

14TH FLYING TRAINING WING



Colonel James Blech
Commander, 14th Flying Training Wing

Colonel Jonathan Cato
Deputy Commander, 14th Flying Training Wing

Chief Master Sergeant Todd Rosenzweig
Command Chief, 14th Flying Training Wing

Colonel Nicholas Lofthouse
Commander, 14th Operations Group

Colonel Scott Ryder
Commander, 14th Mission Support Group

Colonel Francisco Catalá
Commander, 14th Medical Group



GRADUATION PROGRAM

Social Hour

POW MIA Ceremony

USAF Honor Guard

Invocation

Chaplain Edelstein

Official Graduation Dinner

Special Awards

Official Stage Party

Graduation Address

Brigadier General Andrew S. Rendon

Presentation of Awards

Official Stage Party

Presentation of Aeronautical Orders

Colonel James Blech

Brigadier General Andrew S. Rendon



Brig. Gen. Andrew S. Rendon serves as the Commanding General of the 66th Troop Command, Mississippi Army National Guard (MSARNG). He is responsible and accountable for the readiness, training, and development of all Soldiers within the formation and oversees the development and coordination of all policies, plans, and programs of the 66th Troop Command and all subordinate units.

Rendon has over 28 years of military service beginning nearly three decades ago after graduating from ROTC and branching as an Army Aviator. From 1998-2000, he served as a platoon leader and logistics officer for the 2-1 Aviation Regiment, Katterbach, Germany. In 2000, he was selected for company command, serving as commander, F Company, 1-212th Aviation Regiment, Fort Rucker, Alabama. Shifting over to the Mississippi National Guard, he served as the logistics officer for 1-185th Aviation Regiment and platoon leader, C Company, 1-114th Aviation Regiment in Tupelo. As a major, he served as the 185th Expeditionary Combat Aviation Brigade (ECAB) communications officer and assistant operations officer. In 2008, he became the 1-185th battalion executive officer and, from 2009 to 2011, the commander of C Company and the 1-114th Aviation Regiment. From 2011-2012, he served as an aircraft maintenance officer in A Company, 1108th Theater Aviation Sustainment Maintenance Group (TASMG) in Gulfport. From 2012- 2014 he served as the aviation officer in the 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team in Tupelo. He was promoted to lieutenant colonel in 2014 and selected as one of four (Army-wide) commanders for A Company, 1108th TASMG. In 2016, he was selected to command the 1-185th Assault Helicopter Battalion. In 2019, he served as the plans officer for Joint Forces Headquarters, promoted to colonel, and accepted command of the 185th ECAB in Jackson. Following command, he served as the state aviation officer and chief of staff - Army. On 1 July 2024, he was appointed as Commander of the 66th Troop Command.

Rendon has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from the University of Mississippi, a Master of Public Policy and Administration from Mississippi State University, a Master of Strategic Studies from the U.S. Army War College, and a PhD from Mississippi State University. His military operational assignments include three deployments to Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo, and one deployment supporting Operation Enduring Freedom to Camp MISSISSIPPI NATIONAL GUARD BRIGADIER GENERAL ANDREW S. RENDON COMMANDER, 66TH TROOP COMMAND Marmal, Afghanistan. His military education and training is an extensive list that includes the Army Airborne Course, pilot qualification courses for TH-67 Creek, UH-1 Huey, UH-60 Blackhawk, and LUH72 Lakota Helicopters including Maintenance Test Pilot and Instructor Pilot courses, U.S. Army Command and General Staff Course, Senior Operations, and the U.S. Army War College. His awards and decorations include the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star Medal, six Meritorious Service Medals, and numerous other federal and state awards. He has also earned the Senior Army Aviator and Parachutist badges and the order of St. Michael.

Rendon lives in Starkville, with his wife Hilary Rendon. They are the proud parents of Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Kyler Rendon and Ms. Sarah Rendon. His civilian career is at MSU where he serves as the Executive Director for Veteran and Military Affairs. His memberships include the National Guard Association of Mississippi, the National Guard Association of the United States (Lifetime Member), Army Aviation Association of America, Lifetime Member of the U.S. Army War College Alumni Association, member of the America College Personnel Association, and inductee, Pi Alpha Alpha, Public Administration

COLUMBUS AND NORTHEAST MISSISSIPPI

Columbus marks the place that Hernando de Soto crossed the Tombigbee River on his westward expedition in 1540. The Choctaw Indians owned the land until 1816 when they deeded it to the United States Government. The town, which sits atop a 125-foot bluff overlooking the Tombigbee River, began in 1817 with the arrival of a group of 20 pioneers. They set up a trading post named Possum Town, a name given by the Indians because of the "possum-like" features of one of the settlers, Spirus Roach.

The city was formally organized in 1821 and named Columbus by Silas McBee, another of the original settlers. Very quickly, Columbus grew to be the most prosperous center of northern Mississippi's plantation economy. Wealth from "King Cotton" enabled area planters to construct the numerous Greek, Gothic, and Italianate mansions and public buildings still in Columbus today.

During the Civil War, Columbus became a large Confederate arsenal and briefly served as the state's capital when Jackson fell in 1863. The city survived the destruction of the war and still has over 600 homes and buildings built in the antebellum period. Many of these homes are open to the public during the Columbus Pilgrimage each spring. Candlelight dinners and overnight bed and breakfast accommodations can also be arranged.

Nicknamed "The Friendly City," Columbus is the place where flowers healed a nation. In 1862, the Battle of Shiloh foreshadowed the bloody violence of the future Civil War battles. There were 1,500 Union and Confederate dead from the battle buried in Columbus. On April 25, 1866, the first Memorial Day was observed at the burial site dubbed Friendship Cemetery. On that April day, a group of Columbus ladies divided their flowers and laid them upon the graves of Union and Confederate soldiers alike. This action inspired the poem "The Blue and the Gray" and helped heal a wounded country.

Columbus is the birthplace and boyhood home of Pulitzer playwright Tennessee Williams and home of America's first state-supported women's university, the Mississippi University for Women.

Today, Columbus presides gracefully over the beauty of the past in a community greater than 25,000. More than 60 manufacturers are located in Columbus. One of the major locks of the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway is located here, making Columbus an important trade center. The past and the future, delicately interwoven through the fabric of this great city, gleam together like the spring sun on the early morning Tombigbee.

COLUMBUS AIR FORCE BASE

Columbus Air Force Base began as an advanced twin-engine flying school during the rearming of America prior to World War II. The base set a standard of excellence from the start, with a world flying safety record of 24 million consecutive flying miles. The full panel attitude system on which present day instrument flying is based got its start here, as did the standardization of flying evaluation boards, used to evaluate instructor pilots. This earned the base national recognition in *The New York Times* and *Time* magazine, which cited a 44 percent decrease in the accident rate despite the fact that the number of students had doubled and the student-instructor ratio had increased.

A total of 7,766 students came to Columbus for pilot training during World War II to become flying officers in the United States Army Air Corps. AT-8s, AT-9s, AT-10s, and Lockheed Hudson A-29s were all used at different times during these early years.

The base was closed after the war and remained inactive until 1951 when it was reopened as a contract flying school to provide flight training for pilots during the Korean War. T-6s and P-18 Piper Cubs were used to train 3,000 student pilots who came to Columbus between 1951 and 1955.

Four years later, the base was transferred from Air Training Command (ATC) to Strategic Air Command (SAC). The base became home to a B-52 bomber squadron and a KC-135 tanker squadron in the late 1950s. Beginning in 1965, these units deployed to the Western Pacific in support of US military operations in Vietnam. The year of 1965 also brought the title “Best in SAC” as the 454th Bombardment Wing was recognized for outstanding unit skill bombing and navigation at the annual Fairchild Trophy competition.

A convergence of situations brought a close to the SAC years at Columbus Air Force Base. As the demand for pilots to support the war in Southeast Asia increased, the number of bombers stateside was reduced since B-52D models were needed abroad. At the same time, Minuteman and Polaris missiles were taking their places in the strategic deterrent forces.

In 1969 Columbus Air Force Base was returned to Air Training Command (now known as Air Education and Training Command) and resumed the mission for which it was originally activated—training the best pilots in the world. Since 1972 the host organization has been the 14th Flying Training Wing.

25-08 GRADUATES



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2d Lt Brandon E. Alcorn
Hardy, Virginia
C-17 Globemaster III



25-08 GRADUATES



2d Lt Alvern E. Dyer
Plano, Texas
C-17 Globemaster III



2d Lt James C. Alwin
Oconto, Wisconsin
T-38C Talon



2d Lt Matthew R. Hall
Dayton, Ohio
RC-135 Rivet Joint



2d Lt Thomas R. Budraitis
Petal, Mississippi
T-38C Talon



2d Lt Nicholas A. Huff
Jacksonville, Florida
HC-130J Combat King II



25-08 GRADUATES



2d Lt Dakota J. Kuehl
Petersburg, Illinois
C-130J Super Hercules



25-08 GRADUATES

2d Lt Derek M. Spahr
Orlando, Florida
KC-135 Stratotanker



2d Lt Alison E. Lord
Madison, Connecticut
C-17 Globemaster III



1st Lt Yu Feng J. Teo
Singapore, Singapore
T-38C Talon



2d Lt Nathan T. Vestal
Jonesboro, Arkansas
C-130J Super Hercules



2d Lt Lukas C. Porter
Auburndale, Florida
RC-135 Rivet Joint



25-08 GRADUATES



2d Lt Gunnar P. Wessels
Manassas, Virginia
KC-46 Pegasus



2d Lt Mehmet C. Yayla
Istanbul, Turkey
T-38C Talon



25-08 GRADUATES



AIRCRAFT OF AIR FORCE UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE PILOT TRAINING



T-6A: The T-6A “Texan II” is a single-engine, two-seat primary trainer designed to train Joint Primary Pilot Training students in basic flying skills common to U.S. Air Force and Navy pilots. Stepped-tandem seating in the single cockpit places one crewmember in front of the other, with the student and instructor positions being interchangeable. The T-6A has a turbo-prop engine that delivers 1,100 horsepower. Because of its excellent thrust-to-weight ratio, the aircraft can reach 18,000 feet (5,486.4 meters) in less than six minutes. The aircraft is fully aerobatic and features a pressurized cockpit with an anti-G system, ejection seat and an advanced avionics package with sunlight-readable liquid crystal displays. After completion of training in the T-6A, student pilots are awarded their USAF pilot wings.

AIRCRAFT OF AIR FORCE UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE PILOT TRAINING



T-1A: The “Jayhawk” is an Air Force modified version of the civilian Beechjet 400A and is used to train future tanker and airlift pilots. The aircraft has advanced avionics, including a “glass” cockpit and a jump seat for a second student. The T-1A is well suited to teach new pilots the fundamentals of instrument flight, navigation, air refueling, formation airdrop, and crew resource management.



T-38C: Also known as the “Talon,” the T-38 is the advanced jet trainer of the USAF. With a top speed in excess of Mach 1.2, this aircraft is used to familiarize student pilots with the characteristics of modern jet fighter aircraft. The training curriculum for this aircraft emphasizes formation, navigation, and instruments.

AWARDS DESCRIPTION

Order of Daedalians AETC Commander's Trophy:

This award is presented to the most outstanding graduate of the class from each track of training. The recipient of this award attained the highest overall rating in all facets of training.

Distinguished Graduate Award: The Distinguished Graduate award is presented to the students in the top 10% of their Phase II track.

AWARDS DESCRIPTION

Academic Award: The Academic Award is presented to the members of each graduating class who have achieved the highest academic average and is normally given to the graduate with the most number of correct answers on all tests in all phases of training.

Military Training Award: The Military Training Award is presented to the graduate whose leadership, personality, conduct, and bearing had the greatest positive influence on the class.

Flying Training Award: The Flying Training Award is presented to the individual who has obtained the highest flying average amongst members of his/her Phase II class. This graduate had the fewest number of mistakes made on check rides in all of Phase II.

Breaking of Wings

Since man started flying, he has taken to the air with a certain amount of risk. To counter that risk, a tradition was established years ago when the Army Air Corps first started issuing pilot wings to their young aviators. This tradition is called “Breaking of Wings.” At every SUPT graduation, the Air Force issues the pilots their first pair of wings. As tradition has it, that first pair of wings should never be worn by the pilot. To bring good luck, the pilot should break the wings into two parts. One half should be kept by the pilot, the other half should be given to the pilot’s best friend or relative. To preserve the good luck, the two halves should never be brought together while the pilot is still alive. After death, the two halves are once again united with the pilot for good fortune in the next life.



HIGH FLIGHT

*Oh, I have slipped the surly bonds of earth
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;
Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth
Of sun-split clouds – and done a hundred things
You have not dreamed of – wheeled and soared and swung
High in the sunlit silence. Hov'ring there,
I've chased the shouting wind along, and flung
My eager craft through footless halls of air.
Up, up the long, delirious, burning blue
I've topped the windswept heights with easy grace
Where never lark or even eagle flew.
And while with silent, lifting mind I've trod
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,
Put out my hand, and touched the face of God.*

John Gillespie Magee, Jr

CONGRATULATIONS
CLASS
25-08

