

Dept. of Military Affairs: 115th Fighter Wing gains a new commander

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MADISON, Wis. — There is a new commander leading the Madison-based 115th Fighter Wing – which includes more than 1,500 Airmen and a squadron of F-16A Fighting Falcons.

Col. Bart Van Roo assumed command from Brig. Gen. Erik Peterson by receiving the 115th Fighter Wing unit flag as part of an official change-of-command ceremony Oct. 3 in an aircraft hangar on base.

“To the Airmen of the 115th Fighter Wing and the 378th Fighter Squadron, we have an incredibly exciting opportunity ahead of us with so much great to come...I have no doubt that in the F-35 we will be at the very tip of the spear.” Van Roo said.

Van Roo graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and received his commission through the Academy of Military Science in 1999. Col. Van Roo began his military career in 1992 when he enlisted at the 115th Fighter Wing, Madison Wis. He has more than 2,600 flying hours and has been serving for over 28 years.

“Today is the final episode of a three part series,” said Brig. Gen. David May, Wisconsin’s deputy adjutant general for Air. “Installing new officers in each of our senior most command positions in the Wisconsin Air National Guard.”

Volk Field Air National Guard base, 128th Air Refueling Wing, and the 115th Fighter wing transitioned to a new commander within the span of a month.

“The talent of this combined leadership team is humbling,” continued May. “We have a group of leaders that are unbelievable in terms of talent, experience,

knowledge and interpersonal skills.”

While May addressed the wing he expressed his feelings of admiration for the standards that Peterson set during his term as commander of the 115th Fighter Wing.

“Your reputation was built on the relentless pursuit of a standard of excellence,” May said. “A standard that has been set at the top of this organization by your leader for the past four years.”

Peterson recently assumed the duties of Chief of Staff, Wisconsin Air National Guard with more than 29 years of service, culminating as commander of the 115th since Oct 1, 2016.

“It is a rare opportunity to reach the pinnacle of a career of your service with an organization that you love,” said Peterson. “I was able to witness a world class organization in action.”

“115th Fighter Wing team, it is each and every Airmen’s perseverance and ingenuity and dedication that make the 115th Fighter wing a shining example of excellence,” he added.

Peterson, who graduated from the United States Air Force Academy in 1991 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Aeronautical Engineering, enlisted in the U.S. Air Force in 1991, held previous commands to include the 332nd Expeditionary Fighter Squadron of the 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing, Joint Base Balad, Iraq, the 176th Fighter Squadron, 115th Fighter Wing Operations Group, the 115th Fighter Wing Maintenance Group and Vice Commander of the 115th Fighter Wing.

Brig. Gen. Peterson helped instill a culture of dedication to excellence and the desire to move forward with the changing times.

“There are numerous economic social and geopolitical challenges we are facing in the world today,” said Peterson. “Col. Van Roo, I know that you and the 115th stand ready to meet these challenges.”

The 115th Fighter Wing’s newest commander, Col. Van Roo, addressed the fighter wing members on the future of the 115th.

“I want to highlight three wing priorities to ensure our mission success,” said Van

Roo. “First we must foster a culture of growth and innovation, collaborate and build partnerships at all levels, and last, truly empower your Airmen.”

May mentioned that Col. Van Roo simultaneously went to work, devised a plan to alter the Northern Lightning Exercise and create public health protocols that allowed the exercise to move forward with the confidence of all the commanders to send their forces to Wisconsin.

“Long story short he [Col. Van Roo] executed a full sized Northern Lightning Exercise but with fewer people on base, to include COVID testing and numerous other safety procedures...” said May. “It was truly amazing what he accomplished.”

As May finished his address he scanned the room and reiterated the faith he had in the wing’s newest commander.

“An officer that is ready with a track record of being able to do whatever needs to be done well beyond the cockpit of an F-16 and in a spectacular fashion,” said May. “Col. Van Roo is, and will be a leader for everyone in this wing. Col. Van Roo is and will continue to be a partner to this community.”