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NEWS! From the **NAVAL OBSERVATORY**

U.S. NAVAL OBSERVATORY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

U.S. Naval Observatory welcomes Captain Kristine Bench, USN as the 60th Superintendent

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Captain Kristine N. Bench, USN, assumed duties as the 60th Superintendent, United States Naval Observatory (USNO) on July 17, 2026, relieving Captain Kimberly M. Freitas, USN. A time-honored tradition, the Change of Command ceremony was held on the observatory grounds in Washington, D.C.

Rear Admiral Erin Acosta, USN (Commander, Naval Meteorology and Oceanography Command; Oceanographer and Navigator of the Navy) delivered remarks highlighting the challenges and successes of Captain Freitas’s tenure after taking command in June 2024 and framing her contributions in context to the Naval Observatory’s long-standing history dating back to the 19th century, in addition to the continuation of its modern day mission of delivering world-class products and services of defining celestial framework, Earth orientation and precise time.

“Looking back over these two years, it’s remarkable how much this team accomplished. Those accomplishments will endure for years. But when people ask what I’m proudest of, that’s not what comes to mind. I’m proudest that we became a better team,” said Captain Freitas, reflecting on her tour at USNO. She then expressed gratitude to the staff of the observatory. “Thank you for

showing me what it looks like to use your talents in service of something greater than yourselves.

Thank you for allowing me the privilege of serving beside you. It has been the honor of my career.”

Upon assuming command, Captain Bench addressed the audience in attendance. “Standing before this remarkable team as your Commanding Officer is one of the greatest honors of my career. Together, we will honor the proud legacy of the United States Naval Observatory and continue delivering the precision, reliability and leadership upon which our Navy and nation depend.”



Above, left to right: Captain Kristine Bench, Rear Admiral Erin Acosta, and Captain Kim Freitas.

About the U.S. Naval Observatory

The United States Naval Observatory is an Echelon-IV operational command reporting to the Commander, Naval Meteorology and Oceanography Command. Its headquarters is located in Washington, D.C., with field activities located at the Naval Observatory Flagstaff Station in Flagstaff, AZ, and the USNO Alternate Master Clock located at Schriever Space Force Base near

Colorado Springs, CO. The U.S. Naval Observatory provides a wide range of astronomical data and products essential for accurate navigation and the support of communications on Earth and in space.

For more information on the U.S. Naval Observatory and its mission, go to

<https://www.cnmoc.usff.navy.mil/usno/>.