

# Desert Lightning News

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## 65th Aggressor Squadron reactivates at Nellis with aggressor force of F-35s

The 65th Aggressor Squadron reactivated June 9, 2022, with a directed mission to know, teach and replicate fifth-generation air adversaries at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev.

Air Combat Command commander Gen. Mark Kelly flew his F-15E Strike Eagle against the unit's first assigned F-35 and newest commander, Lt. Col. Brandon Nauta, immediately prior to the ceremony.

"Due to the growing threat posed by PRC fifth- and sixth-generation fighter development, we must use a portion of our daily fifth-generation aircraft today at Langley, Elmendorf, Hill, Eielson, and now Nellis, to replicate adversary fifth-generation capabilities," Kelly said. "Precisely because we have this credible threat, when we do replicate a fifth-gen adversary, it has to be done professionally. That's the Aggressors."

In 2019, the then-Air Combat Command commander and Secretary of the Air Force approved the activation to improve training for fifth-generation fighter tactics development, advanced large force training and operational test support. The decision underwent compliance with the National Environmental and Policy Act and other regulatory and planning processes.

The 65th AGRS was previously active at Nellis from 2005 to 2014. During that time, the unit replicated tactics and techniques of potential adversaries with a fleet of F-15 Eagles. When they inactivated, the 64th AGRS continued the aggressor mission with F-16 Fighting Falcons.

"This significant milestone marks our ability to bring fifth-generation capabilities to the high-end fight, and will allow us to enhance our premier tactics and training with joint, allied and coalition forces," said Brig. Gen. Michael Drowley, 57th Wing commander.

The aggressor program began in the 1970s to provide pilots the op-



Lt. Col. Brandon Nauta, 65th Aggressor Squadron commander, makes remarks during the activation ceremony for the 65th AGRS at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., June 9, 2022. The aggressor squadron's mission is to prepare warfighters to win in air combat against any adversary.

portunity to train against a U.S. aggressor force that replicated advanced and credible adversary tactics. Since then, the adversary capabilities have improved significantly and so did the need to replicate these threats.

"Using the F-35 as an aggressor allows pilots to train against low-observable threats similar to what adversaries are developing," said Col. Scott Mills, 57th Operations Group commander.

For the first time during Red Flag-Nellis 21-3, the 57th Operations Group introduced dedicated F-35 aggressors to expand upon the F-16 Fighting Falcon aggressors assigned to the 64th AGRS.

"Working in concert with the 64th Aggressor Squadron, the F-35 aggressors dismantled significant components of the Blue Air game plan and

— See **AGGRESSOR**, on Page 6



Air Force photographs by Airman 1st Class Josey Blades

Lt. Col. Brandon Nauta, 65th Aggressor Squadron commander, assumes command of the 65th AGRS during an activation ceremony at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., June 9, 2022. The aggressor squadron acts as an opposing force in sorties by replicating enemy tactics, techniques and procedures.

# Get to know your people's 'story'

**By Col. (Dr.) Nathan Krivitzky**  
Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio

Years ago when I initially met one of my mentors, the first thing he asked me was: "What's your story?"

He was an imposing man who leaned into the words he spoke. It was not a question I had expected and I was not sure what information he wanted exactly, so to be safe ... I simply blurted out my whole life story.

After I finished bringing him up to speed from high school to present day, he responded with a confirmatory nod and said, "OK then." And walked away.

At the moment, I thought it an odd exchange, but I appreciated he wanted

to know about "me" — the history beyond my Air Force identity.

However, what I know now that I didn't know then was this O-6 mentor, who ended up helping me quite a bit earlier in my career, was essentially trying to get to know my background and the type of person I was.

Each Airman, officer and civilian has a unique set of life experiences. We each have our own "story." Much of this experience comes prior to our time in the service. Oftentimes, it helps shape and mold who we are.

One key leadership tenet is taking care of your people. For leaders at any level, a good first step is getting to know the background and history of

the people you command. It is important to acknowledge and understand this history. Its usefulness cannot be overstated.

What challenges have they had in their life? What challenges do they face currently? What motivates them? What do they value? What are their goals? How did they get to be in your command?

These are just some of the valuable pieces of information that can be gleaned from asking about one's life experiences. You may be surprised what you find out.

For higher-level leaders, it's impossible to know each and every person who serves under you, but focusing on your

key subordinates and then asking those individuals to also learn the background of their own personnel will create a more connected and aware unit. Unit members will appreciate that leadership understands their background and values their life experiences.

Units that feel connected tend to be more resilient, have better morale and are more apt to accomplish the mission. Knowing a person's history will help facilitate mentoring, coaching and ultimately leading that individual.

So, the next time you have a new member come into your unit, consider taking time to sit down with them and learn about their "story" — you'll be glad you did.

## When leading, be a conductor, not a virtuoso

**by Greg Leingang**  
Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio

Some years ago, I came across this quote on mature leadership and wrote it down as a reminder of what excellent leadership looks like: "Remember, you're the conductor — not the virtuoso."

All of us are doers, managers and leaders, depending on the situation, and each function requires a different mindset and different skills. As we go about our workday, we can fall into the trap of not effectively transitioning between the three mindsets, and that can cause serious leadership problems for our organizations.

You might be diligently working on a task you must complete yourself as a doer, and then quickly move into a meeting or conversation that requires you to shift your approach into a leadership mode. However, because your mind is still geared toward "doing," it's possible that you approach the leadership meeting or discussion as the doer "virtuoso" who has all the answers and dictates those answers (and maybe even the literal words) to your team.

You then move on, feeling good that you accomplished the task at hand. In reality, you may have just bungled a leadership moment to the detriment of your team and mission.

Many leaders believe they are paid to have all the answers. So when moving from a "doing" or even a "management" moment into a "leadership" moment, they feel compelled to immediately solve problems by controlling the conversation and too quickly dictating a solution.

This is such an easy trap to fall into. That is why it's so important to deliberately identify and classify the situation you are in at any given moment and select the best approach for the scenario at hand.

If you are in a "doing" moment where you must develop a product largely by yourself, your approach will be mostly autonomous and self-directed. If you're in a "management" moment, you will serve as coach, organizer, technical adviser and standard-bearer. However, if you are in a "leadership" moment, it is critical to shake off the "virtuoso" mindset and allow your team members to engage.

Our most-mature leaders realize they don't need to be an expert on everything. While there are times of urgent crisis that require leaders to issue directives responded to with little conversation and quick action, our business environment generally calls for a much different approach.

The best leaders know their success comes from identifying and hiring talent, developing workforce skills and then engaging the team to capitalize on the its abilities, knowledge and opinions. A breakdown in any of these three areas causes real problems.

Are you hiring people with the right potential? Maybe they don't have all the technical knowledge yet, but do they have the qualities your team needs to be successful? Then, as a leader, what are you doing to grow the skills of your workforce? Have you invested in the training programs, development opportunities and education your workforce needs to be the best they can be personally and professionally?

And then when the time comes to deal with business issues and challenges or decide how to move forward as a leader, do you bring your team together to engage its experience, teach you things you didn't know and allow solutions to come forward out of the open exchange of ideas?

Even if you are focused long-term on hiring practices and training or development, if you are not effectively allowing your teammates to offer opinions and recommendations, you may be acting as a virtuoso and not a conductor. If you find yourself interrupting other people, finishing another person's sentences, trying to complete another's thoughts and dictating the literal words you expect your team member to use, or you do not take the time to sit with your team and deeply consider its points of view, you are likely falling into this common leadership trap.

The eventual result will be that your team members leave you for another job, or perhaps worse, they leave you in spirit.

We will all find ourselves in moments that require our leadership. It's critical that we continually and deliberately work to properly classify that situation.

When our leadership is required, we need to be careful not to allow a "doing" or "virtuoso" approach to undermine an opportunity that calls for us to capitalize on the talents, experience and thoughts of our team. As leaders, let's remember our value is not in having all the answers. It's in how well we coalesce our teams, provide opportunity for team members, and consider the ideas and solutions our teams bring forward.

When leading, be a conductor, not a virtuoso.



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# Nellis Chiefs champion travel changes; lead DOD unaccompanied move PDLA approval

by Airman 1st Class Josey Blades

Nellis AFB, Nev.

A recent modification to the joint travel regulation now allows Airmen directed to move out of government quarters to receive a partial dislocation allowance of \$840.

A PDLA is a one-time, flat-rate payment to help reimburse a service member for expenses incurred while moving out of an unaccompanied household.

This update does not apply to a move between unaccompanied housing units i.e., dorm-to-dorm moves.

The initiative began at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., where Airmen have been moving out of the dorms at a rate much quicker than the Air Force average.

Instead of the usual 36 months in the dorms, Nellis Airmen move out in approximately 12 months.

Both command chiefs for the 57th Wing and 99th Air Base Wing wanted to be in line with the Chief of Staff of the Air Force's letter to the force, which stated, "Leaders owe Airmen and their families the quality of service and quality of life where all can reach their full potential."

The process began when Chief Master Sergeant Raul Villarreal, Jr., Command Chief Master Sergeant of the 57th Wing asked an Airman if he could shadow them moving from the dorms to single family housing, start to finish.

"I asked her, her supervisor, and her First Sergeant if I could come over and look at her house," said Villarreal. "She had a nice nightstand, a nice bed, closet in order, a TV, but you walk around to the other part of the house, and she had nothing."

Villarreal mentioned it started getting us to think "what do these Airmen have when they move out?" He said, "It's literally nothing and we don't give them anything, we don't help with that. That started generating some ideas on what we could do to help these airmen offset some of these costs associated with living."

The chiefs surveyed about 260 Airmen that moved out over the past year. The expenses that came with moving ranged anywhere from \$200 to about \$2,000. It showed Airmen were either paying these costs out of pocket or putting it on their credit cards. This data was used to start exploring ways to offset the cost of moving. Chief Master Sgt. Alex Morgan, Command Chief



Air Force photograph by Airman 1st Class Josey Blades

Chief Master Sergeant Raul Villarreal, Jr., 57th Wing command chief, and Chief Master Sergeant Alex Morgan, 99th Air Base Wing command chief, pose for a photo in front of the unaccompanied dormitories at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., May 25, 2022. Both Chiefs championed the Dislocation Allowance payment when unaccompanied junior service members move out of military dormitories.

Master Sergeant of the 99th Wing said they realized there was no mechanism to help the Airmen.

"And that's really how it started, with a legislative proposal," said Villarreal. "We actually tag teamed an Air Force audit agency tasker just to continue to highlight our challenges on the installation."

To finalize this project, Nellis leadership called on the Las Vegas community and Nevada state representatives and senators to do more for Airmen.

"I think that was a key component because they had the ability to put it in their teammate's hands, get it on The Hill, and really engage at that levels," said Morgan. "We believed we could get after this problem if we utilized the

right resources and brought it to the forefront."

With recent visits and support from Sen. Jacky Rosen, D-Nev., congressional delegates, and the Senate Armed Services Committee, this effort was a success.

"I think it's a huge win because this doesn't just impact Nellis," said Villarreal. "It impacts all the Air Force and the entire DOD for any unaccompanied military member. All military members will be awarded this opportunity. And look, it's not going to fix their problem holistically, but it'll help offset some of the challenges that they have moving off base."

On the sunset of their careers, Morgan and Villarreal wanted to retire with

one big win for all service members across the branches.

"Being able to help someone gives me the biggest satisfaction and it'll continue to give me the biggest satisfaction even as I retire," said Morgan.

Morgan also added, "Ultimately taking care of people and being able to affect not only not just the Air Force but all our services really is able to help me go out with a smile."

"As we continue to move on to our next chapter, closure is a thing but I think the next step for us is, and we've been talking about this, is we want to see it work," stated Villarreal. "We want to find the first Airman that it works for and just have a moment with them."



# 926th FSS gets new commander



Air Force photographs

Col. Sean Rassas, 926th Wing commander at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., passes off the guidon to Maj. Danielle Daley, incoming 926th Force Support Squadron commander during an assumption of command ceremony on June 11, 2022. Daley joins the 926th Wing from the 911th FSS at Pittsburgh Air Reserve Station, Penn.

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# Air Force releases master sergeant/22E7 promotion cycle statistics

by Staff Sgt. Kiana Pearson

JB San Antonio-Randolph, Texas

Air Force officials have selected 4,040 technical sergeants for promotion to master sergeant, out of 27,296 eligible, for a selection rate of 14.8 percent in the 22E7 promotion cycle, which includes supplemental promotion opportunities.

The average overall score for those selected was 342.89. Selectees' average time in grade was 4.16 years and time in service was 14.39 years.

The promotion lists are available on the Enlisted Promotions page of the Air Force's Personnel Center website, the Air Force Portal and myPers. Airmen can access their score notices on the virtual Military Personnel Flight application via the AFPC secure page.

For more information about Air Force personnel programs, visit the AFPC public website.

TOP: Technical sergeants who have been selected for promotion to master sergeant gather at Creech Air Force Base, Nev., to celebrate their achievement.

BOTTOM: Master sergeant selectees from Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., gather to celebrate their achievement.



Air Force photographs

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**AGGRESSOR**, from Page 1

ensured that our combat forces had to work hard for every win,” said Mills.

The F-35s will be employed into large Combat Air Forces exercises, U.S. Air Force Weapons School missions, joint exercises, and operational test and evaluation events that are only conducted at Nellis Air Force Base and the Nevada Test and Training Range.

“Our message to our joint, allied and coalition forces is simple: come to Nellis to fight. The aggressors are ready, and our mission is to ensure you are too,” said Mills.



Air Force photograph

Gen. Mark Kelly, commander of Air Combat Command, flew against the 65th Aggressor Squadron F-35s June 10, 2022, at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev.



Air Force photograph by Airman 1st Class Josey Blades

Col. Scott Mills, 57th Operations Group commander, passes the guidon of the newly-activated 65th Aggressor Squadron to Lt. Col. Brandon Nauta, 65th AGRS commander, during an activation ceremony at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., June 9, 2022. The aggressor squadron acts as an opposing force in sorties by replicating enemy tactics, techniques and procedures.



Air Force photograph by Airman 1st Class Josey Blades

Lt. Col. Brandon Nauta, 65th Aggressor Squadron commander, assumes command of the 65th AGRS during an activation ceremony at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., June 9, 2022. The aggressor squadron acts as an opposing force in sorties by replicating enemy tactics, techniques and procedures.

# NASCAR visits Creech AFB



On June 10, 2022, NASCAR's Car #51, aka the Salute To Service car, rolled into Creech Air Force Base, Nev. In addition to getting to hop in that sweet ride, Hunters got to channel their inner Dale Jr. on the same simulator that real drivers use! Thanks to Garrett Smithley and his team for showing their gratitude to #Team 432 and all they do!



# Some VA facilities introducing advance, smartphone check-in

by Doré Mobley  
Veterans Administration

Check-in for your next VA appointment might be different next time you come in. Beginning this summer, some VA facilities will allow veterans to do one or both of these:

- Start the check-in process up to seven days in advance of the appointment.
- Check in at the clinic using your smartphone on the day of your appointment.

As part of how VA is modernizing the way veterans receive care, VA received extensive feedback from veterans and caregivers about how the checking-in process can be made better, especially for those who use assistive technologies to access their benefits online.

VA's Office of Information and Technology, partnering with VHA, has applied this feedback to the design of the new, modernized patient check-in application coming soon to your location.

VA is deploying the application at facilities geographically. Deployment within all VISNs will occur by the end of August 2022.

### Five facts veterans should know



Courtesy graphic

### about VA's patient check-in application:

1. Veterans will always have the option to check in for an appointment with a staff member. Using the new mobile app therefore is not a requirement. VA staff are honored to check veterans in for appointments and to answer questions.
2. Veterans will need to check-in at the facility with a staff member on appointment day if they require changes

to demographic (contact, next of kin, emergency contact) or insurance information.

3. The patient application has two options:
  - Pre-check-in helps veterans confirm demographic information is up to date prior to an appointment. If a clinic offers pre-check-in, Veterans will receive a link through a text message appointment reminder after confirming an appointment.

• Mobile check-in allows veterans to check-in for an appointment on a smartphone when they arrive at the facility. Upon arrival at a clinic offering mobile check-in, veterans should locate the poster titled, "Have an appointment? Check in with your phone" prominently on display. They should then text or scan the QR code as directed in the poster to start the process.

4. To use the mobile app, veterans must have a smartphone that is connected to Wi-Fi or cellular service and the phone number on file with VA, as this is how VA verifies your identity. Veterans can update their contact information online.
5. The national contract for VetLink kiosks will expire at the end of September 2022. After that date, veterans should:
  - Use the patient check-in application for self-service check-in or check in with a staff member.
  - Submit your travel reimbursement claims through the Beneficiary Travel Self-Service System (BTSSS), mail, fax and/or in-person at a VA medical center.

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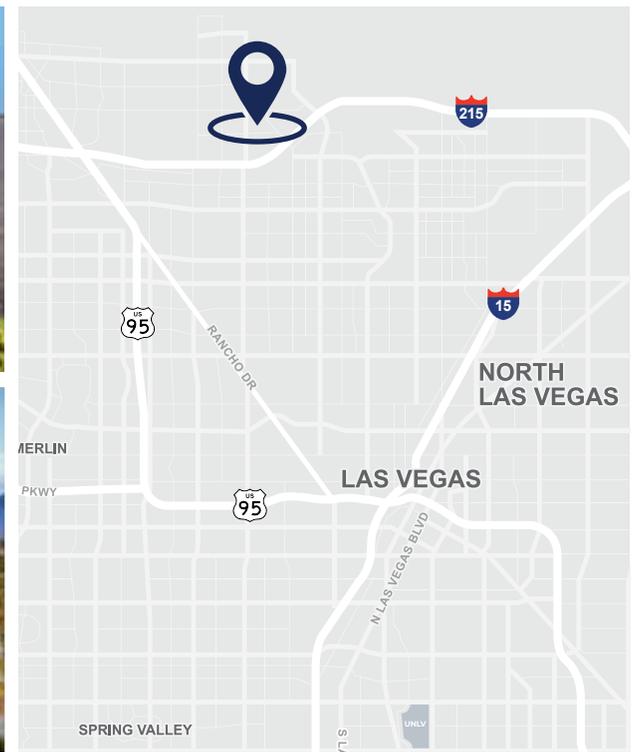
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