

THE BEACON

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE 124TH FIGHTER WING

SUMMER 2025



COMBAT EXCELLENCE - ALWAYS ON MISSION

FROM THE 124TH FIGHTER WING COMMANDER

COL. RYAN RICHARDSON

Thank you all for what you do! This wing has been running at a very high operations tempo for more than a year now, and I could not be prouder of what you accomplished. Between Reserve Component Period 4, Air Support Operations Squadron, Cyber Operations Squadron, Range Squadron exercises and the A-10 operations and maintenance team you accomplished amazing and historic things for our country. Your professionalism and dedication inspire me.

As we begin a new fiscal year, we will continue the 0-3-3 drill schedule to provide continuity for Drill Status Guardsmen and give commanders focused training time. We worked hard to keep drill on the first weekend, and built a schedule that will adequately support our wing wide Combat Readiness Inspection in May.

Our mission remains Combat Excellence. We operate in a dynamic environment with evolving threats to our Nation and State, and we anticipate changes to our flying mission and organizational structure in the coming years. These shifts will require us to adapt how we fight. This year, our priorities remain rooted in Mission, People, and Future — with sharper focus on Mission Readiness; Retain, Recruit, and Develop Airmen; and Posture for the Future.

My intent is to empower you: individual readiness is a personal responsibility – take ownership for it, strengthen the culture in your shops, and find ways to positively impact the wing. This is an effort at all levels, but together we will remain ready for whatever lies ahead, both here in Idaho and across the Air Force.

There are also some structural changes happening in the Air Force, that will shift the future of how we deploy. Instead of the crowd sourcing model, the Air Force is moving towards a Deployable Combat Wing construct. While this will shift how we route information and structure leadership, it will largely not affect the majority of airmen and their day-to-day jobs. Most importantly, these changes are impact-neutral for manning. While some positions may move on the manpower document, we should not lose any manning.

We will remain focused on readiness and our current mission sets, but we are preparing for the future. The wing is already investing in infrastructure design and developing training plans to ensure we are ready for the next mission. Change brings uncertainty, but it also gives us an opportunity to demonstrate the professionalism and excellence that define this organization.

I promise transparency and open communication as these changes unfold. While not all answers are known today, we will face them together. With your skill, commitment, and resilience, I am confident we will succeed, just as we always have.

There is no other team I would rather serve with than the 124th Fighter Wing. Thank you to you and your families for the sacrifices you make to keep our wing ready and our mission strong. I am proud to stand beside you as we write the next chapter of our history.



Go Guard, ATTACK!
COL. RICHARDSON

2026 PRIORITIES

124TH FIGHTER WING



MISSION READINESS

- Fully engage in the technical, mental, physical, and medical readiness of each organization
- Provide the opportunity for our Airmen to train to a challenging and realistic threat environment that is applicable to their mission sets

RETAIN, RECRUIT & DEVELOP OUR AIRMEN

- Foster pride and unit identity with clear expectations, career engagement, and family/employer support
- Partner with recruiters to fill mission-critical vacancies to maximize strength
- Empower Airmen with leadership opportunities and decision-making to grow technical experts and future leaders.



POSTURE FOR THE FUTURE

- Sustain and modernize facilities that support our current missions, while also aggressively designing and planning for the upgrades required for our future fighter
- Pursue partnerships and training opportunities to best prepare our Airmen for future missions.

124TH FIGHTER WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

WING COMMANDER

Col. Ryan Richardson

CHIEF OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Maj. Rebecca Solosabal

PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER

Maj. Bonnie Blakely

PUBLIC AFFAIRS SUPERINTENDENT

Senior Master Sgt. Joshua Allmaras

PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

Tech. Sgt. Mercedee Wilds

Tech. Sgt. Joseph Morgan

Staff Sgt. Jady Eisenbrandt

Airman 1st Class Sarah Welch

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ON THE COVER

Special Warfare Tactical Air Control Party Airmen assigned to the 124th Air Support Operations Squadron, Idaho Air National Guard, trained with Idaho Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawks during a three-day field training exercise including helicopter medical evacuation in Idaho City, Idaho, May 5 - 7, 2025. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Mercedee Wilds)

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124TH
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SOCIAL MEDIA LINKS

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YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE?

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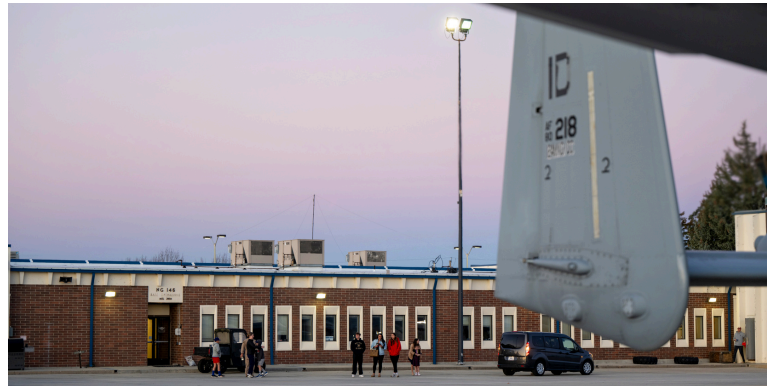




THE 124TH FIGHTER WING DEPLOYS

Photos by Tech. Sgt. Mercedee Wilds & Staff Sgt. Jadyn Eisenbrandt

Airmen and several A-10 Thunderbolt II's from the 124th Fighter Wing, Idaho Air National Guard, prepared to leave for a deployment to the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility March 29, 2025. The deployment was supported by more than 300 Airmen.





Golden light filters through the dense canopy of California's redwoods, casting long beams across the forest floor. The sound of birdsong and rustling leaves blend with the clatter of hammers and the buzz of power tools, an unexpected mix in such a peaceful place. But here, tucked among the towering trees, Airmen from the 124th Civil Engineer Squadron are hard at work.

For two weeks, June 16-27, 2025, this patch of forest is their job site, as they team up with the Redwoods National Park personnel and contractors for logging road removal and repair and cabin renovation at the Wolf Creek Education Center for an Innovative Readiness Training mission, contributing to the Redwoods Rising initiative.

"The 124th CES IRT training is in support of Redwoods Rising, a large-scale multi-year project," said Brian Crowell, Redwood National Park Engineer and project manager. "Part of the founding of the national park was a restoration of the forest ecosystem that was severely damaged by the logging practices pre 1970s."

The Department of Defense IRT program is unique in that it gives military units hands-on training while directly helping communities across the United States and its territories. This program is designed to boost deployment readiness and offers real-world experience in areas like construction, healthcare, transportation and cybersecurity, all while delivering lasting, meaningful support to local communities in need.

"This IRT has provided the 124th Civil Engineer Squadron with real-world experience and knowledge among several trades," said Senior Master Sergeant Donald Huffman, operations management superintendent assigned to the 124th CES and non commissioned officer in charge for this IRT. "The Airmen are provided multiple tasks for their crafts and build camaraderie when they assist each other in larger group projects."



"I just got out of tech school where I learned the bare bones of things, and this IRT has given me the opportunity to get more in-depth training."



The 124th CES is tasked with the restoration of cabins at the Wolf Creek Education Center, a facility where young students can spend the night and learn about nature in one of the two outdoor schoolhouses. They also conducted failing and inaccessible logging road removal and maintenance.

“The outdoor school has been operating since the 1970s, when the park was founded, as a place to teach elementary school aged kids about the forest ecosystem,” said Crowell. “The structures here were built in the '90s and are an integral part of the national park.”

Cabin restoration includes structural repairs, electrical upgrades and aesthetic enhancements, ensuring the cabins remain functional for future generations while also providing Airmen unique training opportunities,

“On top of the training and getting to know the people in my squadron on a more personal level outside of drill weekends, we get to help the community.”

For Airman 1st Class Brooklyn Steed, a structural specialist assigned to the 124th CES, this IRT mission offered hands-on experience and valuable knowledge from experienced teammates.

“I just got out of tech school where I learned the bare bones of things, and this IRT has given me the opportunity to get more in-depth training,” said Steed. “This morning, I was working on the roof, and one of the park’s civilian contractors taught me a whole new way of laying the shingles.”

As the last nails are driven and the cabins take shape under the redwood canopy, the Airmen of the 124th Civil Engineer Squadron will wrap up more than just a construction project.

“This has been such an amazing opportunity,” said Steed. “On top of the training and getting to know the people in my squadron on a more personal level outside of drill weekends, we get to help the community.”





REDWOODS RISING

FEEDING THE FIGHT

Story and photos by
Tech. Sgt. Mercedee Wilds

Tucked within the monstrous redwood trees of Northern California, a team of Services Airmen from the 124th Force Support Squadron, Idaho Air National Guard, is helping power the mission behind the Redwoods Rising Innovative Readiness Training one hot meal at a time, ultimately contributing to sharpening mission-critical skills, strengthening community ties and contributing to meaningful environmental restoration efforts.

From June 16-27, 2025, Idaho Air National Guardsmen from the 124th Civil Engineer Squadron worked side-by-side with Services personnel from Idaho and Puerto Rico to support infrastructure improvements for Wolf Creek Education Center, a local outdoor school during a two-week rotation within a greater 90-day Air National Guard effort. With limited resources in the remote environment, Services Airmen are providing breakfast, lunch, and dinner daily to ensure the mission keeps moving.

“Our job is to feed the civil engineers while they’re out there making the renovations,” said Tech. Sgt. Jordan Son, services Redwoods Rising IRT NCOIC with the Idaho Air National Guard. “We’re not just serving food, we’re building morale, keeping energy high, and being part of something bigger.”

In addition to the 124th Fighter Wing, Airmen from the 156th Force Support Squadron, Puerto Rico Air National Guard, are providing duration staff who ensure the 90-day IRT mission stays on track.



“We’re not just serving food, we’re building morale, keeping energy high, and being part of something bigger.”

“With a mission like this, you really have to get creative,” said Tech. Sgt. Adalberto Gonzalez, the Services NCOIC for duration staff. “We don’t just serve the food, it takes planning, inventory management, and a lot of coordination to make sure every Airman is getting a hot meal in a remote location like this.”

The partnership between the two-week Idaho rotation and the Puerto Rico duration staff, was strengthened through shared challenges and hands-on problem solving. Together, the teams adapt menus on the fly based on available frozen inventory and drive hours each week to ensure variety and quality.

“Every day, we check what’s in the freezer, and we build the menu from there,” said Son. “It’s more flexible than back home, but it forces us to think and work as a team.”

Beyond the food, the IRT experience offers a valuable opportunity for professional growth. Son says that working closely with different units and personalities in a rugged setting has helped sharpen leadership skills and build connections outside their normal roles.

“Even though we’re here to cook, we’re also being invited to help out with painting or concrete work,” Son said. “That kind of inclusion makes us feel part of the mission, and motivates us to bring that energy back to our home units.”

As renovations continue in the redwoods, Services Airmen remain a quiet but crucial backbone to the IRT’s success, fueling both stomachs and spirits along the way.

124TH FIGHTER WING RESOURCES

SCAN THE QR CODE FOR MORE INFORMATION



Sexual Assault Prevention & Response

Support and resources for Airmen and dependents



Retention Office Manager

Crosstraining, education, benefits, and bonuses



Inspector General Complaints Resolution

Prompt, fair responses to complaints at any level



Directors of Psychological Health

Behavioral health, and crisis resources

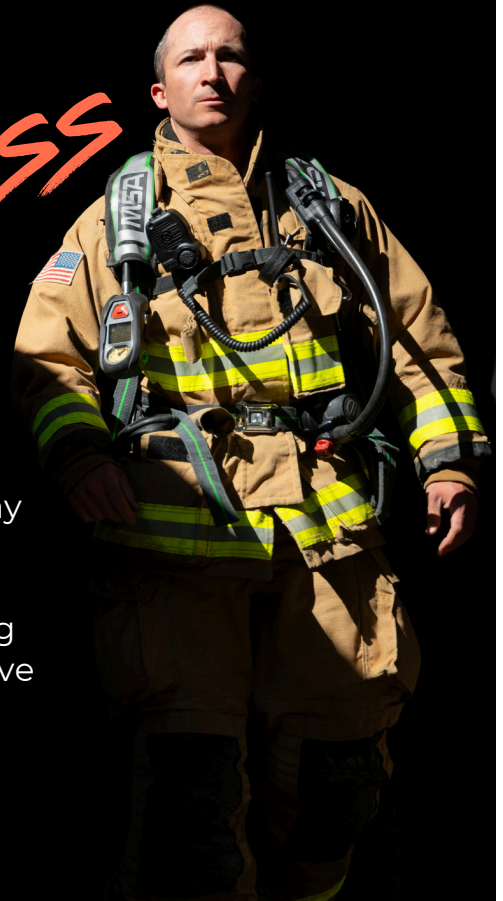


CONGRATS IDANG COMMAND CHIEF CHIEF MASTER SGT. JOSHUA ZIMMERLY

FIRE TRAINING IGNITES READINESS

Gowen Field Fire Department trains in a multi-day exercise at Gowen Field and Nampa Fire Service Training Center on June 6-7, 2025. Components included vehicle rescue extraction and containing live structural burns to prepare the unit to fight live fires and complete recovery operations.

Photos by Staff Sgt. Joseph Morgan, and
Airman 1st Class Sarah Welch







124TH MED GROUP NEW TRAINING FACILITY

The Idaho Air National Guard's 124th Medical Group held a ribbon cutting ceremony April 17, 2025, at Gowen Field in Boise, Idaho, to mark the opening of a new Medical Training Facility. The building, which provides laboratories, exam rooms, administrative areas, classrooms, record storage, and mobility-training storage for the 124th Fighter Wing's 124th Medical Group, was completed in March 2025.





Idaho Air National Guard

Airman & Family **READINESS PROGRAM**

The Airmen & Family Readiness Program (AFRP) serves as a one-stop information and referral center for single, married, active-duty, Guard, Reserves, civilians who work on base, and retired members as well as their families. One of its major functions is to ensure personnel and their families are connected with the appropriate service on and off site.



SERVICES & ACTIVITIES PROVIDED

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| ✓ Deployment Preparation & Reintegration | ✓ Volunteer Opportunities |
| ✓ Personal and Family Readiness | ✓ Career Development |
| ✓ Child & Youth Services | ✓ Transition to Civilian Life |
| ✓ Air Force Aid Society | ✓ Casualty Assistance |
| ✓ Financial Readiness & Emergency Assistance | ✓ Exceptional Family Member Support |

FOR MORE INFO, CONTACT MRS. HEATHER ECHOLS
Airman and Family Readiness Program Manager



Phone: 208-422-5470
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THE RESILIENCE OF MILITARY FAMILIES

HONORING MILITARY CHILDREN

Story and photos by Tech. Sgt. Mercedee Wilds

April marks the Department of Defense's annual observance of the Month of the Military Child, a time to recognize the unique challenges and enduring resilience of the children of military members. With over 1.6 million military children in the United States, these young individuals often navigate frequent relocations, parental deployments, and the complexities of military life.

As the Idaho Air National Guard observes the Month of the Military Child, families like that of Tech. Sgt. Megan Brasley are reminded of the unique challenges and sacrifices military children endure.

Brasley, currently deployed as an aircraft vehicle data operations specialist in the 124th Maintenance Group Plans and Scheduling office, has been in the Air National Guard for 14 years. This marks her third deployment, but her first with young children. Her sons, Ryker, 4, and Rhett, 2, are the heart of her experience.

"The hardest part of being away is missing the everyday moments—bedtime stories, family meals, and backyard play," Brasley shared. "Not being there when they get hurt or sick, and missing their hugs and cuddles, is incredibly difficult."

To help her boys cope with her absence, Brasley and her husband Jeff worked hard to prepare them emotionally. They made Build-A-Bears with recorded messages from Brasley and read them a book called *The Invisible String*, which teaches that love connects people even when they are far apart. A digital photo frame has also helped her stay connected by allowing Brasley to send pictures of her day, letting her children feel a part of her life while she is deployed.

Despite the challenges, Brasley remains committed to her role and finds strength in her children's resilience. "I hope they know how loved they are," she said. "Everything I do is for them, and I hope they are proud of me and themselves for their resilience."

Brasley's experience resonates with the larger theme of the Month of the Military Child, which celebrates the resilience, strength, and sacrifices of military children. According to Heather Echols, the IDANG's Airman and Family Readiness program manager, military children often face emotional challenges due to the frequent separations from their parents.

Echols emphasizes the importance of supporting military families year-round. "Military children are the silent heroes of the military," Echols remarked. "They endure the sacrifices of deployments and the uncertainty of not knowing when their parent will return. They are strong, flexible, and able to thrive in an ever-changing environment."



Echols and her team provide vital support to military families, offering resources for financial assistance, counseling, and deployment support. They also organize events like the Parent-Child Ball, Easter Egg Hunts, and Kids Holiday Parties to foster community and connection.

The Month of the Military Child, celebrated by The Department of Defense each April since 1986, serves as a reminder of the importance of supporting these young family members. The IDANG recognizes this month through initiatives like "Purple Up!" which encourages members to wear purple to show support for military children. The color purple symbolizes all branches of the military, combining Army green, Marine Corps red, and Coast Guard, Navy, Air Force, and Space Force blue.

As families, like the Brasleys, navigate the complexities of military life, their stories serve as a testament to the strength and resilience of military children. Through support, preparation, and love, these young individuals continue to thrive, embodying the enduring spirit of military families.



TACPS PUSH LIMITS IN JOINT FIELD TRAINING

Story by Tech Sgt. Mercedee Wilds

Photos by Tech. Sgt. Mercedee Wilds, Staff Sgt. Jady Eisenbrandt and Airman 1st Class Sarah Welch

The sounds of rotor blades thumped overhead as the rotor wash of a UH-60 Black Hawk kicked up rocks and debris that slammed into the Airmen waiting during a simulated live medevac. Tactical Air Control Party Airmen from the 124th Air Support Operations Squadron, Idaho Air National Guard, gripped sked stretchers and moved Survivor Rescue and Agility Training Dummies, which simulated moving wounded teammates across steep terrain.

The three-day field training exercise, held in the remote mountains of Southwestern Idaho, May 5-7, 2025, was designed to replicate the harsh realities of combat search and rescue in Indo-Pacific environments. It combined Tactical Combat Casualty Care, low-angle rope rescue familiarization, extended field care, and live helicopter integration to push both the tactical and medical readiness of the unit.

“The intent behind this training is a tactical medicine pillar focused in mountainous terrain where extended field care is required, replicating operations in the Indo-Pacific region,” said Tech. Sgt. Griffin Langiano, a TACP/JTAC instructor and the lead planner for the exercise. “Whether we’re working with sister services or unilaterally on an Air Force team, there’s always a need to be proficient in life-saving care.”

The training was the result of nearly three months of coordination, bringing together outside agencies, rotary-wing assets, and medical experts. One of the most significant additions to this cycle was the integration of trauma surgeons from the Air National Guard's C-STARS (Center for Sustainment of Trauma and Readiness Skills) program.



“My role was to help coordinate our group of trauma surgeons with the TACP team,” said Lt. Col. Denise Winters, a trauma surgeon at St. Louis University Hospital and ANG program director with C-STARS, Joint Force Headquarters, Missouri Air National Guard. “We were tasked to look at their SOPs (standard operating procedures), identify any gaps, and provide hands-on training for skills they may not regularly use, such as chest tubes, cricothyrotomies and prolonged care interventions.”

For Winters and her team, the exercise wasn't just an opportunity to teach, it was a chance to better understand the conditions frontline Airmen face and adapt their own approach to Air Force-wide trauma care.

“We gained a greater appreciation for what people are experiencing in the field, their resource limitations and the real risks they encounter,” Winters said. “That helps us when we go back and have conversations about how to build better training for the broader Air Force.”

For newer TACP members, like Senior Airman Christian Moak, the training marked a first-time experience with medical procedures that go beyond the scope of standard battlefield care.

“Learning how to do a chest tube or a cric, those aren’t things we usually get into. That’s usually the medic’s job,” said Moak. “But the truth is, we don’t always have a medic around. This training gave us the confidence to step in and do something when someone needs help.”

Moak, who completed his initial JTAC evaluation in September 2023, said the hands-on aspect of the weekend brought their baseline knowledge to the next level. “It’s one thing to learn this stuff in a classroom. It’s another to do it under stress, in the field, with rotors going, mud everywhere, and limited sleep.”

That realism was intentional. Langiano noted that planning the training for mountainous terrain during spring, when snow and mud are still in play, was one of the biggest logistical challenges.

“We had to be deliberate with site selection and time of year,” Langiano said. “But that’s part of it. We’re training for austere, complex environments, places we could very well find ourselves in the future fight.”

And that fight, many believe, will demand more than just kinetic skill sets.

“These Airmen aren’t just precision airstrikers, they’re communicators, medics, problem-solvers,” said Winters. “What impressed me the most was how quickly they absorbed the medical interventions we introduced and asked the right questions to understand the ‘why’ behind it.”

Throughout the weekend, camaraderie and focus carried the team through late nights, camping, cold mornings, and demanding evolutions. Whether trekking steep hills with rescue litters or improvising splints with limited gear, the TACP team adapted, improvised, and performed.

“It’s always about pushing the standard,” Langiano said. “This was just one step. From here, we’re building full-mission profiles with different terrain, different times of day, and more complex problem sets.”

Because in the end, whether it’s a battlefield, a mountain ridge, or a remote island in the Pacific, the mission, and the lives it protects, requires nothing less.







A NEW ERA IN EXPERTISE

IDAHO AIR NATIONAL GUARD PREPARES CANDIDATES FOR WARRANT OFFICER TRAINING SCHOOL

Three warrant officer candidates assigned to the 124th Fighter Wing's 224th Cyber Operations Squadron participated in a Warrant Officer Candidate Pinning Ceremony at Gowen Field, Idaho, March 21, 2025.

Gowen Field is home to both Army and Air National Guard units. As the Air Force develops its own heritage surrounding the warrant officer program, the Idaho Air National Guard looks to the Army and its decades of tradition, including a ceremonial pinning.

Master Sgt. Travis Anderson, Senior Master Sgt. Jason Swenson and Tech. Sgt. Ed Landis, cyber warfare operators assigned to the 224th COS, were all selected to participate in the USAF's new Warrant Officer Training School program, focused on the cyber operations career field.

"These three members were chosen because they were the most technically skilled members of the 224th COS," said Lt. Col. Kyle Erickson, 224th COS commander. "Of all the cyber operators in the COS, these three are the ones that every other operator will go to when they are seeking help or guidance for a tough problem. Their appointment to the Warrant Officer ranks solidifies them as technical experts."

Bridging this gap between the enlisted and officer ranks will fill a critical role in the wing as every sector stands to benefit from the knowledge of experts in the cyber operations career field.

"The COS doesn't currently have a lot of visibility across the wing," said Landis. "We're hopeful this will help us better integrate with the rest of the wing and share our expertise to make a more immediate impact in our day-to-day operations."

In the spring of 2024, the United States Air Force announced plans to reinstate its warrant officer program. The program was retired in the late 1950s, shortly after the USAF branched off from the United States Army.

Retired Air Force Col. Dale J. Hendry, who achieved the rank of CW2 before commissioning and was one of the IDANG's last warrant officers, spoke at the pinning ceremony.

"I'm extremely honored to have been a part of the National Guard, the United States Air Force, to have been a warrant officer and to be an American," said Hendry, addressing the warrant officer candidates. "Now it's your job to make sure that never changes. I challenge you to always remember you're living in the greatest country in the history of the world. While we've always had our problems, your job is to ensure those problems only result in the best anticipated lives we could hope to lead."

Upon graduation, candidates for the WOTS program are set to return this fall to begin a legacy - a new chapter of warrant officer service and expertise to the Idaho Air National Guard.

Story & photos by Staff Sgt. Joseph Morgan



124TH SECURITY FORCES

TAKES DRILL TO THE FIELD

Story and photos by
Staff Sgt. Jady Eisenbrandt

Lethality isn't just a buzzword for the Airmen of the 124th Fighter Wing's Security Forces Squadron, it's a mindset.

During a field training exercise held at the Saylor Creek Range, a part of the Mountain Home Range Training Complex in Southwest Idaho, on June 6, 2025, SFS Airmen honed their skills in simulated combat scenarios and a heavy weapons qualification. The day's activities were designed to test their tactical readiness and reinforce the squadron's ability to eliminate threats with speed and precision.

"You can have the perfect plan," said Tech. Sgt. Nicholas Loyd, the flight chief overseeing the day's training. "But as soon as you hit the ground, things can change. You have to adapt and push forward to complete the mission."





To start the day, Airmen operated from a simulated forward operating base, testing their ability to react quickly with limited resources. Teams engaged in force-on-force scenarios using weapons loaded with simulation rounds. Each scenario had them maneuvering through ambushes and assaults designed to mimic peer-to-peer conflict environments.

“When you’re actually getting hit with simulation rounds, it hits differently,” said Staff Sgt. Randy Talamantez, a fire team leader and seasoned SFS Airman with prior service in both the U.S. Marine Corps and Army. “It lets you know where you messed up and then you adjust.”



The training wasn’t just about firepower, it was about mental toughness, adaptability, and trust.

“We definitely took a loss on the first push from the opposing force,” Talamantez said. “But each time we went up against them, we adapted and overcame. You could see the improvement with every iteration.”

At the end of the day, Airmen trained side by side with experienced noncommissioned officers, learning how to operate heavy weapons systems which included the M240 machine gun, M249 Squad Automatic Weapon, and Mk19 grenade launcher.





“Some of us are getting a refresher, others are getting their first hands-on time,” Talamantez said. “Either way, it’s building confidence and that’s key when you’re downrange.”

For both Loyd and Talamantez, the concept of lethality is more than just firepower, it’s about mindset, precision, and decision-making under stress.

“Lethality means being a solid weapon for the U.S.,” Loyd said. “That doesn’t just mean pulling a trigger. It’s strategic thinking, marksmanship, and being able to outfight someone with the same tools you have.”

As global threats shift toward near peer adversaries, nations with comparable weaponry and training, the need for adaptable and combat-ready Airmen has never been greater.





124th Fighter Wing

HONORARY COMMANDER

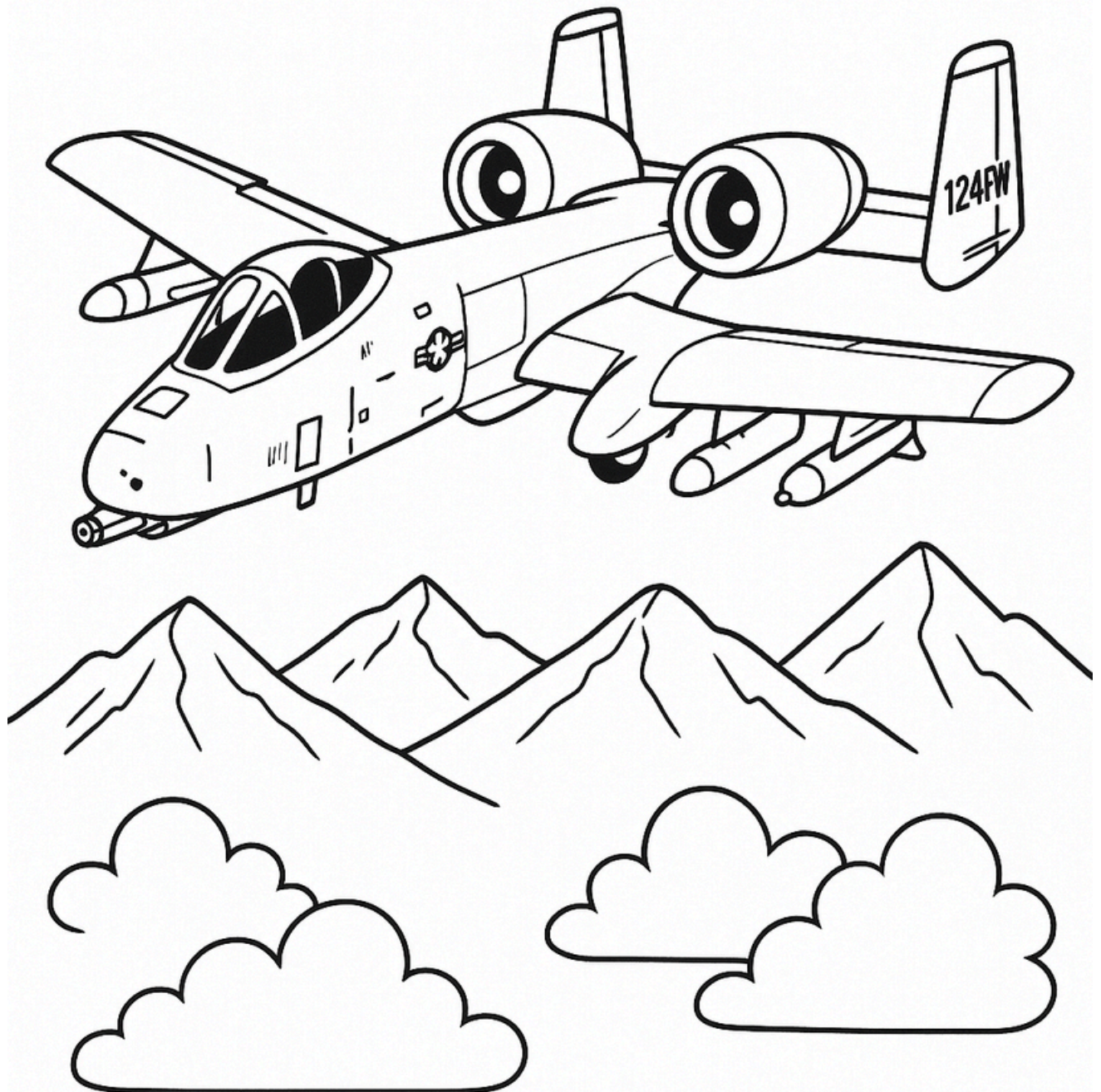
CHANGE OF COMMAND CEREMONY

Welcome Honorary Commanders!

Multiple squadrons and groups from the 124th Fighter Wing welcomed new Honorary Commanders! The Honorary Commanders' program is designed to strengthen relations between the military and civilian communities with local civilian leaders throughout the state of Idaho.



124TH FIGHTER WING





WELCOME HOME DEPLOYERS!





124th Fighter Wing
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