

The Luke Air Force Base Thunderbolt



"We train the world's greatest fighter pilots and combat ready Airmen"

January, 2024
Vol. 23, No. 1



2023 YEAR IN REVIEW



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Noah D. Coger



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Mason Hargrove



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Noah D. Coger



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Mason Hargrove

PHONE NUMBERS

Airman and Family Readiness Center	623-856-6550
Airman's Attic	623-856-6415
Armed Forces Bank	623-535-9766
Base Exchange main store	623-935-2671
Base taxi	623-856-6866
Beauty shop	623-536-1897
Chapel	623-856-6211
Chapel (after duty hours)	623-856-5600
Child development center	623-856-6338
Clothing sales	623-856-6310
Club Five Six	623-856-6446
Command post	623-856-5600
Commissary	623-935-3821
Community center	623-856-7152
Computer IT service desk	DSN 945-2900
Crime Stop	623-856-6666
Dental clinic	623-856-2273
Dermatology	623-856-2273
Dining hall	623-856-6396
Dorm management	623-856-7841
Education center	623-856-7722
EMERGENCY ONLY	911
Equal opportunity	623-856-7711
Eye clinic	623-856-7965
Falcon Dunes Golf Course	623-535-9334
Family health clinic	623-856-2273
Family housing	623-388-3515
Fire station	623-856-6641
Firestone Car Care	623-271-8104
Fitness center	623-856-6241
Flight medicine	623-856-2273
Food court	623-935-2671
Fort Tuthill	623-856-3401
Fraud, waste and abuse hotline	623-856-6149
Hobby shop	623-856-6722
Housing assistance section	623-856-7643
Housing facilities section	623-856-3007
Housing maintenance	623-935-2676
Identification cards	623-856-7832
Information, tickets and travel	623-856-6000
Law enforcement desk	623-856-5970
Legal assistance	623-856-6901
Library	623-856-7191
Lodging office/switchboard	623-856-3941
Maintenance control center	623-856-5469
Marine Corps	623-856-2417
Marine Corps 24-hour duty desk	602-421-5806
Marketing	623-856-3245
Medical appointments	623-856-2273
Military equal opportunity	623-856-7711
Military pay	623-856-7028
Navy Operations Support Center	602-353-3008
OB/GYN clinic	623-856-2273
Office of Special Investigations	623-856-6821
Optometrist	623-856-2273
Orthopedic clinic	623-856-2273
Outdoor recreation	623-856-6267
Pass and registration	623-856-4880
Patient advocate	623-856-8968
Pediatric clinic	623-856-2273
Pharmacy refill call-in	623-856-3969
Photo services	623-856-6168
Post Office	623-935-1343
Public affairs	623-856-6011
Recycling information	623-856-4749
Retiree Activities office	623-856-3923
Rodgers Travel	623-856-6894
Safety	623-856-6941
Security forces	623-856-5970
Security incidents	623-856-7777
Service calls CE maintenance	623-856-7232
Sexual Assault Prevention/Response	623-856-4878
Shoppette	623-266-0040
Sick call	623-856-2273
South Gate VRC	623-856-4768
Straight-Talk line	623-856-7064
Telephone repair (Base)	623-856-4400
Thrift store	623-935-5782
Ticket/tour office	623-856-6000
Travco	855-896-7939
Travel management office household goods	623-856-6425
TMO passenger travel	623-856-7035
Transient alert	623-856-6204
Travel pay	623-856-7028
Vehicle maintenance	623-935-6576
Veterinary services	623-856-6354
Weather	623-856-6805
Wellness center	623-856-2273
Youth center	623-856-7470

January

Luke hosts STRONG Lab



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Mason Hargrove

U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Domitrius Johnson, 56th Civil Engineer Squadron, fire protection specialist, performs an arm Y-Balance test, Jan. 13, 2023, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. This test is part of the Signature Tracking for Optimized Nutrition and Training (STRONG) Lab program hosted by the 56th Fighter Wing. The program is responsible for developing and testing technologies to enhance physical and cognitive readiness of Airmen.

Luke AFB remembers Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Mason Hargrove

Airmen assigned to the 56th Fighter Wing and their families walk in a group, honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Jan. 13, 2023, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. King organized and led events for African American's right to vote, desegregation and other basic civil rights.

Mesa Aviation Day showcases Luke aircraft



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Jakob Hambricht

U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Alex Hunter, 56th Operational Support Squadron aircrew flight equipment technician, assigned to Luke Air Force Base, Arizona, fits an F-35 Lightning II training helmet on a student at the Mesa Gateway Aviation Day, Jan. 24, 2023, in Mesa, Arizona. Students attending the event had the chance to try on pieces of the equipment as they were taught about the importance and purpose for each piece.

February

Luke supports Super Bowl flyover



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Noah D. Cogger

U.S. Navy Lt. Suzelle Thomas, F-35C Lightning II VFA-97 pilot, departs the flightline at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona, Feb. 7, 2023. The Navy was at Luke AFB preparing for a flyover during the 2023 Super Bowl at the State Farm Stadium in Glendale, Arizona, which commemorated 50 years of women flying in the U.S. Navy.

Prescott JROTC Visits Luke



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Elias Carrero

U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Daryan Hargrove (left), 56th Security Forces Squadron military working dog handler, and Staff Sgt. Elizabeth Pedroza (right), 56th Security Forces Squadron military working dog handler, demonstrate bite training to students from the Prescott High School Air Force JROTC unit, Feb. 21, 2023, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. The Prescott students were visiting Luke for a base tour to learn about careers in the Air Force and Luke's mission.

Dr. Stewart concludes Black History Month



U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Dominic Tyler

Dr. Warren Stewart Sr., religious leader and civil rights activist, speaks to Airmen and families Feb. 28, 2023, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. In the United States, February is recognized as Black History Month, giving Airmen the opportunity to celebrate Black American heritage and reflect on diversity in the U.S. Air Force.



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Mason Hargrove

Honorary Commanders learn about Luke AFB

U.S. Air Force Maj. Houston Pye, 309th Fighter Squadron F-16 Fighting Falcon instructor pilot, instructs an honorary commander controlling an F-16 training simulator, Jan. 31, 2023, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. The 56th Training Squadron provided HCCs an opportunity to test an F-16 training simulator to gain insight into F-16 pilot training operations and their importance within the Department of Defense.

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March

Luke Airmen attend military appreciation game



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Elias Carrero

U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Imani Riggins-Johnson (left), 56th Fighter Wing protocol specialist, and Senior Airman Kendrick Woods, 309th Aircraft Maintenance Unit crew chief, watch the opening ceremony of the Los Angeles Dodgers and Chicago White Sox spring training game, March 5, 2023, at Camelback Ranch in Glendale, Arizona. Johnson sang the national anthem to start off the Camelback Ranch military appreciation game.

Air Force Surgeon General visits Luke AFB



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Jakob Hambricht

U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. Robert Miller, Surgeon General of the Air Force, left, speaks with Col. Nathan Schwarmburger, 56th Medical Group commander, during a base visit March 28, 2023, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. Miller was given a tour of Luke AFB and the 56th MDG and was given the chance to speak with 56th MDG Airmen at their respective departments.

U.S. Senator Kelly visits Luke AFB



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Noah D. Coger

U.S. Senator Mark Kelly, (right), speaks with U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Jason M. Rueschhoff (left), 56th Fighter Wing commander, March 10, 2023, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. Kelly visited Luke AFB to speak with wing leadership about various topics, including future development, safety, and funding of numerous projects.

The 607th ACS hosts Exercise Desert Viking



U.S. Air Force illustration by Airman 1st Class Mason Hargrove

Royal Norwegian Air Force aircraft controllers engage in a training mission during exercise Desert Viking, March 10, 2023, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. Desert Viking is a bilateral military exercise between the U.S. and Norway designed to strengthen interoperability between the two countries.

Luke hosts Honorary Commander Rodeo



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Mason Hargrove

56th Fighter Wing honorary commanders engage in an HCC Rodeo, March 24, 2023, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. The event provided HCCs with a unique opportunity to gain insight into the 56th FW's mission and capabilities, while also promoting mutual understanding with the local community.

All female sortie concludes Women's History Month



U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Dominic Tyler

U.S. Air Force Capt. Melanie Kluesner, 62nd Fighter Squadron F-35 Lightning II instructor pilot, prepares for takeoff March 28, 2023, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. Luke premiered a training sortie with an all-female crew concluding Women's History Month.

April

Luke AFB graduates 2,000th U.S. F-35 pilot

U.S. Air Force Maj. Christopher Jeffers, 62nd Fighter Squadron student pilot, poses for a photograph in front of an F-35A Lightning II, April 17th, 2023, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. Jeffers was preparing for takeoff on the final flight needed to graduate as the 2,000th F-35 pilot in the Department of Defense. This milestone marks a step forward for the Airmen at Luke in realizing its mission of training the world's greatest fighter pilots. Since 1941, Luke AFB has graduated over 61,000 pilots, approximately 105 F-35 pilots and 188 F-16 pilots annually, accounting for 75 percent of the world's F-35 pilots.



U.S. Air Force photo and story by Airman 1st Class Katelynn Jackson

Airmen hear veteran, Holocaust survivor



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Katelynn Jackson
Werner Salinger, Holocaust survivor and U.S. Air Force veteran, talks to Airmen at a Days of Remembrance event at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona, April 18, 2023. Salinger was born in 1932 in Berlin and survived the Night of Broken Glass before immigrating to New York in 1939 and enlisting in the U.S. Air Force at the age of 19. The 56th Fighter Wing Diversity and Inclusion Team hosted the event, giving Airmen the opportunity to hear Salinger's story.

Luke EOD trains at Camp Navajo: Furious Alpaca



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Noah D. Cogger

U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Nikolas Kenna (center left), 56th Civil Engineer Squadron Explosive Ordnance Disposal flight technician, leads a group of Airmen assigned to the 56th CES EOD flight during a training scenario at Camp Navajo, Arizona, April 12, 2023. Members assigned to the 56th CES EOD flight participated in exercise Furious Alpaca; a three-day exercise with the strategic objective of conducting operations in degraded environments alongside foreign forces against a near peer threat. The third day included a five-mile ruck into a mock village that was previously under attack and was littered with unexploded ordnances that required mitigation.

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May

56th SFS honors the fallen



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Elias Carrero

Members of the Luke Air Force Base Honor Guard march in formation, May 19, 2023, at Luke AFB, Arizona. The 56th Security Forces Squadron held a retreat ceremony to honor those of the 56th Special Operations Wing who died during the S.S. Mayaguez rescue operation. Ceremonies like these are a long-standing tradition that allow Airmen to showcase respect for U.S. Air Force heritage and those who have served before.



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Mason Hargrove

309th Fighter Squadron Conducts Night Operations

An F-16 Fighting Falcon assigned to the 309th Fighter Squadron taxis on the flightline at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona, May 24, 2023. Pilots from the 309th FS conducted night operations to enhance their abilities to execute the mission anytime, anywhere.

IG conducts fuel spill exercise



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Katelynn Jackson

Shawn Welborn, 56th Civil Engineer Squadron assistant fire chief, releases water to simulate jet fuel spillage in a Defense Logistics Agency Energy fuel spill exercise May 4, 2023, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. The exercise was conducted to test response operations of base recovery agencies in the event of a hazardous fuel spill emergency to ensure installation safety and minimal environmental impact.

56 SFS puts on display for National Police Week



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Elias Carrero

A U.S. Army veteran speaks with members of the 56th Security Forces Squadron May 16, 2023, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. The 56th SFS hosted a display at the Luke AFB Exchange to showcase some of their equipment and answer questions about their role at Luke as a part of National Police Week. National Police Week was initiated by President John F. Kennedy in 1962 and is dedicated to the honor, remembrance, and support of American law enforcement members.

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June

Aiming High: the legacy of Skip Hopler



Courtesy photos

Hopler was one of the first four fighter pilots in Tactical Air Command sent to Hill AFB in Utah in 1978 to set up F-16 training at the 16th Tactical Fighter Training Squadron, the first operational squadron of F-16s. In 2015 he was responsible for the Lockheed Martin F-35 ground training program for the world's newest fifth generation fighter.



U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Dominic Tyler
U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Tyler Smith and Airman 1st Class Andrew Liang, Luke Honor Guardsmen, conduct a flag-folding ceremony at retired U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Edwin "Skip" Hopler's funeral and internment, at the National Memorial Cemetery, June 6, 2023, in Phoenix, Arizona. At the event, the 61st Fighter Squadron conducted a flyover. Hopler's contributions to the development of the F-16 and F-35 training programs were paramount to the capabilities of combat-ready Airmen.

Luke AFB hosts Pride sports tournament



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Katelynn Jackson
U.S. Air Force Airmen assigned to the 56th Fighter Wing participate in a basketball tournament in observance of Pride Month, June 15, 2023, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. Nine units across the wing participated in the event in support of LGBTQIA service members.



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Elias Carrero

Luke soars during IP War Day

U.S. Air Force aircrew assigned to the 56th Fighter Wing, perform postflight checks on F-16 Fighting Falcons after an Instructor Pilot War Day exercise, June 23, 2023, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. This exercise included aircraft from multiple military installations, simulating a large-scale air combat operation.

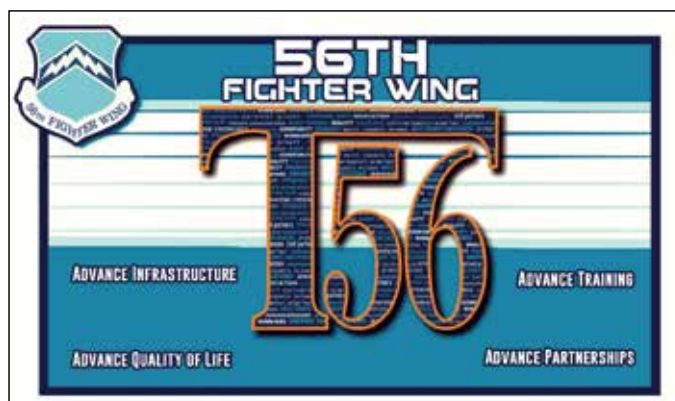
Fifth F-35 squadron activates at Luke AFB



U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Dominic Tyler

U.S. Air Force Col. Matthew Johnston (left), 56th Operations Group commander, stands by U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Adam Vogel (right), 310th Fighter Squadron commander, at an assumption of command ceremony June 2, 2023, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. Traditionally an F-16 Fighting Falcon squadron, the 310th FS stood back up with F-35 Lightning II aircraft and personnel to begin their new mission, to develop the world's greatest F-35 fighter pilots, instructors, and leaders.

Thunderbolt 56



Courtesy graphic

The 56th Fighter Wing leadership announces Thunderbolt 56. Thunderbolt 56, or T56 is for short, is a base billboard that aligns up to 56 initiatives with the lines of effort and objectives of the Wing Strategy.

Luke hosts Juneteenth Cookout



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Elias Carrero
U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. April Farrar (right), 56th Force Support Squadron force management section chief, serves food to Airmen at a Juneteenth cookout June 16, 2023, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. Luke AFB held a cookout to celebrate Juneteenth and honor the historical significance it holds. Juneteenth is a federal holiday commemorating the day slavery was effectively ended in the United States, resulting in the emancipation of African American slaves.

56th MSG commander takes final flight



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Mason Hargrove
U.S. Air Force Col. Anthony Mullinax, 56th Mission Support Group commander, dons an oxygen mask before his final flight in an F-16 Fighting Falcon June 13, 2023, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. Finaflights are conducted in recognition of an Airmen's accomplishments achieved during their time at a unit.

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July

309th FS begins F-16 block swap with Holloman



U.S. Air Force photo and story by Senior Airman Dominic Tyler
The 309th Fighter Squadron initiated an F-16 Fighting Falcon “block swap” with the 49th Wing at Holloman Air Force Base, New Mexico, on July 10, 2023, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona.

Totaling 935 aircraft, the F-16 fleet comprises 50% of the U.S. Air Force fighter inventory. A “block swap” entails an exchange of aircraft that with differences in upgrades and capabilities.

Above, Airman 1st Class Keilani Durfey, 309th Fighter Squadron crew chief, signals to Maj. Saul Sharafinski, 309th FS F-16 Fighting Falcon pilot, before takeoff. The 309th Fighter Squadron has been an active squadron at Luke AFB since April 1, 1994.

Luke AFB supports Air Guard F-35 Training



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Mason Hargrove
U.S. Air Force Col. Jay Spohn, 187th Fighter Wing vice commander, taxis the flightline in an F-35 Lightning II assigned to the 56th Fighter Wing at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona, June 29, 2023. Spohn helped pave the way for student pilots by developing the syllabus for F-35 flight training.

56th MXG hosts Second Quarter Weapons Load Competition

U.S. Air Force Airmen assigned to the 56th Fighter Wing prepare to start the second quarter weapons load competition, July 14, 2023, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. Load competitions serve as part of the final evaluations for quarterly and annual awards in the weapons career field.



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Mason Hargrove

August

AETC Command Chief visits Luke



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Jakob Hambright
U.S. Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Chad Bickley, command chief of Air Education and Training Command, engages with 62nd Aircraft Maintenance Unit Airmen, Aug. 17, 2023, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. Bickley spoke with Airmen and learned how Luke AFB has solidified its status as the premiere F-35 training base for the U.S. Air Force and its partners.

Bombs away: Luke AFB trains for AFCOCOMP



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Katelynn Jackson

U.S. Air Force Airmen from the 56th Equipment Maintenance Squadron, pose for a photo after a training exercise in preparation for this year's Air Force Combat Operation Competition, Aug. 2, 2023, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. AFCOCOMP is a one week high-intensity competition between teams from each Major Command across the Air Force. The teams will compete in seven munitions-themed events meant to test the skills required of ammunition troops during warfighting operations.



U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman David Busby

Luke AFB graduates 1,000th F-35 pilot

U.S. Air Force Capt. Audrey Wilson, 56th Training Squadron student pilot, prepares for her graduating flight Aug. 3, 2023, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. Having completed all required syllabus events and procedures, Wilson is the 1,000th graduate of the F-35 Lightning II pilot program at Luke AFB and exemplifies its core mission to train the world's best fighter pilots and combat ready Airmen.

September

56th CES Holds Commemorative Ruck



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Elias Carrero

U.S. Air Force Maj. Weston Thomsen, 56th Civil Engineer Squadron explosive ordnance disposal flight commander, provided opening remarks during the CES 9/11 Commemorative Ruck Sept. 11, 2023, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. The 56th CES hosted a commemorative ruck in memoriam of those who lost their lives during the Sept. 11 attacks. Thomsen spoke on the historical significance of 9/11, the impact it has had on our nation, and how the military has changed as a result of it. On Sept. 11, a series of four hijackings carried out by terrorists occurred. As a result of the hijackings 2,977 people lost their lives. All across the United States organizations and groups hold memorials and events to honor those who lost their lives in the attacks.

Luke AFB hosts Arizona Commanders Summit



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sergeant Benjamin Cooper

U.S. Army Col. John Ives, Garrison Commander, Fort Huachuca, speaks to a crowd of military leaders from across Arizona during the semiannual Arizona Commanders Summit at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona, Sept. 8, 2023. The summit is held at different military installations within the state every six months to discuss various topics impacting military bases in Arizona.

Operation KIDS kicks off!



U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman David Busby

U.S. Air Force Airman Angelica Arce, 944th Logistics Support Squadron inbound specialist, applies face paint to a child at the 15th annual Operation KIDS event Sept. 9, 2023, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. The simulated deployed environment can provide insight on the deployment process and promote pride for parents while they are deployed. Over 100 children, nine squadrons and four local organizations participated in the event, giving kids the opportunity to experience the deployment process.

Luke celebrates Air Force's 76th Birthday



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Jakob Hambricht

U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. Scott Pleus, U.S. Forces Korea deputy commander, and Airman Jaylen Craig, 56th Security Forces Squadron defender, participate in the formal cake cutting ceremony during the 76th Air Force Ball, Sept. 16, 2023, at the Wigwam Resort, Litchfield Park, Arizona. The cake cutting ceremony involves the tradition of having both the youngest and oldest Airmen cut the cake together. Luke Air Force Base held the ball to celebrate the Air Force's 76th Birthday.

24-hour vigil remembers POW/MIA



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Jakob Hambricht

U.S. Air Force Airmen assigned to the 56th Fighter Wing participate in the 24-hour POW/MIA vigil, Sept. 14, 2023, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. Participants ran with the POW/MIA flag for 24 hours straight, while the names of prisoners of war and those missing in action were read aloud. On National POW/MIA Recognition Day, vigils are held to honor those who endured lengths of captivity and those who have yet to return home.

University of Arizona AFROTC tours Luke



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Mason Hargrove

University of Arizona AFROTC Cadets walk on the flightline, Sept. 21, 2023, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. The visit served as a strategic initiative to advance training by equipping future Air Force leaders with knowledge and firsthand operational insights. By equipping future Air Force leaders with hands-on knowledge and insights, these visits aim to build stronger partnerships within the community and beyond.



Women IN AEROSPACE AND MILITARY SPECIAL EDITION

March is **Women's History Month**: celebrating, honoring and educating Americans on the achievements of women throughout American history. On **February 23, 2024**, each of Aerotech News and Review's publications will publish a special edition dedicated to the achievements of women in the military and aerospace. These issues are sure to be informative, thought-provoking and wonderful keepsake editions.

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October

Becoming a Pilot for a Day

The 56th Fighter Wing welcomed Isaac "Axe-Man" Salinas from Make-A-Wish Arizona to become a pilot for a day, Oct. 13, 2023, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona.

The Pilot for a Day program aims to provide children from Make-A-Wish with an uplifting experience and a break from their daily challenges.

"Wishes wouldn't be able to come true without our partnerships like Luke AFB," said Sawyer Kilen, Make-a-Wish Arizona senior director. "It means so

much to kids like Isaac to be able to come out and see behind the scenes of something he really enjoys."

Upon arrival, Isaac was welcomed and given a flight suit, representing his honorary pilot status for the day.

The adventure commenced with a guided tour of the 61st Fighter Squadron, where Isaac received an up-close F-35A Lightning II tour and even got the rare chance to sit in the cockpit.

A visit to the Air Traffic Control Tower provided Isaac with a panoramic view of the flightline and jets taking off; a sight embodying the essence of airpower.

The next steps were an F-16 Fighting Falcon training simulator immersion, and a tour of Aircrew Flight Equipment, showcasing the technical aspects of a pilot's gear and safety equipment.

Lunch at Club 56 offered an interaction with base personnel before finishing off the day with a meeting with Col. Keagan McLeese, 56th Fighter Wing deputy commander.

"Being at Luke and seeing everything up close has been amazing," said Isaac "Axe-man"



Salinas, Luke AFB Pilot for a Day participant. "Sitting in the cockpit of the F-35A was one of the coolest parts."

This partnership highlights the impact of community partnerships with organizations such as Make-A-Wish and provides an unforgettable experience for kids like Isaac.



Story and U.S. Air Force photos by Airman 1st Class Mason Hargrove

Luke AFB leadership hosts all-call



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Katelynn Jackson
U.S. Air Force Airmen assigned to the 56th Fighter Wing listen to base leadership during a wing-wide all-call, Oct. 31, 2023, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. During the all-call, Brig. Gen. Jason Rueschhoff, 56th Fighter Wing commander, emphasized the importance of every Airman and the work they do to complete Luke AFB's mission of training the world's greatest fighter pilots and combat-ready airmen. In addition to the mission, Rueschhoff underlined the base's lines of effort: advancing training, advancing quality of life, advancing partnerships, and advancing infrastructure.



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November

Canada, U.S. troops take leadership course



Photo by Corporal Aimee Rintjema, Canadian Armed Forces Public Affairs
Canadian Armed Forces and United States Air Force students of the Primary Leadership Qualification Course 2305 come together for a graduation on December 13, 2023, at 16 Wing/Canadian Forces Base Borden, Ontario, to receive their Military Certificates of Achievement. Esteemed guests Chief Master Sergeant Bickley, Brigadier General Alexander, and Chief Hall grace the occasion to address the students, honoring and celebrating their military accomplishments.

Saving a Species: The Sonoran Pronghorn



Story and U.S. Air Force photo by Darlene Seltmann

On December 12-13, 2023, agencies from across Arizona joined together to help preserve the Sonoran pronghorn. In 2002, after a year of severe drought, the Sonoran pronghorn population in the United States plummeted to 21 individuals.

The following year, seven of the remaining animals were gathered and put in a 640-acre pen on Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge to facilitate captive breeding.

Each year in December, Arizona Game and Fish Department, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Department of Defense and other various organizations and agencies participate in the Sonoran pronghorn capture and release operation.

Pronghorn are gathered, tem-

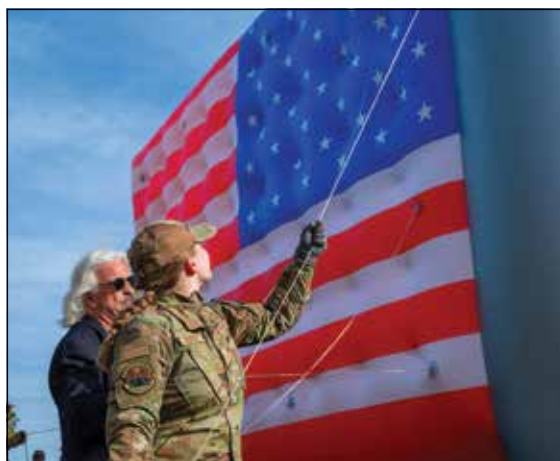
porarily put into large fenced and padded area, called a boma, processed, and given ear tags and radio collars. Once processed they are selected to go back into the captive breeding pen or relocated to other sites.

This year, 70 pronghorn were processed, and 22 transported to the BMGR, Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, and Yuma Proving Grounds. In photo, a Sonoran pronghorn is released back into the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge captive breeding pen after being processed during the annual capture and release. After the pronghorn are captured blood and fecal samples are taken and vaccinations are given; new pronghorn also receive ear tags and radio collars.

See full story in February 2024 Thunderbolt.

December

Luke Participates in Fiesta Bowl Parade



Photos by Airman 1st Class Elias Carrero
December 16, 2023, U.S. Air Force Airman First Class Hailey Zink, 56th Operational Medical Readiness Squadron aerospace medical assistant, guides an American flag balloon during the Fiesta Bowl Parade, Dec. 16, 2023, in Phoenix, Arizona. The event featured various decorated floats, antique cars, charitable groups, local law enforcement organizations and marching bands.



U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Giovanni Morello, 61st Aircraft Maintenance Unit avionics technician, hands out flags to spectators during the Fiesta Bowl Parade, Dec. 16, 2023, in Phoenix, Arizona. The Fiesta Bowl Parade honors individuals or groups who show a commitment to driving economic growth, championing charitable causes, and executing innovative experiences in the greater Phoenix area.

Luke Airman gives back during holidays



Story and U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Dominic Tyler

The 56th Fighter Wing First Shirt Council worked alongside the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots program to distribute hundreds of toys to Luke AFB families. Central to this collaboration was Senior Airman Fernanda Huerta, 56th Comptroller Squadron emergency actions controller and president of the 56th Fighter

Wing Staff Agency Comptroller Booster Club.

When Huerta found that Toys for Tots had hundreds of leftover toys from this year's event, she rented a U-Haul, picked up the remaining toys, and worked with the First Shirt Council to find an event venue.

"Last year, when I moved

here, the Toys for Tots program helped my family out when I needed toys for my two girls," said Huerta. "This year I wanted to give back and help those families who might be struggling this holiday season."

In photo, 56th Fighter Wing Airmen search for toys at a Toys for Tots event Dec. 21-22, 2023, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona



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