, NAVFAC Pacific delivers sustainable, adaptable facilities; engineering construction; acquisition services; expeditionary capabilities; and contingency response to all military departments and Department of Defense agencies.

Humanitarian assistance and disaster relief is one of our core responsibilities; it is especially important in the Asia-Pacific region, where the littorals are home to the preponderance of the world's population but have a propensity for natural disasters...on average at least one every 60 days. So every year, hundreds of Civil Engineer Corps personnel and Seabees deploy in support of Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief missions to help respond, to help assist, and to help build capability in the region so that others can be ready to respond to disaster.

I have the opportunity to travel throughout the Asia-Pacific region to meet with Chiefs of Navy, other senior defense leaders and diplomats. Frequently, in the course of those meetings, the conversation shifts to our Pacific Partnership program, which they consider as one of our most critical and impactful missions. This annual humanitarian assistance mission seeks to strengthen relationships with nations in the Pacific through medical, dental and engineering outreach projects. The program supports countries so that they can respond to humanitarian crises brought on by disease and natural disasters such as pandemic illness, typhoons, earthquakes and tsunamis.

Since inception of the program four years ago, U.S. Navy Seabees have deployed to over a dozen countries to complete more than 70 engineering projects, which include refurbishing schoolhouses, building water-treatment facilities, and constructing new clinics in remote villages. Through these engineering civic action programs, the Seabees live up to their motto: “with compassion for others, ‘we build, we fight’ for peace with freedom.”

Seabees teach local populations new techniques in construction. They also deploy in support of cooperative exercises and for overseas contingency projects throughout Southeast Asia. They work hand-in-hand with their counterparts, strengthening trust and mutual understanding while they do what they do best – they build – examples of their projects include medical facilities in Thailand, security facilities in Cambodia, local community potable water systems in Indonesia, airfield improvements in the Philippines, and the movement of Marines to Guam.

From creating the Master Development plan for a new Marine Corps base, a berth at Apra Harbor for transient carriers, and facilities for a new Army ballistic missile defense task force...to establishing the Joint Guam Program Office, executing the installation planning, issuing the largest Environmental Impact Statement undertaken by the Department of Defense, and developing a construction contracting acquisition strategy for over seven billion dollars of project requirements.... Mike Giorgione and his team at NAVFAC Pacific, made substantial progress on tough projects under challenging fiscal and environmental conditions.

This is a very full plate for any one commander – the role and responsibilities are unique -- the mission extraordinary -- and the stakes are very high for the governments in the region, the United States, the Territory of Guam, the Department of Defense, all four armed services, and multiple echelons of command.

Mike's dynamic leadership, vision, engineering and acquisition expertise have enabled him to lead the NAVFAC Pacific team. He developed these skills early in his career, starting with his first tour in the Navy as a Civil Engineer Corps officer of a Naval Mobile Construction Battalion. Then-LTJG Giorgione was the Officer in Charge of a Civic Action Team, deployed to the island of Yap in the Federated States of Micronesia. This was a unique opportunity for a junior officer - and one that helped Mike learn what kind of leader he wanted to become. Everyday for several months, Mike led a team of twelve Seabees in the conduct of humanitarian assistance projects and daily community relations programs ranging from health care to entertaining the local children.

Mike went on to serve in the Philippines, Italy, and a variety of other assignments, distinguishing himself as an exemplary leader culminating in such remarkable positions as the Commanding Officer of the presidential retreat Camp David – an assignment reserved for the best of our Civil Engineer Corps officers. Subsequently, he served as the last Commanding Officer of the public works center San Diego, then in command while in the midst of the Naval Facilities Engineering Command realignment.

Over the course of an outstanding 29-year career, Mike developed a visionary leadership style all

his own. He produced results, even when navigating in uncharted waters...and he put the concerns for people first. He has a deep-rooted sense of responsibility and genuine compassion for others, which I have seen demonstrated in his strong personal commitment to developing leaders and promoting safety.

While here at NAVFAC Pacific and as the Fleet Civil Engineer, Mike played an instrumental role in executing initiatives that focus on the people of the Pacific Fleet. He developed a diverse workforce, started a program of formal rotational assignments for civilians to broaden their experience, and, despite his demanding duties, he made time to mentor military and civilian personnel as well as command interns, which is why we selected him as the 2009 Pacific Fleet Mentor of the Year. Mike's care for others is admirable and his inspiring leadership by example has fostered a strong, proactive mentoring culture throughout the command. Mike's leadership is not one of simply words but actions - and the Navy is indebted for his service.

There are not many career paths in the world that offer such an exceptional view into the human spirit. Here before you, is a team, where, in the course of their daily mission, their work and labor represents the commitment of our country and reveals the soul of our nation. I am especially grateful to be here today, to recognize the honor, commitment, and courage of this team and to express my personal gratitude for the leadership, dedication, and professional approach taken by Mike Giorgione and the men and women of NAVFAC Pacific.

Mike, you have done amazing things for this command and for the Fleet – at the same time giving so much of yourself while away from your loved ones. Those of us who wear the uniform know that the most important part of our lives, the most important source of strength and support is our family, so we understand and appreciate the personal sacrifices that your family has made and are happy that together we can celebrate this milestone success of your professional career.

Today we recognize and thank Mike's wife Michele for her strength and support. Michele, with selflessness and grace, you supported our team, you helped Mike all over the Pacific, while raising children. With Brianna graduating and attending UC Berkeley in the fall and Ryanne ("Ryan") the volleyball MVP and track star, you served as the family judge and jury and kept the trains running on time. On behalf of the Pacific Fleet, please accept my heartfelt thanks for all you have done - we are grateful for your support.

Mike, Michele - we bid you Fair Winds and Following Seas as you return to Coronado and prepare for Mike's retirement after 29 years of faithful service to the nation...we will miss you.

(applause)

I would like to extend a warm welcome to Rear Admiral Kate Gregory, who returns to Hawaii by way of Virginia Beach, where she was the Chief of Staff, First Naval Construction Division. Kate is well known and respected in the Civil Engineer Corps. You will read in local papers and national media that after becoming the first female Executive Officer and Commanding Officer of a naval construction battalion, she made history again last month when she became the CEC community first female flag officer. But that is not what she will say...Kate is quick to point out, however, “my promotion is simply the result of the generous mentoring by my chains of

command, tremendous help from all the wonderful Navy men and women with whom I have served, friendship of my peers, and unfailing support of my friends – and most of all my family.”

Kate is the right person, in the right place, at the right time. She exemplifies the Seabee “can-do” attitude, deflects attention, and credits her success to a long list of people who have helped her during her career, many who are here today.

We are very fortunate to have her talents, vision, and leadership at the helm here. NAVFAC Pacific will have the continuity of a persevering role model who leads by example and rises to every occasion...and the Pacific Fleet will continue to benefit from the expertise of another seasoned civil engineer. Kate, your career has taken you into tough assignments, and you have excelled repeatedly. Your extensive experience as a combat engineer in the Pacific has prepared you well for this assignment and I look forward to serving with you.

Again, I would like to thank you all for being here today. I would also like to thank the State of Hawaii for your strong support of the Navy. Lastly, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for all those who have served and continue to serve here at NAVFAC Pacific for the valuable contributions of this command to the Navy. Yours is a mission that is essential to everything we do in the Pacific...and for that, your Navy and nation are grateful.

Thank you, and God Bless. Mike, please join me at the podium.

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