



The United States Army Parachute Team

Media Advisory 2026



U.S. ARMY

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The U.S. Army Parachute Team, known as the Golden Knights, has amassed innumerable achievement milestones throughout its more than 60-year history, boasting over 348 world records and 4,600 competition medals. For many, the name “Golden Knights” is synonymous with daring stunts witnessed at airshows and professional sporting events across all 50 states.

To the sport skydiving community, Golden Knights represent the top competitors they’ve faced in national and world-level competitions. Today, the Golden Knights continue their tradition of excellence by connecting Americans everywhere with their Army through stunning displays of aerial expertise.

TEAM HISTORY

In 1959, the Strategic Air Command Parachute Team, or STRAC, was formed by nineteen Soldiers, hand-selected from various Airborne units. Brig. Gen. Joseph Stillwell Jr. gathered the Soldiers to compete in the new sport of skydiving that was then dominated by the Soviet Union. That year, the newly formed All-Army team represented the United States on the international stage and was later designated the United States Army Parachute Team by the Department of Defense in 1961. By the following year, the team had earned their current moniker: the “Golden Knights” signified by the number of gold medals won in international competition and their dominance of the skies.

Today, the team is one of four DoD-sanctioned aerial demonstration teams, alongside the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds, U.S. Navy Blue Angels, and U.S. Navy Parachute Team.

Since their inception, the Golden Knights have performed more than 21,000 shows in all 50 states and 48 countries through spectacular live parachute demonstrations, reaching an average of 60,000 people per show and a third of the nation annually. The team’s aviators and parachutists conduct presentations and speaking engagements at professional and collegiate sporting events, schools, and community activities to educate the public and prospective applicants about the benefits of Army service.



Members of the Black Demonstration team conduct a tri-by-side canopy formation.
Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Brandon Guevara

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ATTN: US Army Parachute Team, Golden Knights
tr-usarec-meb-usapt-media_relations@army.mil

MISSION AND ORGANIZATION

As aerial ambassadors of the U.S. Army, the Golden Knights' mission is to conduct elite parachute demonstrations, competitions, and tandem operations anywhere they are called upon to promote opportunities for service in the Army. Because Soldiers often serve abroad away from the public eye, many have little exposure to our nation's military services. The Golden Knights provide a unique look into the life of a Soldier as the team tours cities and towns around the country. Team members are Soldiers first; they must learn one of over 150 job specialties and serve in the Army before applying to the parachute team. Because of their diversity of backgrounds and specialties, the team represents an array of skills and can speak knowledgeably on many career paths available in the Army.

The team is organized under the U.S. Army Marketing and Engagement Brigade and serves as a national asset for the U.S. Army Recruiting Command. The Golden Knights are made up of more than one hundred men and women organized into six sections: Headquarters Section, Aviation Detachment, Competition Team, Black and Gold Demonstration Teams (named after the Army colors), and Tandem Team.



Golden Knights train their canopy flight over Homestead Air Reserve Base, Fla.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Nick Orozco



Members of the Gold Demonstration Team exit that Dash-8 aircraft.
Photo by Staff Sgt. Daniel Gerlach

HEADQUARTERS SECTION

The battalion headquarters is responsible for everything that happens before show time including prioritizing and scheduling show requests, managing safety and training, budget and logistics, equipment acquisition and maintenance, personnel administration, network communications, medical readiness, media operations, and public relations. Everyone has a central role to play to ensure each mission is performed to the Golden Knight standard.



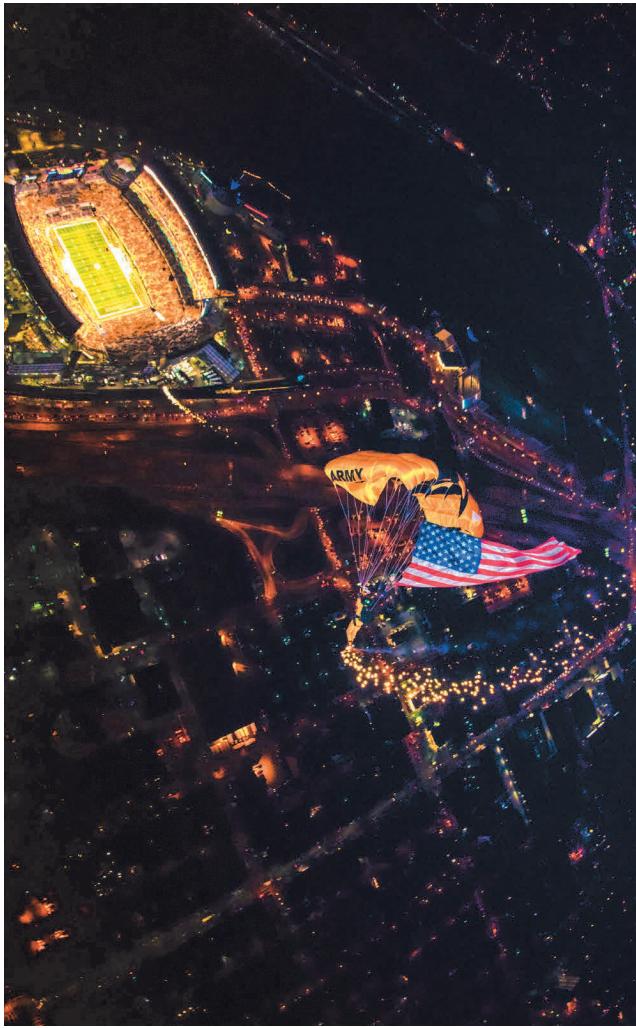
Sgt. Sloan Kanat salutes the audience after a demonstration jump for a captivated audience at the Chicago Air and Water Show. Photo by DAC Megan Hackett

THE DEMONSTRATION TEAMS

When most people talk about the Golden Knights, they are often referring to Black or Gold Demonstration Teams. Millions of people each year encounter the Golden Knights at one of 70 venues across the nation and abroad each year. These men and women share their Army stories with populations who may have had little to no previous interaction with a Soldier.

Preparation for each show begins hours before the performance. Smoke and pyrotechnics are rigged, parachutes and drop flags packed, equipment and manifests checked, weather evaluated, briefings given, maneuvers assigned, interviews recorded, and safety briefings given to designated media riders for the day. Once on site, the “Dash 8” takes off 30 minutes prior to time-on-target. Pilots establish their flight patterns, black and gold wind drift indicators are dropped and recorded, and the plane climbs to altitude. Demonstration Teams perform a wide variety of maneuvers at altitudes as low as 2,000 and as high as 12,500 feet. Team videographers (who are trained to capture maneuvers utilizing helmet-mounted video and still cameras) can be identified flying above or navigating their canopies around group freefall and canopy formations for training debriefs and media content.

**** For additional information on specific maneuvers that will be performed for the 2026 demonstration season and beyond, see below Supplementary Information****



Members of the demonstration team fly the American flag and night pyrotechnics into Pittsburgh, Pa. Steelers Stadium, Heinz Field.



Members of the United States Army Parachute Team display a mass formation during winter training.



Members of the United States Army Parchute Team display a tri-by-side formation during winter training.



Sgt. 1st Class Dan Osorio takes a passenger for a tandem over Moapa Valley, Nev. (Top and Bottom photos)



Staff Sgt. Jason Bauder takes his passenger on a tandem skydive.



Sgt. 1st Class Jake Kerkow with a tandem passenger just after exiting the aircraft.

TANDEM TEAM

Tandem Team is selected from highly qualified parachutists on the demonstration teams and leads U.S. Army Recruiting Command's Tandem Orientation Program (TOP). TOP is a powerful outreach tool that introduces educators, first responders, community leaders, public officials, professional athletes, and celebrities to the thrill of tandem skydiving for the first time with some of the most professional non-commissioned officers in the U.S. Army. The sought-after program enables participants to spend the day with Tandem Team Soldiers from all walks of life during a once-in-a-lifetime experience from 12,500 feet altitude. Key community partners are invited by local recruiting battalions to take part in the experience where participants find themselves impressed by the courage, discipline, teamwork, and expertise demonstrated by their tandem instructors and videographers. Guests often arrive with butterflies and a bit of apprehension, and leave with stories, a customized media package, and a new appreciation for the education, training, and leader development available in the Army.

A few recognized passengers who have jumped with the tandem team include the 41st President of the United States, George Herbert Walker Bush and his granddaughter, Jenna Bush-Hager, former UFC fighters Dominick Cruz and Chuck Lidell, former NFL player/football commentator Nate Burleson, actors Clive Standen and Lucy Martin from the TV show "Vikings", "Dirty Jobs" host Mike Rowe, Vince Vaughn, NFL Hall-of-Famer Hines Ward, Geraldo Rivera, Chuck Norris, Bill Murray, the cast members of the TV show "The Unit," Dennis Haysbert and Robert Patrick of the New Orleans Saints, and quarterback Drew Brees.



Staff Sgt. John Pemberton videos tandem pair exiting the Twin Otter over Homestead, Fla.

Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jonathan Lopez

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The 4-way formation competition teams exits a Twin Otter for a training jump over Laurinburg, N.C.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Skyler Romberg



Soldiers from the demonstration team fly a canopy relative work maneuver over Homestead Air Reserve Base, Fla. during the parachute team's Annual Certification Cycle.

Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Nahu Ramirez

COMPETITION TEAM

The Golden Knights competition team was recognized in 2023 by the Skydiving Hall of Fame as the winningest team in U.S. parachuting history for their consistent accolades in parachuting competitions. Over the past 60 years, the Competition Team has shattered approximately 350 individual civilian and military world records at international competitions like the Military World Games or Conseil International du Sports Militaire (CISM).

Located on Fort Bragg, N.C., the front half of the Golden Knight Headquarters houses the team museum and showcases the competition team's accomplishments. The team is revered not only for its fierce reputation, but also its spirit of camaraderie and sportsmanship. The team has competed in disciplines such as canopy piloting, canopy relative work, free-fall formation skydiving, target accuracy, and vertical formation skydiving. They sport an impressive record of over 490 national champion, 130 world champion, 50 national, and 10 world team titles.



The Golden Knights fly in the Army Star flag as part of their demonstration performance.

Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Brandon Guevara

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AVIATION DETACHMENT

The aviation detachment, known as “Team Six,” is the backbone of the parachute team and is composed of some of the finest fixed-wing aviators and crew members in the Army. These officers, warrant officers, Soldiers, and Department of the Army Civilians ensure all teams arrive safely to their destinations anywhere in the country. The aviation detachment has flown more than 114,000 hours under the most demanding weather, time constraints, and air traffic conditions. The pilots and crew members maintain a fleet of five aircraft: Two DHC-8 / C-147A medium transport aircraft specially modified for paratroop operations, and three DHC-6-400 Twin Otters, also known within the Army as the UV-18. No other section tops Team Six’s professionalism, experience, and make-it-happen attitude.



Staff Sgt. Nathan Chavez conducts aircraft pre-flight inspection for the DHC-8 aircraft in Cleveland, Ohio.



One of the the C-147A (DHC-8 315) aircraft in USAPT's fleet.



Aerial videographer, Staff Sgt. Jason Bauder, lands his parachute after capturing imagery of a tandem skydive in Shelton, Wash.

Demonstration Maneuvers: The Golden Knights are excited to present a modernized aerial demonstration with a lineup of new maneuvers. Team Leaders customize the jump sequence based on weather, landing area, and time allotted by air show directors and air bosses. Maneuvers may include:

- Narrator Pass
- Parachute Stack Out
- Freefall Mass Formation
- Baton Pass
- Drop Flag
- Cutaway
- Advanced Canopy Relative Work
- High-Performance Canopy Landings
- Wingsuit Tracking- Wingsuits allow trained parachutists to glide through the air utilizing a specially designed suit that utilizes parallel cells to make the wing rigid when flown. This allows the jumper to generate much greater lift to extend their horizontal range and flight time significantly compared to a traditional skydive.
- Synchronized Canopy Flocking
- Line Up with Aircraft Fly By

Please see the “Golden Knights, US Army Parachute Team” YouTube channel, Playlist: “Maneuvers” for B-Roll video of each maneuver.

[https://youtube.com/playlist?
list=PLpPhFRekNYa024yvmR9VdShVqCK30iKmS
&si=eU1ohPmS0TeWQWNC](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLpPhFRekNYa024yvmR9VdShVqCK30iKmS&si=eU1ohPmS0TeWQWNC)

Exhibitions

Less common exhibitions performed for select events conducted by Golden Knights include high-performance canopy piloting and synchronized wingsuit flight. Members are drawn from other teams based on the specialized skills required to fulfill mission requests. Canopy piloting, also known as “swooping” utilizes high-performance canopies and a series of precision spiraling turns that build speed and power into the final “swoop” across the ground.

ABE

Army Bodyflight Experience (ABE) provides the feeling of skydiving in a safe and controlled environment via the use of vertical wind tunnels. Participants will receive instructions from active-duty Army Golden Knights and certified wind tunnel instructors who are accredited by the International Bodyflight Association. The program integrates a STEM class, conducted by a STEM Educator on the flight deck for all participants, which includes basic tunnel operation, STEM concepts, and a physics demonstration.



Sgt. 1st Class Nick Birkner guides a student at an ABE event.

To find us on social media, follow any of the items below:

<https://linktr.ee/USArmyParachuteTeam>

 Golden Knights, U.S. Army Parachute Team

 @armygoldenknights

 U.S. Army Golden Knights



Staff Sgt. Mark Pierce performs a high performance canopy maneuver at a competition in Eloy, Ariz.

Wrap Up

These professional Soldiers proudly represent the 150+ career pathways available in the Army. To learn about the many opportunities available in today's Army visit <https://www.goarmy.com/> or download the U.S. Army Career Navigator app.

For information about the Golden Knights, please visit <https://www.goarmy.com/golden-knights> or https://recruiting.army.mil/golden_knights/

