

# Desert Lightning News

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Serving Southern Arizona's military community, including Davis-Monthan Air Force Base

JULY 2022

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### FEATURE



Courtesy photo

#### PJ COMPLETES USMC COURSE

See Page 8

By  
**GEORGE TINSETH**

355th Wing History Office

In the early morning hours of June 6, 1944, long before the sun began to rise, the thunderous drone of more than a thousand Allied aircraft taking to the skies awakened residents near the several aerodromes in England.

The aircraft represented the first phase of "Operation Overlord," the Allied invasion of occupied France. Bombers, fighters and transports carrying thousands of paratroopers and glider troops to drop behind the venerable German Atlantic "sea wall," were the tip of the spear for the D-Day landings. As the planes flew, more than 160,000 soldiers of the main invasion force were already embarking on 2,500 ships across the rough seas of the English channel, bound for the beaches of Normandy later that morning.

The members of the 355th Fighter Group, comprised of the 354th, 357th and 358th Fighter Squadrons, first received word of the invasion plans on the evening of June 5, 1944. At 11 p.m. that night, Col. James "Wild Bill" Cummings, the 355th FG commander, briefed his excited aviators on the invasion plans and their role in "Operation Overlord."

After the brief, the pilots busied them-

selves catching what little sleep they could, memorizing flight paths, possible targets and the Rules of Engagement. They also familiarized themselves with the cockpits and controls of their brand new P-51 Mustangs, freshly painted with the now iconic white stripes indicative of the D-Day invasion aircraft, which had just arrived a few months earlier. The P-51 was replacing the tough and battle proven P-47 Thunderbolts that many of the aviators had been flying since 1943.

At approximately 3 a.m., on June 6, 1944, the first fighters of the 355th FG departed from Steeple Morden, England, and began their flight to France.

Much like the paratroopers and paragliders, who were dropping behind enemy lines at the same early morning hours, the 355th FG was tasked with disrupting the enemy as much as they could. They bombed bridges, roads and railways, strafed German convoys heading for Normandy, and hit German aerodromes and aircraft on the ground. The goal was to attack any "targets of opportunity" in order to keep the Germans disorganized and impede them from reinforcing their positions in Normandy, or mount counter attacks on the Allied invasion force.

For some in the 355th FG, June 6, 1944, would be their first combat flight. This included future Ace Maj. Bert Marshall of the



Courtesy photo

**Col. William "Wild Bill" Cummings, 355th Fighter Group commander, walks out of a building before the Normandy invasion. The 355th FG was a part of D-Day, June 6, 1944, in the first phase of Operation Overlord, the Allied invasion of occupied France.**

354th FS, who was flying his first combat mission despite having logged more flight

See D-DAY, Page 3

## Desert Lightning News

Continue to get Davis-Monthan Air Force Base latest news and information from these sources:

<http://www.aerotechnews.com/davis-monthanafb> and social media  
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**First Friday**  
of the month

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**15th day of the month**  
prior to date of publication

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All military branches are included  
Email name, phone number and a brief description of your service to [jenna@aerotechnews.com](mailto:jenna@aerotechnews.com)

# MI-17 HELICOPTER TRANSPORT



A Mi-17 helicopter is loaded on to a C-17 Globemaster III aircraft at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, June 9, 2022. The C-17 was carrying an Mi-17 helicopter that the Department of Defense is delivering to aid Ukrainian troop movement around the battlefield.



Photos by Tech. Sgt. Sergio A. Gamboa

Mi-17 helicopters sit June 9, 2022, at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, waiting to be loaded and transported as part of a joint effort by Air Mobility Command, U.S. Transportation Command, the 309th Aerospace Maintenance And Regeneration Group and various 355th Wing units, including the 355th Logistics Readiness Squadron, to provide U.S. security assistance. The Department of Defense is delivering the helicopters to aid Ukrainian troops around the battlefield as it continues to expedite the authorization and facilitation of additional assistance to Ukraine.





# HISTORY HIGHLIGHT

**1970s — In honor of the countdown to the U.S. Air Force’s 75th Anniversary in September, we’re showcasing pieces of Davis-Monthan Air Force Base history and highlighting how far it’s come over the years through innovation, accelerating change and thriving through the decades.**

During the 1970s, the 355th Tactical Wing was reactivated and DM celebrated its 50th anniversary.

The aircraft flown during this time were the A-7D Corsair II, also known as the “Short Little Ugly Fellow,” flown from 1971 to Oct. 2, 1979, and the A-10A Warthog, welcomed in 1976 as DM’s first A-10. In the same year, the 355th TFW was designated as the host unit for the installation.



*An A-10A Warthog flies above Davis-Monthan Air Force Base after arriving in the 1970s. It has remained a staple of DM’s flightline as it continues to meet the war fighting demands of today and tomorrow with its dedicated pilots and maintainers.*

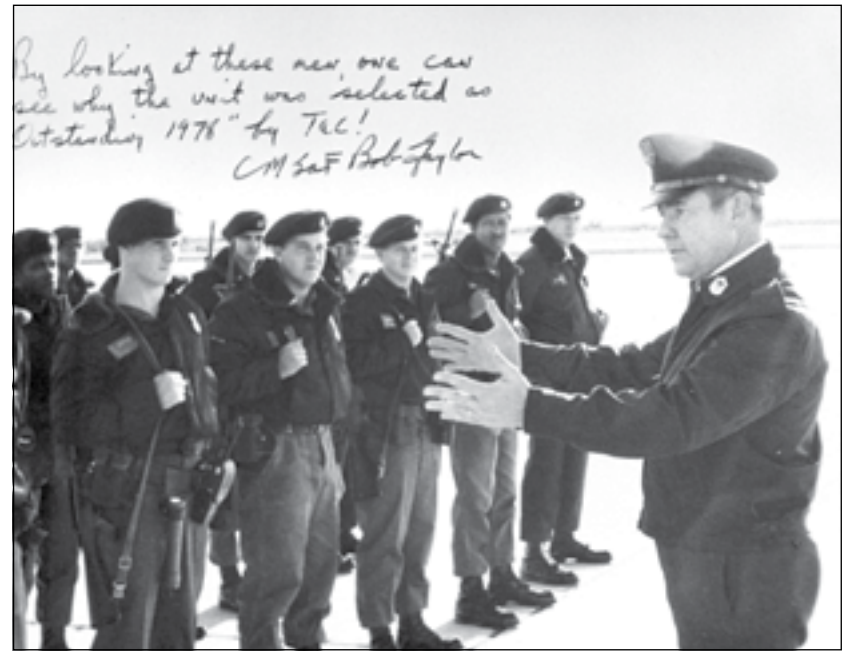


*A Volkswagen Beetle is parked beside an A-10 GAU-8 Gatling gun as a size comparison.*



*An A-7D Corsair II sits on display at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base where it was flown from 1971 to late 1979.*

Courtesy photos



*The fifth Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, Bob Gaylor, speaks to a group of Airmen during a visit to Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, in the 1970s.*

*By looking at these new ones can see why the unit was selected as Outstanding 1976 by TAC!  
CM SGT Bob Gaylor*



## Warrior of the Month

Warrior of the Month celebrates outstanding Desert Lightning Airmen who go above and beyond to contribute to the United States Air Force mission.

Congratulations to June’s Warrior of the Month, U.S. Air Force Staff Sergeant Clarissa Munoz, 355th Force Support Squadron Installation Personnel Readiness Team. Munoz leveraged her innovative skills by solidifying and executing a specialized out-processing plan for an Immediate Response Force Team deployment. This plan allows Airmen to be ready three months prior to their deployment window. Her relationship with and coordination between eight supporting agencies led to improvements in the out-processing procedures with enduring changes in the entire work center.



# From Airman to Officer

Story and photos by  
**Airman 1st Class  
VAUGHN WEBER**

355th Wing Public Affairs

Even though Davis-Monthan Air Force Base is the formal training unit for the A-10 Thunderbolt II aircraft, U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Keelan Hopkins has wanted nothing more than to pilot heavy aircraft, and he's now one step closer to achieving that dream.

It all started one day when Hopkins was hard at work with his munitions crew. He got an urgent notification calling them back in to the squadron. He didn't know what was going on at first and was even more confused when he learned that the commander would be there. Yet, when the commander started talking about colleges and a scholarship program, it dawned on Hopkins that he was getting handed a certificate authenticating what he had been waiting for since enlisting.

"When I got that certificate handed to me, it was one of the greatest moments of my life," said Hopkins, 355th Munitions Squadron conventional maintenance crew chief. "It was just a surreal experience overall, and I didn't expect to receive any sort of notification that I'd been accepted so soon."

After receiving the scholarship, his leadership set him up to shadow different officers giving him the opportunity to see what they do on a day-to-day basis.

"His positivity and approachable demeanor will better him and his classmates at USAFA," said U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Paul Matthews, 43rd Electronic Combat Squadron EC-130H Compass Call co-pilot. "Developing his leadership potential there for the next five years, I see Senior Airman Hopkins being a fine young officer ready to lead Airmen in whichever career he pursues."

The preparatory school is a 10-month program including math, science, reading and writing courses. Once he graduates from the prep school, he will transition to the USAF Academy for his bachelor's degree. After he earns his bachelor's, he will finally be commissioned as an officer



**U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Keelan Hopkins inspects munitions with his crew at the 355th Munitions Squadron at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, June 7, 2022. The Preparatory School for the U.S. Air Force Academy is 10 months long focusing on mathematics, English and basic sciences.**

**LEFT: U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Keelan Hopkins poses for a photo at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, June 7, 2022. Hopkins is on his way to the Preparatory School for the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado.**



in the Air Force. Hopkins was one of 50 Airmen selected Air Force-wide for the program this year.

"I saw Hopkins' early development where he stood out as one of the most reliable Airman in the shop," said U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Aaron Burley, 355th Munitions Squadron custody account supervisor. "The non-commissioned officers could always count on his production and without question he got the job done."

Many people throughout Hopkins' life were officers that he looked up to including family and friends who were pilots that first sparked his interest in this dream. Shortly after enlisting, Hopkins discov-

ered that he still had many opportunities to become an officer. At first this seemed like it would be more difficult than commissioning from the start, but it actually proved to be in his favor. His prior military experience, accomplishments and desire to reach new heights would look far better on an application than someone deciding to commission early on with less experience.

"He matured on his prior potential and molded into a great leader and exemplary Airman," said Burley. "Anything he knew he taught and anything he didn't know, he sought to learn."

In 2021, Hopkins applied to become an officer through an application process called

Leaders Encouraging Airman Development, an Air Force-wide initiative that gives Airmen without degrees the opportunity to attend the USAFA. This program also gives unit commanders the authority to identify and nominate exceptional Airmen, who exhibit leadership qualities for acceptance to the prep school. He was not accepted in 2021, but that didn't discourage him as he reapplied and was accepted in 2022.

"I think if anyone is considering applying just do it, it can only help in the long run," said Hopkins. "I've seen myself grow so much as a person and even though I've still got a long way to go, I'm looking forward to the future."

## D-DAY (from Page 1)

hours in a fighter aircraft than any other pilot in the 355th FG. Other future Aces from the 355th FG flying that day included Lt. Col. Clairborne Kinnard Jr. of the 354th FS, Lt. Col. Raymond Myers of the 358th FS and Maj. Bill "Bud" Fortier of the 354th FS, all of whom would go on to shoot down a combined 19 enemy aircraft between them before the end of the war.

From the early morning hours until approximately 8:30 p.m., all three squadrons that comprised the 355th FG flew mission after mission over Normandy and the French interior, including the areas around Paris. The Germans, despite the initial

surprise, quickly mounted stiff resistance to the Allied aircraft.

Through the German anti-aircraft defenses and aerial response, the 355th FG managed to wreak havoc on the enemy, destroying multiple locomotives, supply depots, aircraft on the ground, decimating troop convoys, bombing enemy tanks and eliminating key bridges. They also took a heavy toll on the German aircraft that were fielded against them in the sky, ultimately downing 15 that day. This would account for more than half of the total 26 enemy planes shot down by the entirety of the Eighth Air Force on D-Day.

By the end of their operations on June 6, 1944, the 355th FG suffered two losses.

One was 1st Lt. George Phillips of the 357th FS, who was killed when his parachute failed to deploy as he bailed out of his crippled P-51. The second loss was 1st Lt. Walter Douglas, also from the 357th FS, who bailed out of his aircraft over Calais, France, after it was hit by flak and was subsequently taken prisoner.

The Allied landings on Normandy would be truly among one of the greatest and audacious large-scale operations conducted by the Allies in Europe during World War II. It marked the beginning of turning the tide of war against the Axis grip on Western Europe. Due to the efforts of the 355th FG, as well as other units of the Eighth and Ninth Air Forces, the German

Luftwaffe was never able to mount any real air presence over Normandy, which could have severely jeopardized the Allied landing efforts.

The Allies "owned the skies" and for the rest of June, as Fortier stated in his memoir, "Our mission was to clobber anything that moved by road, rail, river or air." This effort, along with having the advantage of air superiority, allowed the Allies to eventually break out of the Normandy beachhead and begin an all-out dash across France, ultimately liberating Paris. Although a tough war still laid ahead, June 6, 1944, began the legacy of the 355th FG as the "Steeple Morden Strafers," a nickname that they carried with pride.



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# DM member wins AF award

**By Airman 1st Class WILLIAM TURNBULL**

355th Wing Public Affairs

One of Desert Lightning Team's Sexual Assault and Response victim advocates was recognized for her exceptional service as the 2021 Victim Advocate of the Year by Headquarters, U.S. Air Force.

"I'm honored to be recognized with this award, but it's a team effort," said Teresa Perrin, 355th Wing SAPR victim advocate specialist. "Here at Davis-Monthan we believe in humanizing the SAPR office. We try to go out across base and have positive interactions with people before they need our services so that they are more likely to come in if the need ever arises."

Perrin is responsible for providing SAPR services to one of the largest U.S. Air Force installations, composed of 19,000 military, dependents over 18 years of age, Department of Defense civilian em-

ployees and 12th Air Force (Air Forces Southern) forward operating locations throughout the Caribbean as well as Central and South America.

"To be able to have someone walk in our door in a moment of crisis, at probably the lowest point of their life, and be able to help them during their healing process and watch them doing better over time is extremely humbling," she said.

Perrin has demonstrated on multiple occasions that she is willing to go above and beyond to ensure that SAPR is viewed in a positive light across Davis-Monthan.

"Ms. Perrin was deserving of this award because of her dedication to always put people first," said Michael Starkey, 355th Wing Sexual Assault Response Coordinator. "I'm super proud that she was recognized at the highest level of the Air Force. She's always looking to empower victims and turn them into thriving survivors."



Airman 1st Class William Turnbull

*Teresa Perrin, 355th Wing Sexual Assault Prevention and Response victim advocate specialist, poses for a photo outside of the SAPR office at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, June 13, 2022. The SAPR VA of the Year Award recognizes those who support the program's overall services and prevention efforts with energy, conviction and commitment.*

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# Under the helmet



Photos by Senior Airman Kaitlyn Ergish

*The 355th Civil Engineer Squadron leadership team participates in the Under the Helmet event on the fire training grounds at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, June 17, 2022. The purpose of this event was to give leadership an experience of what 355th CES firemen have to accomplish when executing real-world fire and rescue responses.*

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# HOMECOMING







Photo by Senior Airman Kaitlyn Ergish

*A U.S. Air Force HC-130J Combat King II assigned to the 79th Rescue Squadron taxis down the flight line at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, June 7, 2022. Members of the 355th Wing returned home on two HC-130s after an overseas deployment.*





# PJ Completes USMC Winter Mountain Leaders Course

By Airman 1st Class  
**WILLIAM TURNBULL**

355th Wing Public Affairs

A pararescueman from Davis-Monthan Air Force Base's own Guardian Angel Formal Training Unit, 68th Rescue Squadron, completed the U.S. Marine Corps' Winter Mountain Leader Course at the U.S. Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center in Bridgeport, California, April 15, 2022.

The course is designed to train U.S. and allied ground forces in winter mountain maneuvering and warfare tactics.

That PJ was U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Cody Miller, 68th RQS Formal Training Unit Instructor, who was the only U.S. Air Force member to attend the course along with 28 other service members from the U.S. Army, U.S. Marine Corps and Allied Forces.

"The U.S. Marine Corps' Winter Mountain Leaders Course is dedicated to teaching students at all different levels of experience and backgrounds in winter mountain operations, instructing them on how to effectively maneuver and lead a team through winter mountain terrain," Miller said. "We started with 28 people, and after the initial fitness test and the first few weeks of the course seven people were dropped from the training."

Miller learned about the course through a 68th RQS civil servant, a retired U.S. Marine, and volunteered for this intense high-altitude course.



Courtesy photos

**U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Cody Miller, 68th Rescue Squadron Formal Training Unit Instructor, poses for a photo during the Winter Mountain Leaders Course at the U.S. Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center in Bridgeport, California, April, 10, 2022. The Winter Mountain Leaders Course is dedicated to teaching armed forces at all different levels of experience and backgrounds how to maneuver and lead a team through snowy mountain terrain.**

training, I think it is a huge benefit to that unit overall," Miller said. "Especially being stationed in Tucson, Arizona, it's difficult to get cold weather training and experience for the PJs stationed here."

Miller plans to pass along this training to his students at the Guardian Angel Formal Training Unit in order for them to become more proficient in snowy, mountainous conditions. A benefit that ensures that the U.S. and its Allies are always prepared to see a mission through to the end, regardless of the conditions, ready for the future fight anytime, anywhere.



**U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Cody Miller, 68th Rescue Squadron Formal Training Unit Instructor, climbs up a snowy mountain at the U.S. Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center in Bridgeport, California, April, 13 2022.**

"Once we were able to find the initial point of contact, they connected us with the right people at the training center, ultimately securing us a spot," Miller said.

Even with the limited number of slots per class, Miller was selected to help spread the course's knowledge to the U.S. Air Force.

The course capitalized on aspects of Combat Search and Recovery in mountainous terrain. It covered downhill skiing and snow shoeing techniques that reduce the time it takes to reach a patient and/or retrieve lost equipment substantially. Furthermore, participants learned first-

hand the difficulty of moving a patient and equipment through thick snowy terrain.

Another part of the Winter Mountain Leaders Course was hypothermia training. Miller and the other participants spent time in below freezing water temperatures ranging from 15-30 degrees Fahrenheit. This was to show them how to identify the early signs of hypothermia, which was closely monitored by experienced staff, as well as local Emergency Medical Technicians during the training.

"At the very least if you have one person from an operational unit attend this

## Summary Courts Officer Notification

On May 7, 2022, Davis-Monthan Air Force Base lost a true wingman when Capt. Hannah Jorgensen passed away. Anyone who may have a claim of indebtedness to her estate may contact the Summary Courts Officer (SCO) listed below:

Airman	SCO	Contact Info
Capt. Hannah Jorgensen	Capt. Aaron Smith	aaron.smith.58@us.af.mil

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# MWD: the beast defender

By Senior Airman  
**KAITLYN ERGISH**

355th Wing Public Affairs

U.S. Air Force 355th Security Forces Squadron Military Working Dog handlers are responsible for caring and training all assigned MWDs to protect and defend military installations by detecting potential explosive ordinances and illegal

substances. MWDs are also trained to respond upon command to guard and attack any personnel who pose a threat to the U.S. Air Force and its Airmen. The 355th SFS hosts several demonstration events every year to involve the local community as well as joint training with local law enforcement working dogs to enhance MWDs' experience and environment exposure.



Photos by Senior Airman Kaitlyn Ergish

*Frenky, a military working dog assigned to the 355th Security Forces Squadron, performs a building search at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, June 1, 2022. MWDs are trained to detect explosives, take down uncooperative assailants and help protect and defend Air Force installations.*

*LEFT: Senior Airman Gabriel Higuera, 355th Security Forces Squadron military working dog handler, poses as a simulated perpetrator while training SSilke, 355 SFS MWD, at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, June 1, 2022. Utilizing a bite suit during training ensures MWDs are fully equipped to protect and attack on command in a real-world environment.*



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## DESERT DIAMOND CASINOS

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Keenan Williams



Jesse King



Mike Wahl



Carlos Nieblas



10832 S Alley Mountain Dr., Vail AZ 85641  
\$425,000 - 4BD, 2BA



17375 S Purple Mesa Trail, Vail AZ 85641  
\$430,000 - 4BD, 2.5BA



1085 W Whispering Meadows Ct, Sahuarita, AZ 85629  
\$464,000 - 4BD, 2BA



8455 E Via Cortina Madera, Tucson AZ 85747  
\$370,000 - 3BD, 2BA



5465 W Lazy S Street, Tucson AZ 85713  
\$135,000 - 2BD, 1BA



**Ray Alston**  
USAF 1st Sgt, Retired  
Designated Broker  
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Let us help you buy or sell your property anywhere in Tucson, Vail, Oro Valley, Green Valley, Marana, Sahuarita, Benson or Sierra Vista. We are your resource for all VA related real estate transactions as well as Conventional, USDA and FHA!

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If you are considering a career in Real Estate  
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Always looking for motivated agents!  
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