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Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron 73 Holds Change of Command

CORONADO, Calif. (NNS) -- Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) 73 held a change of command ceremony at Naval Air Station North Island in Coronado, Calif., June 19.

At the ceremony, Cmdr. Andy Berner relieved Cmdr. Pete Riebe as the commanding officer of the "BattleCats" of HSM-73.

The change of command was held in conjunction with the "BattleCat" 30th anniversary ceremony.

Riebe, a native of Arlington, Wash., is a 1996 graduate of the United States Naval Academy. As commander of HSM-73, Riebe led a squadron of more than 250 personnel and 11 MH-60R aircraft. During his tenure, he deployed HSM-73's Combat Element 1 on the first-in-class deployment with USS Freedom (LCS 1) and prepared his squadron for its upcoming deployment with Carrier Air Wing 17, embarked aboard USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70).

Berner, a native of Chatham Township, N.J., is also a 1996 graduate of the United States Naval Academy. At sea, his career as a naval aviator includes assignments with Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron (Light) (HSL) 43 aboard USS Ingraham (FFG 61) and USS Rodney M. Davis (FFG 60). He also served as the assistant air department officer aboard USS Wasp (LHD 1) and completed his department head tour with HSL-51 Detachment 3 as the officer-in-charge aboard USS Kitty Hawk (CV 63) and USS George Washington (CVN 73).

Cmdr. Matthew Ort, a 1997 graduate of Purdue University, reported as HSM-73's executive officer.

The ceremony's guest speaker, Capt. Matthew Leahey, Commander, Carrier Air Wing 17, spoke to the pride and professionalism of the entire HSM-73 "BattleCat" team,

expressing what an integral part the squadron plays in Carrier Air Wing 17.

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