



**COMBAT SYSTEMS OFFICER TRAINING  
GRADUATION CEREMONY**



Friday, January 16th, 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 CDR Jeremy Selitto, USN*

NARRATOR  
*SrA Riley Hoffman*  
*451st Flying Training Squadron*

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

GUEST SPEAKER  
*Colonel Michael A. Thomas*  
*Deputy Chief of Safety, Headquarters Air Force*

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 MICHAEL A. THOMAS**

DEPUTY CHIEF OF SAFETY,

HEADQUARTERS AIR FORCE



## **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.

## **Colonel Michael A. Thomas**

Colonel Michael A. Thomas is the Department of the Air Force Deputy Chief of Safety, Headquarters Air Force, Arlington, Virginia. He assists the Chief of Safety in developing, executing, and evaluating all Air and Space Force aviation, occupation, space, weapons, and human factors safety programs. Additionally, he regularly engages with external agencies with safety equities within the Department of Defense, US Government, and partner nations. Finally, he leads the Safety Issues Branch in the Pentagon which is comprised of cross-functional safety experts supporting all responsibilities of the Chief of Safety.



Colonel Thomas received his commission through ROTC after graduating from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Over his career, Colonel Thomas served in a variety of operational and staff assignments, and has commanded at the Squadron, Group, and Joint Task Force level. He supported multiple operations throughout his career such as JOINT GUARDIAN, NORTHERN WATCH, ENDURING FREEDOM, IRAQI FREEDOM and INHERENT RESOLVE.

Prior to his current position, Col Thomas was the Director of Safety for Air Force Special Operations Command at Hurlburt Field, FL.



**1st Lt Salvatore G. Baulo**

Hometown	Greenville, SC
Aircraft	MPRIS
Assignment	Beale AFB, CA



**1st Lt Dakota H. Bullivant**

Hometown	Dassel, MN
Aircraft	F-15E, WSO
Assignment	Seymour Johnson AFB, NC



**2d Lt Alex J. Cowin**

Hometown	Avon Lake, OH
Aircraft	RC-135, NAV
Assignment	Offutt AFB, NE



**1st Lt William R. Fey**

Hometown	Fort Mill, SC
Aircraft	RC-135, NAV
Assignment	Offutt AFB, NE



**1st Lt Jacob M. Krumrey**

Hometown	Victoria, TX
Aircraft	MPRIS
Assignment	Beale AFB, CA



**Capt Gregg W. McCambley**

Hometown	Horsham, PA
Aircraft	MPRIS
Assignment	Beale AFB, CA



**1st Lt Aaron T. Moudry**

Hometown	San Diego, CA
Aircraft	MPRIS
Assignment	Beale AFB, CA



**2d Lt Michael S. S. Padley**

Hometown	Belo Horizonte, Brazil
Aircraft	HC-130J, CSO
Assignment	Patrick SFB, FL



**2d Lt David M. Pingleton**

Hometown	Dixon, CA
Aircraft	F-15E, WSO
Assignment	Seymour Johnson AFB, NC



**Capt Jeffrey M. Poekhan**

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



**2d Lt Raleigh M. Seigny**

Hometown	Fayetteville, NC
Aircraft	WC-130J, NAV
Assignment	Keesler AFB, MS



**2d Lt Michael E. Swenson**

Hometown	Greeley, CO
Aircraft	MPRIS
Assignment	Beale AFB, CA



**1st Lt Konner Y.V. Waszak-Cortessi**

Hometown	Brookfield, WI
Aircraft	AC-130, CSO
Assignment	Kirtland AFB, NM



## **Outstanding Instructors**

CSO Fundamentals Simulator Instructor	Maj Curtis Zoss
Electronic Warfare Simulator Instructor	Capt Jonathan Mims
Tactical Fundamentals Simulator Instructor	Maj Sarah Brandt
Radar Scope Interpretation Simulator Instructor	Lt Col Evan Zangerle
T-6 Simulator Instructor Pilot (CSI)	Mr. Joseph Sorrell
T-96 Simulator Instructor Pilot (CSI)	Mr. Eric Zihmer
T-96 Transition Instructor	Capt John Gluzsek
T-96 Military Training Routes Instructor	Maj Kevin Warrington
Multi-Crew Synthetic Training System Instructor	Maj Robert Reynaud
T-6 Instrument Instructor Pilot	Maj Jeffrey Guanch
T-6 Navigation Instructor Pilot	Capt Ryan Dauteuil
Active Duty Academic Instructor	Lt Col Brandon C. Smith
Civilian Academic Instructor (CAI)	Mr. Matthew Schelling
Active Duty Intel Instructor	TSgt George Hayden
Integration Instructor	Maj James Harris

## **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 Commander**

Capt Tony Dagostino



## 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>*