



## Northrop Grumman prepares for B-21 rollout



Northrop Grumman photograph

by Larry Grooms  
special to Aerotech News

**AEROSPACE VALLEY, Calif.**—“This changes everything,” is the silent message superimposed on an 11-second Northrop Grumman video of a shrouded B-21 Raider to either roll out or be unveiled Dec. 2 at Air Force Plant 42 in Palmdale, Calif.

With security measures that could be fodder for a Tom Clancy techno-thriller, the public debut of the first new U.S. Air Force bomber in more than 30 years invites contrasting comparison with aviation disclosures of the early distant past. Asked to recall any similarly secretive roll-outs, 412th Test Wing Historian James Tucker said one that came close was the XP-59, America’s first jet fighter during World War II, shipped by rail from the factory to Muroc Army Air Base (now Edwards) and flown in total secrecy.

Although the B-21’s predecessor, Northrop Grumman’s B-2 Spirit stealth bomber, appeared before a large and enthusiastic crowd in the sunlight outside the doors of the same assembly

hangar three decades earlier, that’s where the similarity ends — “Changing Everything.”

This Friday an as yet undisclosed number of unnamed guests are expected “by invitation only” to witness the event from a likewise undisclosed location inside or outside.

Because Congress is scheduled to remain in session on Friday, both Aerospace Valley Congressional representatives are committed to remain in the Capitol to vote. However, House Republican Leader Kevin McCarthy, and Republican Congressman Mike Garcia are expected to make formal remarks concerning the B-21 Raider defense program.

News releases and statements from Northrop Grumman officials used the terms rollout and unveiling interchangeably, and artistic representations vary between artist renderings of an aircraft and the featureless shape of a tailless fuselage veiled in a semi-transparent shroud.

The American public will be able to watch on their devices live-streaming video of Friday’s proceedings. And based on nervous and dismissive tweets from the People’s Republics

of wherever, the rest of the world will be taking an interest as well in what NGC Aeronautics Systems President Tom Jones called “a sixth-generation aircraft.”

Viewers can access the livestream reveal of the B-21 Raider Friday at <http://ms.spr.ly/6186dCONr>

The unveiling is currently scheduled for 5 p.m., PST.

While much of what has been revealed about how the B-21 Raider’s visible features and flight performance envelope are improved from the B-2, including a smaller airframe configuration, altered exhaust ports and refined trailing edges, the blockbuster news that “Changes Everything” concerns the skin and everything below it, including engines, armaments, mission profiles, and perhaps the most significant change that Changes Everything Else in the likely future of aerospace technology.

The Quantum Leap allowing America’s aerospace to build better, faster, possible cheaper and world-beating invention derives in part from technology used in the B-21’s testing — and the

Air Force’s decision to flight test a production-model aircraft instead of the traditional X-plane. Andrew Hunter, Air Force acquisition chief, was quoted as saying the early decision on flight-test aircraft production, “is paying dividends as we look towards first flight.”

The B-21’s advancements in stealth capabilities also incorporate open-systems architecture, and Joint All-Domain Command and Control technologies to share data across platforms. Northrop’s system for digital testing is touted as a way to reduce risk by catching and fixing problems before they reach the assembly line.

So far, there are still six B-21s in various stages of development, including the first flight test aircraft. The second complete B-21 is dubbed G1, a ground test aircraft. One of the mysteries yet to unfold is whether any of the B-21 Raider bombers, so-named in honor of the Jimmy Doolittle Raiders who first bombed Tokyo in World War II, will be built to operate without a crew onboard.

See RAIDER, Page 2





Air Force graphic

An artists' impression of the B-21 Raider stealth bomber, with Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., as the backdrop. Designed to perform long-range conventional and nuclear missions, and to operate in tomorrow's high-end threat environment, the B-21 will be a visible and flexible component of the nuclear triad. The 420th Flight Test Squadron based at Edwards will plan, test, analyze and report on all flight and ground testing of the Raider. The Air Force plans to incrementally replace the B-1 Lancer and the B-2 Spirit bombers to form a two-bomber fleet of B-21s and modified B-52s. The B-21 program is on track to deliver B-21s to the first operational base, Ellsworth AFB, South Dakota, in the mid-2020s.

The Sept. 18, 2021 edition of *Aerotech News and Review* reported Northrop Grumman's demonstration of technology allowing uncrewed aircraft to track enemy aircraft and securely share mission-critical data to commanders for strategic advantage. All of that would depend on aircraft capable of safely penetrating the full range of environments. The logical and now technologically

feasible and affordable solution, NG executives pointed out, is producing aircraft with the flexibility to be quickly transformed to meet mission parameters, and the capability to be optionally piloted vehicles.

And yes, they demonstrated an existing airframe that can be converted from crewed to remotely piloted or autonomously operated and

back again in hours and minutes or no more than a day or two, and by a pair of technicians using simple hand tools. Such planes already exist at Northrop Grumman. That is no mystery.

For more on the B-21 Raider roll-out, visit [www.aerotechnews.com](http://www.aerotechnews.com) on Friday, Dec. 2.

## Facts about Northrop Grumman's B-21 Raider

- **A Digital Bomber.** The B-21 is a digital bomber. Northrop Grumman uses agile software development, advanced manufacturing techniques and digital engineering tools to help mitigate production risk on the B-21 program and enable modern sustainment practices. Six B-21 Raiders are in various stages of final assembly and test at Northrop Grumman's plant in Palmdale, Calif.

- **Cloud Technology.** Northrop Grumman and the Air Force successfully demonstrated the migration of B-21 ground systems data to a cloud environment. This demonstration included the development, deployment and test of B-21 data, including the B-21 digital twin, that will support B-21 operations and sustainment. This robust cloud-based digital infrastructure will result in a more maintainable and sustainable aircraft with lower-cost infrastructure.

- **Open Architecture.** To meet the evolving threat environment, the B-21 has been designed from day one for rapid upgradeability. Unlike earlier generation aircraft, the B-21 will not undergo block upgrades.

New technology, capabilities and weapons will be seamlessly incorporated through agile software upgrades and built-in hardware flexibility. This will ensure the B-21 Raider can continuously meet the evolving threat head on for decades to come.

- **A National Team.** Since contract award in 2015, Northrop Grumman has assembled a nationwide team to design, test and build the world's most advanced strike aircraft. The B-21 team includes more than 8,000 people from Northrop Grumman, industry partners and the Air Force. The team consists of more than 400 suppliers across 40 states.

- **Sustainment.** Long-term operations and sustainment affordability has been a B-21 program priority from the start. In partnership with the Air Force, our team has made maintainability an equally important requirement to stealth performance to ensure we're driving more affordable, predictable operations and sustainment outcomes.

*Courtesy of Northrop Grumman*

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 Website: [www.aerotechnews.com](http://www.aerotechnews.com)

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# STEM-ulation: Edwards stars in new video game

by Adam Bowles  
Edwards AFB, Calif.

DoD Starbase Edwards has created the very first interactive mobile video game starring Edwards Air Force Base, Calif.

“Battlecraft” inspired by the popular video game “Battleship” was created to teach kids about science, math, engineering and technology with a fun interactive experience.

“We created this game during the pandemic when we were not able to see our students in person,” Amira Flores, DoD Starbase Edwards Director explained. “The game is an extension on a lesson we already do at Starbase called Fly on the Ceiling. The game aligns with California mathematical standards and ISTE technology standards. So, the crew decided to produce this game to help students retain these important STEM principles in a unique way.”

With video games very much a part of today’s culture, what better way is there for the Starbase Edwards students to learn mathematical skills, coordinates and even Edwards AFB aviation based on what kids nowadays all know and love.

“Who doesn’t love video games,” Flores said. “We know based on re-



Air Force photograph

Students at DoD Starbase Edwards work on the Battlecraft video game that features Edwards Air Force Base, Calif.



search that students love to play with interactive games like Minecraft and Roblox. Based on that research, we decided that why not create a fun math game based on video games. They are actually playing and learning and don’t even know that they are learning.”

Truly starring Edwards AFB, the player gets to choose between different Edwards aircraft to use to play Battlecraft and choose between different levels of difficulty that challenges even the smartest of minds.

“Airplanes have always been a fascination for me,” Emily, a Tompkins Elementary School sixth grader said. “It’s really fun playing it. You have to figure out what they are trying to say and make it click in your brain to get it right and win.”

It is also tailored to Starbase Edwards using avatars based on actual team members.

“We created avatars based on our teachers so when the kids come and interact with us they can also interact with us at home,” Flores explained.

With the guidance of developers and graphic artists Alfred De La Costa, Roanna Victorio, Rahul Khurana and Jesse Krepelka, after one and a half years of hard work, programming, and learning how to code, the concept of Battlecraft came to life.

“We also talk with the students how we created this video game,” Flores explained. “We talk about the graphic design, the coding systems, and how long it takes to create a narrative and a story to the game.”

Try out Battlecraft for yourself and see if you have what it takes — <https://battlecraft.starbase-edwards.org/>. You must use a non-CAC enabled device.

## TPS hosts Korean pilots

The USAF Test Pilot School at Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., recently hosted the Republic of Korean Air Force for a technical exchange, sharing both flight experiences and cultural traditions. The goal is to make the students more well-rounded flight test professionals by exposure to different aircraft, control rooms, test centers, and test facilities. As part of the visit, the TPS planned and hosted an American Thanksgiving feast with all the traditional fixings for the ROKAF and USAF TPS team. The culmination of a successful technical exchange, a Thanksgiving meal together was the perfect ending for shared experiences in flight test and cultural traditions.



Air Force photographs by Adam Bowles





# Jet engine installed on NASA's Quesst

by **Matt Kamlet**  
 NASA Armstrong

NASA's quiet supersonic X-59 now has the engine that will power it in flight.

The installation of the F414-GE-100 engine took place at Lockheed Martin's Skunk Works facility in Palmdale, Calif., in November, marking a major milestone as the X-59 approaches the completion of its assembly.

The 13-foot-long engine from General Electric Aviation packs 22,000 pounds of propulsion energy and will power the X-59 as it flies at speeds up to Mach 1.4 and altitudes around 55,000 feet.

"The engine installation is the culmination of years of design and planning by the NASA, Lockheed Martin, and General Electric Aviation teams," said Ray Castner, NASA's propulsion performance lead for the X-59. "I am both impressed with and proud of this combined team that's spent the past few months developing the key procedures, which allowed for a smooth installation."

The X-59 team will follow the aircraft's assembly with a series of ground tests and ultimately, first flight in 2023.

NASA's X-59 is the centerpiece of the agency's Quesst mission. The aircraft is designed to reduce the sound of sonic booms, which occur when an aircraft flies at supersonic speeds, to a quiet sonic "thump." This will be demonstrated when NASA flies the X-59 over communities around the U.S. starting in 2025, with the goal of providing the data necessary to open the future to commercial supersonic flight over land, greatly reducing flight times.



NASA photograph by Carla Thomas

A GE Aviation F414-GE-100 engine is installed in NASA's quiet supersonic X-59 aircraft, at Lockheed Martin's Skunk Works facility in Palmdale, Calif. The 13-foot-long engine packs 22,000 pounds of propulsion energy and will power the X-59 to speeds up to Mach 1.4. Installation of the engine marks a major milestone as the X-59 nears assembly completion, taxi tests, and first flight.



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# Hometown Heroes



Navy photograph by PO3 Gray Gibson

## USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76) conducts flight operations

**PHILIPPINE SEA**—Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Equipment) Airman Micah Dayoub, from Lancaster, Calif., watches as an F/A-18E Super Hornet attached to the Royal Maces of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 27, lands on the flight deck of the U.S. Navy's only forward-deployed aircraft carrier, USS *Ronald Reagan* (CVN 76), in the Philippine Sea, Nov 4. The Royal Maces conduct carrier-based air strikes and strike force escort missions, as well as ship, battle group, and intelligence collection operations. *Ronald Reagan*, the flagship of Carrier Strike Group 5, provides a combat-ready force that protects and defends the United States, and supports alliances, partnerships and collective maritime interests in the Indo-Pacific region.

## USS Milius (DDG 69) Sails The Philippine Sea



Navy photograph by PO2 Richard Cho

**PHILIPPINE SEA**—Damage Controlman 3rd Class Peyton Salter, from Williamsville, Ill., and Ensign Michael Brooks, from Santa Clarita, Calif., participate in a damage control exercise on the flight deck aboard Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS *Milius* (DDG 69) while operating in the Philippine Sea, Oct. 27. *Milius* is assigned to Commander, Task Force 71/Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 15, the Navy's largest forward-deployed DESRON and the U.S. 7th Fleet's principal surface force.

## Marines Join NJCAA at Men's and Women's Cross-Country Championships

U.S. Marine Corps Capt. Steven Lamb, officer selection officer with Officer Selection Team Tallahassee, Fla., and Palmdale, Calif., native, speaks to athletes, coaches and athletics directors at the 2022 National Junior College Athletic Association DI and DII Men and Women's Cross-Country and Half-Marathon National Championships in Tallahassee, Fla., on Nov. 12, 2022. The Marine Corps partnered with the NJCAA to develop new relationships with Junior College athletic directors, coaches and other key personnel.



Marine Corps photograph by Lance Cpl. Gustavo Romero

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On this date...

# Eighty-one years later, a day that still 'lives in infamy'

Eighty-one years ago, on Dec. 7, 1941, the Imperial Japanese Navy Air Service launched an attack upon the United States — a neutral country at the time.

The attack against the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, occurred just before 8 a.m., Dec. 7 — a Sunday.

The attack led to the United States' formal entry into World War II the next day. Japan intended the attack as a preventive action to keep the U.S. Pacific Fleet from interfering with its planned military actions in Southeast Asia against overseas territories of the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and the United States. Over the course of seven hours there were coordinated Japanese attacks on the U.S.-held Philippines, Guam, Wake Island, and on the British Empire in Malaya, Singapore and Hong Kong.

The base was attacked by 353 Imperial Japanese aircraft (including fighters, level and dive bombers, and torpedo bombers) in two waves, launched from six aircraft carriers.

Of the eight U.S. Navy battleships present, all were damaged, with four sunk. All but USS *Arizona* were later raised, and six were returned to service and went on to fight in the war. The Japanese also sank or damaged three cruisers, three destroyers, an anti-aircraft training ship, and one minelayer.

A total of 188 U.S. aircraft were destroyed;

2,403 Americans were killed and 1,178 others were wounded. Important base installations such as the power station, dry dock, shipyard, maintenance, and fuel and torpedo storage facilities, as well as the submarine piers and headquarters building (also home of the intelligence section) were not attacked. Japanese losses were light: 29 aircraft and five midget submarines lost, and 64 servicemen killed. Kazuo Sakamaki, the commanding officer of one of the submarines, was captured.

Japan announced a declaration of war on the United States later that day, but the declaration was not delivered until the following day. The following day, Dec. 8, Congress declared war on Japan.

On Dec. 11, Germany and Italy each declared war on the U.S., which responded with a declaration of war against Germany and Italy.

There were numerous historical precedents for the unannounced military action by Japan, but the lack of any formal warning, particularly while peace negotiations were still apparently ongoing, led President Franklin D. Roosevelt to proclaim Dec. 7, 1941, "a date which will live in infamy."

Because the attack happened without a declaration of war and without explicit warning, the attack on Pearl Harbor was later judged in the Tokyo Trials to be a war crime.



Navy photograph

The USS *Arizona* (BB-39) burning after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Dec. 7, 1941. *Arizona* sunk at Pearl Harbor, and is resting on the harbor bottom. The supporting structure of the forward tripod mast has collapsed after the forward magazine exploded.



Navy photograph

A small boat rescues a seaman from the 31,800 ton USS *West Virginia* (BB-48), which is burning in the foreground. Smoke rolling out amidships shows where the most extensive damage occurred. Note the two men in the superstructure. The USS *Tennessee* (BB-43) is inboard.

Photograph taken from a Japanese plane during the torpedo attack on ships moored on both sides of Ford Island shortly after the beginning of the Pearl Harbor attack. View looks about east, with the supply depot, submarine base and fuel tank farm in the right center distance. A torpedo has just hit USS *West Virginia* on the far side of Ford Island (center).



Imperial Japanese Navy photograph



National Archives photograph

Left: President Franklin D. Roosevelt signs the declaration of war against Japan, in the wake of the attack on Pearl Harbor.



*On this date...*



**Dec. 3, 2005:** XCOR Aerospace flew its EZ-Rocket (a rocket-powered Long-EZ aircraft the company built as a demonstrator for its reusable rocket engines) from Calif., to California City, Calif., both in Kern County. Test pilot Dick Rutan made the flight, which lasted about 9 minutes and carried U.S. mail from the post office in Mojave to addresses in California City. This was the first time that a manned, rocket-powered aircraft was used to carry U.S. Mail.



**Dec. 3, 2017:** Expedition crew members on board the International Space Station hosted the first pizza party in space.



**Dec. 4, 1965:** Gemini 7 is launched. Gemini 7 was a 1965 crewed spaceflight in NASA's Gemini program. It was the fourth crewed Gemini flight, the 12th crewed American spaceflight, and the 21st crewed spaceflight including Soviet flights and X-15 flights above the Kármán line. The crew of Frank Borman and Jim Lovell spent nearly 14 days in space, making a total of 206 orbits. Their spacecraft was the passive target for the first crewed space rendezvous performed by the crew of Gemini 6A. Gemini 7 held the record for the longest space flight until Soyuz 9 in June 1970, and was the longest crewed space flight in U.S. history until the Skylab 2 mission of May and June 1973.



**Dec. 7, 1972:** Apollo 17, the last manned mission to the moon in the Apollo series, launched with astronauts Eugene A. Cernan, Ronald E. Evans, and Harrison H. Schmitt, lunar module pilot, on board. Apollo 17 was a "J-type mission" that included three days on the lunar surface, extended scientific capability, and the use of the third Lunar Roving Vehicle. Cernan, Evans and Schmitt returned to Earth on Dec. 19.



**Dec. 8, 1949:** Muroc Army Airfield in the California High Desert is renamed Edwards Air Force Base in honor of test pilot Capt. Glen Edwards who was killed in the 1948 crash of the YB-49 Flying Wing prototype. While the crash claimed the lives of five crewmembers, Edwards was the only one with a link to California. A ceremony was held at Edwards AFB to mark the name change, but the plaque misspelled Edwards first name and had to be replaced at a later date.



**Dec. 8, 1967:** The first Black NASA astronaut, Maj. Robert Henry Lawrence, Jr., died in the crash of a Lockheed F-104D Starfighter while practicing zoom landings with Maj. Harvey Royer at Edwards AFB, Calif. Lawrence was flying backseat on the mission as the instructor pilot for a flight test trainee learning the steep-descent glide technique intended for the cancelled Boeing X-20 Dyna-Soar program. Lawrence left behind a wife and one son.



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# Homesick soldiers, a Christmas story

by Bob Alvis  
special to Aerotech News

Each year when the holidays come around, those in the military experience a wide range of emotions.

Being the trained defender who serves his or her country, the demands of keeping focused on the mission leaves little room for heartfelt memories of home, days of youth, and the family life that took place before you raised your hand and swore an oath to leave all that behind.

Back during the Vietnam War, when the draft was still in effect, many of the young soldiers before deployment were busy in training and getting up to speed about what the world of combat was going to be like — especially in Vietnam. After deployment, soldiers were required to get up to speed pretty fast and transition from homelife to life in the jungles and foxholes without much time to consider separation.

Since it is December and the holidays are coming up, I wanted to share a few recollections from soldiers who found themselves in Vietnam suffering from being separated from family and the warmth of the Christmas holidays as they dealt with the heat and humidity of a country with no resemblance to the North Pole.

Dan was one of many suffering from the Vietnam experience and like many, the drama in one's life just added to the despair of the holidays, as Dan puts it:

"In December of 1971, I was stationed in Da Nang, Vietnam. I was drafted eight months earlier and had to leave my family and my girlfriend. We dated for over a year prior to my leaving, and we talked about marriage sometime in the future. She wrote me every day and I looked forward to her letters. Those letters are what I lived for each day. Well, about two weeks before Christmas her letters stopped coming. I was sure it was a mail issue, and her letters were just being delayed.

I never got another letter from her, and I was devastated! After a few weeks I learned, through her mother, that she found another boyfriend in college. I thought my life was over. I lost my appetite, I couldn't sleep, and I didn't want to talk to

anyone. I could not imagine my life without her, and no one could cheer me up."

Another soldier named Tim shared a similar feeling about the run up to the holidays with his recollection:

"I had been in Vietnam for about a month in 1970, and Christmas time was approaching. But it was hard for me to get into the holiday mood with the 100-degree heat and humidity, and the constant fear of not knowing if I might wake up dead some morning.

"There was a Christmas tree on the Intensive Care Unit. It was sent to us by a caring VFW club back home. The head nurse had purchased gifts for all the staff. I got a pen and pencil set, along with a "ditty bag" full of little things like shaving gear and note paper and candy from the Red Cross."

Then we have the story of Doc Bates, another one of those soldiers that understood the Christmas spirit and was doing his best to keep it alive for all those he served as a medic. One of those who served with him explained Doc's actions like this:

"Doc Bates came to Claymore Corner, a small primitive base 35 miles northwest of Saigon at the beginning of the 1967 Christmas season, at a time when the men there were especially down and gloomy. A few days after Bates' arrival, the new company commander, Howard "Dutch" McAllister, himself fighting depression as Christmas grew near, noticed a small, scruffy, artificial Christmas tree that sat on some flat rocks just outside the mess tent. He also noticed something peculiar going on around the tree every evening.

"While soldiers listlessly moved through the mess tent receiving their evening meal on steel trays, McAllister spied one soldier carefully brushing dust from the sad-looking Christmas tree each evening. Like everything else on the base, a fine patina of red dust from the day's truck convoys had collected on the tree, making the soldier's efforts basically useless. When McAllister finally drew near, he realized the man faithfully tending to the shabby tree was the company's senior medical aid man, Doc Bates. He was short and compact with a thatch of reddish-brown hair



Courtesy photograph

Dan ... during his time in Vietnam.

and a quick smile. McAllister approached the quiet medic, asking him, "What's this, Doc? First aid for the tree?" Bates laughed and replied, "Just trying to make myself count, Captain."

These three soldiers represent hundreds more who were suffering the same depression because the holidays and Christmas were anything but joyful and meaningful, being so far from home and family in a war zone.

Many of us never heard of a tradition in Vietnam that started to take place on Christmas Eve as homesick soldiers started a little tradition that for many brought a little peace of mind and hope for a better tomorrow in the land of jungles and rice patties. While doing some research I discovered that the tradition was carried out at many locations all over the country.

As Dan explains it here, I think we can understand how powerful a moment this was and to all the other soldiers during that time on a Christmas Eve so far from home.

"As Christmas approached, it just got worse. Then I found out that, instead of going to the big party they had for the 200 soldiers at our camp, I had to be on guard duty all night on Christmas Eve. On Christmas Eve, I walked to the armory feeling very lonely and depressed. I picked up my weapons, an M-16 rifle, some illumination flares, a heavy M-60 machine gun, plus several belts of ammo and dragged the equipment out to the camp perimeter for 12 hours of guard duty in a muddy trench four feet deep. I did have a radio that I could use to talk to the other soldiers nearby during the night in case we came under attack.

"I remember complaining to a buddy nearby on the radio about having to work on Christmas Eve, and we began to make small talk. My buddy then began to tell me what was going to happen later that night. He explained that it was a tradition in Vietnam, that at the stroke of midnight, every soldier on guard duty would take out an illumination flare and shoot it skyward.

"The flares were extremely bright and turned night into day while floating down on a small parachute. They burned for about one minute and lit up everything in your immediate vicinity. They were only supposed to be used if you saw or heard something unusual and had to see if the enemy was coming through the perimeter wire.

"As midnight approached, I was now thinking about what this 'event' would actually look like. I wondered if I would be able to see the flares fired from the many neighboring camps surrounding the city of Da Nang.

"When the clock struck midnight, I grabbed my flare and got ready. When flares started to be launched, I shot mine skyward with a loud roar. It streaked upwards to about 1,000 feet. I heard a 'pop' and the magnesium flare ignited, creating a dazzling white light so bright, it hurt your eyes to look directly at it.

"Suddenly, as far as I could see, thousands of these flares were seen shooting into the night sky all around the city of Da Nang. In seconds, the whole area was lit with an incredibly bright light. It was literally daylight at midnight. I have never again seen anything like this. I was stunned! I climbed out of my trench and looked all around me, 360 degrees. Immediately, the Christmas story from the Gospel of Luke 2:8-14 came to me.

"Then things went silent ... maybe it was my imagination, but I thought I heard people singing Christmas carols in the distance.

"I suddenly had a very different perspective. In that muddy trench at 19 years old, I had a wonderful peace come over me that Christmas Eve.

To this day, I will never forget that night, 12,000 miles from home, where I got a little taste of the glorious night the shepherds witnessed."

As I read more stories like this, I was thinking how the greatness of America was in the way we grew up back in those days, and how those old Christmas traditions from all across America and the joys of Christmas Eve services and Christmas Day with loved ones and friends, was the strength we drew on to help us overcome the fear of the unknown in such trying conditions.

Imagine the scene as soldiers paused, looked to those skies and had a brief moment with a glowing star that gave them peace and a chance to share a little bit of home with hundreds more who needed a star of their own.

God bless you all and have a happy and safe holiday season and I look forward to entertaining you with more stories in the coming year. So, for now, Bob out — until next year ...



Courtesy photographs

Left: Doc Bates during his time in Vietnam. Doc lost his life doing what he did best, in service to his fellow soldiers. Right: Doc's Christmas tree.





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# Engaging the Future: 412th SFS prepares JROTC cadets for service

by Adam Bowles  
Edwards AFB, Calif.

The 412th Security Forces Squadron at Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., invited almost 100 Air Force Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps cadets from Desert High School to their headquarters Nov. 4, 2022, to learn the way of the Defender.

This day was dedicated so that the JROTC cadets could gain as much knowledge as they could about being an Airman and a Defender so they could be fully prepared for future service.

“We need to give them an opportunity to be able to see what it’s like to be in the military,” Tech. Sgt. Michael Beck, Visitor Control Center NCOIC, 412th SFS explained. “If from this if we get a bunch of recruits in the offices the next couple of weeks, that’s great. Maybe one day they can become pilots, Security Forces, fire department, whatever the scenario may be but just give them an opportunity to see what its like.”

Air Force military police, otherwise known as Defenders, play a huge role in installation security and mission readiness. The event had the cadets separated into groups

ily have plans to be in the military until an experience changed her mindset and passion in life.

“Originally, I didn’t have a really good reason to be in JROTC,” Hewes said. “At school it counts for P.E. credits and I didn’t want to do P.E. But the more I did it, the more I realized this is what I want to do with my life and my dream is to be a Thunderbird.”

Hewes says she doesn’t let obstacles get in the way of pursuing her dream of being a USAF Thunderbirds pilot.

“I know it’s really hard since they have height requirements and I am on the short side, but I am trying really hard and training a lot. This is what I want to do when I am older. I want to go into the military. I want to serve my country and make sure everyone has an equal chance at everything,” Hewes said.

Tech. Sgt. Stephanie Marshall, Combat Arms NCOIC, 412th SFS explained that having the cadets see the weapons and armory up close is an important step for their preparation for future service.

“Weapons are so much a part of today’s culture,” Marshall said. “It’s not this thing where we just see it in the movies now. It’s in music videos and video games. So they



Air Force photograph by Adam Bowles

About 100 JROTC cadets from Desert High School came to learn the way of the Defender from the 412th Security Forces Squadron at Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., Nov. 4, 2022.

Even with the tough journey ahead of them, the cadets’ drive and passion shines through thanks to the 412th Security Forces’ knowledge and preparation.

“If you have the desire to do something with your life, don’t give

up because someone told you not to do it,” Hewes said. “Keep trying, no matter how hard or how impossible it might seem because everyone has their limits and if you break those limits then you can essentially do anything you want in your life.”

If you are interested to learn more about the Air Force JROTC program you can go to their website here [<https://www.af.mil/About-Us/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/104476/air-force-junior-reserve-officer-training-corps/>].



Air Force photograph by Adam Bowles

Cadet Eden Hewes battles Tech. Sgt. Quentin Humphries during defense training. About 100 JROTC cadets from Desert High School that came to learn the way of the Defender from the 412th Security Forces Squadron at Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., Nov. 4, 2022.

so the 412 SFS Defenders could best showcase their various capabilities, answer questions and allow the cadets an opportunity to participate in training exercises. The capabilities included showcasing Security Forces’ duty related gear, weapons and armory, and military working dog abilities.

“It’s important to understand the realism of what we do,” Staff Sgt. Kristian Cormier, Vehicle NCOIC, 412th SFS said. “They need to understand what the gear feels like, how heavy our weapon systems are, understanding what it takes to actually utilize it against an enemy. This is real.”

Sixteen-year-old Cadet Eden Hewes from Desert High School explained that she didn’t necessar-

know what these weapons systems are, but they don’t really have that understanding of how real they are. I wish somebody took the time like this to actually show me what these weapons are really capable of so I would have took the time to learn about them early on.”

These cadets may then graduate Desert High School and move on to the grueling task of basic training.

“Essentially basic training is meant to break you down to the lowest level,” Senior Airman John Shurelds, Entry Controller, 412th SFS explained. “Everyone gets broken down to the lowest level and then after a week, two weeks, three weeks, they start to build you back up to fit the mold of the Airman.”



Air Force photograph by Adam Bowles

Tech. Sgt. Quentin Humphries looks over a JROTC cadet during defense training. About 100 JROTC cadets from Desert High School came to learn the way of the Defender from the 412th Security Forces Squadron at Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., Nov. 4, 2022.





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# Cal Vet Secretary recalls Gulf War attack

by Dennis Anderson  
special to Aerotech News

**LANCASTER, Calif.**—They never knew what hit them. Of more than 40 Scud missiles fired at Saudi Arabia during the first Persian Gulf War, this was the one that got through.

Patriot Missiles, anti-missile missiles, were credited with knocking down most of the Scud missiles fired at cities in Israel and Saudi Arabia, but this one got through. A Patriot radar system was malfunctioning.

Debris was falling, and out in the flat horizon of sand and sun that is Saudi Arabia, a large warehouse shattered in a plume of black smoke. A Scud missile destroyed a barracks full of Americans three days before the war's end.

To Capt. Vito Imbasciani the scene that unfurled hovered between the unreal, and the

surreal. The first Persian Gulf War was almost over, but not before the missile launched by Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein hit the barracks for dozens of National Guard troops, killing 27 and wounding 40 more.

Imbasciani was an Army Medical Corps doctor in a remote posting with four medics to assist him. More than 30 years after the events, Imbasciani recalled what happened next.

"There were two dead Americans, both females, and that has affected me to this day," Imbasciani said, addressing an audience of about 300 veterans, friends and family members gathered Nov. 12 for the Veterans Military Ball. "Then there were five dead, then 10, and then 15," he said. "Then the wounded started coming in."

It would be 90 minutes before more doctors could be bused 17 miles from the Khobar Towers. Sirens screamed, with ambulances speeding the wounded to hospital care.

"We were there for an hour and a half before that," Imbasciani said. "I commandeered a mosque to secure the dead and posted a guard."

In the cruel annals of war, the 14th Quartermaster Detachment deployed from Pennsylvania only five days earlier. The unit had not even begun its mission. The war ended three days later on Feb. 28, 1991. Imbasciani notes of the 300 killed, he and his team personally dealt with "fully one fifth of the casualties from that war."

Imbasciani, who retired as a full colonel, serves as Secretary of the California Department of Veterans Affairs, CalVet. Dressed in immaculate officer's "mess dress" for the ball hosted by the Coffee4Vets non-profit, Imbasciani lauded the group for putting on the only formal evening event organized "by veterans, and for veterans."

Radio personality Greg Mack emceed the event that served as a salute to two "Greatest Generation" World War II veterans, Louis Moore and William Senso who received standing ovations. It was a night of finery, graced with gowns, and dress uniforms, and dinner jackets.



Photograph by Dennis Anderson

Guests enjoy the Veterans Military Ball Nov. 12, 2022, in Lancaster, Calif. The Ball is hosted by Coffee4Vets.

Lou Gonzales, Army veteran of the Cold War, was also honored for his contributions to building affordable homes for veterans through the CalVet funded program in Southern California through the non-profit builder, Homes4Families. Fifty-six such homes are being built in Palmdale.

"I never thought when I was a young guy in the Army that I would ever be able to do something like this," Gonzales said, accepting his award.

Also recognized was Walter Sapp, Lt. Cmdr. U.S. Coast Guard Ret. Sapp, an Agent Orange veteran of the Vietnam War's "brown water Navy" survived one of the most difficult bouts of COVID-19 from early in the pandemic. He

spent three months in VA hospital care.

Imbasciani oversees the largest state veterans' agency responsible for 1.6 million California vets. He noted that the federal VA manages health care, but California maintains eight homes for elder veterans, including the William J. "Pete" Knight Veterans Home in Lancaster.

The agency, he said, also offers generous educational benefits for veterans or their dependents. The agency also writes home loans for thousands of veterans, and "we don't just guarantee the loan," he said. CalVet funds the loans and has the lowest foreclosure rates.

"I won't dance around," Imbasciani quipped. "You host the nation's only Veterans Military Ball." Shortly after that, everyone danced.



Photograph by Dennis Anderson

CalVet Secretary Dr. Vito Imbasciani, a veteran of the first Gulf War, was the keynote speaker at the Veterans Military Ball, Nov. 12, 2022, in Lancaster, Calif.

## Edwards CivMil installs new leadership

by Dennis Anderson  
special to Aerotech News

**PALMDALE, Calif.**—Brig. Gen. Matthew Higer, who oversees just about everything happening at the "Flight Test Center of the Universe" in the Aerospace Valley, had a few things to note about national priorities, addressing an annual dinner of the Edwards Air Force Base Civilian Military Support Group.

Higer is commander of the 412th Test Wing at Edwards Air Force Base, Calif.

According to the etiquette and customs of the community group that supports activities at the home of the Air Force Test Center, everyone gathered Nov. 4, 2022, at the Hilton Garden Inn rose for the Pledge of Allegiance, hands over heart, the words duly recited from memory.

After administering installation of the new board members and officers of the support group, Higer noted with pride his role leading "Airmen and Guardians" of the Air Force and Space Force in his command.

"When I say I love 'The Aerospace Valley,' I mean that this is the 'Aero-

space Valley,'" Higer said. "I have never seen an antelope in the Antelope Valley," he quipped. "I have seen a lot of the airplanes that fly here."

Then he offered a few remarks about the Pledge of Allegiance.

Taking note that we are in a fraught moment for politics and civics nationally, coming into the 2022 mid-terms, and in the time to follow, he urged the dozens of civilian and military and veterans in the audience to study an earlier period of national turbulence in the decade leading up to the Civil War.

"I'd like everyone to take note of one word in the Pledge," the general said. "That word is 'indivisible.'"

The U.S. Civil War, sometimes still referred to as "The War Between The States," the attempt as President Abraham Lincoln notes to "divide up effects" and break up the United States, failed, "and that situation was corrected," Higer told the group. "And that is what 'one nation, indivisible,' means."

The general was careful to note that he was himself taking no position "left or right," or "red or blue," adding that was the appropriate position "for a bunch of reasons," including the U.S.

military's non-political responsibilities to the nation and the Flag that the nation represents.

He added a few words from the storied Chinese military strategist of antiquity, Sun Tsu. He observed that many were familiar with his work, and many might not be. But in Sun Tsu's treatises in warfare that the easiest victory for an adversary is when the enemy, through its own actions, defeats itself.

Those are the objectives of authoritarian, autocratic adversary states, the kind of governance experienced in Russia and China, he said.

"That is what Russia and China would like for us to do, to divide, and defeat ourselves," he said.

Higer spoke on an evening that he reserved to praise the Edwards Civilian Military Support Group, a community-based volunteer group that makes quality of life contributions to the personnel at Edwards, particularly the enlisted ranks.

The evening signaled completion of the three-year leadership of the group by Lisa Moulton, credited by past President Al Hoffman and incoming President Matthew Winheim, for success in keep-

ing the group together during two years of shutdowns and restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Moulton, unable to attend Friday, was greeted with applause and affection for her effectiveness leading the group.

"We believe in the importance of Edwards Air Force base in serving this nation," incoming Civ-Mil President Matthew Winheim said. "We are all volunteers, every single one of us, just like the service members that we serve. No one ever told us to serve. We just volunteered."

The group, Winheim said, requires volunteers, funding, and he added, "There are always going to be people because this Valley loves its Air Force Base. We want to be able to say we are ready and we can help."

He recalled his own enlisted service "as an airman at Edwards Air Force Base many years ago, an airman who needed a little help, and we heard about this thing called 'The Airman's Attic,' and got that help. Fast forward 30 years and this airman gets to serve with the organization that made that project happen."

The Airman's Attic is a no-cost shop

stocked with appliances, furniture, things to assist establishment of households for family moves to the base.

"There are people who need our service, and we are glad to do it," he concluded.

The year's "Unsung Hero" award went to Scott Cummings, and "Member of the Year," to longtime board member and retired Navy test pilot John Fergione.

Taking the oath as Class of 2025 Directors, Dennis Anderson, Judy Cooperberg, Allen Hoffman, Lisa Moulton, Terry Norris, Julie Swayze, with Board Officers for the next year, President Matthew Winheim, Vice President, Allen Hoffman, Secretary, Tom Weil, Treasurer, David Norris and Past President Lisa Moulton.

The group of dozens of active service, veterans, and civilian supporters were led by Edwards' Chief Master Sgt. Denisha Ward-Swanigan, 412th TW command chief, in a rousing chorus of the Air Force Song, and it was musically clear that "Nothing'll stop the U.S. Air Force!"



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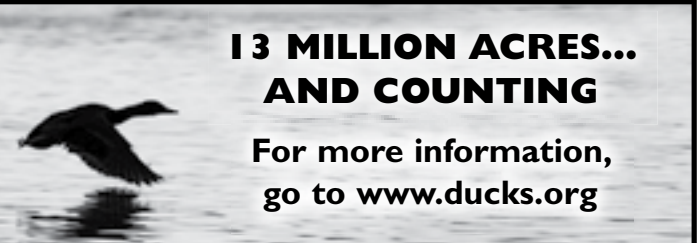


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