



**COMBAT SYSTEMS OFFICER TRAINING
GRADUATION CEREMONY**



Friday, May 16, 2025
National Naval Air Museum
Naval Air Station Pensacola, FL

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

ENTRANCE OF OFFICIAL PARTY

PRESENTATION OF THE COLORS
Hurlburt Field Honor Guard

NATIONAL ANTHEM
2d Lt Grace Peele
479th Student Training Squadron

INVOCATION
Command Chaplain CDR Jeremy Selitto, USN

NARRATOR
Captain Luly Rios
451st Flying Training Squadron

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

GUEST SPEAKER
Colonel Nathan Colunga
Commander, Special Warfare Training 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 NATHAN T. COLUNGA

COMMANDER,

SPECIAL WARFARE TRAINING 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 Nathan T. Colunga

Colonel Nathan T. Colunga is Commander of the Special Warfare Training Wing, Second Air Force, Air Education and Training Command, Joint Base San Antonio -Chapman Training Annex, Texas. The Special Warfare Training Wing provides initial and advanced skills training for Air Force ground combat forces, administering 16 different training courses and managing Air Force participation in seven joint schools. This training includes entry-level and apprentice courses for Special Tactics, Combat Rescue, Combat Control, Pararescue, Special Reconnaissance, and Tactical Air Control Party officer and enlisted specialties, as well as combat diving, basic airborne, military freefall, static-line jumpmaster, air traffic control, and paramedic training. The wing consists of two groups, seven squadrons, and twelve detachments across ten states.



Colonel Colunga received his commission through ROTC in 2000 after graduation from the University of Texas at Austin. Since completion of navigator training in 2001, he has flown more than 3,300 hours and is a graduate of the U.S. Air Force Weapons School. Colonel Colunga has commanded special operations forces in garrison and in combat, and executed multiple deployments in support of operations in the U.S. Central Command and U.S. Africa Command areas of responsibility. Most recently, he served as the Commander, Joint Special Operations Air Component – Central. Prior to his assignment to Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Colonel Colunga was the Vice Commander, 352nd Special Operations Wing, RAF Mildenhall. Colonel Colunga is married and has two children.

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Squadron Commanders

479 STUS

Lt Col Austin Lohman

479 OSS

Lt Col Micheal Matchett

455 FTS

Lt Col Benjamin Hoffman

451 FTS

Lt Col Joshua Lancaster



Graduate Flight Commanders

Capt Austin Bolinger
Maj Jonathan Beening
Capt John Gluszek
Capt Joshua Irvin
Capt David Laird
Maj Mitchell Mabee
Capt Bret MacDonald
Capt Jonathan Mims
Capt Samuel Morehead
Capt Paul Mueller
Capt Julio Sostre
Capt Timothy Trammell
Capt Logan Vanatta
Capt Mallory Wade
Capt Nicholas Walker





2d Lt John A. Chambers

Hometown	Decatur, TX
Aircraft	F-15E, WSO
Assignment	Seymour Johnson AFB, NC



2d Lt Sara M. Deczynski

Hometown	New Hope, PA
Aircraft	RC-135, EWO
Assignment	Offutt AFB, NE



2d Lt Jacqueline V. Ellison

Hometown	Athens, GA
Aircraft	MC-130J, CSO
Assignment	Kirtland AFB, NM



2d Lt Ryan R. Ellsworth

Hometown	Aguadilla, Puerto Rico
Aircraft	MPRIS, CSO
Assignment	Beale AFB, CA



2d Lt Jackson W. Gilbert

Hometown	Charleston, SC
Aircraft	RC-135, EWO
Assignment	Offutt AFB, NE



2d Lt Devyn M. Grant

Hometown	Conroe, TX
Aircraft	RC-135, EWO
Assignment	Offutt AFB, NE



2d Lt Jacob A. Grimes

Hometown	Athens, OH
Aircraft	RC-135, EWO
Assignment	Offutt AFB, NE



2d Lt Gavin J. Harbo

Hometown	Eagan, MN
Aircraft	MPRIS, CSO
Assignment	Beale AFB, CA



2d Lt Jeremy M. Hicks

Hometown	San Antonio, TX
Aircraft	OA-1K, WSO
Assignment	Will Rodgers Air National Guard Base, OK



1st Lt Daniel A. Hinman

Hometown	Rising Sun, MD
Aircraft	RC-135, EWO
Assignment	Offutt AFB, NE



2d Lt Russell W. Hotchkiss III

Hometown	Southington, CT
Aircraft	B-52, WSO
Assignment	Barksdale AFB, LA



2d Lt Eric R. Keilbarth

Hometown	Tulsa, OK
Aircraft	B-52, WSO
Assignment	Barksdale AFB, LA



2d Lt Jayne B. Lewis

Hometown	Blairstown, NJ
Aircraft	F-15E, WSO
Assignment	Seymour Johnson AFB, NC



Capt Micheal J. Lyons

Hometown	Fort Worth, TX
Aircraft	OA-1K, WSO
Assignment	Will Rodgers Air National Guard Base, OK



Capt Curtis D. McKinney

Hometown	Cabot, AR
Aircraft	C-130H, Nav
Assignment	Little Rock AFB, AR



2d Lt Clare A. Provoncha

Hometown	Williamsburg, VA
Aircraft	B-52, WSO
Assignment	Barksdale AFB, LA



2d Lt Audrey M. Ruda

Hometown	Cocoa Beach, FL
Aircraft	RC-135, EWO
Assignment	Offut AFB, NE



2d Lt Kyle C. Sorensen

Hometown	Ludlow, MA
Aircraft	C-130H3, Nav
Assignment	Bradley ANGB, CT



2d Lt Isabel W. Strinsky

Hometown	Greenville, SC
Aircraft	MC-130J, CSO
Assignment	Kirtland AFB, NM



2d Lt Christian A. Tinoco

Hometown	Miami, FL
Aircraft	MC-130J, CSO
Assignment	Kirtland AFB, NM



2d Lt Alexander J. Toth

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



2d Lt Anna Grace Violette

Hometown	St. Louis, MO
Aircraft	RC-135, EWO
Assignment	Offut AFB, NE

Outstanding Instructors

CSO Fundamentals Instructor	Capt John Gluszek
Tactical Fundamentals Instructor	Maj Sarah Brandt
Electronic Warfare Support	Capt Raechelle Lord
Suppression of Enemy Air Defenses	Capt Nicholas Ronci
Advanced Navigation Instructor	Capt Luly Rios
DTD Sensor Operation Instructor	Capt Jacob Western
T-96 Simulator Instructor (CSI)	Mr. Christopher Kidney
T-6 Simulator (CSI)	Mr. Michael Yager
T-1 MTR WSO Instructor	Lt Col Toby Smith
T-1 MTR EWO Instructor	Capt Samuel Morehead
T-1 DT WSO Instructor	Lt Col Jarrod Beers
T-1 DT SO Instructor	Capt Jason Hightower
T-1 Fighter Employment	Maj Kyle Carter
T-1 Bomber Employment Instructor	Maj Andrew Fecteau
T--1 Fighter Intercept Instructor	Capt Timothy Trammel
T-1 Visual Low Level Instructor	Lt Col Mary Spafford
T-1 Instructor Pilot	Capt Jake Pope
T-6 Instrument Instructor Pilot	Capt Ryan D'Auteuil
T-6 Navigation Instructor Pilot	Lt Col Forrest Whitfield
T-6 Formation Instructor Pilot	Capt Micthell Mabee
Active Duty Academic Instructor	Capt John Gluszek
Integration Instructor	Capt Taylor Frauenhofer
Civilian Academic Instructor (CAI)	Mrs. Cynthia Curry
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>