



PRESS RELEASE

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26 February 2025

56th Fighter Wing completes final U.S. F-16 sortie

LUKE AIR FORCE BASE, Ariz. – The 56th Fighter Wing flew the final F-16 Fighting Falcon local training sortie today, February 26, 2025, at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona.

The 309th Fighter Squadron was the last U.S. Air Force F-16 training squadron at Luke AFB. The squadron will convert to training pilots on fifth generation aircraft, becoming the seventh F-35A Lightning II squadron on the installation.

“The F-16's final flight at Luke signifies a transition, not an end,” said Brig. Gen. David Berkland, 56th FW commander. “It's a tribute to the aircraft's legacy and the Airmen who mastered it, building a foundation of lethality that directly supported the Combat Air Force. Now, we focus on Luke's future as the premier F-35 training wing, ensuring continued air dominance and unmatched combat capability.”

The F-16 arrived to Luke AFB in December 1982 and pilot training began in February 1983. In the jet's 42 years of service with the 56th FW, more than 20 thousand F-16 pilots have graduated the training program. The final class of F-16 student pilots graduated from the 309th FS in September 2024.

Lt. Col. Michael Ress, 309th FS commander, piloted today's flight, closing the F-16 chapter for his squadron as it prepares to transition to the F-35A.

The 309th Aircraft Maintenance Unit, which was charged with the care of the final F-16 aircraft and ensured safe flying conditions for the pilots of the 309th FS, is scheduled to conclude the divestment of the remaining F-16 aircraft next month.

The 425th FS will continue to fly the F-16 and train Republic of Singapore Air Force fighter pilots and maintainers at Luke AFB until they transition to Ebbing Air National Guard Base, Arkansas, in the coming years.

For additional questions, contact the 56th FW Public Affairs Office at 623-856-6011 or 56FW.PA@us.af.mil.