PATUXENT RIVER, Md. - January 10, 2020 - Lt. Col. Rory Feely became the 49th commander of the United States Naval Test Pilot School (USNTPS) following a change of command ceremony yesterday. Feely took over from Cmdr. Glenn P. Rioux who served as the school’s commanding officer since July 2018.

Retired Rear Admiral Paul A. Sohl was guest speaker at the change of command ceremony. Sohl formerly served as the commanding officer of Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division and as both the executive officer and commanding officer of Fleet Readiness Center Southeast.

“You’ve set the foundation for TPS to be an integral part of the Navy’s larger transformation – well done,” said Sohl. “I couldn’t be prouder and more appreciative of your command’s accomplishments over the last year and a half. We all owe you a debt of gratitude.”

Sohl praised Rioux’s initiatives to develop and implement a long-term vision statement for the school, to comprehensively update the school’s curriculum and develop measurable learning objectives aligned to them, and to formalize the school’s instructor qualification standards. “You’re taking the deliberate steps required to get to a coaching instructional methodology,” Sohl said. “This is real education reform.”

Feely, according to Sohl, exhibited three traits that will make him a successful commanding officer of USNTPS: “a contagious curiosity, a core belief that perceived failures actually get us closer to the solution more quickly than successes, and finally, he holds dear the idea that humans inherently want to connect together in teams to solve the biggest challenges.”

Feely, the current executive officer of USNTPS, has served 24 years in the Marine Corps and has deployed four times to Iraq, Southeast Asia, and Central Asia. An acquisitions officer and experimental test pilot, Feely’s last assignment prior to joining USNTPS was to the Marine Corps’ Heavy Lift Helicopter Program Office, where he was responsible for the CH-53K International team’s efforts in Germany and Israel. He is a USNTPS graduate and served four years as a military test pilot at Air Test and Evaluation Squadron 21, where he worked on precision weapons and high-fidelity sensor systems integrated onto combat helicopters.

A native of Dublin, Ireland, Feely has a bachelor’s degree in Physics and a minor in Mathematics from University College Cork. He earned a master’s in Technical Program Management from Johns Hopkins University in 2009 and a master’s in Aerospace Engineering from Naval Postgraduate School in 2015. He is the recipient of the 2009 National Defense Industrial Association Marine Corps Tester of the Year Award and is an active member of the Vertical Flight Society, the Society of Experimental Test Pilots, and the Marine Corps Aviation Association.

“We make combat systems for Marines and sailors who fly into combat,” said Feely. “We have to a good job. We have to do a better job.”

“If you want to make a difference, you need to do the kind of work that does,” said Feely.

Rioux, a fellow graduate of USNTPS, enlisted in the Navy and served as an electronics technician, where he attained the rank of Petty Officer First Class before being selected for the Enlisted Commissioning Program. At the same time, he earned his bachelor’s and master’s degrees at Virginia Tech with majors in Computer Science and Software Engineering and minors in Mathematics and Leadership. After a career supporting flight test projects, carrier and humanitarian operations, and unmanned air systems program offices at NAVAIR, Rioux reported to USNTPS as executive officer in January 2017.

“It has been an honor and pleasure serving with you,” said Rioux to Feely. “And I’ll tell you this: hang on, it’s a wild ride. It goes so very quickly, but enjoy it, cherish it, it will be awesome and you’re going to do a great job.”

During his remarks, Rioux presented commendations to USNTPS instructor Mr. Ron Barthelmes for spearheading the curriculum development effort, and to instructor Lt. Cmdr. Nick Denison and chief flight instructor Cmdr. Ryan Donohue for updating the USNTPS history book for the first time since 1992.

Founded in 1945, USNTPS trains the world’s finest developmental test pilots, flight officers, engineers, and industry and foreign partners in the full-spectrum test and evaluation of aircraft and aircraft systems. Located at NAS Patuxent River, the school is in the forefront of developing modern test techniques, and is a leader in the standardization of flight test. It is the only source of rotary-wing test pilots in the United States and serves as the U.S. Army’s test pilot school. Graduates leave the program prepared to meet the wide range of requirements necessary to conduct research, developmental and operational test and evaluation activities in support of U.S. military services, government agencies, and many foreign nations.

USNTPS is a component of Naval Test Wing Atlantic, test wing under Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division. With facilities in Patuxent River, Maryland; Lakehurst, New Jersey; and Orlando, Florida NAWCAD supports the research and development, engineering, test and evaluation of all Navy and Marine Corps air vehicle systems and trainers.