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Mixon takes command of USARPAC

Story and photos by Sgt. 1st Class Jason Shepherd
United States Army, Pacific Public Affairs

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii -- With the passing of the United States Army, Pacific colors, Soldiers, professional Army Civilians, Family members and well-wishers from the community witnessed the Army Service Component Command's change of command in a ceremony Feb. 1 on historic Palm Circle.

As sun bathed the parade field between frequent rain showers, Lt. Gen. Benjamin R. Mixon replaced Lt. Gen. John M. Brown, III, who steps down after three and a half years as USARPAC commanding general.

Adm. Timothy J. Keating, commander, U.S. Pacific Command, passed the colors from Brown to Mixon, thereby honoring one of the most ancient traditions of the military profession, the symbolic changing of command from one warrior to another.

"They'll be a rustle in the ranks tomorrow when for the first time since the early '70s, Lt. Gen. Brown will not be there for muster..." Keating said, "but we'll realize in a big hurry that Randy Mixon is with us, as is Rhonda (Mixon). He's proved his mettle in battle. Much will be required of him and his family in the months and years ahead, but they are up to the task."

Mixon relinquished command of the 25th Infantry Division to Brig. Gen. Mick Bednarek at Schofield Barracks on Jan. 30. Mixon was commander of the Tropic Lightning Division during its recent, 15-month deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom where he served as the Multinational Division North commander. Before the change of command ceremony, Brown officiated in a ceremony to appoint Mixon lieutenant general.

"As we prepare Army forces to deploy, I am committed to ensure that we protect the environment and the sensitive cultural concerns of all the citizens of the areas in the Pacific," Mixon said. "I intend to work with all concerned citizens to achieve a balance between training and our mission, to protect the environment and to protect our cultural concerns. Ideally, we can work together for the good of our nation."

Hawaii's Lt. Gov. Duke Aiona, Jr. was also on hand to farewell the Browns and to welcome the Mixons. Aiona recognized Brown for his service to USARPAC and Hawaii.

"It's my great honor to be here today, on behalf of the people of the State of Hawaii to say thanks to Gen. Brown for everything that he's done," Aiona said, "(and) to let him

know that we appreciate the trials and tribulations that he's gone through during his command here in the Pacific."

"We are here to support and assist (Mixon) in every way possible," he added. "We understand the challenges you have ahead of you, and we're here to stand side by side."

"It's been an honor and personal highlight to pass this command to Randy Mixon," Brown said. "He and Rhonda are already members of the great USARPAC family. They are a talented, dedicated, passionate, and are absolutely the right couple to move this command forward to meet the challenges of tomorrow."

Earlier in the ceremony, the Army Superior Unit Award was presented to USARPAC. Brown and Command Sgt. Maj. Joseph Zettlemyer, USARPAC command sergeant major, added the award streamer to the USARPAC colors. Brown then pinned a superior unit award ribbon on Sgt. Jasmar Briscoe, who represented all the Soldiers in the command from Jan. 1, 2004 to Oct. 31, 2006. They are also authorized to wear the ribbon.

"We salute the Soldiers of the finest Army we have ever known," Keating said. "They stand before us today. They are very well equipped, they are very well trained, and they are very well educated. Their tactics, techniques, procedures, and doctrine are the best of any army ever. But one thing that distinguishes that Soldier: he or she is very well led and for that, we can thank Lt. Gen. John Brown."

Brown also was honored during a retirement ceremony held before the command change ceremony, receiving a Distinguished Service Cross for his more than 38 years of military service. His wife, Elaine, was also awarded the Public Service Award for her "enthusiastic and creative contributions" to USARPAC.

Speaking of his wife, Brown said, "I've watched her represent our nation in front of all army spouses, in audiences with queens, first ladies and spouses of army leaders across the Asia Pacific, but I've also seen her on her knees in a pair of dirty jeans on the Shafter thrift shop floor... I've watched her befriend young army spouses and help them through their first deployments and separation in their careers. It's been an interesting and rewarding journey and I would not have made it with anyone else. Thank you."

"I will never forget that in this position I have been given, it's all about the soldiers you see on the field in front of you," Mixon said. "One Team, and God bless America."

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Note: Low resolution photos with captions on next page are the same as the higher resolution JPG files with Photoshop embedded captions attached to the email providing this news release.



(Casa Mixon) Christina Kemmer, Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army for Hawaii, presents Lt. Gen. Benjamin R. Mixon, commanding general, United States Army, Pacific, with a lei after the change of command ceremony Feb. 1.

Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jason Shepherd, United States Army, Pacific, Public Affairs



(LTGMixonReceives the colors) Lt. Gen. Benjamin R. Mixon receives the USARPAC Colors from Adm. Timothy J. Keating, commander, U.S. Pacific Command, during the change of command ceremony held on historic Palm Circle Feb. 1. Mixon took command from Lt. Gen. John M. Brown, III, who steps down after three and a half years in command.

Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jason Shepherd, United States Army, Pacific, Public Affairs



(LTGMixon) Lt. Gen. Benjamin R. Mixon, commanding general, United States Army, Pacific, speaks to the audience during the change of command ceremony on Fort Shafter Feb. 1. Mixon takes over for Lt. Gen. John M. Brown, III, who steps down after three and a half years in command.

Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jason Shepherd, United States Army, Pacific, Public Affairs