

active duty, he received a direct commission as a Second Lieutenant in the Medical Service Corps while serving in the Tennessee Army National Guard.

He is a graduate of the Army Medical Department Officer Basic and Advanced Courses, and the Command and General Staff College. He holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin and a master's degree from Austin Peay State University.

Toft's past assignments include Stinger Missile Crew Chief, 1-32 Field Artillery, Fliegerhorst Caserne, Hanau, Germany; Stinger Missile Squad Leader, 2-44th Air Defense Artillery, Fort Campbell, Ky; Medical Platoon Leader, 2nd Squadron, 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment, Cookeville, Tenn.; Ambulance Platoon Leader, 25th Medical Battalion; Medical Platoon Leader, 4-22 Infantry Battalion; Executive Officer, C/225th Forward Support Battalion and Deputy Support Operations Officer, 225th Forward Support Battalion, 25th Infantry Division, Schofield Barracks, Hawaii; Commander, C/99th Support Battalion, 9th Separate Infantry Brigade, Fort



Lt. Col. Steven Toft

Polk, La.; Commander, Medical Troop, Regimental Support Squadron, 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment, Fort Polk, La.; Reserve Component Advisor, Readiness Group Fort Riley; Battalion S2/3, 125th Forward Support Battalion, 1st Armored Division, Fort Riley, Kan.; Commander, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 31st Combat Support Hospital, Fort Bliss, Texas; Chief, Division Medical Operations Center, 101st Airborne Division; Executive Officer, 86th Combat Support Hospital, Fort Campbell, Ky.; S2/3, 1st Medical Brigade; Executive Officer, 1st Medical Brigade; Deputy Surgeon, III Corps, Fort Hood, Texas. His operational and combat deployments include Haiti in 1995, Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and Operation Iraqi Freedom in Iraq and Kuwait.

Toft's awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, the Army Meritorious Service Medal with four Oak Leaf Clusters, the Army Commendation Medal with four Oak Leaf Clusters, the Army Achievement Medal with Silver Oak Leaf Cluster, the Expert Field Medical Badge, the Parachutist Badge and the Air Assault Badge.



Army Lt. Col. Steven Toft, right, accepts the colors from Army Brig. Gen. Lynn Collyar, commander, Defense Distribution Center, during the Defense Distribution Depot Red River, Texas, change of command ceremony. Passing the colors from the outgoing commander to the incoming commander is a long-standing tradition in the military that symbolizes the transfer of command from one officer to another.

DDRT Idol winner sings National Anthem at change of command ceremony

By Stacy L. Umstead, DDC Public Affairs

Melba Thurston, secretary for the Distribution Operations Branch of Defense Distribution Depot Red River, Texas, sang the national anthem during Red River's change of command ceremony July 26.



Defense Distribution Depot Red River, Texas's 2007 "Idol," Melba Thurston.

Thurston competed in Red River's 2007 DDRT Idol contest for the honor of singing the anthem during the ceremony and was selected as the winner by U.S. Army Lt. Col.

Betty Yarbrough, DDRT's outgoing commander.

Thurston, who has been with DDRT for more than 25 years, has a strong singing background. At the age of 7, she made her debut singing with her local church youth choir. Throughout her school years, Thurston performed at many events to include black history programs, proms and her own graduation ceremony.

Although the competition brings no global fame, Thurston wanted to win for a different reason.

"I wanted to sing the National Anthem during our change of command because within the last few years, the song has taken on a whole new meaning for me," Thurston said. "My son is one of the war fighters that DDRT supports. He is preparing for his third deployment to the war."

"Somebody once said that the hardest part of being a mother is the labor and delivery -- that somebody never watched their baby board a plane headed to war," Thurston explained.

The competition, hosted by DDRT employee Carol Wright, coordinator for the change of command, included a panel of three judges—minus the infamous Simon Cowell—who judged the performance of Thurston and two other contestants.

"I am honored that I was chosen to sing the National Anthem at this year's ceremony," Thurston said. "As I sing it, I won't be singing it for recognition, fame or glory; I will be singing it because I am proud to be a part of DDRT and the Defense Distribution Center's mission to support our sons, daughters, nieces and nephews, the war fighters who, too, ask for no recognition, fame or glory."