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TAKE OUR DAUGHTERS AND SONS TO WORK DAY

APRIL 25, 2019 // 148TH FW PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Airmen and their families participated in a variety of activities as part of the annual "Take your daughter and sons to work day" event, April 25th, 2019 at the 148th Fighter Wing. The 148th Fighter Wing Airman and Family Readiness Program hosted this event in support of National Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day.



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EXERCISE: FRISIAN FLAG

MARCH 29, 2019 // BY TECH. SGT. LYNETTE HOKE, PUBLIC AFFAIRS

F-16 Aircraft from the Minnesota Air National Guard 148th Fighter Wing are at Leeuwarden Air Base in the Netherlands for the 2019 Frisian Flag, March 28, 2019. Frisian Flag is a 12-day NATO partnership exercise in the Netherlands that will allow all international participants of the exercise to execute training on operational tactics in a global setting with multiple coalition partners like Germany, Poland, France, and the United States.



CROATIA STATE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM ENGAGEMENT

APRIL 6, 2019 // BY TECH. SGT. LYNETTE HOKE, PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Acquiring new assets is an exciting time for any organization, this sentiment especially extends to the Croatian Air Force during their quest to purchase F-16s for their flying force. Recently, the Minnesota Air National Guard, through the State Partnership Program, was able to help enhance this excitement by letting the force get an up close and personal look at the aircraft.

Nearly 180 members of the 148th Fighter Wing were nearby in the Netherlands participating in the 2019 Frisian Flag exercise. During the first weekend in April, a small contingent headed for Zagreb International Airport, with the sole intention in creating an opportunity to have cross-talk with key leaders from the Croatian military, currently flying MiG-21s.

During the event, aviators were able to show a large crowd of military spectators a great symbolic act of the two countries, connected to each other through the state partnership program. The Minnesota Air National Guard F-16 and Croatian military MiG-21 took off for a short four-ship flight. "I am excited to be a part of this engagement and talk with the Croatian military about operations and maintenance related to the F-16," said a 179th Fighter Squadron Captain. "It was an honor to fly alongside them and their MiG-21 aircraft."

This was an historic event and another confirmation of friendship and strategic partnership between Croatia and the United States, said Croatian Defense Minister Damir Krstičević. The mechanics and other logistical personnel were on hand to help answer any questions from Croatian Air Force personnel. Like a good neighbor helping the next door pal out, the gratitude was felt by all military members who were able to be a part of the weekend.

"Their endless hospitality and the whole experience is something I will not forget; I look forward to what the future will bring for Croatia and I would definitely want to be a part of more partnering events like this," the Captain said.

The historic event, the flight of two MiG-21s and two Minnesota F-16s flying a four-ship, brought a number of spectators, including dozens of Croatian officer school candidates, local officials, and the United States Ambassador to Croatia, Ambassador W. Robert Kohorst. Kohorst got an up-close and personal look at the aircraft and was satisfied with the visit of the Minnesota National Guard, according to an official press release.

The partnership between Croatia and the Minnesota National Guard started in 1996 and the countries have conducted multiple engagements throughout the two decades. The program has focused on strengthening several key military capabilities including cyber defense and security and defense support to civil authorities.



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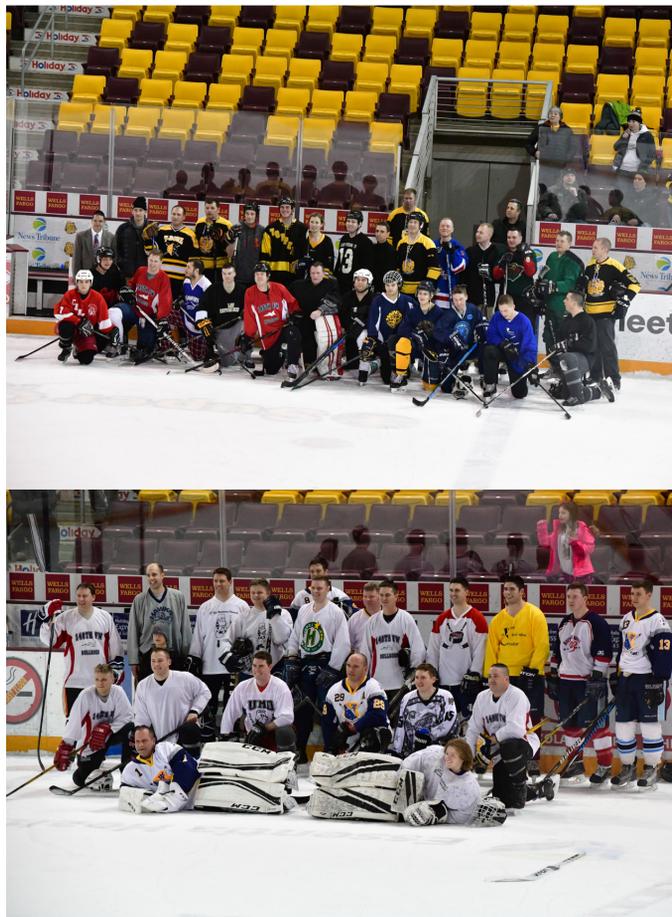


BULLDOGS IN ACTION

DECEMBER 1, 2018 // TECH. SGT. LYNETTE HOKE, PUBLIC AFFAIRS



Airman Leadership School proved to be a breeze for Staff Sgt Brianna Westendorf, an Airman from the Minnesota Air National Guard 148th Fighter Wing. She took home all the coveted awards offered to participants to include: the Commandants Award, and the Distinguished and Academic Achievement Award. It is highly unusual for one individual to earn three awards.



FEBRUARY 10, 2019 // MSGT RALPH KAPUSTKA, PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The AMXS and MXM Squadrons held a hockey game in February. The game allowed for family members and fellow Airmen to watch the hockey game, and then participate in a free skate. MXG Leadership knows that it is important to carve out dedicated time for events like this to help offset the daily stresses of readiness requirements, and ongoing ops tempo. According to Major Will Carr, "creating time for our Airmen away from the shop to focus on esprit de corps and morale is something that leadership will continue to focus on." The game was well received - there is much debate about what the final score was - but MXM came out on top.

ROTC MISSION FAMILIARIZATION

MARCH 23, 2019 // A1C OLIVIA SALINAS, PUBLIC AFFAIRS



The 148th Fighter Wing held a mission familiarization visit for the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps (AFROTC) on March 23, 2019. University of Minnesota Duluth AFROTC Detachment 420 and Michigan Technological University Detachment AFROTC 400 were in attendance. The visit provided AFROTC cadets the opportunity to learn about the mission of the 148th Fighter Wing and to explore their potential career pathways interactively. Cadets gained knowledge about careers and leadership roles from enlisted and officer ranks that have first-hand experience in the field. Riley Simpson, a third-year cadet, from AFROTC detachment 400 described her experience learning about a career field in operations, "I want to be a pilot. I want to fly F-16s. So, it was a very cool experience to hear about their

mission. The pilots were able to answer questions that you can't just Google such as 'what's it like to be an Air Force pilot.'" Outside of operations, cadets had the chance to inquire about career paths in civil engineering, communications, finance, logistics readiness, and public affairs.

"The planes are very cool but this visit allowed us to see the backbone of the Air Force which happens off the flight line. Additionally, as ROTC cadets, we typically focus on active duty, and this was an excellent opportunity to learn about the Guard," said Cadet Riley Simpson. Not only was this familiarization visit beneficial to the cadets, but it also allowed the 148th Fighter Wing to show the next generation how fulfilling it can be to serve your country at a local and national level. Command Chief Master Sgt. Lisa Erickson explained, "What's great about this visit is that cadets have the opportunity to see us in action and see what a military organization looks like. When they are here, they see us all in uniform doing what they've been reading about in a book, but the biggest thing I hope they get from this experience is the mission set at the 148th and that you can serve your country in a part-time capacity and still have the satisfaction."

COLONEL JACKSON HITS 4,000 FLYING HOURS

JANUARY 16, 2019 // MSGT RALPH KAPUSTKA, PUBLIC AFFAIRS



Col. Bradley Jackson, 148th Fighter Wing Operations Group Commander hit a milestone, Jan. 16, 2019. Jackson achieved what most pilots only dream of, he logged 4,000 hours in an F-16. According to F-16.net, only 51 pilots before him have accomplished this feat. Jackson enlisted with the 148FW right after he graduated from high school and he was off to basic training that August. His first six years as an Airmen were spent in the enlisted ranks but he knew from an early age he was born to be pilot. Since grade school his Dad would feed him books on flying. "I would read short combat stories of all the World War II aces and liked airplanes," said Jackson. "My Dad was a B-17 Crew Chief in World War II...he had all the old war stories."

In 1986, Jackson was encouraged by his supervisors to go before the board and was selected to become

a pilot. In March, 1987 he went to pilot training school in Columbus, Miss. Instead of being overwhelmed and looking at all he had to accomplish to successfully complete pilot training he chose to take a different approach. "I focused on the next thing and did everything I could to be successful at that," Jackson said. "There is a lot of pressure when this is your life-long dream." His approach worked and he graduated top in his class.

Jackson's first flight at the 148FW was in 1988 in the F-4 Phantom. He would fly that aircraft until June 1990 when the wing converted to the F-16. His first flight in an F-16 was in back of a B-model at a conversion course in Wichita Falls, Kan.

In 1993, Jackson was hired as the Operations Officer and that would start his full-time career at the wing. He performed many jobs throughout his career to include Alert Detachment Operations Officer and Commander at Tyndall AFB, Fla.; Chief of Standards and Evaluations, Weapons and Tactics Officer, 179th Fighter Squadron Director of Operations, Operations Support Flight Commander and Maintenance Squadron Commander. He has commanded the 148FW's Operations Group since 2013. Jackson remembers hitting the 3,000 hour mark in the F-16 during a flight in 2009, shortly after he returned from his third combat tour in Iraq. "That was a big one, you have been in the jet for a very long time and you are now in the minority that has 3,000 hours," Jackson said.

He really didn't think the 4,000 hour milestone was a real possibility until he hit 3,400 hours and had what he viewed as five to six years left before retirement. However, it was never about the milestone for him, it was about doing what the wing needed to be successful, doing what the team needed to be successful. "If you started to make the 4,000 hours a priority then it becomes a little too much about me and I wouldn't be dealing with some of things I should be dealing with as the Operations Group Commander," said Jackson. "I should feel the same if I got 3,999 hours, it is just one of those things that people keep track of...one of those things that worked out for me personally that I can hang on the wall and be proud of," stated Jackson.

Many people along the way helped the Colonel achieve the milestone, which he was quick to point out, giving most the credit to the support teams, maintenance folks and mentors both past and present that make up the wing. "The airplanes that we fly are second to none, our Airmen tear them apart and make sure you have the most reliable equipment you could possibly have," Jackson said. "I am really proud of what we accomplished here at the wing, I could never have gotten to this point without that running in the background. It is about the team and the people...it is not about me."

Jackson will retire in March 2019 after 38 years of service to his country but he still has a few more sorties to fly before calling it a career. "The next five or so hours that I get in the jet will be very reflective and just enjoying every last minute knowing that it will not be happening anymore," Jackson said. When it is all tallied up, Jackson will have been with the wing for over half of its existence. His career embodies the Air Force core value of "service before self."



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READINESS: 148TH FIGHTER WING HIRES NEW FULL-TIME POSITIONS

FEBRUARY 3, 2019// MSGT RALPH KAPUSTKA, PUBLIC AFFAIRS



The 148th Fighter Wing is in the process of hiring 52 full-time maintenance and support positions. The vast majority of the positions will be maintenance related and should help the 148FW in complying with the order from former Defense Secretary James Mattis, requiring an 80 percent mission capability rate by the end of fiscal year 2019. The 148FW has already hired over half of the needed positions and anticipate that all the positions will be filled by the end of February 2019.

So, why is a mission capability rate important? In simple terms, it determines how many jets are available to fly. If you cannot fly a jet due to a maintenance issue, you either miss out on a real-world mission or a training opportunity for your pilots. In either case, the readiness of a unit is negatively affected.

Maintenance personnel and supply are the two main factors in determining a mission capability rate. Having additional Airmen to work on the jets should help improve the rate but you still have a variable in getting parts in a timely manner. “The more people you have...the more people you have to work on the jets that are broken,” said Lt. Col. Robert Troy, 148th Fighter Wing Maintenance Group Commander. “We believe that our mission capability rate will improve with the additional Airmen.”

Currently, the 148FW is one of the top F-16 units in the Air National Guard when it comes to mission capability. Between fiscal year 2016 and fiscal year 2018, the wing averaged a rate of over 78 percent. In fiscal year 2016, the wing surpassed the 80 percent benchmark with a rate of 81.44 percent.

Under the total force integration concept, the 148FW has received three active duty pilots that will train with the wing for multiple years before returning back to the Air Force for their next assignment and anticipate receiving two more. In addition to the active duty pilots, the wing hired three new drill status Guardsmen pilots creating an increased demand for time in the cockpit.

“Pilots require a minimum amount of sorties each month to remain combat mission ready and with more pilots we need to fly more sorties,” said Lt. Col. Nathan Aysta, 179th Fighter Squadron Commander. “The new pilots require a lot of instruction to accomplish a flying syllabus and to get them seasoned in the F-16. To do this, we need more personnel to train these pilots and more aircraft to support their required monthly sorties.”

With a fixed amount of jets and the increased need for sorties, the 148FW Maintenance Group is under pressure to maintain the current fleet so monthly flying requirements can be met. “The additional maintenance Airmen allow us to support a very aggressive flying schedule. Less experienced pilots require approximately 30 percent more sorties than an experienced pilot,” Troy said.

The 148FW will use the additional maintenance personnel to run a more robust second-shift. “We have always ran a scaled back night shift by taking assets from our day-shift,” said Troy. “The additional positions will allow us to patch up the holes on our day-shift and increase our maintenance fix capability at night.”

Wing members experienced an exceptionally high operations tempo in fiscal year 2018 in which half of its members deployed, most to locations in Southwest Asia. “If you don’t counter the consistently high operations tempo by either scaling back the mission or increasing the number of people to make things more manageable you are going to drive people away,” said Troy. “The morale part of these new hires is really important.”

“Now we can hire some of our drill status Guardsmen, people we have trained...hometown people with commitments to the 148FW that take pride in their work and community,” said Chief Master Sgt. Dawn Teachworth, 148th Fighter Wing Maintenance Operations Flight Superintendent. “There is a difference between cycling out every two to three years and being based here...the Guard is like a family.”

In 2011, community leaders represented largely by the Military Affairs Committee went to Washington, D.C., to advocate on behalf of the 148FW for an Active Association, known today as Total Force Integration. The original roadmap was to have four Active Duty pilots getting trained by the highly experienced pilots at the 148FW. The Active Duty Air Force planned to send 40 F-16 Maintenance Airmen to support the additional flying. “After a few years it was evident the Active Duty could not send the Maintenance Airmen due to some unplanned Weapons Systems staying in the inventory which effectively diverted those folks to other platforms,” said Col. Chris Blomquist, 148th Fighter Wing Commander. “Instead they fully funded the 148FW to hire 52 drill status Guardsmen to support absorption of these additional pilots.”

While the 148FW will be getting a majority of the new Airmen from its’ drill status Guardsmen pool, they will also bring in some people from out of state. Not only will these new hires be a welcomed addition to a weary full-time workforce but it will have a positive impact on the Duluth, Minn. economy. It is estimated that the additional hires will have an economic impact of nearly \$5 million and will result in 20 indirect jobs. Also, the wing will need to add roughly another 400 flying hours annually to accommodate the increase in pilot training, generating another \$4 million in operating costs.

The 148FW took a holistic approach in defining which work areas these positions would go to. Around 40 went into various Aircraft Maintenance functions. The other 12 went into areas such as Fuels, Supply, Operations, Communications, Security and Human Resources. “It takes many different types of specialties to put airplanes in the air...more than just pilots and maintenance are required to keep airplanes flying,” said Blomquist.

“The 148FW is thankful for the support we have locally and look forward to be leading edge innovators for our country,” Blomquist concluded.

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