

Desert Lightning News

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Serving Southern Nevada's military community, including Nellis, Creech and NTTR

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A LOOK BACK AT



2023

2023 Air Force Trials



Air Force photograph by William R. Lewis

Retired Corporal Carlene Lorimer, a British army representative at the 2023 Air Force Trials, prepares to release an arrow during the archery competition at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., Feb. 28, 2023. In 2011, the Department of Defense created the Military Adaptive Sports Program to enhance warrior recovery by engaging wounded, ill and injured service members in ongoing daily adaptive activities based on their interests and ability.

FedEx Racing visits Nellis



U.S. Air Force photograph by Tech. Sgt. Lucretia Cunningham

Pit crew members from FedEx Racing stop for a photo with reservists from the 926th Wing during a base tour March 4, 2023, Nellis Air Force Base, Nev. The visit provided an opportunity for the pit crew and F-35 maintainers to compare their experiences.

Japan Self-Defense Force visit Nellis AFB



Air Force photograph by Senior Airman Cydnie Williams

Members of the Japan Air Self-Defense Force stand in front of an F-35 Lightning II during a tour of Nellis Air Force Base, Nev. March 30, 2023. The 65th Aggressor Squadron hosted the Japan Air Self-Defense Force to show how their unit works to organize, carry out, and maintain Nellis' mission sets.

Red Flag Nellis 23-1 kicks off



Air Force photograph by Senior Airman Megan Estrada

The first Red Flag-Nellis exercise of 2023 ran Jan. 23-Feb.10. Close to 100 aircraft and 3,000 coalition service members arrived at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., to participate in the large force air combat training exercise centered on readiness and interoperability between joint and allied forces. Aligning with the 2022 National Defense Strategy, Red Flag-Nellis 23-1 will focus on the Indo-Pacific Theater and the pacing challenge alongside our allied partners.

Celebrating Creech's 80th anniversary



Air Force photograph by Senior Airman Kristal Munguia

Airmen assigned to the 432nd Wing/432nd Air Expeditionary Wing, their families and retirees watch the Air Demonstration Squadron, Thunderbirds, perform during the base's 80th Anniversary celebration at Creech Air Force Base, Nev., March 7, 2023. In 1942, the base operated as Indian Springs Airport but now hosts the global Remotely Piloted Aircraft Enterprise and became the home of the "Hunters."

AFOTEC Commander first general officer certified as fifth-generation aggressor pilot



Air Force photograph by Airman First Class Trevor Bell

Brig. Gen. Michael Rawls, Air Force Operational Test and Evaluation Center commander, secures his helmet in an F-35A Lightning II at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., Jan. 12, 2023. As the commander of AFOTEC, Gen. Rawls is responsible for the independent testing and evaluation of new and existing systems for the Air Force. Rawls was certified on the F-35A Lightning II aircraft with the 65th Aggressor Squadron at Nellis. The 65th AGRS' directed mission is to know, teach and replicate fifth-generation air adversaries.

Red Flag Nellis 23-2 underway



Air Force photo by William R. Lewis

An F-35I ADIR AS-1 assigned to 140 Squadron, Nevatim Air Base, Israel, lands to prepare for Red Flag-Nellis 23-2 at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., March 8, 2023. Red Flag, which ran March 12-24, allows U.S. and coalition forces to train together in high-end, realistic scenarios increasing interoperability of the joint force.

Polish infrastructure team visits Nellis



Air Force photograph by Tech. Sgt. Alexandre Montes

A Polish Infrastructure Team member talks to Airmen from the 99th Logistics Readiness Squadron F-35A Lightning II fighter jet parts store during a site visit March 31, 2023, at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev. The Poland Provided Infrastructure program is part of a larger infrastructure agreement between the U.S. and Poland, including the planning, design and construction of military construction projects at sites throughout Poland.



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The deadline for submissions to Desert Lightning News is no later than Monday, 4:30 p.m., the week of desired publication date.

For all submissions, a name and phone number of a person to contact must be included in the event questions arise.

All material is edited for accuracy, brevity, clarity and conformity to the AP Style Guide, to include military ranks and proper writing etiquette.

Corrections: Desert Lightning News staff members strive for accuracy each week. If you notice an error in fact, contact the Desert Lightning News staff at 334-718-3509, or e-mail editor@aerotechnews.com, and we will consider publishing a correction when appropriate.

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432nd performs first iteration of ACE exercise with MQ-9 Reaper



Air Force photograph by Airman 1st Class Victoria Nuzzi

A four-day Agile Combat Employment (ACE) exercise took place at the 432nd Wing/432nd Air Expeditionary Wing from April 11-14, 2023. ACE is an operational concept intended to ensure Airmen are ready for contingencies and able to operate from locations with varying levels of capacity and support, ensuring Airmen and aircrew are postured to provide lethal combat power across the spectrum of military operations.

From Fighter to Aggressor



Air Force photograph by Tech. Sgt. Loretta Cunningham

The 926th Wing's 706th Fighter Squadron was redesignated as the 706th Aggressor Squadron during a ceremony on May 5, 2023, at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev. The redesignation goes into effect on May 14. As Nellis' third aggressor squadron, the 706th's mission focuses on continuing to know, teach, and replicate fourth-generation aggressor air adversaries. The shift in mission set allows the 64th and 65th AGRS to pursue the next generation of air defense and Nellis' endeavor towards becoming the 5th Generation Center of Excellence.

RIGHT: Maj. Gen. Michael Koscheski, left, 15th Air Force commander, passes the 800th Rapid Engineering Deployable Heavy Operations Repair Squadron Engineer Group Group guidon to Col. Andrew Cullen, during a change of command ceremony on Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., May 16, 2023. The 800th RHG is charged with organizing, training, equipping, and modernizing its three Red Horse Squadrons.

ACC wins Readiness Challenge IX



Air Force photograph by Emily Mifsud

Airmen representing Air Combat Command and the 99th Civil Engineer Squadron from Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., took the title at Readiness Challenge IX, the Department of the Air Force's annual civil engineer skills competition, April 24 to 28, 2023, at Tyndall AFB, Fla. After a weeklong competition filled with full-spectrum, integrated base response and recovery operations events between eight teams from across the Department of the Air Force, 99th CES demonstrated they were the best.

CMSAF visits Nellis



U.S. Air Force photograph by Senior Airman Megan Estrada
Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force JoAnne S. Bass, takes a picture with 99th Force Support Squadron Airmen during a visit at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada, May 2, 2023. During her visit, Bass spoke with NCOs over lunch, received a first-hand look at dormitories on base and held an all-call.



Air Force photographs by Senior Airman Josey Blades

SSamuel, a retired 432nd Security Forces Squadron military working dog, smiles for the camera after his retirement at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., May 12, 2023.

800th RED HORSE Group change of command



Air Force photograph by Airman 1st Class Jordan McCoy

SSamuel and SSeneca retire from their duties as military working dogs



SSeneca, a retired 99th Security Forces Squadron military working dog, chews on a bite sleeve after her retirement and final bite at Nellis. MWDs are used by the security forces and other agencies to assist with searches to detect drugs and bombs. The double SS in the name indicates that the dog was born at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas.

Nellis makes a wish come true



Joseph D., a child with the Make-A-Wish foundation, left, and U.S. Air Force Maj. Aaron Hieronymus, 17th Weapons Squadron weapon systems officer, are at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., to tour the F-15E on June 2, 2023. A wish is as important as any treatment or medicine, a wish is a prescription for hope.

Air Force photograph by Senior Airman Zachary Rufus

66th Rescue Squadron inactivates



Air Force photograph by Senior Airman Megan Estrada

The 66th Rescue Squadron inactivated during a ceremony at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., June 1, 2023 for the second time in the unit's history. The 66 RQS fell under the 355th Wing at Davis-Monthan AFB, Ariz., but is located at Nellis AFB. The inactivation opens up additional space for a larger fighter presence at Nellis AFB as it transitions to the Fifth Generation Center of Excellence. The 66th RQS was one of six Air Force active-duty HH-60 combat rescue units. Their primary mission was to provide rapidly deployable, expeditionary and agile combat search and rescue in response to contingency operations worldwide.

Nellis welcomes new F-16 static display honoring aggressor heritage

The 57th Wing at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., proudly unveiled its latest addition to aviation heritage on June 23, 2023, with an F-16C Fighting Falcon static display inside the main gate. The aircraft, tail number 86-0291, first entered operational service on December 15, 1987, with the 302nd Tactical Fighter Squadron at Luke AFB, Ariz. During its tenure at Luke, 86-0291 played an active role in various military operations. It operated in southwest Asia and Europe where it enforced no-fly zones over Iraq and supported United Nations air operations. In 2003, 86-0291 became an integral part of training initiatives, injecting near-peer adversary tactics into U.S. and coalition exercises as part of the 64th Aggressor Squadron at Nellis. Over the years, it played a crucial role in training more than 30,000 aircrew members.



Air Force photograph by Senior Airman Wyatt Stabler

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Red Flag Nellis 23-3 gets underway



Air Force photograph by William R. Lewis

Red Flag-Nellis 23-3 welcomed around 30 units and approximately 2,000 participants from the USAF, USSF, Marine Corps, Navy, and Air National Guard, July 3-Aug. 4. The 414th Combat Training Squadron at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., conducts Red Flag exercises to provide aircrews the experience of multiple, intensive air combat sorties in the safety of a training environment.

Nellis has hosted Red Flag exercises since 1975 to provide aircrews the experience of multiple, intensive air combat sorties in the safety of a training environment. There are three iterations of Red Flag annually: one U.S. only, one open to FVEY (Five Eyes) participants and another that welcomes an expanded roster of international allies and partners. The training occurs at Nellis AFB on the Nevada Test and Training Range, the U.S. Air Force's premier military training area with more than 12,000 square miles of airspace and 2.9 million acres of land.

World War II veteran experiences modern cockpit



U.S. Air Force photograph by Senior Airman Ariel O'Shea

LEFT: Retired World War II veteran Stuart Towey fires a shot on a simulator while 1st Lt. Shane Hutchins, assigned to the 432nd Wing/432nd Air Expeditionary Wing, looks on at Creech Air Force Base, Nev., July 7, 2023. Towey visited the base as part of a program aiming to fulfill his dream of sitting in a cockpit again, which came true in an MQ-9 simulator.

Hunters welcome new 432nd Wing/432nd AEW commander



Air Force photograph by Senior Airman Ariel O'Shea

The 432nd Wing/432nd Air Expeditionary Wing held a change of command ceremony at Creech Air Force Base, Nev., bidding farewell to Col. Eric Schmidt as its commander, and welcoming Col. Nicholas Pederson, July 14, 2023. Pederson took command from Schmidt with Maj. Gen. Michael G. Koscheski, 15th Air Force commander, presiding over the event. "To the men and women of the 432nd Wing, those in the audience, those who are flying the line as we speak, those in the crew rest and those deployed downrange," said Pederson, "it is the honor of my life to command this organization and to lead you."

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Air Force MQ-9 Reaper makes debut at USMC exercise



Air Force photograph by Tech. Sgt. Emerson Nunez

A U.S. Air Force MQ-9 Reaper participated in a Marine Corps Service Level Training Exercise for the first time ever at Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, Calif., from July 24-28, 2023, an event that saw joint cooperation between the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps. Assigned to the 432nd Wing, the MQ-9's presence in SLTE 5-23 was a unique opportunity to verify and exercise new Agile Combat Employment (ACE) capabilities, as well as tactics, techniques and procedures for the remotely piloted aircraft. The MQ-9 was developed for counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism (COIN/CT) operations and continues to be very effective in those areas, but RPAs can also provide value in strategic competition operations by leveraging their long loiter times to provide persistent intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance.



Air Force photograph by Senior Airman Josey Blades

99th SFS, EOD promote STEM at BattleBots

Staff Sgt. Austin Biskey, a 99th Civil Engineering Squadron explosive ordnance disposal craftsman, controls the man transportable robot system, in the BattleBots arena, Nev., Sept. 6, 2023. The MTRS is an explosive ordnance disposal device that allows EOD personnel to detect, confirm, identify and dispose of unexploded explosive ordnance and other hazards from a safe distance.

926th Wing welcomes new commander



Air Force photograph by Tech. Sgt. Lecretia Cunningham

The 926th Wing welcomed its new commander during an assumption of command ceremony Sept. 10, 2023, at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev. Brig. Gen. Regina Sabric, 10th Air Force commander, presided over the ceremony where Col. Jason Reiss took command over the U.S. Air Force Warfare Center-associate unit. Reiss is a command pilot with more than 3,000 flight hours in fighter aircraft including the T-38 Talon and F-15 Eagle. He's an F-15E evaluator, instructor pilot and comes to the 926th after serving as commander for the 414th Fighter Group, at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, N.C.

Nellis Welcomes New Honorary Commanders



Air Force photograph by Airman 1st Class Jordan McCoy

Honorary commander inductees gather for a group photo at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., Aug. 18, 2023. The honorary commander program creates opportunities to educate key community members about the missions of Nellis.

MQ-9 Hellfire launches in the desert



Air Force photograph by Airman 1st Class Victoria Nuzzi

An MQ-9 Reaper remotely piloted aircraft piloted by Airmen from the 556th Test and Evaluation Squadron flies over the Nevada Test and Training Range and fires an Air-to-Ground Missile-114 Hellfire missile, Aug. 30, 2023. The 556 TES performs all software and physical testing to improve the combat capabilities of the MQ-9 Reaper.

USAA Salute to Service: Las Vegas Raiders



Air Force photograph by Senior Airman Megan Estrada

Staff Sgt. Taylor Thagard, 99th Civil Engineer Squadron fire and emergency services NCO in charge of training, runs football drills during the United Services Automobile Association Salute to Service Bootcamp at Allegiant Stadium, Las Vegas, Nev., Sept. 19, 2023. Events like these boost Airmen's morale while also strengthening ties between the military and the local community.



Air Force photograph by Senior Airman Megan Estrada

34th WPS flies over Allegiant Stadium

Airmen from the 34th Weapons Squadron fly over Las Vegas, Nevada, Oct. 9, 2023. Airmen from the 34th Weapons Squadron participated in a refueling formation which included two HH-60W Jolly Green IIs and an HC-130J Combat King II. The mission of the Combat King II is to rapidly deploy to execute combatant commander directed recovery operations to include airdrop, airland, helicopter air-to-air refueling, and forward area ground refueling missions.

Ignite visits Nellis



Air Force photograph by Staff Sgt. Alexi Bosarge

Team members from the NBA G League Ignite basketball team run drills during practice at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., Nov. 28, 2023. The 99th Air Base Wing hosted the practice and invited Airmen and their families to participate to boost morale. While at Nellis, Ignite took a tour of the flightline where Airmen briefed players and management on the mission sets of each aircraft stationed at Nellis.



Air Force photograph by Senior Airman Zachary Rufus

99th CES fire specialists train

Airman 1st Class Kyle Datu and Staff Sgt. Matt Trevizo, 99th Civil Engineering Squadron fire protection specialists, extinguish a fire during an aircraft live fire training exercise at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., Oct. 12, 2023. Propane ignitors are built in multiple positions throughout and around the training fuselage providing firefighters with a more realistic training environment.

34th WPS conduct CSAR Training



Air Force photograph by Senior Airman Zachary Rufus

Capt. Terry Tilgham, a student instructor pilot assigned to the 34th Weapons Squadron, reads flight documents prior to launching out from a combat search and rescue mission at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., Oct. 23, 2023. 34th WPS' student pilot instructors qualified in CSAR tactics.

Creech Airmen return home from deployment



Air Force photograph by Airman 1st Class Victoria Nuzzi

A U.S. Air Force Airmen from the 432nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron is welcomed home from deployment by his family at Harry Reid International Airport, Nev., Oct. 25, 2023. The Airman was deployed in an undisclosed location for a multiple-month deployment.

Nellis Thanksgiving 2023



Air Force photograph by Airman 1st Class Timothy Perish

Chief Master Sgt. Jason Tricky, left, the 57th Wing command chief, and Brig. Gen. Richard Goodman, the 57th Wing commander, serve food to Airmen, retired veterans and guests in the Crosswinds Dining Facility at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., Nov. 23, 2023. The dining facility is open to active duty service members, retirees, family members and civilians who have base access.

New USO opens at Nellis AFB



U.S Air Force photograph by Airman 1st Class Elizabeth Tan

USO Nevada members along with leadership from Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., cut the ribbon at the grand opening ceremony of Nellis' new USO, Dec. 1, 2023. After years without a USO due to the old building being condemned, a new building was opened in a newly renovated dormitory building.

USAF Weapons School holiday party



Air Force photograph by Airman 1st Class Elizabeth Tan

Chief Master Sgt. Jared Pietras, Senior Enlisted leader of the United States Air Force Weapons School, dressed as Santa Claus, ziplines down an HH-60W at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., Dec. 9, 2023. This performance was dedicated to USAFWS Airmen and their families for a holiday party to build morale.

Raiders, Nellis give out Christmas trees



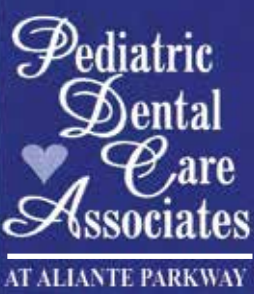
Air Force photograph by Senior Airman Wyatt Stabler

Airmen from the 99th Civil Engineer Squadron load a Christmas tree on an Airman's car at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., Dec. 5, 2023. The Las Vegas Raiders teamed up with Nellis volunteers to give away 500 live Christmas trees to active-duty service members, retirees, and their families.


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