

The Luke Air Force Base Thunderbolt

“We train the world’s greatest fighter pilots and combat ready Airmen”

June 2024
Vol. 23, No. 6



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FEATURE



Senior Airman Katelynn Jackson
**GOV. HOBBS SUPPORTS
MILITARY CHILDREN**

See Pages 6 and 7

Luke AFB launches 100,000th F-35 sortie

By Senior Airman
JAKOB HAMBRIGHT

56th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

The 56th Fighter Wing produced its 100,000th F-35 Lightning II sortie, May 9, 2024, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona.

The sortie, flown by U.S. Air Force Capt. Garrett Ellis, 308th Fighter Squadron instructor pilot, marks another milestone for Luke AFB’s F-35 program.

“The 100,000th F-35 sortie here at Luke symbolizes the professional work and excellence of the whole Luke team,” said U.S. Air Force Col. Matthew Johnston, 56th Operations Group commander. “During an F-35 student’s time here, they can expect to receive hundreds of academic hours and over 80 simulator and flying missions, so they are prepared for the Combat Air Forces.”

The 100,000th sortie also highlights the incredible work that the 56th Maintenance Group conducts to ensure the 56th Fighter Wing can produce sorties with reliable and maintained aircraft.

“For a decade, our maintenance team has worked hard to sustain these highly capable aircraft,” said U.S. Air Force Col. Adam DiGerolamo, 56th MXG commander. “Each and every year, we’ve been able to overcome obstacles to meet mission and



U.S. Air Force photos by Senior Airman Jakob Hambricht

U.S. Air Force Capt. Garrett Ellis, 308th Fighter Squadron instructor pilot, stands in front of an F-35 Lightning II before conducting the 100,000th F-35 sortie at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona, May 9, 2024. The sortie marked a milestone for the 56th Fighter Wing and the entire Luke AFB team who made it possible.

training requirements, culminating in this momentous milestone.”

Even with 100,000 sorties under its belt,

Luke AFB looks to the future, continuing its mission of training the world’s greatest fighter pilots and combat ready Airmen.



U.S. Air Force Capt. Garrett Ellis, 308th Fighter Squadron instructor pilot, receives his pre-flight briefing before conducting the 100,000th F-35 Lightning II sortie at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona, May 9, 2024.



LEFT: U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Tristen Gilliland, 308th Aircraft Maintenance Unit crew chief, observes as Senior Airman Daniel Oates, 308th AMU avionics technician, secures a panel on an F-35 Lightning II, May 9, 2024, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. The F-35, piloted by Capt. Garrett Ellis, 308th Fighter Squadron instructor pilot, made history as the 100,000th F-35 sortie flown here at Luke AFB.



U.S. Air Force Capt. Garrett Ellis, 308th Fighter Squadron instructor pilot, prepares to fly the 100,000th F-35 Lightning II sortie at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona, May 9, 2024.



LEFT: U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Tristen Gilliland, 308th Aircraft Maintenance Unit crew chief, marshals Capt. Garrett Ellis, 308th Fighter Squadron instructor pilot, as he prepares to fly the 100,000th F-35 Lightning II sortie at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona, May 9, 2024.

Thunderbolt

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F-16s & F-35s fly with Kingsley Eagles

By Senior
Master Sgt.
JENNIFER
SHIRAR

173rd Fighter Wing Public
Affairs

U.S. Air Force F16 Fighting Falcons and F-35 Lightning IIs from Luke Air Force Base, Arizona, recently traveled to Kingsley Field in Klamath Falls, Oregon. The aircraft were at the base to train and fly with the Oregon Air National Guard – an opportunity to enhance student training for both units.



U.S. Air National Guard photos by Senior Master Sgt. Jennifer Shirar

TOP RIGHT: A U.S. Air Force F-16 Fighting Falcon from the 309th Fighter Squadron, out of Luke Air Force Base, Arizona, taxis to the runway in preparation for a training mission at Kingsley Field in Klamath Falls, Oregon, May 14, 2024.



A U.S. Air Force F-35 Lightning II from Luke Air Force Base, Arizona, taxis back following a training mission at Kingsley Field in Klamath Falls, Oregon, May 14, 2024.



U.S. Air Force F-16 Fighting Falcons from the 309th Fighter Squadron out of Luke Air Force Base, Arizona, prepare to launch for a training mission at Kingsley Field in Klamath Falls, Oregon, May 14, 2024.



U.S. Air Force F-16 Fighting Falcons from the 309th Fighter Squadron out of Luke Air Force Base, Arizona, prepare to launch for a training mission at Kingsley Field in Klamath Falls, Oregon, May 14, 2024.



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FUEL SPILL EXERCISE

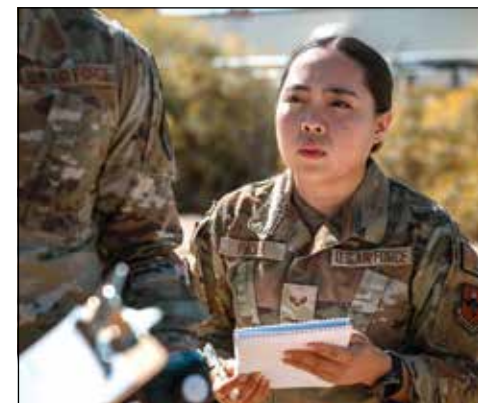


U.S. Air Force firefighters assigned to the 56th Civil Engineer Squadron, pour out water to simulate a fuel spill, May 9, 2024, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. The exercise simulated scenarios where responders practiced containment and mitigation techniques for fuel spills. Exercises like these are essential for preparing response teams to safeguard the environment in real emergencies.

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



U.S. Air Force firefighters assigned to the 56th Civil Engineer Squadron, map out their route during a fuel spill exercise, May 9, 2024, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona.



U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Sheldy Pacaña, 56th Medical Group bioenvironmental engineering technician, receives info during a simulated fuel spill exercise, May 9, 2024, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona.

BOTTOM MIDDLE: U.S. Air Force firefighters assigned to the 56th Civil Engineer Squadron, inspect vents during a fuel spill exercise, May 9, 2024, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona.



BOTTOM LEFT: U.S. Air Force firefighters assigned to the 56th Civil Engineer Squadron, roll up their hoses during a fuel spill exercise, May 9, 2024, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona.

Behind bars: 56th SFS hosts Jail and Bail

Photos and story by
Senior Airman
KATELYNN JACKSON

56th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

To celebrate National Police, members of the 56th Security Forces Squadron would pick up a person, hold a mock trial for them and ask them to either stay in a fake prison for an hour or find someone to bail them out. National Police Week honors the men and women of law enforcement agencies around the country, while remembering those who gave their lives in service.



U.S. Air Force Master Sergeant Michael Rodriquez, 56th Equipment Maintenance Squadron, conventional maintenance non-commissioned officer in charge participates during a jail and bail event for the 2024 Police Week, May 14, 2024, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona.



U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Caleb Cool, 56th Security Forces Squadron vehicle control official, participates in the role of the judge during a jail and bail event for the 2024 Police Week, May 14, 2024, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona.



LEFT: U.S. Air Force Senior Master Sergeant Andria McGuire, Operational Medical Readiness Squadron senior enlisted leader, takes part in a jail and bail event with the 56th Security Forces squadron during the 2024 Police Week, May 14, 2024, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona.



U.S. Air Force Chief Master Sergeant Jason Shaffer, 56th Fighter Wing command chief, poses for his mugshot during jail and bail event for the 2024 Police Week, May 14, 2024, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona.

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U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Taeshaun Hunter (right), 56th Security Forces Squadron defender, listens as Colby Brandt (left), Glendale Police Department assistant chief, gives remarks during the 2024 Police Week opening ceremony, May 13, 2024, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona.



U.S. Air Force Airmen assigned to the 56th Security Forces Squadron salute the colors during the 2024 Police Week opening ceremony, May 13, 2024, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. National Police Week honors the men and women of law enforcement agencies around the country, while remembering those who gave their lives in service.

Luke AFB kicks off **POLICE WEEK**



U.S. Air Force Airmen assigned to the 56th Security Forces Squadron stand in formation during the 2024 Police Week opening ceremony, May 13, 2024, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona.

U.S. Air Force photos by Senior Airman Jakob Hambright

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Gov. HOBBS VISITS TO SU

Story and photos by
Senior Airman
KATELYNN JACKSON

56th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

The 56th Fighter Wing hosted Arizona Governor Katie Hobbs for a military roundtable and the ceremonial signing of Arizona House Bill 2246, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona, May 16, 2024.

Hobbs and military leadership started the day with a roundtable discussion focusing on K-12 education for military children in Arizona. Active-duty, Reserve, and National Guard leaders from across the state detailed how the different paths of military service can provide unique challenges for military families.

"In 2008 the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission was established to identify areas where military students needed assistance," said U.S. Air Force Col. Peter Abercrombie, 56th Mission Support Group commander. "Arizona was one of the first 11 states to sign up. There's value in making sure that military children have a safe landing spot, and we should take care of them as they move between states."

Last month, Hobbs signed Arizona House Bill 2246 into law. Befittingly, the bill created the Purple Star School Program in the state during the Month of the Military Child.

This bill allows Arizona schools to apply for a Purple Star designation and identifies requirements that demonstrate the school is prepared to meet the needs of military-connected children, in particular during the difficult period of transitioning to a new school.

"This is an exciting day for the over 50,000 military-connected children, who deserve quality support and education just like every other student," said Hobbs. "I am proud to sign House Bill 2246, officially establishing the Purple Star School Program within the Arizona Department of Education."

To receive the Purple Star designation, schools must have a liaison assigned specifically for military families, establish a dedicated website with information and resources available, maintain a student-led transition program, and provide professional development for staff centered on the unique needs of military-connected students.

"I strongly encourage every school in Arizona to challenge themselves and go the extra mile to meet the basic requirements and ensure our military children are well taken care of," said Hobbs. "It's so important that the brave men and women who choose to put their lives on the line for our freedom receive the care and support they deserve, and that extends to their families."

On average, military-connected students will have attended eight to nine schools by the time they graduate high school; three times more than their non-military connected peers. The Purple Star designation assists military parents in enrolling their children in a school with the proper resources to aid the unique challenges of military-connected children.



Arizona Governor Katie Hobbs and Luke Air Force Base members pose for a group photo with Arizona House Bill 2246 at a ceremonial signing, May 16, 2024, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. This community-driven program designates schools meet the requirements to support the unique educational and social challenges faced by military-connected children.

RIGHT: Arizona Governor Katie Hobbs is greeted by U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Jason Rueschhoff, 56th Fighter Wing commander, May 16, 2024, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. The 56th Fighter Wing hosted Hobbs for a roundtable discussion with military leadership and a ceremonial signing of Arizona House Bill 2246, allowing Arizona schools to apply for the Purple Star School Program.

While this initiative is designed to support active-duty members and their families, it also aids National Guard and Reserve units across the state.

"While our comparable stability is one of our benefits, there are still some National Guard challenges that are met with this initiative," U.S. Air National Guard Maj. Gen. Troy Daniels, Air National Guard assistant adjutant general for air. "This Includes interstate transfers or transitions from active duty into the National Guard."

This initiative was spearheaded by persistent advocates including Dr. John Croteau,

Dysart Schools superintendent, and Arizona attorney and founder of Holon Law Partners and 56th Fighter Wing command spouse, Melissa Rueschhoff.

"Serendipitously, today marks exactly one year from when I first heard about this program, and now Governor Katie Hobbs has signed it into law," said Rueschhoff. "I could not be happier or prouder of our entire team that made this happen."

The implementation of this program ensures that military students are not only college ready, but life and career ready, while strengthening the fabric of their community.



SUPPORT MILITARY CHILDREN



U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Jason Rueschhoff, 56th Fighter Wing commander, speaks at the ceremonial signing of Arizona House Bill 2246, May 16, 2024, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. This bill established the Purple Star School Program within the Arizona Department of Education.



Arizona Governor Katie Hobbs looks to U.S. Air Force Col. Peter Abercrombie, 56th Mission Support Squadron commander, at a roundtable discussion about the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission (MIC3) and the Purple Star School Program, May 16, 2024, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona.



U.S. Air Force Col. Peter Abercrombie, 56th Mission Support Squadron commander, leads a conversation during a roundtable discussion about the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission (MIC3), May 16, 2024, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. The MIC3 is a partnership between the Defense Department and state governments that addresses unique educational and social challenges faced by military-connected children.

LEFT: Melissa Rueschhoff, Arizona attorney and founder of Holon Law Partners and 56th Fighter Wing command spouse, speaks at the ceremonial signing of Arizona House Bill 2246, May 16, 2024, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona.

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Chaplain's thoughts ...

Embracing Change: A Path to Career Growth and Fulfillment.

By Senior Airman
TABITHA KAMAU

Religious Affairs Airman, 56th Fighter Wing

Hello reader, you do not know me, but we are about to get acquainted.

Today's article is about a challenge I've encountered in the last few months of being a cross-trainee. I hope it encourages you in whatever season of life you find yourself. As I reflect on my career progression, I cannot help but acknowledge the pivotal crossroads that many young professionals, including myself, encounter: the choice between staying stagnant in familiarity or embracing change to meet the demands of a new job.

This dilemma often brings forth a wave of uncertainty and apprehension, as the fear of the unknown clashes with the comfort of the familiar. However, through my experiences, I have come to realize that confronting this challenge head-on is essential for both personal and professional development.

At the heart of this dilemma lies the choice between stagnation and growth. While it may seem tempting to remain in our comfort zones, doing

so ultimately limits our potential and inhibits our journey towards career advancement. Instead, the solution lies in embracing change and adapting to the needs of the new job.

I have found that changing to fit the needs of a new job offers superior benefits. First, it propels professional growth by pushing us out of our comfort zones and motivating us to acquire new skills and knowledge. Second, it opens doors to career advancement opportunities, allowing us to reach new heights of success and fulfillment in our careers.

To effectively navigate this transition, I have adopted proactive measures to submit myself to on-the-job training and expert knowledge. Seeking out opportunities for additional training, whether through formal courses, CDC's, workshops, or mentorship programs, has been instrumental in my growth. I have learned to embrace feedback and constructive criticism as essential for improvement, leveraging the expertise of colleagues and mentors to expand my skillset and knowledge base.

Supervisors also play a crucial role in supporting us as we face the challenges of adapting to new job requirements and embracing change. In addition to the strategies mentioned above, supervisors can provide invaluable support by offering feedback tailored to our

specific needs and goals. By providing regular, constructive feedback, supervisors help us identify areas for improvement and track our progress as we adapt to the demands of the new job.

For young professionals in the military facing similar dilemmas, my advice is simple: embrace change as a catalyst for growth. Recognize that adapting to new challenges and environments is not a sign of weakness, but rather a testament to resilience and ambition. Seek out help, training, advice, mentors, support networks, and above all be patient and compassionate with yourself as you navigate the challenges and uncertainties that come with changing careers.

This involves acknowledging that transitions can be difficult and allowing yourself the time and space to adapt, learn, and grow without being too hard on yourself for setbacks or mistakes along the way. Remember, the path to success often requires stepping outside of your comfort zone and embracing change with open arms.



U.S. Air Force photo
Senior Airman
Tabitha Kamau

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Be safe: 101 Critical Days of Summer

By Capt.
PAIGE MEHRINGER

Air Force Safety Center

KIRTLAND AFB, NEW MEXICO — Each summer, many of us find ourselves driving to the beach to soak up the sun, feel the hot sand beneath our feet, and beat the heat by racing into the cool ocean waves. However, these particular summer past-times include three of the biggest risks during the 101 Critical Days of Summer: driving, excessive heat, and the water.

Memorial Day marks the start of 101 Critical Days of Summer that ends on Labor Day. This campaign promotes operational and off-duty risk management skills to ensure that Airmen, Guardians and their families stay safe during what should be the most enjoyable time of the year.

“Our Airmen and Guardians are on-mission around the world, and they integrate proactive safety measures into their military operations every day,” said U.S. Air Force Maj. Gen. Sean Choquette, DAF Chief of Safety and commander of the Air Force Safety Center. “As summer approaches, we are here to help everyone apply that same level of thoughtful risk management in our personal lives as we enjoy our summer activities.”

So, why is the 101 Critical Days of Summer a necessary campaign? Some of the biggest risks are also preventable. According to the National Safety Council, data for 2021 shows motor vehicle fatalities increased during the summer months by as much as 405 deaths. Drowning related deaths increased in June, July and August by as much as 333 fatalities, and excessive heat related deaths increased by as much as 193 fatalities.



Courtesy graphic

During this time last year, the Department of the Air Force had 190 mishaps involving a motor vehicle with 85 percent occurring off duty. Additionally, DAF had 228 off-duty mishaps occurring during sports and recreation, 21 involving water. In total, the Department, unfortunately, lost 20 lives during the 2023 summer.

In light of these statistics, it is crucial to prioritize safety behind the wheel. To help you start your summer right, here are a few tips to stay safe while driving this summer: Stay hydrated during long drives to keep alert and focused, and plan ahead for rest areas to prevent fatigue. Buckle-up and be sure that your passengers do too! Moreover, be sure to get your car serviced to ensure your vehicle stays cool and comfortable during the hottest days.

Many of us are off to enjoy the beautiful weather at our

favorite pool, lake or ocean, but beware, while it keeps you cool, the water comes with its own set of safety hazards. Keep you and your loved ones in one piece by wearing proper floatation devices, research potential hazards, like rip tides and drop-offs, and know your local boating laws. Additionally, while you may feel comfortable, be cautious of sun exposure. It's always important to wear sunscreen and clothing to protect you from the sun's rays.

Just like when you are at the beach, it is imperative to protect against heat exposure and other hazards when hanging outdoors with your friends and family. As always, stay hydrated! During peak sun hours, be sure to seek shade, avoid strenuous outdoor activities and take frequent breaks to cool down. Additionally, familiarize yourself with the rules, regulations and tips for your activities to prevent accidents before they occur. Your risk assessments and precautions keep you, your loved ones, and the mission safe!

“Our Occupational Safety Division works hard to provide our Airmen, Guardians and their families with the tools and information they need to enjoy their summer safely,” stated William Walkowiak, chief of Occupational Safety at AFSEC. “Similar to last year, we challenge everyone to assess the risks of any activities this season to prevent injuries or worse.”

With so many preventable injuries or deaths in the summer months, we encourage everyone to implement the appropriate risk management on and off duty. Our goal to have zero mishaps and fatalities begins with you and your safety practices, and we are here to help!

Visit 101 Critical Days of Summer webpage for more summer safety and risk management tips.

<https://www.safety.af.mil/Divisions/Occupational-Safety-Division/Summer-Safety/>

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