

## Red Flag 23-3 kicks off at Nellis



Air Force photograph by Senior Airman Zachary Rufus

An F-35 Lightning II assigned to the 4th Fighter Squadron, Hill Air Force Base, Utah, takes off for a Red Flag 23-3 mission at Nellis AFB, Nev., July 25, 2023.

**by Senior Airman Zachary Rufus**

*Nellis AFB, Nev.*

Red Flag-Nellis is scheduled to conclude today, Aug. 4, 2023, having started on July 17.

Red Flag is one of the U.S. Air Force's largest combat training exercises.

The 414th Combat Training Squadron hosts Red Flag with a mission to maximize the combat readiness, capability and survivability of participating units. They provide realistic, multi-domain training in a combined air, ground, space and electronic threat environment while providing opportunities for a free exchange of ideas between forces.

"The key objectives in this iteration include strengthening joint force integration, capitalizing on our mobility force with tanker integration, and enhancing proficiency in agile combat employment with an emphasis on agile logistics capabilities," said Col. Eric Winterbottom, 414th CTS commander. "These objectives aim to enhance the overall operational capabilities, readiness, and joint effectiveness across the spectrum."

Red Flag 23-3 aligns with the National Defense Strategy and will focus on training joint force operations and command and control. The large-scale exercise maximizes

collaboration and synergy among joint and interagency partners, making our nation's forces more lethal.

"The Department of Defense prioritizes the People's Republic of China as our number one pacing challenge," said Winterbottom. "Red Flag helps our warfighters develop the right operational concepts, capabilities and plans to bolster deterrence and maintain our competitive advantage."

"We also train to respond to and effectively deter nation-state threats emanating from Russia, Iran and North Korea, and transnational and non-state actor threats from violent extremist organizations, such as those operating in the Middle East, Africa, and South and Central Asia."

Red Flag 23-3 recognizes the critical role of aerial refueling and will emphasize tanker aircraft capability to extend their range and endurance, tackling the tyranny of distance. A notable number of KC-135A and KC-46 aircraft are participating to prioritize strategic mobility and refueling in a contested environment.

"Red Flag's enduring principles are why it has remained the USAF's premier large-force exercise for the last 48 years," said Winterbottom. "It shapes our priorities which are the same for each exercise; safety, realism and relevance."

FOR MORE PHOTOS, SEE PAGES 6 & 7



Air Force photograph by Senior Airman Megan Estrada

Senior Airman Ethan Waltman, aircraft armament systems specialist assigned to the 113th Wing, Joint Base Andrews, Md., conducts final checks on an F-16 Fighting Falcon before a Red Flag 23-3 mission at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., July 19, 2023. This Red Flag will provide more complex realistic scenarios concentrated on warfighting in the Indo-Pacific theater.



# US Air Force reinstates special bonuses, pays, most PCSs

With additional support from Congress on several pending reprogramming requests, the U.S. Air Force will restore funding to most military personnel programs that were suspended or closed last week.

The Air Force will restore the Selective Retention Bonuses and the Aviation Bonus program beginning next week.

Additionally, beginning next week the Air Force will resume authenticating paused PCS orders for moves in fiscal year 2023, with the target of Airmen having orders in-hand at least 30 days before departure date. Before the end of July, Airmen awaiting orders with departure dates in August or later will begin to receive their orders.

The previously announced DEROS extension for Airmen on overseas long tours with a DEROS between October and December 2023 remains in effect. These DEROSs have been extended to January through March 2024. Airmen can request an exception to policy from



Courtesy graphic

their wing commander, for Air Force Personnel Center commander consideration if needed.

The SRB program will be reinstated this month for all eligible career fields. Eligible Airmen reenlisting or extend-

ing for a bonus can immediately take action to contract for a bonus. Airmen previously eligible for a bonus who extended until Oct. 1, 2023, may now work with their Military Personnel Flights for exceptions to policy to now

take action to contract for a bonus.

The Aviation Bonus Program that opened on June 5 and was paused July 11 is scheduled to re-open in the next week. All aviators who were previously eligible but had not contracted will remain eligible. Aviation bonuses remain offered on a first come, first serve basis until fiscal year 2023 funds are exhausted.

Finally, Assignment Incentive Pay and Foreign Language Proficiency Pay agreements paused July 11 will be reinstated. This includes Airmen receiving new or recertifying existing foreign language bonus pay or initiating new assignment pay at all locations.

While most of the benefits have been reinstated, the Air Force will continue to communicate with Airmen whose PCS orders have not been completed, specifically those with PCS moves in fiscal year 2024.

Airmen with questions can call the Total Force Service Center at 210-565-0102, or toll-free at 800-525-0102.

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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.

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# Hunters welcome new 432nd Wing/432nd AEW commander

by Airman 1st Class Victoria Nuzzi  
Creech AFB, Nev.

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.

Koscheski congratulated Schmidt on his accomplishments, while welcoming the new wing commander. He also spoke about the wing and its mission.

"We are saying goodbye to a commander who led with distinction and honor," said Koscheski. "Col. Schmidt, along with his wife Heather and his children, have been an integral part of the Creech family."

Schmidt was awarded the Legion of Merit for his service to the United States as the 432nd WG/432nd AEW commander. During Schmidt's time as commander, his leadership enabled 496,800 flight hours during 20,436 sorties. He also fortified the persistent overwatch of 124,000 Afghan refugee evacuations camps. Additionally, he executed a \$96



Air Force photograph by Senior Airman Ariel O'Shea

Maj. General Michael Koscheski, 15th Air Force commander, presents the 432nd Wing/432nd Air Expeditionary Wing guidon to Col. Nicholas Pederson, incoming 432nd WG/432nd AEW commander, during the change of command ceremony at Creech Air Force Base, Nev., July 14, 2023. Pederson, a seasoned leader and master navigator with an impressive aviation career, brings extensive experience in remotely piloted aircraft operations.

million budget funding agile combat employment (ACE) exercises, Immediate Response Force initiatives and the accelerated adoption of satellite launch and

recovery technology driving strategic competition operations in four theaters.

"To our Hunter warriors and loved ones, working with you has been the pin-

nacle joy of my professional career," said Schmidt. "I've been fortunate to share in some pretty amazing events from my 28-year career, but all of those pale in comparison to the time I have spent with all of you."

Pederson spoke about how grateful and excited he was to take command of the wing during his speech.

"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 down-range," said Pederson, "it is the honor of my life to command this organization and to lead you."

Upon assuming command, Pederson has logged over 3,000 hours in the B-1B, MQ-1B, MQ-9, T-34, T-1, and T-3. He was also a Weapons School instructor for the MQ-1 and the MQ-9. He previously served as the vice commander of the 49th Wing at Holloman Air Force Base, N.M.

In his new position, Pederson will be in charge of over 4,000 Airmen. Their mission is to operate and support the MQ-9 Reaper Remotely Piloted Aircraft which provides intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance and precision attack capabilities to provide critical support to combat operations and support national security.



Air Force photograph by Tech. Sgt. Emerson Nuñez

Senior Airman Mikaela Mauricio, assigned to the 432nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, salutes after an aircraft dedication at Creech Air Force Base, Nev., July 14, 2023. The aircraft dedication is a symbolic part of a change of command ceremony that sees the previous commander and command chief's names removed from the aircraft and replaced by the new ones.



Air Force photograph by Senior Airman Ariel O'Shea

Maj. General Michael Koscheski, Fifteenth Air Force commander, Col. Eric Schmidt, outgoing 432nd Wing/432nd Air Expeditionary Wing commander, and Col. Nicholas Pederson, incoming 432nd WG/432nd AEW commander, wearing flight suits, stand at attention with Airmen assigned to the 432nd WG/432nd AEW at the wing's change of command ceremony at Creech Air Force Base, Nev., July 14, 2023. Pederson assumed command of the 432nd WG/432nd AEW from Schmidt.



Air Force photograph by Tech. Sgt. Emerson Nuñez

Airmen assigned to the 432nd Wing/432nd Air Expeditionary Wing render a ceremonial first salute to their new commander at Creech Air Force Base, Nev., July 14, 2023. The wing was participating in a change of command ceremony, which saw Col. Nicholas Pederson assume command of the wing's approximately 4,000 Airmen.



Air Force photograph by Tech. Sgt. Emerson Nuñez

Col. John Ethridge, 432nd Wing/432nd Air Expeditionary Wing vice commander, salutes the flag with other Airmen during the national anthem at Creech Air Force Base, Nev., July 14, 2023. Those assembled were participating in the wing change of command ceremony.



# Nellis' Red Flag building receives an upgrade

by Senior Airman Megan Estrada  
Nellis AFB, Nev.

A six-year construction project is complete just in time for Red Flag 23-3, taking place at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., from July 17-Aug. 4, 2023.

With expanded square footage and an operational upgrade to building 201, the newest additions to the Red Flag headquarters exemplify how Nellis is bringing the future faster.

As the Air Force's future home of 5th-Generation Center of Excellence, Nellis is uniquely capable of hosting the F-35 Lightning II and the F-22 Raptor.

"Fifth-generation aircraft have more extensive classification requirements than the legacy building can support," said Steven Imonti, 414th Combat Training Squadron director of plans. "The ability to plan, brief and debrief at the appropriate classification levels in a facility that can include all the participants will greatly enhance learning."

The new construction allows the facility to support up to 500 personnel in 20 rooms, each with capacity for 25 exercise participants. Aircrew re-

ceive an improved training experience with enhanced access to modernized technology and equipment required to sustain more than just fifth-generation aircraft.

"Red Flag 23-3 will be the first large-force exercise to utilize the 414th's new 43,000 square foot state-of-the-art facility," said Col. Eric Winterbottom, 414th CTS commander. "The new building allows us to host the technological requirements of multiple fifth generation and beyond participant units. It sets the stage for the future of integrated air combat training."

Red Flag exercises align with the National Defense Strategy and focus on training joint force operations and command and control. Warfighters maximize collaboration and synergy among joint and interagency partners, making our nation's forces more lethal.

"Red Flag's enduring principles are why it has remained the U.S. Air Force's premier large-force exercise for the last 48 years," said Winterbottom. "It shapes our priorities which are the same for each exercise; safety, realism and relevance."



Air Force photograph by Randy Lewis

The new Red Flag building on Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., July 18, 2023. The facility will help the 414th Combat Training Squadron, Red Flag, continue to be one of the U.S. Air Force's largest combat training exercises.

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# USAF releases abbreviated accident report for MQ-9A crash

An U.S. Air Force Air Combat Command accident investigation board completed its analysis of an MQ-9A Reaper that crashed July 14, 2022 at an undisclosed location in the European Command area of responsibility.

The aircraft was assigned to the 432nd Wing at Creech Air Force Base, Nev., and was briefly flown by a Mission Control Element from the 50th Attack Squadron at Shaw AFB, S.C. At the time of the mishap, a Launch and Recovery Element assigned to the 489th Attack Squadron at Creech AFB was flying the MQ-9A.

The aircraft took off from the undisclosed location and, shortly after handover to the MCE, experienced malfunctions with control systems. After conducting the appropriate checklists, conditions determined the need to land as soon as possible. The MCE elected to return to base and hand the aircraft back to the LRE.

Upon regaining control of the MQ-9A, the LRE crew, comprised of a pilot and sensor operator, incorrectly analyzed the emergency procedure as “stuck [engine] torque.” The pilot determined



Courtesy photo

the only way to successfully recover the aircraft would be an engine-out landing.

When the MQ-9A arrived overhead at the designated airfield, the pilot cut off fuel to the engine and feathered the propeller, effectively shutting down the engine. Due to the prior malfunctions, the indication on the cockpit display suggested the engine was still operating. Assuming the engine was still operational, the crew attempted an unsuccessful

go-around. The aircraft experienced controlled flight into terrain southeast of the intended airfield and was destroyed on impact.

The investigation board determined the cause of the mishap was pilot error based on channelized attention and basic airmanship. The LRE crew relied on erroneous indications from the malfunctions and incorrectly diagnosed the emergency procedures required. After

cutting fuel to the engine, the aircraft no longer had the thrust required for a “go around” maneuver. This ultimately resulted in a failed attempt to recover the aircraft and the subsequent controlled flight into terrain.

The mishap resulted in no injuries and no fatalities. The mishap resulted in minimal damage to civilian property. The aircraft, valued at approximately \$14.6 million, was destroyed.



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# RED FLAG-NELLIS 23-3



Air Force photograph by Senior Airman Zachary Rufus

An F-22 Raptor assigned to 27th Fighter Squadron, Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Va., takes off for a Red Flag 23-3 night mission at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., July 20, 2023. Airmen and pilots are required to train at night to maintain their combat readiness and all-weather capabilities.



Air Force photograph by Senior Airman Zachary Rufus

Lt. Col. Ross Hobbs, commander of the 34th Bomb Squadron, Ellsworth Air Force Base, S.D., climbs into a B-1B Lancer prior to launching out for a Red Flag 23-3 mission at Nellis AFB, Nev., July 20, 2023. Red Flag-Nellis 23-3 is a combat training exercise shared with a variety of attack, fighter and bomber aircraft between Air Force, Joint, and Coalition pilots, aircrew and operators, reinforcing the agile combat employment concepts of posture, movement and maneuver, protection, and sustainment.



Air Force photograph by William R. Lewis

U.S. Navy Aviation Machinist Mate Petty Officer 3rd Class Lugo Thomas assigned to the Electronic Attack Squadron 138 Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, Wash., finishes fueling an EA-18G Growler during Red Flag 23-3 at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., July 18, 2023.





Air Force photograph by Senior Airman Zachary Rufus

A U.S. Air Force pilot assigned to the 64th Aggressor Squadron taxis during Red Flag 23-3 at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., July 25, 2023. This Red Flag will concentrate on three primary themes: defensive counterair, offensive counterair suppression of enemy air defenses, and offensive counter air-air interdiction.

Air Force photograph by William R. Lewis

An F-16 Fighting Falcon pilot assigned to the 113th Wing, Joint Base Andrews, Md., taxis out for a Red Flag 23-3 mission at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., July 19, 2023. This Red Flag will concentrate on three primary themes: defensive counterair, offensive counterair suppression of enemy air defenses, and offensive counter air-air interdiction.



Air Force photograph by William R. Lewis

U.S. Navy Aviation Machinist Mate Petty Officer 3rd Class Lugo Thomas assigned to Electronic Attack Squadron 138 Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, Wash., conducts preflight preparation of an EA-18G Growler during Red Flag 23-3 at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., July 18, 2023. The EA-18G Growler is a variant in the F/A-18 family of aircraft that combines the proven F/A-18F Super Hornet platform with a sophisticated electronic warfare suite.



Air Force photograph by William R. Lewis

A KC-135R Stratotanker, takes off for a Red Flag 23-3 mission at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., July 17, 2023. Tankers play a key role in Red Flag missions, enabling long-range operations, to extend the range and endurance of participating aircraft.



Air Force photograph by William R. Lewis

RIGHT: An F-35 Lightning II assigned to the United States Air Force Weapons School takes off for a Red Flag 23-3 mission at Nellis AFB, Nev., July 25, 2023. Red Flag provides unique training with an emphasis on Airman and Guardians' readiness for high-end warfighting and strategic competition.



# Air Force on hand for Battle of Vegas 2023



Major Megan Hainline, Maj. Matt Kading, Capt. Matthew Brown, and Staff Sgt. Matthew Guiterrez assigned to the 422nd Test and Evaluation Squadron are welcomed at the fourth annual Battle for Vegas softball game between the Las Vegas Raiders and Las Vegas Golden Knights July 22, 2023 at Las Vegas Ballpark, Summerlin, Nev. They were honored for their service after a ceremonial flyover to start the game that evening.



LEFT: Jakob Johnson of the Las Vegas Raiders swings during the Battle for Vegas charity softball game at the Las Vegas Ballpark, Summerlin, Nev., July 22, 2023. Johnson participated in the Battle for Vegas charity softball game between the Las Vegas Raiders and Las Vegas Golden Knights. The Golden Knights won the game, 22-21.



LEFT: Two-time MLB World Series champion Jose Canseco cracks a line drive to the left field fence at the Las Vegas Ballpark, Summerlin, Nev., July 22, 2023. Canseco participated in the Battle for Vegas charity softball game between the Las Vegas Raiders and Las Vegas Golden Knights. The event raised \$275,000 for local charities.



An A-10 Thunderbolt II, F-15E Strike Eagle, F-35 Lightning II, and F-16 Fighting Falcon perform a flyover at the fourth annual Battle for Vegas, July 22, 2023 at the Las Vegas Ballpark, Summerlin, Nev.. The flyover kicked off the Battle for Vegas softball game between the Las Vegas Raiders and Las Vegas Golden Knights.

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