

52d Fighter Squadron  
Change of Command  
Ceremony



15 May 2026  
Luke Air Force Base, Arizona

# KEY PERSONNEL

## **PRESIDING OFFICER**

Colonel Peter H. Cossette  
Commander, 944th Operations Group

## **OUTGOING COMMANDER**

Lieutenant Colonel Joshua R. Jones

## **INCOMING COMMANDER**

Lieutenant Colonel Daniel R. Westendorf

## **NARRATOR**

Major Jack M. Miller

## **GUIDON BEARER**

Airman First Class Hannah R. Gundy



# SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

Opening Narration

Arrival of the Official Party

Presentation of the Colors

National Anthem  
*by First Lieutenant Robyn Soh*

Invocation  
*by Mr. Aaron Byrum*

Remarks  
*by Colonel Peter Cossette*

Medal Presentation

Remarks  
*by Lieutenant Colonel Joshua Jones*

Change of Command

Remarks  
*by Lieutenant Colonel Daniel Westendorf*

Closing Narration

Air Force Song

Departure of the Official Party

Reception  
*52d Fighter Squadron Dojo*

# Lieutenant Colonel Joshua R. Jones

Lieutenant Colonel Joshua R. Jones is the outgoing Commander of the 52nd Fighter Squadron, Luke AFB, Arizona. The Ninjas are Air Force Reserve Command's largest F-35A fighter squadron comprising 50 full and part time instructor pilots. The Ninjas are the most experienced F-35 squadron in the world, possessing a rich heritage of training countless American, Australian, Norwegian, Italian, Dutch, and Danish fighter pilots as well as the initial F-35 cadre for Israel, Japan, and the Republic of Korea.

Colonel Jones grew up in Franklin, Tennessee and earned his commission from Auburn University in 2006. Most importantly, he met his wife Amy while at Auburn. Amy commissioned in 2005, she served as an AFSOC Maintenance Officer at Hurlburt Field, Florida. Together they enjoyed assignments around the United States, South Korea, and Germany before settling in Arizona with their two kids, Jacob and Reagan.



Colonel Jones is a Command Pilot with 2,900 hours in the T-37, T-38C, A-10A, A-10C, and F-35A with combat experience in Operation ENDURING FREEDOM and Operation INHERENT RESOLVE. He served as Chief Instructor for the 107th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron in Iraq and for the 31st Test and Evaluation Squadron, leading F-35A Initial Operational Test and Evaluation at Edwards AFB, CA. Colonel Jones joined the 944th Operations Group in 2019 and stood up the first Belgian F-35 squadron as Director of Operations. He took Command of the Ninjas in August of 2024. In his civilian capacity, he is a First Officer with FedEx Express.

## **EDUCATION**

2006 Bachelor of Science, Business Administration and Aviation Management, Auburn University, AL

2006 Air and Space Basic Course, Maxwell Air Force Base, AL

2011 Squadron Officer School, Maxwell Air Force Base, AL

2013 Master of Aviation Science, Aeronautics, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, FL

2014 USAF Fighter Weapons School, Nellis Air Force Base, NV

2021 Air Command and Staff College, correspondence

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

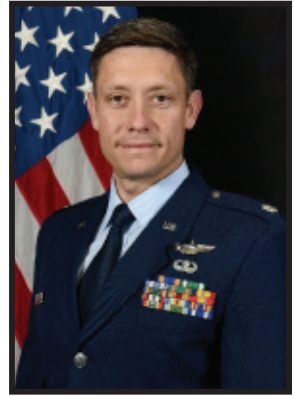
- 2006 – 2007, Standardization and Evaluation Officer, Little Rock AFB, AR
- 2007 – 2009, Student, Undergraduate Pilot Training, 88th FTS, Sheppard AFB, TX
- 2009 – Student, A-10 Formal Training Unit, 358th FS, Davis-Monthan AFB, AZ
- 2009 – 2011, A-10 Pilot, 25th Fighter Squadron, Osan AB, Republic of Korea
- 2011 – 2013, A-10 Flight Lead, Flight Commander, 81st FS, Spangdahlem AB, Germany
- 2013 – 2016, A-10 Instructor Pilot, Chief of Weapons, 357th FS, Davis-Monthan AFB, AZ
- 2016 – 2019, F-35 Operational Test Pilot, 31st TES, Edwards AFB, CA
- 2019 – 2020, F-35 Instructor Pilot, 944 Operations Group Detachment 2, Luke AFB, AZ
- 2020 – 2021, F-35 Instructor Pilot, Chief of Weapons, 61st FS, Luke AFB, AZ
- 2021 – 2023, F-35 Flight Examiner, Traditional Reservist, 52nd FS, Luke AFB, AZ
- 2023 – 2024, F-35 Flight Examiner, Director of Operations, 312th FS, Luke AFB, AZ
- 2024 – Present, F-35 Flight Examiner, Commander, 52nd Fighter Squadron, Luke AFB, AZ

# Lieutenant Colonel Daniel R. Westendorf

Lieutenant Colonel Daniel R. Westendorf is the incoming Commander of the 52nd Fighter Squadron, Luke AFB, Arizona.

Colonel Westendorf was the Senior Assistant Director of Operations, 52nd Fighter Squadron, Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. This role requires oversight of daily operations including syllabus development, training plans, and squadron activation requirements to ensure the Reserve members of the Ninjas continue to provide world-class support to the Active Air Forces.

Colonel Westendorf grew up in Colts Neck, New Jersey and earned his commission in the Marine Corps from the United States Merchant Marine Academy in 2009. Most importantly, he met his wife Laura while he was attending USMMA and she was completing her Undergraduate Degree at Queens College. She has remained by his side through multiple deployments and Permanent Changes of Station. Together they enjoyed assignments in Florida, Texas, Virginia, California, and Nevada before settling in Arizona with the 52d Fighter Squadron.



Colonel Westendorf is a Senior Pilot with over 2,000 hours across the T-6B, T-45C, F/A-18C, F-35C, and F-35A. His combat experience includes missions in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, and Operation INHERENT RESOLVE. He has served in billets at the squadron and group level including Pilot Training Officer, Flight Lead Standardization Officer, Maintenance Officer, and Operations Officer. He completed his time on Active Duty at the Navy's Fighter Weapons School helping to establish the F-35 Strike Fighter Tactics Instructor Syllabus and served as the United States Navy's Subject Matter Expert for F-35 Air-to-Air Employment. He joined the 944th Operations Group, 52d Fighter Squadron in 2022. In his civilian capacity, he is a First Officer with United Airlines.

## EDUCATION

- 2009 Bachelor of Science, Marine Transportation, United States Merchant Marine Academy, NY
- 2010 The Basic School, Marine Corps Base Quantico, VA
- 2012 Expeditionary Warfare School, correspondence
- 2016 Landing Signal Officer School, Naval Air Station Virginia Beach, VA
- 2018 USN Fighter Weapons School (TOPGUN), Naval Air Station Fallon, NV
- 2022 Air Command and Staff College, correspondence

## ASSIGNMENTS

- 2009 – 2010, Assistant Officer Selection Officer, New Jersey Recruiting Station, NJ
- 2010, Student, The Basic School, MCB Quantico, VA
- 2011 – 2012, ALO, 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward), Camp Helmand, Afghanistan
- 2012, T-6B Pilot, VMT-6, Naval Air Station Whiting Field, FL
- 2013, T-45C Pilot, VT-21, Naval Air Station Kingsville, TX
- 2014, F/A-18C Pilot, VFA-106, Naval Air Station Virginia Beach, VA
- 2014 – 2019, F/A-18C Flight Examiner, VMFA-323, MCAS Miramar, CA
- 2019 – 2022, F/A-18 A-D and F-35C TOPGUN Instructor Pilot, Naval Air Station Fallon, NV
- 2022 – 2023, F-35 Instructor Pilot, 944 Operations Group, Luke AFB, AZ
- 2023 – 2024, F-35 Instructor Pilot, 63rd Fighter Squadron, Luke AFB, AZ
- 2024 – 2026, F-35 Flight Examiner, Senior ADO, 63rd FS, Luke AFB, AZ

## History of the 944th Operations Group

In 2001, the mission of the 944th Fighter Wing transitioned to that of a Flying Training Unit. The 944th Operations Group shifted its focus to training F-16 pilots in initial, recurrent, and instructor pilot qualifications. This marked the beginning of the group's distinguished legacy of training pilots on the F-16 at Luke AFB. Between 2001 and 2015, the group trained over 90% of Combat Air Force F-16 pilots.

In 2015, the first F-35 Lightning II arrived at Luke AFB, ushering in a new era of elite training conducted by the pilots of the 944th Operations Group. In 2016, Detachment 2 initiated the Foreign Military Sales training program, which expanded into years of training for partner nations transitioning to the F-35. These nations included Japan, the Republic of Korea, Israel, Taiwan, the Republic of Singapore, Australia, Norway, Italy, the Netherlands, and Denmark.

Today, the group includes the 69th Fighter Squadron and the 52nd Fighter Squadron, along with detachments at Holloman AFB, NM and Eglin AFB, FL. The group is also responsible for training the Belgian Air Force on the F-35.

Throughout its 32-year history, the group has upheld the heritage of heroic aviators, supported worldwide operations, and trained some of the world's finest fighter pilots. Its legacy continues to reflect honor, dedication, and sacrifice.

The background of the entire page is a soft, semi-transparent image of the United States flag, showing the stars and stripes. The text is overlaid on this background.

## THE CHANGE OF COMMAND CEREMONY

The change of command ceremony is a military tradition deeply rooted in history. Historically, the passing of a unit's flag was accomplished in front of the unit so all could see and witness the changing of leadership.

This symbolic tradition has survived throughout military history. The modern ceremony continues to announce to all, the authority of the incoming commander in the finest of military traditions.

# Air Force Song

Off we go, into the wild blue yonder,  
climbing high, into the sun.

Here they come, zooming to meet our thunder,  
At'em now, give-em the gun!

Down we dive, spouting our flame  
from under, off with one helluva roar!

We live in fame, or go down in flame.

Hey! Nothing'll stop the  
US Air Force!

