


# NORAD, US NORTHCOM Welcomes New Commander

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**By Staff Sgt. Thomas J. Doscher, U.S. Northern Command Public Affairs**

PETERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Colo (NNS) -- North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) and U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM) from Air Force Gen. Gene Renuart held a change of command ceremony on Peterson Air Force Base May 18.

Navy Adm. James Winnefeld took command from Air Force Gen. Gene Renuart in a ceremony on Peterson Air Force Base May 18.

Defense Secretary Robert Gates, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. Mike Mullen and Canadian Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Walt Natynczyk, were on-hand to oversee the passing of the commands' colors to Winnefeld.

"It is a tremendous honor to have taken command of NORAD and U.S. NORTHCOM," Winnefeld said. "I can think of no greater responsibility or honor than protecting our people and our way of life, and I take this to be a sacred trust."

Introducing the new commander, Gates said America and Canada were fortunate to be receiving a NORAD and U.S. NORTHCOM commander like Winnefeld.

"It is our nations' good fortune to have another proven leader and warrior ready to lead this vital organization," Gates said. "He led the USS Enterprise through Operation Enduring Freedom immediately after the attacks on 9-11. As a carrier strike group commander, he supported Operation Iraqi Freedom and conducted maritime security missions in the Persian Gulf. With this singular resume, I can think of no better officer to assume the vital duties of defending our nation, responding to natural disasters when called upon and partnering with Canada, Mexico and our Caribbean neighbors in securing our borders and our sovereignty."

Coming from an assignment as Director for Strategic Plans and Policy on the Joint Staff, Winnefeld has also commanded the U.S. 6th Fleet and the Theodore Roosevelt Carrier Strike Group.

Winnefeld took the opportunity to talk about the strong relationship between the U.S. and Canada and NORAD as part of the bedrock of that relationship.

"Canada and the United States have an exceptional partnership," Winnefeld said. "Most recently seen in places like Afghanistan and Haiti, and I've always considered it a privilege to serve with the Canadian armed forces. I look forward to serving shoulder-to-shoulder once again with Canadians in this command and to forging as strong personal partnership with you."

In recognition of senior Mexican military officers present at the ceremony, Winnefeld expressed his desire to strengthen the relationship between U.S. and Mexican military forces.

"Your presence here today is symbolic of the vital partnership between the U.S. and Mexico, and between our two militaries," Winnefeld told the officers in Spanish.

Winnefeld recognized the accomplishments of the commands and said he was looking forward to becoming part of the team.

"While I know I need to listen and learn, I join this great team with a lot of energy and ideas," Winnefeld said. "There are any doors of opportunity open to these two commands, and we will step through them in due course. In so doing, we will not forget our American and Canadian colleagues serving together overseas. They and others from like-minded nations are our first line of defense."

Citing a connection between those who serve on the front lines and the mission of NORAD and U.S. NORTHCOM, Winnefeld recognized two Fort Carson Soldiers in the audience who were recovering from wounds they suffered in combat as well as "Gold Star" family members, people who've lost loved ones on deployment, who were at the ceremony.

"When one of these devoted young men and women is wounded or lost in action, it's not an isolated event far away," he said. "There's a clear connection between what these very special people did and do over there and what we do over here."

Winnefeld ended his remarks by making those Soldiers and Gold Star families a promise.

"We at NORAD and U.S. NORTHCOM pledge to you, who have given so much to our country, that in the brief moment in time that we are privileged to serve in this place, we will give it our very best effort," he said.

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