



**COMBAT SYSTEMS OFFICER TRAINING
GRADUATION CEREMONY**



Friday, February 20th, 2026
National Naval Aviation Museum
Naval Air Station Pensacola, FL

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

ENTRANCE OF OFFICIAL PARTY

PRESENTATION OF THE COLORS

NATIONAL ANTHEM

*AIC Aja Copeland
451st Flying Training Squadron*

INVOCATION

Chaplain LT Latoya Smith, USN

NARRATOR

*Capt Jon McDonald
479th Student Squadron*

OPENING REMARKS

*Colonel Shane Muscato
Commander, 479th Flying Training Group*

GUEST SPEAKER

*Maj Gen John R. Edwards
Director, Global Power Programs*

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

MAJ GEN JOHN R. EDWARDS

DIRECTOR,

GLOBAL POWER PROGRAMS



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 24 T-6 Texan II 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.

Maj Gen John R. Edwards

Maj. Gen. John R. Edwards is the Director of Global Power Programs, Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics, the Pentagon, Arlington, Virginia. He is responsible for the direction, planning and programming of more than 150 Air Force, joint service, and international programs to include the F-15, F-16, F-22, F-35, Next Generation Air Dominance, Minuteman III, B-1, B-2, B-52, E-4B NAOC, NC3, Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile, Advanced Medium-Range Air-to-Air Missile, B61, Long Range Standoff and Sentinel programs with a \$22 billion annual budget.



Maj. Gen. Edwards graduated from the University of Hawaii's Air Force Reserve Officer Training Program in 1995. He commanded the 28th Bomb Wing at Ellsworth Air Force Base, South Dakota, 479th Flying Training Group at Pensacola Naval Air Station, Florida, and 96th Bomb Squadron at Barksdale AFB, Louisiana. He also served in various positions on the Joint Staff J-8 Force Structure, Resources and Assessment Directorate, U.S. Air Forces Central Command, and U.S. Air Force Headquarters Executive Action Group. Additionally, he was the Director of the Nuclear Enterprise, Defense Threat Reduction Agency. Prior to his current assignment, he was the Director for Strategic Capabilities Policy on the National Security Council, advising the President of the United States and National Security Advisor on strategic deterrence.

Maj. Gen. Edwards is a Master Combat Systems Officer with more than 2,500 flight hours including more than 237 combat hours in operations Allied Force and Enduring Freedom.



2d Lt Adam G. Amara

| | |
|------------|----------------|
| Hometown | San Diego, CA |
| Aircraft | RQ-170, EWO |
| Assignment | Creech AFB, NV |



1st Lt Blake O. Barnhoorn

| | |
|------------|----------------|
| Hometown | Yulee, FL |
| Aircraft | RQ-170, EWO |
| Assignment | Creech AFB, NV |



2d Lt Ryan L. Beckett

| | |
|------------|---------------|
| Hometown | Merced, CA |
| Aircraft | B-1B, WSO |
| Assignment | Dyess AFB, TX |



1st Lt Nicholas D. DeStefano

| | |
|------------|----------------|
| Hometown | Sayville, NY |
| Aircraft | RQ-170, EWO |
| Assignment | Creech AFB, NV |



1st Lt Mark M. Dingzon

| | |
|------------|---------------|
| Hometown | Baltimore, MD |
| Aircraft | MPRIS, CSO |
| Assignment | Beale AFB, CA |



1st Lt Benjamin I. Domenico

| | |
|------------|------------------|
| Hometown | Milliken, CO |
| Aircraft | HC-130, CSO |
| Assignment | Kirtland AFB, NM |



1st Lt Joseph T. Edmonds

| | |
|------------|----------------|
| Hometown | Alexandria, VA |
| Aircraft | B-1B, WSO |
| Assignment | Dyess AFB, TX |



2d Lt Lake H. Gibbins

| | |
|------------|---------------------|
| Hometown | Galway, NY |
| Aircraft | C-130H, NAV |
| Assignment | Little Rock AFB, AR |



2d Lt Camilla H. Hren

| | |
|------------|-------------------|
| Hometown | Johnsonville, NY |
| Aircraft | LC-130, NAV |
| Assignment | Stratton ANGB, NY |



1st Lt Eric M. Huster

| | |
|------------|-------------------------|
| Hometown | Cincinnati, OH |
| Aircraft | F-15E, WSO |
| Assignment | Seymour Johnson AFB, NC |



1st Lt Henry Huynh

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



1st Lt Jeremiah H. Joswick

| | |
|------------|-------------------------|
| Hometown | Louisville, KY |
| Aircraft | F-15E, WSO |
| Assignment | Seymour Johnson AFB, NC |



1st Lt Vaughn La

| | |
|------------|---------------|
| Hometown | Slidell, LA |
| Aircraft | MPRIS, CSO |
| Assignment | Beale AFB, CA |



Capt Alexis G. Luther

| | |
|------------|------------------|
| Hometown | Louisville, KY |
| Aircraft | HC-130, CSO |
| Assignment | Kirtland AFB, NM |



1st Lt Jack G. Munz

| | |
|------------|-------------------------|
| Hometown | San Juan Capistrano, CA |
| Aircraft | EA-37B, EWO |
| Assignment | Davis-Monthan AFB, AZ |



1st Lt Christopher T. Nelms

| | |
|------------|---------------|
| Hometown | Athens, GA |
| Aircraft | MPRIS, CSO |
| Assignment | Beale AFB, CA |



1st Lt Eric A. Pennington

| | |
|------------|------------------|
| Hometown | Waldorf, MD |
| Aircraft | MC-130, CSO |
| Assignment | Kirtland AFB, NM |



1st Lt William J. Plante

| | |
|------------|------------------|
| Hometown | Williamsburg, VA |
| Aircraft | HC-130, CSO |
| Assignment | Kirtland AFB, NM |



1st Lt Peter F. Sanchez

| | |
|------------|-------------------------|
| Hometown | Cherry Hill, NJ |
| Aircraft | F-15E, WSO |
| Assignment | Seymour Johnson AFB, NC |



1st Lt Ethan J. Smith

| | |
|------------|-------------------------|
| Hometown | Winston Salem, NC |
| Aircraft | F-15E, WSO |
| Assignment | Seymour Johnson AFB, NC |



1st Lt Christopher M. Speegle

| | |
|------------|-------------------------|
| Hometown | Crestview, FL |
| Aircraft | F-15E, WSO |
| Assignment | Seymour Johnson AFB, NC |



1st Lt Robert Drake C. Taylor

| | |
|------------|-------------------|
| Hometown | San Diego, CA |
| Aircraft | B-52, WSO |
| Assignment | Barksdale AFB, LA |



1st Lt Zackary J. Tempert

| | |
|------------|-------------------------|
| Hometown | Pittsburgh, PA |
| Aircraft | F-15E, WSO |
| Assignment | Seymour Johnson AFB, NC |



1st Lt Andrew D. Thompson

| | |
|------------|-----------------------|
| Hometown | Rochester, MN |
| Aircraft | EA-37B, EWO |
| Assignment | Davis-Monthan AFB, AZ |



Capt Mark A. Vorndran

| | |
|------------|-------------------------|
| Hometown | Brunswick, OH |
| Aircraft | F-15E, WSO |
| Assignment | Seymour Johnson AFB, NC |



1st Lt Max S. Weiss

| | |
|------------|----------------|
| Hometown | East Islip, NY |
| Aircraft | RC-135, NAV |
| Assignment | Offutt AFB, NE |



1st Lt Noelle J. Yocum

| | |
|------------|------------------|
| Hometown | Sterling, VA |
| Aircraft | MC-130, CSO |
| Assignment | Kirtland AFB, NM |

26-05 Outstanding Instructors

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|---|-----------------------------------|
| CSO Fundamentals Simulator Instructor | Maj Clinton Brandt |
| Electronic Warfare Simulator Instructor | Capt Jonathan Mims |
| Tactical Fundamentals Simulator Instructor | Capt Victoria Beck |
| Radar Scope Interpretation Simulator Instructor | Maj Aaron Chamberlain |
| T-6 Simulator Instructor Pilot (CSI) | Mr. Gregory Butcher |
| T-96 Simulator Instructor Pilot (CSI) | Mr. David Galloway |
| T-96 Transition Instructor | Capt Carson Burke |
| T-96 Military Training Routes Instructor | Lt Col Joshualee Lancaster |
| Multi-Crew Synthetic Training System Instructor | Capt Carla Y. Adams |
| T-6 Instrument Instructor Pilot | Capt Jonathan McDonald |
| T-6 Navigation Instructor Pilot | Maj Jeffrey Guanch |
| Active Duty Academic Instructor | Capt John V. Gluzsek |
| Civilian Academic Instructor (CAI) | Mr. Matthew Bissell |
| Active Duty Intel Instructor | TSgt George Hayden |
| Integration Instructor | Maj Melanie Engle |

26-06 Outstanding Instructors

| | |
|---|------------------------------|
| CSO Fundamentals Simulator Instructor | Maj Curtis Zoss |
| Electronic Warfare Simulator Instructor | Capt Dominic Bullotta |
| Tactical Fundamentals Simulator Instructor | Maj Sarah Brandt |
| Radar Scope Interpretation Simulator Instructor | Maj Clinton Brandt |
| T-6 Simulator Instructor Pilot (CSI) | Mr. Michael Yager |
| T-96 Simulator Instructor Pilot (CSI) | Mr. Brian Boettger |
| T-96 Transition Instructor | Maj Addison Fisher |
| T-96 Military Training Routes Instructor | Maj Justin Andress |
| Multi-Crew Synthetic Training System Instructor | Capt John Gluzsek |
| T-6 Instrument Instructor Pilot | Maj Forrest Whitfield |
| T-6 Navigation Instructor Pilot | Capt Ryan Dauteuil |
| Active Duty Academic Instructor | Capt Hanna Wingett |
| Civilian Academic Instructor (CAI) | Mr. Matthew Fishel |
| Active Duty Intel Instructor | Capt Hanna Wingett |
| Integration Instructor | Capt Noah Cote |

Squadron Commanders

479 STUS

Lt Col Austin Lohman

479 OSS

Lt Col Michael Matchett

455 FTS

Lt Col Benjamin Hoffman

451 FTS

Lt Col Joshua Lancaster

Graduate

Flight Commanders

Capt Brandon Kelly

Capt Eric Carter



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 multiple aircrew training devices 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>