

56TH OPERATIONS GROUP

CHANGE OF COMMAND

CEREMONY



22 JUNE 2026

LUKE AIR FORCE BASE, ARIZONA

KEY PERSONNEL

PRESIDING OFFICER

Brigadier General David J. Berkland
Commander, 56th Fighter Wing

OUTGOING COMMANDER

Colonel Oliver R. Lause

INCOMING COMMANDER

Colonel Matthew P. Wilson

COMMANDER OF AIRMEN

Lieutenant Colonel Jonathan V. Kay

NARRATOR

Senior Airman Hunter L. Allen

GUIDON BEARER

Chief Master Sergeant Kenneth A. Wilkins



SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

Opening Narration

Arrival of the Official Party

Presentation of the Colors

National Anthem

Technical Sergeant Carol S. Russell

Invocation

Chaplain Portmann K. Werner

Introductions

Remarks

Brigadier General David J. Berkland

Medal Presentation

Remarks

Colonel Oliver R. Lause

Change of Command

Remarks

Colonel Matthew P. Wilson

Flagship Unveiling

Air Force Song

Departure of the Official Party

Closing Narration

Colonel Oliver R. Lause

Colonel Oliver R. Lause is the outgoing Commander, 56th Operations Group, Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. The group's mission is to build the future of airpower by training F-35 pilots, F-16 pilots, F-15 pilots, and intelligence and command control warfighters. He oversees the Air Force's largest operations group comprised of 13 squadrons and over 170 F-35 and F-16 aircraft.



Colonel Lause received his commission in 2004 as a U.S. Air Force Academy graduate. He commanded the Utah Test and Training Range, 388th Fighter Wing, Hill AFB, Utah and the 35th Fighter Squadron, Kunsan Air Base, Republic of Korea. Col Lause held various staff positions at joint/coalition, major command, and wing levels, to include serving as Executive Assistant to the Supreme Allied Commander Europe and Commander, U.S. European Command at Supreme Headquarters Allied Power Europe, Belgium. He has flown as an instructor pilot, evaluator pilot, and weapons officer in the F-35 and F-16 across Pacific Air Forces, Air Combat Command, and U.S. Air Forces in Europe, in addition to instructing at the U.S. Air Force Weapons School, Nellis AFB, Nevada.

Colonel Lause was a National Defense Fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, California and a Blue Horizons Fellow in the Center for Strategy and Technology, Spatz Center, Air University, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. He is a command pilot with more than 2,000 hours in the F-35A, F-16, T-38C, and T-37B including 200 combat hours in Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. He has also flown alert missions supporting Operation NOBLE EAGLE.

ASSIGNMENTS

- Aug 04 – Feb 06, Student, Joint Specialized Undergraduate Pilot Training, Vance AFB, OK
- Feb 06 – Apr 06, Student, Introduction to Fighter Fundamentals, Moody AFB, GA
- Apr 06 – Jan 07, Student, F-16 Replacement Training Unit and Night Systems Course, Luke AFB, AZ
- Feb 07 – Apr 08, Standardization and Evaluation Liaison Officer and F-16 Flight Lead, 36th Fighter Squadron, Osan AB, Republic of Korea
- May 08 – Jun 08, Student, F-16 Block 50 Conversion Course, Luke AFB, AZ
- Jun 08 – Dec 010, Flight Commander, Assistant Chief of Group Standardization and Evaluation, Chief of Mobility, F-16 Instructor and Evaluator Pilot, 79th Fighter Squadron, Shaw AFB, SC (Oct 09 – Feb 10, Chief of Mobility, F-16 Instructor Pilot, Bagram AB, Afghanistan)
- Jan 11 – Jun 11, Student, F-16 Weapons Instructor Course, USAF Weapons School, Nellis AFB, NV
- Jul 11 – Jul 12, Chief of Weapons and Tactics, F-16 Weapons Officer, 80th Fighter Squadron, Kunsan AB, Republic of Korea
- Aug 12 – Jul 15, Flight Commander, Chief of Wing Scheduling, Chief of Weapons, F-16 Weapons School Instructor, 16th Weapons Squadron, Nellis AFB, NV
- Aug 15 – Jun 16, Blue Horizons Fellow, Center for Strategy and Technology, Spatz Center, Air University, Maxwell AFB, AL
- Jul 16 – Jul 17, Aide-de-Camp to the Commander, U.S. Air Forces in Europe, U.S. Air Forces Africa, Ramstein AB, Germany
- Aug 17 – Jun 18, Inspector General, F-16 Instructor Pilot, 52d Fighter Wing, Spangdahlem AB, Germany
- Jun 18 – Jun 19, Commander, 35th Fighter Squadron, Kunsan AB, Republic of Korea
- Jun 19 – Jul 21, Executive Assistant, Deputy Executive Assistant, and Special Assistant to the Supreme Allied Commander Europe and Commander, U.S. European Command, Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, Belgium
- Jul 21 – Jun 22, National Defense Fellow, Hoover Institution, Stanford University, CA
- Jul 22 – Jun 23, Chief of Staff, F-35A Pilot, Hill AFB, UT
- Jun 23 – Jun 24, Commander, Headquarters, Utah Test and Training Range, F-35A Instructor Pilot, Hill AFB, UT
- Jun 24 – Present, Commander, 56th Operations Group, Luke AFB, AZ

Colonel Matthew P. Wilson

Colonel Matthew P. Wilson is the incoming Commander, 56th Operations Group, Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. The group's mission is to build the future of airpower by training F-35 pilots, F-16 pilots, F-15 pilots, and intelligence and C2 professionals. He oversees operations for the Air Force's largest operations group comprised of 13 squadrons and over 170 F-16 and F-35 aircraft.



Colonel Wilson was Chief of the Command and Control Division, Headquarters Air Force, Pentagon. Prior to joining Air Force Headquarters, he was the Commander of the 495th Fighter Squadron, 48th Operations Group, 48th Fighter Wing, RAF Lakenheath, United Kingdom. Before squadron command, Colonel Wilson served as a strategist for the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the Pentagon after earning a Master of International Public Policy at Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies. His operational experience includes several assignments as an F-16 and F-35 Instructor Pilot in the Combat Air Forces, where he served as a tactical leader in his community, earning placement in the US Air Force Weapons School. Upon graduation, Colonel Wilson served globally in several roles as a subject matter expert for both Joint and Coalition contingency and operational planning in Korea, the Indo-Pacific region, Europe and NATO, Africa, the Middle East, and southwest Asia.

Colonel Wilson earned his commission in May 2006 from the United States Air Force Academy. He held a variety of positions in F-16 and F-35 fighter operations at the squadron, group, and wing levels and is a command pilot with more than 2,500 flying hours including 648 combat hours.

ASSIGNMENTS

- Jun 06 – Jan 08, Student, undergraduate pilot training, Laughlin AFB, TX
- Feb 08 – Mar 09, T-38 Pilot, squadron scheduler, 87th Flying Training Squadron, Laughlin AFB, TX
- Apr 09 – Jun 09, Student, introduction to fighter fundamentals, 434th Flying Training Squadron, Laughlin AFB, TX
- Jul 09 – Apr 10, F-16 Student, F-16 basic course, 310th Fighter Squadron, Luke AFB, AZ
- Apr 10 – Feb 12, F-16 Instructor Pilot, chief of training and scheduling, 4th Fighter Squadron, Hill AFB, UT
- Feb 12 – Jul 14, F-16 Instructor Pilot, flight commander, 79th Fighter Squadron, Shaw AFB, SC
- Jul 14 – Dec 14, F-16 Student, U.S. Air Force Weapons School, Nellis AFB, NV
- Jan 15 – Jan 16, F-16 Instructor Pilot, Chief of wing weapons, 8th Operations Support Squadron, Kunsan AB, Republic of Korea
- Jan 16 – Jul 18, F-16 Instructor Pilot, Chief of wing weapons, 31st Operations Support Squadron, Aviano AB, Italy
- Jul 18 – May 19, CSAF Scholar, Washington, D.C.
- Jun 19 – Jun 21, Joint Strategist, Pentagon, Washington, D.C.
- Jun 21 – Dec 22, F-35 Student, F-35 transition course, 63rd Fighter Squadron, Luke AFB, AZ
- Jan 22 – May 23, F-35 Evaluator, Director of Operations, 495th Fighter Squadron, RAF Lakenheath, United Kingdom
- Jun 23 – Jun 24, F-35 Evaluator, Commander, 495th Fighter Squadron, RAF Lakenheath, United Kingdom
- Jul 24 – Jun 25, Student, Senior Developmental Education, Naval War College, Newport, RI
- Jul 25 – Jun 26, Division Chief, Command and Control Division, Headquarters Air Force, Pentagon, Washington D.C.

The background of the slide is a faded, 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.

56th Operations Group History

Originally named the 56th Pursuit Group Interceptor, the 56th Operations Group was activated at Savannah AB, Georgia, on 15 January 1941. Initially, the group was involved in the defense of the East Coast; however, on 6 January 1943, the 56 OG was reassigned to King Cliffe, England and joined the war in Europe. Equipped with the Republic P-47 Thunderbolt Fighter, the unit flew its first combat mission of World War II on 13 April 1943 as part of a fighter sweep over occupied France. During the months that followed, the group escorted allied bombers over enemy territory and conducted offensive and defensive counter air missions to suppress enemy fighters.

On 6 March 1944, the unit's fighters provided penetration support for 620 bombers during the first daylight raid against Berlin. As part of Operation OVERLORD, the Normandy invasion of D-Day, 6 June 1944, the group flew 142 protective cover sorties for the invading allied force. During its continuing support for allied armies pushing Axis forces back toward the German homeland, group fighters destroyed 79 enemy aircraft in a single day. On one notable encounter against a numerically superior force, 50 group aircraft ran into 250 German aircraft over Bonn, Germany. Outnumbered 5 to 1, group aircrews still destroyed or damaged 52 enemy aircraft. The unit's highest single-day toll on the German Air Force occurred on 13 April 1945, the second anniversary of the 56th's first combat mission. While engaged on an attack against a German airdrome, group fighters destroyed over 190 enemy aircraft. At war's end, the 56th boasted 997.5 German aircraft kills and 39 fighter aces. As the draw-down after World War II quickened, the group was reassigned to Camp Kill-Mer, New Jersey, where it was inactivated on 18 October 1945.

For its efforts during the World War II, the 56th Operations Group was awarded the Distinguished Unit Citation, European Theater of Operations; and the Distinguished Unit Citation, Holland. Campaigns the 56th fought in include the air offensive over Europe, Normandy, Northern France, Rhineland, and RR-Dennes-Al-Sass. Not quite a year after the end of World War II, the Air Force reactivated the 56th at Selfridge Field, MI and equipped it with P-47 and P-51 aircraft. In 1947, the group converted its fleet to the F-80 and to the F-86 in 1950. After the unit's deactivation in 1952, the group was subsequently reactivated in 1955 to fly air defense and training missions until its deactivation in 1961. On 28 October 1991, the 56th Pursuit Group was redesignated the 56th Operations Group. In FY15 the 56th Operations Group flew 11,783 sorties totaling 16,000 hours, and graduated 630 students. Today, the group is the largest fighter Operations Group in the United States Air Force with over 700 personnel and 111 aircraft assigned.



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AIR FORCE SONG

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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!

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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!

