



New Yuma County Sheriff sworn in during change of command ceremony

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For the first time in its history, the Yuma County Sheriff's Office held a change of command ceremony to recognize outgoing Sheriff Ralph Ogden for his years of service and to swear in his replacement, Sheriff-elect Leon Wilmot.

A few hundred people attended the Friday morning ceremony at the Yuma County Fairgrounds, including many fellow deputies, officers and agents from other area law enforcement agencies. Ogden spoke briefly during the ceremony, saying his time as sheriff has been an honor and a privilege.

"I want you to know how much you have meant to me. I want you to know how proud I am to have been your leader," Ogden told the deputies who were standing in formation as part of the ceremony. "Each of you is a professional, and I know you will live up to our 'Dedicated to Service' motto. I further know that each of you will provide the support to Sheriff Wilmot that you have provided me over the years."

Presiding Yuma County Superior Court Judge John Nelson administered the oath of office to Wilmot, as his wife Ruth held the Bible. Afterwards, Tony Rouhotas, a retired commander from the Imperial County Sheriff's Office, pinned on Wilmot's badge.

"I would like to thank the residents of Yuma County for the faith they have placed in me to assume the duties and responsibilities of their sheriff," Wilmot said. "But I would remiss if I did not thank Sheriff Ralph Ogden for his 42 years of service to Yuma County, and for the 27 years I got to work next to him and learn what I know."

Wilmot, 49, has spent 27 years with the Yuma County Sheriff's Office, the last seven of which as the chief deputy. He officially takes office on Jan. 1.

Wilmot began his career in law enforcement in 1985 as a reserve deputy with YCSO while he was still a Marine assigned to the Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron Crash Fire Rescue Unit at Marine Corps Air Station Yuma. Originally from San Fernando, Calif., he was hired as a full-time deputy in 1987 after completing his four years in the Marine Corps.

Patterned after a military change of command ceremony, Cpl. Wendall Walker delivered the department's banner to Ogden, who in what was his last official act as sheriff, then presented it to Wilmot — which symbolized the total transfer of responsibility of the office to the new sheriff.

"The passing of colors between sheriffs is signifying the passing of command. The colors symbolized the responsibility, authority and accountability of the sheriff," a narrator read. "As a symbol of the office, the passing of the colors represents the passing of the responsibilities of the office to the new sheriff, who by accepting the colors, shows his total commitment to the office and his oath."

In his closing remarks Wilmot said that it had been an honor to have worked side-by-side with the men

and women of the sheriff's office over the years and that he is even more humbled now to continue doing so as the next sheriff.

He finished his remarks by referring a poster that hangs on the wall of his office that has a quote from the famous Greek philosopher Socrates.

"It says no man should criticize his country, state, or his city unless he is willing to dedicate himself to public service," Wilmot said. "For it is easy to criticize, but it is most difficult to give of one's self to others."

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