

## Tyndall F-16 Pilot Dies in Crash

Matthew J. LaCourse, 58, an Air Force civilian pilot assigned to the 82nd Aerial Targets Squadron at Tyndall AFB, Fla., died in the crash of an F-16 he was flying over the Gulf of Mexico Nov. 6.

The base lost contact with the F-16 around 9 a.m. on Nov. 6 and search and rescue crews immediately were dispatched to the aircraft's last known location. Rescue crews recovered his body in the Gulf.

LaCourse, a 1978 Air Force Academy graduate, retired as a lieutenant colonel after more than 22 years of service.

"Our thoughts and prayers go out to the family members of our fallen teammate as they struggle through this extremely difficult time," stated a base news release. The cause of the crash is not yet known, but an investigation is underway.

## Russia Ups Air Activity in Europe

Russia intensified air exercises over Europe in October, and in response NATO scrambled British, Danish, German, Norwegian, Portuguese, and Turkish fighters, Alliance officials said.

"NATO detected and monitored four groups of Russian military aircraft conducting significant military maneuvers in European airspace over the Baltic Sea, North Sea/Atlantic Ocean, and Black Sea. ... These sizable Russian flights represent an unusual level of air activity over European airspace," according to a NATO news release.

Allied fighters intercepted a total of 26 Russian combat aircraft, including two flights of Tu-95 strategic bombers supported by tanker aircraft and fighter escorts off Norway, Britain, and Portugal on Oct. 29.

F-16s scrambled over the Baltic to investigate a group of strike aircraft the same day, mimicking a similar strike group that had flown the preceding day.

"NATO has conducted over 100 intercepts of Russian aircraft in 2014 to date, which is about three times more than were conducted in 2013," officials stated.

## Second F-15 Crash in Less Than Two Months

An F-15D Eagle from the 48th Fighter Wing crashed north of its base at RAF Lakenheath, UK, during a combat training mission Oct. 8, officials announced.

The 493rd Fighter Squadron pilot—who was alone in the two-seater—safely ejected and was taken to a hospital for treatment and subsequently released, according to official statements.

The crash comes on the heels of a fatal Massachusetts Air National Guard F-15C crash in the mountains of Virginia this August. Lt. Col. Morris Fontenot Jr. reported a mechanical problem before communications were lost. Both accidents are under investigation.

## New Bosses at ACC and PACAF

Gen. Lori J. Robinson assumed command of Pacific Air Forces from Gen. Herbert J. "Hawk" Carlisle, becoming the first woman to lead an Air Force component major command. The ceremony took place at JB Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, on Oct. 16.

"General Lori Robinson is a phenomenal leader and a

proven operator," said Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A. Welsh III, who presided over the change of command. "She fully understands what it takes to be successful in this business and has all the tools to take this command to even higher levels of performance."

Carlisle assumed command of Air Combat Command from Gen. Gilmary Michael Hostage III during a ceremony at JB Langley-Eustis, Va., shortly thereafter, on Nov. 4.

## ★ screenshot



Air Force Secretary Deborah Lee James said Hostage, who will retire after nearly four decades in uniform, “has been a tireless leader” who is “dedicated and committed to excellence.” She also praised Carlisle, saying he “really knows what it takes to be successful in the combat business.”

### **Bouncing Predator**

Wind shear combined with pilot inexperience caused the MQ-1B Predator remotely piloted aircraft landing accident at Creech AFB, Nev., in April, investigators announced.

The student pilot was flaring the RPA for a practice landing when a sudden wind shift caused the aircraft to lose lift on April 4. The student pushed full-throttle to compensate but did not follow standard procedures and failed to pull the nose up after the aircraft bounced off the runway surface, according to the accident investigation board report released in late October.

“It is highly likely that the aircraft would have recovered to normal flight” if the student had responded correctly, the

report’s executive statement noted. Instead, the student attempted to level the aircraft, overcorrected, and bounced the RPA several times before shearing the undercarriage off.

Total repair costs are tagged at \$4.5 million, according to the AIB. The aircraft was assigned to the 11th Reconnaissance Squadron at Creech.

### **Last Time Flying the Hercules**

The New York Air National Guard’s 107th Airlift Wing at Niagara Falls Airport/Air Reserve Station flew its final C-130 mission Sept. 25 before conversion to the MQ-9 remotely piloted aircraft.

“We are transitioning from the C-130, which we’ve been flying since 2008 and have become comfortable with, having deployed with it to Iraq and Afghanistan,” said wing commander Col. John J. Higgins in an Oct. 1 news release.

The flight ended the Air Guard unit’s seven-year association operating the C-130s at Niagara Falls together with Air Force Reserve Command’s 914th Airlift Wing. Members of the



Photo by Jim Haseltine

107th AW are now training as RPA pilots, sensor operators, intelligence coordinators, and communications specialists. The unit is expected to be fully operational in the RPA mission by 2017. Reservists of the 914th AW will continue to fly the C-130s.

**Prolonged Friction Caused F-35 Fire**

DOD and Pratt & Whitney investigators have determined that prolonged engine friction caused an F-35 fan blades fire in June that led to grounding the entire fleet.

The team concluded the fire was caused by “prolonged rubbing into the material in the stator,” which then “decomposed and superheated the titanium rotor leading to excessive heating.”

The excessive heating “started very small cracks in a titanium seal and then led to failure of the third stage fan rotor,” according to a joint statement. The statement was issued with an Oct. 14 contract notification disclosing that DOD and the engine maker had agreed on a \$592 million contract for 36 additional F135 engines.

Under terms of the latest contract, the F-35 Joint Program Office and P&W are now “executing a plan to modify the current fielded operational and test engines and [will] implement a long-term solution for production engines.”

**GPS IIF Launch Successful**

The Air Force successfully launched its eighth GPS IIF satellite from Cape Canaveral AFS, Fla., aboard an Atlas V launch vehicle Oct. 29.

The mission was the fourth GPS IIF launch this year, pushing the Air Force to its “highest GPS launch tempo in over 20 years,” said Col. William T. “Bill” Cooley, AFSPC’s director of the Global Positioning Systems Directorate.

The launch was also the 50th mission utilizing United Launch Alliance’s Atlas V vehicle.

**An Eerie Site: Air Force commandos from the 321st Special Tactics Squadron and British military members “infiltrate” an area of RAF Sculthorpe, UK, during a bilateral training mission Nov. 6. The commandos searched for simulated threats and rescued simulated hostages.**

**Jack Broughton, 1925-2014**

Retired Col. Jacksel M. Broughton, a fighter pilot who flew a total of 216 combat missions in Korea and Vietnam and later became a prominent aviation author, died Oct. 24 at age 89 after a short illness.

Broughton earned an Air Force Cross for action in Vietnam, along with two Silver Stars, the Legion of Merit, and four Distinguished Flying Crosses. In addition to his storied Air Force flying career—Broughton commanded the Thunderbirds in the 1950s, leading their transition to the supersonic F-100—he wrote two critically acclaimed books about the Vietnam air war: *Thud Ridge* and *Going Downtown*.

Broughton was also a valued contributor to *Air Force Magazine*. His most recent article, “The Heart of the North,” appeared in April.

He graduated from West Point and flew P-51s and P-47s in Europe before transitioning to the first jet-powered aircraft in Korea. During Vietnam, he was vice commander of the 355th Tactical Fighter Wing and led ground-attack missions in the F-105.

He attempted to protect two pilots who inadvertently broke rules of engagement during the Vietnam War, leading to his court-martial. The events were widely considered a miscarriage of military justice, but they ended his uniformed career.

Postretirement, Broughton flew as a charter pilot and was a space shuttle program flight test and technical planning advisor, entrepreneur, and author.

**Safest Year for USAF Aviation**

The Air Force logged its best year in terms of aviation safety in Fiscal 2014, achieving a 32 percent reduction in overall Class A aviation mishaps and a 64 percent drop in Class A flight mishaps from the preceding year, officials said.

USAF photo by A1C Dillon Johnston





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**Breathe. Just Breathe:** Capt. Jessica Looft, a flight nurse with the 18th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, secures an oxygen hose to a litter on a Marine Corps C-130 during *Keen Sword*, a joint exercise with Japan held at bases in the Pacific region including both Kadena and Yokota air bases in Japan. More than 11,000 US military personnel participated in the exercise, aimed at honing interoperability and the combat readiness of the two nations.

The Air Force Safety Center defines a Class A mishap as one involving loss of life, an injury resulting in permanent or total disability, the destruction of an aircraft, or more than \$2 million in property damage or loss.

"This is truly a good news story," said Air Force safety chief Maj. Gen. Kurt F. Neubauer. "Commander involvement at all levels resulted in [Fiscal] 2014 being the safest aviation year in the history of the Air Force."

The Air Force suffered seven Class A accidents and lost two aircraft in Fiscal 2014, compared to 19 Class A incidents resulting in the loss of 14 aircraft in Fiscal 2013, according to an Oct. 10 press release.

"Aviator attention to detail and proper risk management enabled these historic lows," said Neubauer.

#### Total Force OTS Graduation

The Air Force Officer Training School graduated its first class incorporating Active Duty, Air National Guard, and Reserve trainees in a ceremony at Maxwell AFB, Ala., on Oct. 10.

In a major step toward Total Force integration, OTS commissioned 193 new second lieutenants, including 73 Active Duty and 12 Reserve candidates who completed the Basic Officer Training course and 108 ANG trainees who finished the Academy of Military Science, according to officials.

For the first time, all the officer candidates went through parallel eight-week training courses, rather than the 9.5-week program for Active Duty and Reserve and six weeks for ANG. "The simultaneous training provided the same great training to two great officer candidate groups," said OTS Commandant Col. Scott M. Lockwood.

The Total Force integration also shows in the staffing and command at OTS, where the commandant's office rotates between an Active Duty and an ANG officer. OTS plans to merge the BOT and AMS programs into a single system.

#### Special Ops Squadron Leaves Hurlburt

The 9th Special Operations Squadron has transferred from Hurlburt Field, Fla., to Cannon AFB, N.M., in preparation to retire its legacy MC-130P Combat Shadow aircraft for new-build MC-130J Commando IIs.

"It's sad to see an aircraft retire, but we will retain the best of what the Shadow community has done for [Air Force Special Operations Command] and our nation and move that

#### F-35 LRIP 8 Handshake Deal

The Defense Department and Lockheed Martin have struck a deal on the Lot 8 buy of F-35 low-rate initial production jet aircraft in October. The unit cost "for all three variants of the airframe in LRIP 8 is approximately 3.6 percent lower than the previous contract," the company stated in a press release.

"We are making steady progress in reducing F-35 costs," said Lockheed Martin F-35 general manager Lorraine M. Martin. The company reiterated the goal of reducing F-35 unit costs "to the equivalent of today's fourth generation fighters by the end of the decade." LRIP 8 involves 43 aircraft, broken down into 19 Air Force F-35As, six Marine Corps F-35Bs, four Navy F-35Cs, and 14 international airframes. This includes two F-35As each for Israel, Italy, and Norway, four for Japan, and an additional four F-35B models for Britain.

Coupled with the 166 aircraft contracted for under LRIP Lots 1 through 7, the F-35 program will total 209 aircraft in use by eight nations when LRIP 8 is complete.

—John A. Tirpak

to the next aircraft,” said CMSgt. Matt M. Caruso, AFSOC’s command chief, at Hurlburt on Oct. 3.

Officials activated a stay-behind detachment—1st Special Operations Group, Det. 1—at Hurlburt to see the unit’s MC-130Ps to retirement in May 2015. Until then, the detachment “will continue to provide aerial refueling to SOF vertical-lift assets as well as support infiltration and exfiltration operations,” said 1st SOG Commander Col. Shawn Cameron.

**F-16s in Midair Collision**

A pair of F-16Cs assigned to the Oklahoma Air National Guard’s 138th Fighter Wing collided during a training sortie, forcing one of the pilots to eject near Moline, Kan., Oct. 20.

The pilot who ejected was taken to the hospital at McConnell AFB, Kan., for medical evaluation and was released. The second pilot safely recovered the other F-16 involved in the mishap and flew the fighter back to the unit’s base in Tulsa. Neither aviator was seriously injured in the accident.

Maintainers at Tulsa were assessing the extent of damage to the surviving aircraft and Air Force investigators will publish details of the Oct 20 incident after the conclusion of a formal accident investigation.

**We Got This:** *TSgt. Patrick Vitamvas gives the go-ahead signal to lift the wing of an Oklahoma Air National Guard F-16 that had crashed near Moline, Kan., on Oct. 20. (See “F-16s in Midair Collision,” on this page.) Crews from McConnell AFB, Kan., aided in recovering the aircraft and securing the area. The McConnell airmen teamed with members of the 138th Fighter Wing to complete the recovery process and transfer responsibility to the safety inspection board.*

**Back Home, More To Come**

An Air Force X-37B orbital test vehicle returned to Earth after a 674-day classified mission in space. The reusable unmanned spaceplane touched down at Vandenberg AFB, Calif., on Oct. 17, Air Force space officials announced.

The mission, OTV-3, was the third and longest space trip to date for the two-vehicle, Boeing-built X-37B fleet. OTV-3 began on Dec. 11, 2012, with the vehicle’s launch into orbit from Cape Canaveral AFS, Fla.

Air Force officials were tight-lipped about the X-37’s activities on orbit—as they have been about the previous two X-37 missions—other than to say the vehicle served as a test platform to validate new space technology and concepts of operation.

Several more X-37 flights are planned, with the next mission slated to lift off from the Cape in 2015, Air Force spokesman Capt. Chris Hoyler told *Air Force Magazine*.

Space officials revealed no additional details “on the current or future operating status of the OTVs” due to the classified nature of the spaceplanes’ activities, Hoyler said.

Earlier in October, NASA announced that the Air Force would begin using bays at the nearby Kennedy Space Center for processing X-37 vehicles for launch from Canaveral. The bays formerly supported space shuttles.

—Autumn A. Arnett

USAF photo by A1C David Bernal Del Agua



## The War on Terrorism

### Operation Enduring Freedom

#### Casualties

By Nov. 18, a total of 2,351 Americans had died in Operation Enduring Freedom. The total includes 2,347 troops and four Department of Defense civilians. Of these deaths, 1,841 were killed in action with the enemy while 510 died in noncombat incidents.

There have been 20,040 troops wounded in action during OEF.

#### Oil Leak Caused Predator Crash

A rapid oil leak that resulted in an engine seizure caused the April 26 crash of an MQ-1B Predator near Jalalabad Airfield, Afghanistan, according to an Air Combat Command accident report summary.

The Predator, assigned to the 214th Reconnaissance Squadron from Davis-Monthan AFB, Ariz., was lost during an intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance mission from Jalalabad.

The Predator was destroyed on ground impact for a loss of some \$4.61 million. There were no injuries or damage to private property.

#### C-5Ms In Tactical Retrograde Role

C-5M Super Galaxys were drafted into the tactical role for the first time to expedite the drawdown of forces and equipment in Afghanistan.

This helped ease demands on the highly tasked C-17 fleet, according to Air Mobility Command officials.

"We've never seen a C-5 used like this," said SMSgt. William March, an AMC logistics management specialist. This usage has increased the stress on C-5M components, such as landing gear, creating a need to change logistics support practices a bit.

Instead of flying eight-to-10-hour missions as usual, the C-5Ms conducted three short daily flights, flying more than 70 sorties to and from expeditionary airfields, carrying 381 vehicles and more than 460 pieces of equipment since August, according to AMC.

### Operation Inherent Resolve

#### Casualties

By Nov. 18, a total of two American troops had died in Operation Inherent Resolve. Of these deaths, none were killed in action with the enemy. Both died in noncombat incidents.

There have been no troops wounded in action during OIR.

#### Incoherent but Finally Resolved

US Central Command dubbed the aerial offensive against ISIS as Operation Inherent Resolve, applying the name retroactively to all operations in Iraq and Syria since Aug. 8.

The name signifies that "we are going to stay resolved and determined to get after this threat," Pentagon spokesman Rear Adm. John Kirby explained in an Oct. 15 press briefing.

"We're going to do it in partnership, and I think that's where the 'inherent' comes in, in the name," Kirby stated, noting that some 60 countries are now "involved in this effort in various forms."

CENTCOM stressed that Inherent Resolve will continue to be a broad coalition effort, but "diplomatic, informational, military, [and] economic" means also will be required to "degrade and ultimately destroy" ISIS, according to a press release.

#### Kobani Stabilized in Wake of US Airdrop

Kurdish forces seized control of most of the Syrian city of Kobani after USAF C-130s air-dropped bundles of weapons, ammunition, and medical supplies to the besieged fighters on Oct. 19.

Kurdish forces controlled the "majority of the city," though conditions were tenuous after US and coalition aircraft flew air strike and resupply missions in and around the city, Pentagon spokesman Rear Adm. John Kirby said in a brief.

Kirby said the US did not get involved in the inventory of the supplies dropped, but Kurdish officials in Iraq arranged the supplies and requested the airlift.

"Air relief ... was deemed to be the best, most efficient, effective way to get the supplies in," he said, adding that it is likely the US may determine future air resupply sorties could be used in the campaign against ISIS. The strikes and air resupply helped degrade ISIS capabilities, such as key equipment and vehicles, in addition to killing several hundred fighters.

### Reaper Damages Runway

An Air Force MQ-9 Reaper remotely piloted aircraft suffered a "hard landing" in Niamey, Niger, following an unarmed reconnaissance and surveillance sortie in support of operations in West Africa Oct. 20.

The impact "damaged the runway at Diiori Hamani International Airport in Niamey" but caused no injury to military or civilian personnel, a US Air Forces in Europe-Air Forces Africa spokesman said.

The incident is under investigation.

### B-52s Support NATO Drills

B-52 bombers flew long-range sorties in support of NATO na-

val forces during Exercise Noble Justification in the Atlantic and Mediterranean in October, US Strategic Command announced.

"The B-52s will perform two long-range sorties from the continental United States to the US European Command area of operations and back," a STRATCOM spokesman told *Air Force Magazine* Oct. 22.

"The participation of US bombers ... was specifically requested by NATO leadership," STRATCOM Commander Adm. Cecil D. Haney said in a news release.

"It is important that we continue to train our strategic bomber force in a variety of joint environments, to ensure we remain proficient in key skill sets," Haney added.

Europe-based KC-135s and F-16s also took part in the



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## Senior Staff Changes

**CONFIRMATION: To Be Brigadier General:** Peter J. Lambert.

**NOMINATIONS: To be Lieutenant General:** Mark C. Nowland. **To be ANG Brigadier General:** Shelley R. Campbell. **To be AFRC Major General:** Derek P. Rydholm.

**CHANGES:** Brig. Gen. John A. Cherrey, from Dep. Dir., Intel., Ops., & Nuclear Integration, AETC, JBSA-Randolph, Texas, to Dir., Intel., Ops., & Nuclear Integration, AETC, JBSA-Randolph, Texas ... Brig. Gen. Thomas H. Deale from Commandant, ACSC, AETC, Maxwell AFB, Ala., to Dir., Ops., ACC, JB Langley-Eustis, Va. ... Maj. Gen. Michael A. Keltz from Dir., Intel., Ops., and Nuclear Integration, AETC, JBSA-Randolph, Texas, to Cmdr., 19th AF, AETC, JBSA-Randolph, Texas ... Brig. Gen. Peter J. Lambert, from Vice Cmdr., AF ISR Agency, JBSA-Lackland, Texas, to Vice Cmdr., 25th AF, ACC, JBSA-Lackland, Texas ... Maj. Gen. John T. Shanahan, from Cmdr., AF ISR Agency, JBSA-Lackland, Texas, to Cmdr., 25th AF, ACC, JBSA-Lackland, Texas. ■

13,000-strong international exercise that ran Oct. 13-26. Air Force B-2s and B-52s had deployed for exercises in Europe, staging from RAF Fairford, UK, this summer.

### Upgrade for Tinker, NATO AWACS

Air Force and NATO Sentry AWACS E-3s have begun receiving an extensive cockpit modernization.

The Diminishing Manufacturing Sources Replacement of Avionics for Global Operations and Navigation (DRAGON) program will remove obsolete parts and ensure compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization standards.

DRAGON will replace the jet aircraft's analog flight deck with digital displays, add Mode-5 identification friend or foe, new weather-radar and enhanced proximity warning capabilities, and delete the navigator from the crew.

E-3s of the 552nd Air Control Wing at Tinker AFB, Okla., and NATO's E-3s stationed at Geilenkirchen, Germany, are undergoing joint engineering and development, but each will have separate production and deployment contracts.

Ground testing for NATO AWACS was scheduled for October, with flight testing starting in November. The Air Force expects to deliver a full fleet of DRAGON-enabled E-3s by 2025.

### Keltz Takes Command of 19th AF

Maj. Gen. Michael A. Keltz assumed command of the re-formed 19th Air Force in a ceremony at JBSA-Randolph, Texas, Oct. 22. The 19th oversees Air Education and Training Command's flight training programs.

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## By the Numbers

# 333,610

The annual number of sorties flown in and out of Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan, making it DOD's busiest runway.

The numbered air force was activated Oct. 1, with Keltz as its first commander.

The newly reconstituted NAF "reinforces proper oversight and relieves some of the dual-role responsibilities of the AETC commander," Keltz said in a release.

The NAF was inactivated in an effort to reduce staffing and headquarters cost under a 2012 initiative. "We tried the directed efficiencies two years ago. But when you have wing commanders and nothing in between them and a four-star commander, we found there was something missing," Keltz explained. Now, "we can fully focus on the mission of flying training."

Keltz previously served as AETC's director of intelligence, operations, and nuclear integration.

### Northrop Grumman Protests Contract

Northrop Grumman officially protested awarding of the Three Dimensional Expeditionary Long-Range Radar system to Raytheon, halting all work on the \$19.5 million contract awarded earlier in October.

The company filed its complaint with the Government Accountability Office, to review the guidelines of the initial development contract. The Air Force plans to buy 30 of the ground-based radar systems to replace the legacy AN/TPS-75 radars currently in operation, and more are anticipated in sales to US allies and partners.

Raytheon spokesman Mike Doble told *Air Force Magazine* the company believes the Air Force ran "a very tough, but very fair, competition." He said Raytheon remains confident in its bid and is "eager to move forward and deliver this much-needed 3DELRR capability to the US and its friends and allies."

The company will work with the Air Force to mitigate any delays in the contract once it is resolved, said Doble. The first three radars are slated to reach initial operational capability by 2020.

### First ANG Hercs Rotate to Poland

Air National Guard C-130s rotated to the Aviation Detachment at Powidz AB, Poland, to exercise with the Polish air force for the first time in October.

Three C-130Hs from the Illinois ANG's 182nd Airlift Wing based in Peoria, along with some 50 pilots, maintainers, and support personnel, arrived in Poland Oct. 10, wing spokesman TSgt. Todd Pendleton told *Air Force Magazine*.

Until then, C-130Js from Ramstein AB, Germany, supported the bulk of AvDet airlift rotations.

"As Poland's state partner, the Illinois Air National Guard airmen continue to deepen established relationships and build partner capacity between US and Polish forces," said Lt. Col. Jack Harman, commander of the 52nd Operations Group Det. 1. It oversees the detachment.

"NATO's interoperability is key to the strength of the Alliance," he said.

Illinois C-130s wrapped up their three-week rotation to Powidz Nov. 1, said Pendleton. ★



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