

The Luke Air Force Base Thunderbolt



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

August, 2023
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FEATURE



Airman 1st Class Mason Hargrove
309TH FS BLOCK SWAP

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Luke AFB supports 187th FW F-35 Training



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

U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Tam Kangas (center), 61st Fighter Squadron instructor pilot, gives a pre-flight brief to 2nd Lt. Savannah Raskey (right), 187th Fighter Wing student pilot, alongside Senior Airman Dylan Mcgarr (left), 61st Aircraft Maintenance Unit crew chief, July 7, 2023, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve pilots routinely train with the 56 FW to better integrate all Airmen in the Total Force effort.



U.S. Air Force 2nd Lt Savannah Raskey (right), 187th Fighter Wing student pilot, inspects an F-35 Lightning II assigned to the 61st Fighter Squadron alongside Lt. Col. Tam Kangas (left), 61st Fighter Squadron instructor pilot, July 7, 2023, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona.



U.S. Air Force 2nd Lt. Savannah Raskey, 187th Fighter Wing student pilot, prepares for her first F-35 Lightning II flight, July 7, 2023, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona.



LEFT: U.S. Air Force 2nd Lt. Savannah Raskey, 187th Fighter Wing student pilot, walks to her first F-35 Lightning II flight, July 7, 2023, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona.



A U.S. Air Force F-35 Lightning II taxis on the flightline, July 7, 2023, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. The 56th Fighter Wing regularly hosts and F-35 student pilots from various Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve fighter wings.



U.S. Air Force 2nd Lt. Savannah Raskey, 187th Fighter Wing student pilot, prepares for her first F-35 Lightning II flight, July 7, 2023, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve pilots routinely train with the 56 FW to better integrate all Airmen in the Total Force effort.

Thunderbolt

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Luke Airmen to compete in inaugural gaming event

By Senior Airman
DOMINIC TYLER

56th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

Luke Air Force Base has been invited to participate in the first ever Air Force Gaming Western Regional Esports Invitational on Sept. 22-23, 2023, at Hill AFB, Utah. The invitational is scheduled to include tournaments featuring Super Smash Brothers, Rocket League, Magic: The Gathering, and the main event, Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2, 4v4 Search & Destroy.



Courtesy graphic

Luke Air Force Base has been invited to participate in the first ever Air Force Gaming Western Regional Esports Invitational, Sept. 22-23, 2023, at Hill AFB, Utah. To compete or volunteer for the event, reach out to the base AFG ambassadors, or join the AFG Discord community. The AFG program cultivates a community of Airmen of different ages, ranks, and backgrounds to compete, volunteer, and connect over their mutual passion for gaming.

"This unique event is a testament to the strength and diversity of the Air Force community," said U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Anthony McAlum, 56th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron shift supervisor and Luke AFG ambassador. "We believe it will strengthen our relationships and foster friendly competition and look forward to seeing our community come together for this remarkable event."

In the beginning, what began as a small Discord server in 2019, evolved into a service-wide competitive program designed for resiliency and retention.

The Air Force Gaming program cultivates a community of Airmen of dif-



Senior Airman Dominic Tyler

U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Parker McKenna (left) and Tech. Sgt. Anthony McAlum (right), Luke Air Force Base Air Force Gaming ambassadors, pose for a photo with the official AFG coin, July 19, 2023, at Luke AFB, Arizona. The AFG program cultivates a community of Airmen of different ages, ranks, and backgrounds to compete, volunteer, and connect over their mutual passion for gaming.

ferent ages, ranks, and backgrounds to compete, volunteer, and connect over their mutual passion for gaming.

"This is an essential outlet for some of our guys," said McAlum. "Work can be demanding at times and after a long shift, some of our Airmen just want to come home and decompress by gaming with friends."

Over 15,000 Airmen and Guardians have joined AFG, a website that serves as an esports hub, built specifically for the Department of the Air Force. On the gaming website, Airmen can find various competitions and gaming events to attend, ranging from casual Friday game nights to multi-week tournaments, and information on opportunities for temporary duty station assignments.

Most recently, McAlum competed with his team in the 2023 AFG Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2, Spring Minor League tournament.

"There was a total of 27 teams from bases all across the United States," said McAlum. "In the Stage 3 play-

offs, we went undefeated to win the championship. The guys on my Call of Duty team aren't even from Luke. We're all scattered across the U.S. and we all met on AFG."

The team went on to represent AFG in a Call of Duty match against the French air force, winning 3-1 in a best of five set tournament.

"This Air Force program supports Airmen with a resource where they can connect and compete with other gamers on a global level," said U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Parker McKenna, 56th Force Support Squadron formal training manager and Luke AFG ambassador. "When I'm assigned to another base, I make sure to reach out to the base AFG ambassador to get spun up on the local gaming community there."

Airmen interested in getting involved can join the AFG discord community or reach out to the Luke AFG ambassadors. For more information on upcoming events visit airforcegaming.com.

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56th MXG hosts Second Quarter Weapons Load Competition



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

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 Staff Sgt. Paolo Silva, 63rd Aircraft Maintenance Unit weapons load crew member, helps prepare a GBU-12 Paveway II bomb to an F-35 Lightning II during the second quarterly 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.

LEFT TOP: U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Mario Romero-Sheran, 63rd Aircraft Maintenance Unit weapons load crew member, secures an AIM-9X Sidewinder missile to an F-35 Lightning II during the second quarterly weapons load competition, July 14, 2023, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona.

LEFT MIDDLE: U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Paolo Silva, 63rd Aircraft Maintenance Unit weapons load crew member, secures an AIM-9X Sidewinder missile to an F-35 Lightning II during the second quarterly weapons load competition, July 14, 2023, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. The load competition featured the loading of an AIM-120 AMRAAM, an AIM-9X Sidewinder missile, and a GBU-12 with a time standard of 30 minutes.

LEFT BOTTOM: U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Simon Delaney, 62nd Aircraft Maintenance Unit weapons load crew member, tightens the bolt of an AIM-9X Sidewinder missile during the second quarterly weapons load competition, July 14, 2023, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona.

Dreams, diversity, and determination: an Airman's story

By Airman 1st Class
KATELYNN JACKSON

56th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

When Winnie Adipo was just a young girl growing up in Kenya, she dreamed of nothing more than becoming an officer in the military.

Every year, Adipo's father, an agriculture teacher at a local high school, had free tickets to see the annual fair in Mombasa, a coastal city in the south-eastern Kenya.

With the myriad vibrant colors, dizzying rides flying overhead and mouth-watering aromas in the air, any child would be dazzled by the showgrounds. However, Adipo looked forward to one attraction more than any adrenaline rush that rides or sugary sweets could offer.

"After all the rollercoasters and food trucks closed for the night, the Kenyan military would arrive," said Adipo, her warm brown eyes lighting up. "We would wait every single year until midnight for their performance."

As a child, Adipo was mesmerized by images of soldiers in crisp uniforms, marching with perfect synchronization to the booming music of the band; a preemptive instinct swelled inside her, drawn to the potent demonstration of strength and unity.

"When I was older, I began to understand the impacts of military service," said Adipo. "I saw that

it was something bigger than myself and I knew I wanted to join."

Adipo would attempt to enlist several times into the Kenyan military, and each time she would be denied.

"Unemployment was really high in Kenya," Adipo said. "So of course, many people would try to enlist, but the recruiters only let in people they knew or those who could pay to get in."

On her fourth and final attempt, having earned her bachelor's degree, she spoke to a recruiter about becoming an officer.

"He told me, 'Give me 200,000 shillings and I'll fix you in,'" said Adipo, her brows furrowing. "I just didn't have that sort of pocket money and just like that, my dream was gone."

While her dream of joining the Kenyan military was at an end, Adipo would go on to enlist in the U.S. Air Force in 2016.

Her journey from Kenya to Luke Air Force Base, Arizona, is one of perseverance and determination. A success story that Adipo credits to a lifetime of experiences her diverse background awarded her.

Adipo's cultural humility began far before she ever stepped foot overseas. Kenya is made up of 44 tribes, all with different languages and cultural backgrounds. Her father was from a small coastal

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Courtesy photo

Winnie Adipo (right), cooks lunch with her sister, Idza Adipo (left), June, 2023, in Mombasa, Kenya. Adipo was born in Kenya and immigrated to the U.S. in 2015 before enlisting in the United States Air Force with the hope of commissioning as a chief nursing officer.

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DREAMS (from Page 4)



U.S. Air Force photo by
Airman First Class Katelynn Jackson

U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Winnie Adipo, 56th Medical Group noncommissioned officer in charge of personnel administration, poses for a studio photo, March 18, 2023, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. Adipo was born in Kenya and immigrated to the U.S. in 2015 before enlisting in the U.S. Air Force with the hope of commissioning as a chief nursing officer. Adipo has been selected for the Nursing Enlisted Commissioning Program and will begin class at Arizona State University in August of 2023.

tribe called Mijikenda and her mother from a large central tribe called Kikuyu.

Born in Nairobi, the capital of Kenya, Adipo and her family moved to the city of Mombasa when she was very young. While the majority of Kenya is populated with Christians like her family, Mombasa is a Muslim community with a majority Arab population.

Her family's home in Mombasa had no water or electricity until she was 14. Consequently, she spent much of her childhood going to a well to fetch water, doing laundry by hand, playing with other kids in the sand, and exploring the nearby bushes in search of wild fruits.

While her older siblings all attended Christian high schools, Adipo's high academic marks qualified her to go to a predominantly Muslim high school nearby.

"Almost everyone in that school was Muslim and Arabic, I was among very few Christian Africans there," said Adipo. "I had to wear a hijab for the first time, learn Islamic culture and the Arabic language."

In addition to military aspirations, Adipo also felt a pull to nursing, having grown up watching her mother work as a nurse. As the second youngest in a middle-class family of five children, she couldn't afford to pursue a nursing education on her own.

Despite achieving excellent grades throughout her primary and secondary education, she didn't qualify for the government scholarship for nursing school.

After receiving scholarships for an alternative field of study, she went on to earn her bachelor's degree in psychology and communications from the University of Nairobi in 2012.

Her dreams began to be realized in 2015 when Adipo got an email, mistakenly delivered as spam, to her account saying she was selected for the Diversity Visa Program. The DVP is a U.S. State Department sponsored initiative which grants up to 50,000 immigrant visas annually to potential migrants from countries of low immigration rates to the United States.

"If you have never stepped out of your country of birth, I will tell you to go and experience how different the world is," Adipo said. "It completely opens your mind."

She first arrived in Tacoma, Washington, in October of 2015. She would spend the first two months collecting all the necessary documents to begin employment.

"The man driving me to the social security card offices asked me what I had been doing in Kenya and what I wanted to do," said Adipo. "I told him when I was a little girl, my dream was to join the military."

The man promptly encouraged her to look into enlisting in the U.S. military and gave her a U.S. Air Force recruiters number. Adipo described being surprised by the smoothness of the enlistment process as opposed to that of the one she encountered in Kenya.

"It was so simple I couldn't believe it," said Adipo. "No one was trying to take my money!"

Adipo again inquired about joining as an officer. However, she needed to obtain a U.S. citizenship in order to commission into an officer position, which Adipo could only acquire through first enlistment.

Having scored highly on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery, a multiple-choice test designed to predict occupational success in the military, she was qualified for any job of her choosing.

The Air Force provided her the opportunity to finally train and work in the medical field, and Adipo enlisted as a health services management specialist.

From the beginning of her military service, Adipo set the standard amongst her fellow Airmen, starting at basic military training.

"In Kenya we are used to a culture of discipline and respecting higher authority," said Adipo with a shrug on her shoulders. "People coming and shouting at my face? That's nothing to me. I was used to the hard life."

Upon graduation from basic training and technical school, she quickly began to excel in the operational Air Force. In 2018 She earned below-the-zone, an early promotion consideration awarded to junior enlisted Airmen who demonstrate exceptional performance and operate a rank above their current

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309TH FS BEGINS F-16 BLOC



By Senior Airman
DOMINIC TYLER

56th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

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.

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

“The F-16 has been the primary fighter aircraft of the U.S. Air Force for more than 20 years,” said U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Jason M. Rueschhoff, 56th Fighter Wing commander. “But as the Air Force strives for innovation and next-generation technologies, Luke aims to be fully transitioned to the F-35 in the next few years.”

In exchange for the Block 42 aircraft, the 309th FS will be receiving Block 40 aircraft from Holloman AFB. As of today, Holloman AFB has received 18 Block 42 F-16s, with three being Luke heritage jets with custom paint schemes.

The unique paint schemes honor significant events from the squadron’s history. The 309th FS has been an active squadron at Luke AFB since April 1, 1994.

“Our heritage jets have the same purpose as every other jet; to be flown for training,” said U.S. Air Force Maj. Saul Sharafinski, 309th FS F-16 Fighting Falcon pilot. “This block swap allows flexibility and standardization of the 49th Wing’s training jets.”

The 49th Wing trains F-16 pilots as well as MQ-9 Reaper pilots and sensor operators, providing combat-ready Airmen and Guardians to the U.S. Air Force.

Up to this point, Luke has received 18 Block 40 F-16s. After the last iteration of the F-16 B-course the aircraft will be sent to several bases, the first being Fort Wayne at Indiana Air National Guard Base, Indiana.

This is part of the Air Force’s larger initiative of accelerating change and investing in the development of its fighter force structure by transforming and modernizing efforts to ensure air and space superiority.



U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Keilani Durfey, 309th Fighter Squadron crew chief, signals to Maj. Saul Sharafinski, 309th FS F-16 Fighting Falcon pilot, during a flight check on July 10, 2023, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. The 309th Fighter Squadron has been an active squadron at Luke AFB since April 1, 1994.



LOCK SWAP WITH HOLLOWMAN



U.S. Air Force photos by Senior Airman Dominic Tyler of an F-16 Fighting Falcon pilot, before takeoff, July 10, 2023.



Crew chiefs assigned to the 309th Fighter Squadron prepare an F-16 Fighting Falcon for takeoff, July 10, 2023, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. This paint scheme matches that of the World War II era 310th Fighter Squadron's "Passionate Patsy" Republic P-47 Thunderbolt.



Five F-16 Fighting Falcons assigned to the 56th Fighter Wing prepare for takeoff at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona, on July 10, 2023. These aircraft are part of an F-16 block swap between the 309th FS and the 49th Wing at Holloman Air Force Base, New Mexico. Luke is the largest fighter pilot training base in the U.S. Air Force and is dedicated to training the world's greatest fighter pilots for the U.S. and their allied partners.



Crew chiefs assigned to the 309th Fighter Squadron prepare an F-16 Fighting Falcon for takeoff. This aircraft is a part of an F-16 block swap between the 309th FS and the 49th Wing at Holloman Air Force Base, New Mexico. This paint scheme matches that of the World War II era 310th Fighter Squadron's "Passionate Patsy" Republic P-47 Thunderbolt.



An F-16 Fighting Falcon assigned to the 56th Fighter Wing soars at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona, on July 10, 2023. These aircraft are part of an F-16 block swap between the 309th FS and the 49th Wing at Holloman Air Force Base, New Mexico.



An F-16 Fighting Falcon taxis before takeoff, July 10, 2023, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. This aircraft painted in a desert brown color scheme known as the 'MiG Killer', is part of an F-16 block swap between the 309th FS and the 49th Wing at Holloman Air Force Base, New Mexico.



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Chaplain's Corner ...

Personal Motto: A Tool for Decision-Making

by Chaplain (1st Lt.)
MATTHEW BELL

"Be good. Be safe. Work hard. Have fun. Be nice." That is what I tell my children when they walk out of my front door to go to school. That is my way of reminding them to have self-control and to be a good person.

If ever my children are in doubt about how they should act, my hope is they will remember those words and they would make the right choice.

Should I hold the door open for my friend? Yes, Dad said, "Be good ... Be nice."

Should I cross the street without looking both ways? No, Dad said, "Be safe."

Should I copy off my friend's homework assignment? No, Dad said, "Be good ... work hard."

My friends invited me to play basketball with them, but I'm nervous. Should I play? Yes,

Dad told me to, "Have fun."

Do you have a personal motto or phrase that helps guide your decision-making? If not, you could use our family motto. Or perhaps you could lean in on the Air Force core values: Integrity First, Service Before Self, and Excellence in All We Do.

Perhaps you would prefer a simpler phrase like "Do the right thing and live honorably," or "Always with honor." Whatever the phrase may be, I hope that you tell it to yourself every single day because, like my own children, we all need reminders to have self-control and to be a good person.

These every-day reminders will help you fight against toxic attitudes like bitterness and disillusionment. Cynicism can be a real problem for military members after only a few years of service. You want to be an optimistic person, but certain people you work with are dif-



Courtesy photo

Chaplain (1st Lt.) Matthew Bell

ficult and you don't trust their motives. You want to be motivated, but your job has become monotonous. I want to be a good person, but (fill in the blank).

A personal motto recited every single day, preferably at the start of the day, will help you to center your mind and realign your perspectives no matter the circumstances.

I hope this tool will serve as a guidepost reminding you to stay on the right path. Don't forget that your Chaplain Corps team is always ready to help Combat Ready Airmen to be spiritually fit.

DREAMS

(from Page 5)

class. Only three years later, now a staff sergeant, she was placed as the noncommissioned officer in charge of personnel administration with the 56th Medical Group at Luke AFB.

While already proving successful in her current career field, Adipo never lost sight of achieving her goal of becoming a nurse and commissioned officer. She began preparing her submission package for the Nursing Enlisted Commissioning Program in 2022.

The highly selective program would allow her to earn a nursing degree cost-free at a public university while continuing to receive benefits and pay before attending Officer Training School. She would then return to active duty as a commissioned nursing officer in the U.S. Air Force.

Adipo said that despite stereotypes or ignorance formed from lack of exposure to diverse cultures, her background and nationality was never something that held her back in or outside of her career.

"When you do face adversity or negativity, when people make assumptions about you, you can't focus on that," said Adipo, her voice clipped with quiet fervor. "You can let your work speak for itself and people will notice."

Her work certainly was noticed and, in April of 2023, she was selected for the NECP. Adipo is scheduled to begin class in August at Arizona State University.

Her success can be attributed, Adipo says, to the lessons of patience, acceptance, and humility that she gained from her upbringing.

"Diversity is really in here," Adipo said, pressing a finger to her temple. "Just being of the same color, age or gender doesn't mean you will have the same perspective of the people who share your appearance. We all think and contribute to the mission differently."

The Air Force recognizes the essential value that diversity of background, experience, demographics, perspectives, thought and organization contribute to our ultimate success in an increasingly competitive and dynamic global environment.

Adipo supports this ideology, stating, "We all come from different walks of life here, and that's what makes America great."

Airmen like Adipo not only exemplify the Air Force's core value of excellence but contribute to the diversity of perspective that is not only the force's, but the nation's, greatest leverage.

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Luke firefighters assist with Glendale landfill fire

By Senior Airman
DOMINIC TYLER

56th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

The Luke Air Force Base Fire Department responded to a three-acre fire at the Glendale Municipal Landfill, working alongside fire crews from around the West Valley at approximately 9 p.m., July 19, 2023, in Glendale, Arizona.

First responders reported there were no injuries, and no structures were threatened.

Luke provided water tanker support via an Automatic Aid Agreement with the city of Glendale. Over six thousand gallons of water was delivered to multiple apparatuses on scene.

"The training that our military and civilian firefighters go through at Luke is paramount in these situations," said Jason Haddock, Luke AFB Fire Department deputy fire chief. "This enables us to complete both the military mission and ensures interoperability off the installation."

The support provided by Luke's community partners including the Glendale, Phoenix, Peoria, and Surprise fire departments resulted in the fire being extinguished, preventing long term affects to the surrounding area.

"This is a prime example of how the communities of the West Valley and Luke AFB set the standard for community integration," said U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Keagan McLeese, 56th Fighter Wing deputy commander. "There's a lot to be proud of when it comes to our Thunderbolt Airmen, and this is no exception."

The Luke Fire and Emergency Services flight provides first class emergency response, for medical and structural purposes, to the base populace as well as the public within the West Valley.



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

A Phoenix Fire Department firetruck (left) and a 56th Civil Engineer Squadron Fire Department water tanker (right) respond to a 3-acre fire at the Glendale Municipal Landfill, around 9 p.m., July 19, 2023, in Glendale, Arizona. The support provided by Luke's community partners prevented long term affects to the surrounding area.



A Phoenix Fire Department firetruck responds to a 3-acre fire at the Glendale Municipal Landfill, around 9 p.m., July 19, 2023, in Glendale, Arizona.



A Phoenix Fire Department firetruck (left) and a Luke Air Force Base Fire Department water tanker (right) respond to a 3-acre fire at the Glendale Municipal Landfill. The support provided by Luke's community partners including the Glendale, Phoenix, Peoria and Surprise fire departments resulted in the fire being extinguished, preventing long term affects to the surrounding area.



A 56th Civil Engineer Squadron firefighter adjusts water pressure on a water tanker in response to a 3-acre fire at the Glendale Municipal Landfill, around 9 p.m., July 19, 2023, in Glendale, Arizona. Luke provided water tanker support via an Automatic Aid Agreement with the city of Glendale.

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