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# COMMANDERS CORNER

On November 11<sup>th</sup>, our nation honors all veterans with a federally recognized holiday. This day honors all veterans that have served in the United States Armed Forces both past and present. You as military members understand our military mission and the 148<sup>th</sup> FW mission but many that don't serve do not. In fact, with less than 1% of the current United States population serving in the military, most Americans don't understand the military and aren't personally connected with anyone who serves. This divide is commonly referred to as the civil-military gap. The National Guard is in a very unique position to help bridge this gap by connecting the civilian population around us with the military utilizing its Citizen Soldier/Citizen Airman concept. You as 148<sup>th</sup> FW members are integral to connecting our 148<sup>th</sup> FW with our local community.

Recently I was standing behind the glass watching my son's hockey practice when I noticed the majority of the hockey coaches on the ice were 148<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing members. I started talking with a gentleman next to me and he mentioned how there was a lack of coaches during the previous weekend. I asked him why and he said they were in the Guard and were working last weekend. This conversation opened up the dialogue discussing the 148<sup>th</sup> FW, what we do, and how often we have deployed in support of overseas operations. He was amazed at the frequency of deployments and the size of our wing. This wasn't the first time I've discussed the military with civilians unfamiliar with the military and the 148<sup>th</sup> FW. That gentleman, who has never served in the military, now has a connection to the military and subsequently has a much better understanding of what we do and all the people that are a part of our great organization.

As I thought more about that conversation, I realized how interested our community is about the 148<sup>th</sup> FW and what we do up at the base. I urge you to make that connection with your family, friends, civilian co-workers, and those you interact with around the community and tell your story. Talk with them about the mission we provide to our state and our nation and all the great people you work with. Talk about the deployments you've supported and the challenges you've faced while away from your home and family. Talk with them about all the different organizations on base and how those organizations support the F-16 mission. This connection you make will help the civilian population understand our organization better and the mission we accomplish for our state and nation.

Connecting our local community with our organization will significantly help decrease the civil-military gap. As a Citizen Airmen, you are integral to making this connection happen and I urge you to tell your military story. As this Veterans Day approaches and in Veterans Days to come, your family, friends, and community will be thinking of your service and sacrifice. Be proud of your service to your state and nation and for being a key component to the 148<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing's Legacy of Excellence.



Col Nate Aysta, 148th Fighter Wing Operations Group Commander

# FORMER 148FW SELECTED AS READINESS CENTER COMMANDER

By Audra Flanagan, 148<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing Public Affairs

Former 148<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing Commander, Brig. Gen. Frank Stokes, has been selected to command the Air National Guard Readiness Center located at Joint Base Andrews, Maryland.

The Readiness Center ensures the combat readiness of Air National Guard units in the 54 states and territories by acting as a liaison between the National Guard Bureau and states on Air National Guard operational activities. The Commander, a major general, serves as the Principal Advisor to the Director of the Air National Guard for operational, training, and execution matters.

“I am honored that our National Guard leadership has the trust and confidence to select me as the Air National Guard Readiness Center Commander” said Stokes. “I look forward to serving our units, states, territories, and the District of Columbia as we continue to increase airman resiliency and improve mission readiness for our national's defense.”

A Duluth native, Stokes was the wing commander of the 148<sup>th</sup> from 2009 to 2015 before serving as the Chief of Current Operations for the National Guard Bureau. In 2016, Stokes assumed the role of Deputy Director of the Strategy and Plans Directorate, Africa Command at Stuttgart, Germany.

Currently, Stokes serves as the Director of Plans, Programs and Requirements for the Air National Guard Readiness Center. He advocates and integrates the Air National Guard's \$10 billion annual appropriation into the U.S. Air Force and Department of Defense's strategic planning and programming processes. In this capacity, he supports more than 107,000 Guard members, 90 wings and 174 geographically separated units throughout the 50 states, three territories, and the District of Columbia.

Stokes says “I'm thankful for the tremendous support from past and current leaders and from my family. I feel truly blessed for my career experiences and am excited for this next chapter of leadership.”

Stokes will begin his new assignment in November 2019.



# 148TH FW FAMILY DAY



# THE ONLINE ON FIVE

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE 148TH FIGHTER WING,  
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# EXERCISE: BAYOU WEASEL

SEPT-OCT 2019 // BY STAFF SGT. DANIELLE THARALDSON, PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The 148th Fighter Wing participated in Bayou Weasel a training exercise that took place at the Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base in New Orleans, Louisiana and lasted from Sept. 24 – Oct. 19, 2019.

Nearly 200 148FW Airmen endured some hot and humid weather to keep the jets in the air, in stark contrast to the much cooler weather in Minnesota. Along with the Maintainers, there were Security Forces, Force Support and Logistics Readiness personnel to make sure things ran smoothly.

While in New Orleans, 148FW pilots flew basic fighter maneuvers and air combat maneuvers with F-15s from the 159<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing, Louisiana Air National Guard and VFA-204 F-18s from the U.S. Navy. A total of 174 sorties were flown to include 12 pilot upgrade sorties.

“For me Bayou Weasel was a great example of our versatility as a unit. It was another step in our continued push for Full Spectrum Readiness, said Master Sgt. Stew Hartwick, Bayou Weasel First Sergeant. “This trip, on top of Maintenance and Operations, we had Security Forces, Services, Unit Deployment Monitors and Command Support Staff, that really helped to shape who and what we are as a deploying unit, and our abilities to go anywhere at any time to accomplish anything,” Hartwick said.



## STARBASE EXPANDS AT THE 148TH FIGHTER WING BY: 2LT CRYSTAL KIRCHNER-

STARBASE Minnesota is a 501(c)3 educational nonprofit organization founded in 1993 in St. Paul, MN whose mission is to inspire and educate youth in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). STARBASE is a program of the Department of Defense and Minnesota National Guard which provides the STARBASE free program classrooms, access to a technology-rich environment, in-kind services and volunteers. Through engaging, authentic curriculum combined with state-of-the-art technologies in the exciting, innovative and immersive STEM learning environment, STARBASE programs exemplify the best educational programs that are in high demand. There are 66 STARBASE locations in 31 states across the U.S. STARBASE Duluth has been operating since November 6, 2017. They are currently expanding into the “courtyard” area of building 250, with an official ground-breaking ceremony on November 6, 2019. Their expansion will provide 7,000 square feet of dedicated space for the STARBASE program to include four state-of-the-art STEM classrooms. This will allow STARBASE to serve 2,000-6,000 students annually, with the hope of serving over 2,500 students from the greater Minnesota area including the North Shore, Iron Range and down the I-35 corridor. In the 2018-2019 school year STARBASE Duluth served 1,468 students. During the summer an additional 188 students attended the STARBASE Explorers Summer STEM Camp. STARBASE gives all students, especially those typically underrepresented in STEM, the opportunity to develop essential skills in STEM. This allows a pathway for great STEM careers that exist right here in our region. The program is a 25-hour program that is exciting, innovative and focuses on the skills STEM workers use in their careers to include creativity, perseverance and teamwork. Members of the 148th Fighter Wing are invited to be involved in the program. Each week STARBASE hosts a STEM speaker at the students ceremony graduation event. All week, students watch videos of people with STEM careers and collect trading cards for those people. At the end of the week, STARBASE brings in a STEM speaker from a STEM industry or STEM-field to talk about how they use STEM in their careers every day. The 148th is filled with members who use STEM as a part of your job each day and it opens students’ eyes to a larger world of opportunities for their future. Interested members can contact volunteer coordinator, Jessica Gudmundson at 218-788-6022 or [jgudmundson@starbasemn.org](mailto:jgudmundson@starbasemn.org). If anyone would like to visit STARBASE to watch these little scientists and engineers in action, simply stop by or email program director, Charity Johnson at [csjohnson@starbasemn.org](mailto:csjohnson@starbasemn.org). Once you visit the classrooms and see what these students are doing and how they are learning, you’ll be a true believer in the STARBASE program. To see our mission in action, and the impact STARBASE is having, please click this link: <https://vimeo.com/343645251>



## FITNESS

Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David Goldfein said he will launch an initiative requiring officers in command billets to be in shape. His message was: Get on a fitness program or your job is at risk. According to recently published Defense Department data, the Air Force has the second-highest percentage of obese troops, following the Navy. Unit fitness will be among the elements Squadron commanders will be graded on as part of a successful command tour. Goldfein’s intent is to change the fitness culture from the top down. Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force Kaleth Wright said the goal is to promote a culture of fitness across the force – a standard he said will improve readiness across-the-board. **Bottom Right picture:** Airman 1st Class Ricky Schiff and Staff Sgt. Jesse Krause, 148th Fighter Wing pose for a picture with Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David Goldfein while participating in the 23rd Annual Air Force Marathon.



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# EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT RUNS IN THE FAMILY

By Audra Flanagan, 148FW Public Affairs

How would you react if faced with an emergency situation? Would your reaction help or hinder the situation? These reflective questions could help you prepare for an emergency.

In July, 148<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing Civil Engineer Operations Manager, Master Sgt. Grant Gimpel was enjoying nature in Minnesota’s beautiful Boundary Water Canoe Area, also known as the BWCA. Gimpel and his 11-year old son Gavin were settling in for their evening camp on a warm, sunny day on Larch Lake. East of the Gunflint Trail, Larch Lake is known for its clear waters and walleye fishing.

While splitting firewood, Gimpel chopped his left index finger with an ax causing severe blood loss. The blood loss slowed his pulse and blood pressure so much that he blacked out and fell face-first onto the rocks surrounding their fire pit. The impact of the fall caused multiple lacerations on the left side of his jaw and nose.

Gimpel is a state fire fighter for the 148<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing Fire Department and a volunteer with the Grand Lake Township volunteer fire department. When Gavin saw his dad fall, he used Gimpel’s Grand Lake volunteer fire department-issued radio to call for help. Gavin attempted to use the hailing channel three times but did not receive a response. After that he activated the emergency distress button which locked the radio onto the St. Louis County Dispatch Center located in Duluth. Gavin notified the dispatch center that his dad needed help.

At this time, Gimpel regained consciousness and provided dispatchers a self-assessment of his injuries. St. Louis County dispatchers coordinated with emergency responders in Cook County who would quickly paddle to the camp site to take over efforts to stop Gimpel’s bleeding and bandage his face. A Forest Service float plane, carrying a St. Louis County rescue squad member, based out of the Kawishiwi Ranger District in Ely, Minn. flew onto Larch Lake to transport Gimpel and his son.

A 1959 de Havilland Beaver flew both Gimpel and Gavin, to Devils Track Lake where they met an ambulance and were transported to North Shore Health Hospital and Care Center in Grand Marais, Minn. Gimpel received 24 stitches on his face and a couple more on his finger.

“I was bleeding and my face was covered with ash and dirt from the fall” Gimpel recalls “but Gavin remained calm throughout this experience.” “Gavin saved my life” Gimpel said proudly.

Since this event, friends, family, and colleagues have repeatedly spoken to him about personal readiness. Northlanders are fortunate to live near remote forests, lakes, and trails offering the very best of nature. We celebrate these remote spaces for their beauty and solitude. Gimpel’s event serves as a reminder that we should have a communication plan in place in case of emergency. For those of us who don’t have emergency radios, we may to consider a spot GPS or satellite phone for use during emergencies.

In addition to the gadgets and emergency kits that can help us, it’s important to plan and reflect on how we will react when facing an emergency.



A 1959 De Havilland Beaver arrives on Larch Lake, Minn. in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area to transport Master Sgt. Grant Gimpel to Grand Marais, Minn. after experiencing severe blood loss while chopping wood at his camp site.



Gavin Gimpel, son of Master Sgt. Grant Gimpel sits in the right seat of a 1959 De Havilland Beaver in July 2019. Gimpel's father was transported from Larch Lake to Grand Marais in this Forest Service aircraft after experiencing severe blood loss while chopping wood at his camp site.

## BULLDOGS RECOGNIZED NATIONALLY

By: Audra Flanagan 148FW/PA

“Bulldogs – you’ve done it again!” were the words Wing Commander, Col. Chris Blomquist used to inform 148th members they earned two of the Air National Guard’s top awards. “We’ve asked you to do an incredible amount of work” he said, “but calendar year 2018 was extremely challenging.” The 148th was selected as the top Air National Guard flying wing by both the Air Force Association (AFA) and the National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS) for its accomplishments in 2018.

Selection of both awards is based on overall combat readiness and the unit’s performance as compared to other flying units. The 148th was selected for successfully deploying 43% of our members to six overseas locations in support of Operations INHERENT RESOLVE and FREEDOM SENTINAL, flying 2518 sorties, exceeding maintenance and pilot mission capability rate standards, 104.84% end strength and a 93.19% retention rate.

The Spaatz Trophy is presented by NGAUS annually. The award is named after former Chief of Staff of the Air Force, Gen. Carl S. Spaatz and is awarded to the overall outstanding flying unit in the Air National Guard. On September 1st, Col. Nate Aysta was joined by Lt. Col. Connie Armstrong, Capt. Mylii Pukema, 2nd Lt. Jordan Beautow, and 2nd Lt. Crystal Kirchner to receive the NGAUS Spaatz Trophy at the NGAUS National Conference held in Denver, Colo. This was the first time the 148th earned the Spaatz Trophy.

On September 16th, Col. Chris Blomquist and Chief Master Sgt. Lisa Erikson were joined by Capt. Chris Ziegler, pilot of the year and Master Sgt. Robbie Frey, senior non-commissioned officer of the year to receive the Air Force Association’s Air National Guard Outstanding Flying Unit Award. This is awarded to the Air National Guard unit with the most outstanding airmanship. The prestigious award was presented during the Air Force Association’s Opening and Awards Ceremony held in conjunction with the 2019 Air, Space & Cyber Conference.

148th Fighter Wing Command Chief, Chief Master Sgt. Lisa Erikson said “accepting this award in a room filled with 6,000 past and present Air Force leaders was validating for the hard work the Wing has put forth.” The keynote speaker for this event was Sir Richard Branson who spoke on the civilian sector’s efforts to make space flight a reality. This topic is particularly relevant as the Air Force recently activated its Space Command in late August. “It was interesting hearing Branson’s innovative ideas on space transportation and how these ideas relate and complement the Air Force’s space superiority vision” said Erikson.

The 148th previously earned this award in 2006, 2009 and 2012.



Former Secretary of the Air Force and Chairman of the AFA, Mr. F. Whitten Peters; 148th Fighter Wing Commander, Col. Chris Blomquist; Chief Master Sgt. Lisa Erikson; Capt. Chris Ziegler; Master Sgt. Robert Frey; Director of the Air National Guard, Lt. Gen. Scott Rice; and Chief Master Sergeant of the Air National Guard, Ronald Anderson pose for a photo after the presentation of the Air Force Association’s Outstanding Air National Guard Unit Award.



Chief Master Sergeant of the Air National Guard, Ronald Anderson; Director of the Air National Guard, Lt. Gen. Scott Rice; Operations Group Commander, Col. Nate Aysta; Logistics Readiness Squadron Commander and MN NGAUS Vice Chair, Lt. Col. Connie Armstrong; Capt. Mylii Pukema; 2nd Lt. Jordan Buetow; 2nd Lt. Crystal Kirchner; and Arizona Adjutant General and NGAUS Vice Chair, Maj. Gen. Michael McGuire pose for a photo after the presentation of the Spaatz Trophy at NGAUS national conference.

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# SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER ORIENTATION FLIGHTS



## 148FW MILITARY BALL

The 148th Fighter Wing held a fall harvest themed Military Ball on Saturday, 26 October 2019 that was hosted by the Bulldog Enlisted Council. The night was well attended by members of the 148th, their significant others, retirees, and local community representatives. The Duluth Depot was elegant and provided the perfect venue for an unforgettable night. The night was filled with laughter, camaraderie, and friendship.

The Duluth native, Representative Pete Stauber was the keynote speaker for the evening. Stauber talked about the importance of the 148FW and the excellent national reputation the Wing has earned by triumphantly tackling every mission we are tasked to do. “What you folks are doing for our country is nothing short of magnificent,” stated Stauber.

The Military Ball is steeped in tradition, dating back to 1895, and will be a legacy event that lives on for the 148th Fighter Wing and the U.S. Air Force. It’s important for our military members to have time to connect outside of the work setting and for those who support us most to have the opportunity to connect with the military culture.



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# MEET THE NEW CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE MINNESOTA AIR NATIONAL GUARD

By: Audra Flanagan 148FW/PA

Brig. Gen. Daniel Gabrielli assumed the role of Chief of Staff of the Minnesota Air National Guard on September 14, 2019 at a ceremony held at the 133rd Airlift Wing.

Gabrielli, the former Wing Commander at the 133rd Airlift Wing, has also served as the Deputy Operations Group Commander 386th Air Expeditionary Group, Ali Al Salem Air Base, Kuwait, Deputy Director for Air, Space, and Cyber Operations at the National Guard Bureau, and various leadership positions at the 133rd Airlift Wing.

Gabrielli sees his new role as a way to “support commanders, chiefs, and leaders in both flying wings” in the Minnesota Air National Guard “to enable them to achieve what THEY want to achieve in terms of mission and readiness”. Gabrielli says he strives to “help airmen in terms of clearing out the tertiary issues and allowing them to focus on their mission”.

“My short term goals are getting to know the 148th and its people to get a feel for their needs and goals” he said. Gabrielli recently attended the 148th’s military ball and will be the key note speaker at upcoming Awards and Retirement Ceremony in December.



U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Daniel Gabrielli recites the oath of office in St. Paul, Minn., Sept. 14, 2019. Gabrielli is promoted to the rank of brigadier general and will serve as the chief of staff in the Minnesota Air National Guard (Photo by TSgt Amy Lovgren)

## NORTHERN LIGHTNING



## AROUND THE WING



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Front and back cover photos by MSgt Lynette Hoke. Photos taken during the ESGR Boss/Spouse lift