



**COMBAT SYSTEMS OFFICER TRAINING
GRADUATION CEREMONY**



Friday, April 18, 2025
National Naval Air Museum
Naval Air Station Pensacola, FL

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

ENTRANCE OF OFFICIAL PARTY

PRESENTATION OF THE COLORS
Eglin Honor Guard

NATIONAL ANTHEM
2d Lt Joshua Williams
479th Student Training Squadron

INVOCATION
Command Chaplain CDR Jeremy Selitto, USN

NARRATOR
Captain Joshua Plummer
451st Flying Training Squadron

OPENING REMARKS
Colonel Shane Muscato
Commander, 479th Flying Training Group

GUEST SPEAKER
Colonel Kelly Hobgood
Deputy Commander of Operations, 429th Special Operations Wing

PRESENTATION OF
AERONAUTICAL ORDERS AND WINGS

AWARDS

AIR FORCE SONG

DEPARTURE OF OFFICIAL PARTY

OFFICIAL PARTY

COL SHANE P. MUSCATO

COMMANDER,

479TH FLYING TRAINING GROUP

COL KELLY K. HOBGOOD

DEPUTY COMMANDER OF OPERATIONS,

429TH SPECIAL OPERATIONS WING



Colonel Shane P. Muscato

Colonel Shane P. Muscato is the Commander of the 479th Flying Training Group at Pensacola Naval Air Station, FL. The Group includes four squadrons, 500 personnel and 45 T-6 Texan II and T-1A Jayhawk aircraft and trains over 300 Combat Systems Officers each year for the U.S. Air Force, Air Force Reserve Command and Air National Guard. Additionally, the Group supports over 1,500 Air Force personnel in the Pensacola, FL area.



Prior to joining the 479 FTG, Colonel Muscato was the Division Chief for the Special Operations Forces and Personnel Recovery Capability Development Team as a member of Air Force Futures, Headquarters United States Air Force at the Pentagon, Arlington, VA. As the leader of this team, he directed the establishment of requirements for the special operations and personnel recovery formations of the Air Force to meet future operational needs. Furthermore, his team conducted wargaming and analysis of these future capabilities and provided updates to the Air Force's future force design to enable affordable, timely, and accurate effects in future conflicts.

Colonel Muscato was commissioned via the United States Air Force Officer Training School, Maxwell Air Force Base, AL. He is a master navigator with over 3,100 hours. He has deployed in support of numerous operations including ENDURING FREEDOM, IRAQI FREEDOM, NEW DAWN, FREEDOM'S SENTINEL and INHERENT RESOLVE. Colonel Muscato has commanded at the squadron level, expeditionary squadron level, and as the Combined Joint Special Operations Air Component-Afghanistan Deputy Commander.

Colonel Kelly K. Hobgood

Col Kelly Hobgood is the Deputy Commander of Operations for the 492d Special Operations Wing, Hurlburt Field, Florida. She is responsible for enterprise-wide special operations aviation training, executing a \$169 Million flying hour program, flying 33.5 thousand hours annually with 26 aircraft across four weapon systems to include the AC-130J, MC-130J, C-146A, and U-28A. She is responsible to the 492dSOW Commander for ensuring Air Commandos are trained and mission-ready to contribute significantly to the success of special operations efforts across multiple theaters.



Colonel Hobgood received her commission through the Officer Training School(OTS) program after graduating from the University of Sioux Falls. After graduating OTS, she attended Joint Specialized Undergraduate Navigator Training (JSUNT) at Randolph AFB, Texas followed by the MC-130H Formal Training Unit at Kirtland AFB, New Mexico. Colonel Hobgood's operational assignments include the 15th Special Operations Squadron, Hurlburt Field, Florida, the 1st Special Operations Squadron, Kadena AB, Okinawa, Japan, and the 14th Weapons Squadron at Hurlburt Field, Florida. She has deployed multiple times in support of Counter Narcotics operations, Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, Operation ENDURING FREEDOM-Philippines, and Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. Prior to her current position, Col Hobgood was the Commander, 492d Special Operations Group, Duke Field, Florida.

Colonel Hobgood is a Master Navigator with more than 2,100 combined hours in the T-43A, T-1A, T-6A, MC-130P, and MC-130H aircraft. She is married to Patrick Hobgood of Wellington Florida, and they have two sons, Alexander and Dylan, and two daughters, Leila and Amelia.

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Squadron Commanders

479 STUS

Lt Col Humberto Centeno

479 OSS

Lt Col Todd Saksa

455 FTS

Lt Col Benjamin Hoffman

451 FTS

Lt Col Joshua Lancaster



Graduate Flight Commanders

Capt Kenny Nguyen

Capt Scott Wortman

Capt Timothy Trammell

Capt Bret MacDonald





2d Lt Keanan L. Ard

Hometown	Robertsdale, AL
Aircraft	F-15E, WSO
Assignment	Seymour Johnson AFB, NC



2d Lt Riley J. Burns

Hometown	Marcellus, NY
Aircraft	F-15E, WSO
Assignment	Seymour Johnson AFB, NC



2d Lt Jamie R. Ebersole

Hometown	Hilo, HI
Aircraft	B-52, WSO
Assignment	Barksdale AFB, LA



2d Lt Isabel C. Falter

Hometown	Cincinnati, Ohio
Aircraft	HC-130, CSO
Assignment	Kirtland AFB, NM



2d Lt Karley A. Grell

Hometown	Flower Mound, TX
Aircraft	HC-130, CSO
Assignment	Kirtland AFB, NM



2d Lt Sean P. Gillespie

Hometown	Goodyear, AZ
Aircraft	HC-130, CSO
Assignment	Kirtland AFB, NM



2d Lt Michael T. Kirwan

Hometown	Oradell, NJ
Aircraft	MC-130, CSO
Assignment	Kirtland AFB, NM



2d Lt Ryan A. Massey

Hometown	Lawrenceville, GA
Aircraft	F-15E, WSO
Assignment	Seymour Johnson AFB, NC



2d Lt Carson S. Neiswender

Hometown	Odenton, MD
Aircraft	F-15E, WSO
Assignment	Seymour Johnson AFB, NC



2d Lt Jared T. Norton

Hometown	East Bridgewater, MA
Aircraft	B-52, WSO
Assignment	Barksdale AFB, LA



2d Lt Preston S. Novinger

Hometown	Littleton, CO
Aircraft	MC-130, CSO
Assignment	Kirtland AFB, NM



2d Lt Lucas M. Smith

Hometown	Universal City, TX
Aircraft	AC-130, CSO
Assignment	Kirtland AFB, NM



Capt Vincente A. Tellez

Hometown	Santee, CA
Aircraft	B-52, WSO
Assignment	Barksdale AFB, LA

Outstanding Instructors

CSO Fundamentals Instructor	Capt Garrett Mack
Tactical Fundamentals Instructor	Capt Jacob Western
Advanced Navigation Instructor	Capt Dominic Bullotta
DTD Sensor Operation Instructor	Capt Jacob Western
T-96 Simulator Instructor (CSI)	Mr. David Jackey
T-6 Simulator (CSI)	Mr. Michael Yager
T-1 MTR WSO Instructor	Maj Kyle Carter
T-1 DT WSO Instructor	Capt John Cyhaniuk
T-1 DT SO Instructor	Maj Ryan Johnson
T-1 Bomber Employment Instructor	Maj Andrew Fecteau
T--1 Fighter Intercept Instructor	Capt Brandon Mule
T-1 Visual Low Level Instructor	Lt Col Evan Zangerle
T-1 Instructor Pilot	Lt Col Michael Hewlett
T-6 Instrument Instructor Pilot	Maj Dan Derby
T-6 Navigation Instructor Pilot	Capt Ryan D'Auteuil
T-6 Formation Instructor Pilot	Capt Micthell Mabee
Active Duty Academic Instructor	Capt Jacob Western
Civilian Academic Instructor (CAI)	Mr. Matthew Schelling
Active Duty Intel Instructor	SSgt Hanna Wingett

History of the 479th Flying Training Group

The 479th Flying Training Group (FTG) traces in lineage to World War II. In September 1943, Lt Col Leo Dusard was tasked with standing up a new fighter group. He began by selecting key personnel from the 329th Fighter Group (FG), and on October 15th the 479 FG was activated at Grand Central Air Terminal in California.

Following the reassignment of Lt Col Dusard, Lt Col Kyle Riddle took the reins of the 479 FG and quickly deployed the group to Europe. On April 16th 1944, 145 officers and 910 enlisted members deployed to Wattisham Royal Air Station near the village of Ipswich, England.

Only 11 days after arriving in Wattisham, the 479 FG participated in its first combat mission. Maj John H. Lowell led 34 P-38F *Lightnings* on a sweep over Holland and Belgium. On May 31st 1944, Capt Frank Keller of the 435th Fighter Squadron (FS) recorded the group's first kill by destroying a Junkers Ju-88 *Zerstorer* on the ground near Humfeld, France. Then, on July 29th, Capt Arthur Jeffrey made history as the first pilot to shoot down a rocket-propelled aircraft, a Messerschmitt Me-163 *Komet*, over Germany. On Thanksgiving Day 1945, the 479 FG boarded the *USS Enterprise* to return home to the United States. Upon return, the 479 FG was deactivated on December 1st 1945 at Camp Kilmer.

After World War II, the 479 FG was activated and deactivated several times:

- December 1952, 479th Fighter-Bomber Group, George AFB, California, North American P-51 *Mustang*.
- June 1953, 479th Fighter-Bomber Group, North American F-86F *Sabre*
- June 1954, 479th Fighter-Bomber Group, F-100A *Super Sabre*
- October 1957, group deactivated
- 26 July 1991, 479th Fighter Group, Holloman AFB, New Mexico, AT-38 *Talon*
- November 1991, group deactivated
- November 1998, 479th Flying Training Group, Moody AFB, Georgia, AT-38C & T-6A *Texan II*
- 21 June 2007, group deactivated

Finally, on October 2nd, 2009, the 479 FTG was activated at NAS Pensacola, Florida, under the Command of Col Travis A. Willis. The unit's mission is to train the Air Force's next generation aviator, the Combat Systems Officer (CSO). The 479th uses the T-6A *Texan II* and the T-1A *Jayhawk* to this end.

* The group's three fighter squadrons (434th, 435th, and 436th) aircraft didn't have cowling colored markings like other Eight Air Force fighter groups. Rather, the 479th *Lightnings* were distinguished only by their colored tail rudders.

The Evolution of the Combat Systems Officer

Combat Systems Officers (CSO) can follow their roots back to the advent of multi-crew bi-planes in WWI. During this time, CSOs fulfilled multiple roles to include navigators, observers, ordnance delivery, and intelligence gatherers on enemy positions across Europe. For many years, their duties on aircraft were not well defined. It wasn't until the historic "Southern Cross" flight across the Pacific Ocean in May of 1928 that the navigator's mission really began to take form.

Fourteen years after the historic "Southern Cross" flight, the United States entered World War II. In many World War II aircraft, to include the mighty B-26 flown by our 451st Bomber Squadron (BS) and 455th BS, the cockpit was designed for two crew members. As was typical with these aircraft, one seat was assigned to the navigator. In addition to navigation duties, the navigator also had bombardier responsibilities. This led to the affectionate term "bombigator", referring to this multi-purpose crew position.

After WWII, CSO aircrew duties were expanded to maximize U.S. Air Force aircraft combat capabilities. Vietnam-era aircraft and tactics paved the way for the three distinct aircrew roles CSOs perform today. These specialties include Weapon Systems Officer (specializing in weapons employment), Electronic Warfare Officer (expert in electromagnetic spectrum exploitation), and Panel Navigator (expert in aircraft positioning, time control, and orchestrating airdrop). Since their inception, these three separate aircrew specialties have sustained the U.S. Air Force's air superiority around the world. From OPERATION DESERT STORM, to OPERATION ALLIED FORCE, to OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM, to OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM, CSOs have been the backbone of the US Military's operational successes.

Today, the Combat Systems Officer title designates an aviator that is trained to perform duties either as an Electronic Warfare Officer, Weapon Systems Officer, or a Panel Navigator. And while the crew position's duties and name may have transformed over the years, its fundamental role to the lasting success of the United States Air Force has not. The demand for CSOs will only continue to grow in the 21st century as our nation upholds its global commitments and remains postured to defend our interests around the world.

As trained experts, Combat Systems Officers graduates project airpower in the interests of the United States in the following aircraft: AC-130J, B-1B, B-52, C-130H, EA-18G, EC-130, F-15E, HC-130J, MC-130J, RC-135, RQ-170, and U-28 aircraft.

The Air Force Song

by Robert Crawford

*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! (Give 'em the
gun!)*

*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 U.S. Air Force!*



For photos of today's events... Find us on Facebook!

<http://www.facebook.com/479FTG>



