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Dean takes over reins of First Air Force

TYNDALL AIR FORCE BASE, Fla. – In a ceremony filled with traditions older than the force itself, command of Continental U.S. North American Aerospace Defense Command Region-First Air Force (Air Forces Northern) changed Thursday morning in front of a formation of Airmen and hundreds of distinguished guests.

During the ceremony officiated by Gen. Gene Renuart, commander of NORAD and U.S. Northern Command, Maj. Gen. Garry C. Dean assumed command from Maj. Gen. Henry C. Morrow. Morrow is moving on to become the defense representative to the U.S. Liaison Office, U.S. Central Command in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

“It’s hard to believe three years have passed since I took on the mantle and responsibility as your commander,” General Morrow said in parting remarks to assembled Airmen and guests. “In so many ways it seems like only yesterday. So much has been accomplished, not only in depth but also in breadth and scope.”

General Dean comes to Tyndall from the Pentagon, where he was the Air Force deputy inspector general. This will be a second assignment at Tyndall for General Dean, as he was previously stationed here from July 2006 to January 2008 as the Air National Guard assistant to the commander and Air Component Coordination Element director.

“I’m deeply humbled and honored to be named the commander of 1st Air Force,” said Gen. Dean. “General Morrow has handed me a superb organization, and I will do my utmost to lead this organization to a new level of success in defending our nation’s skies and borders.”

The incoming commander pledged to accomplish 1st Air Force’s ongoing homeland defense mission by supporting Airmen and their families, protecting and ensuring critical and modern technology and working closely with established partners, including the Air National Guard and other branches of the military and civilian organizations.

“We have a mutual commitment to keep our nation safe from terrorist attacks,” he said. “We will be called upon again, and we must be ready at a moment’s notice to provide the necessary air power. We cannot fail, and we will not fail, in this enduring Air Force mission.”

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During his farewell remarks, General Morrow praised the “expertise and skill” of those under his command and also proudly recounted several of their impressive accomplishments during his three-year tenure. Among those he recounted were thousands of successful air-defense missions flown from sites around the country.

“That is a monumental undertaking, and one that has kept our nation’s skies—and shores—safe from terrorist attack,” he said.

He also lauded the professionals from the Air Force’s Rescue Coordination Center, who conducted more than 2,000 search and rescue missions, saving the lives of more than 825 American citizens. He also specifically recalled the expeditious response of the forces when three major hurricanes struck the southeast in September 2008.

“I am proud to have worked side-by-side with each and every one of you during that tumultuous period,” he said. “I render a profound salute of respect and thanks to each and every one of you. It has been a great ride and I am grateful for having had a front row seat.”

General Dean, accompanied by his wife, Lisa and four daughters, said he is looking forward to working with Brig. Gen. André Viens, CONR’s deputy commander, and Brig. Gen. Darryl Roberson, 325th Fighter Wing commander.

Having recently worked and lived in the Tyndall area, General Dean also had praise for the local community. “The people of Bay County work hard to make sure this is a great place to live,” he said.