

Videmus Omnia

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE 55TH WING ASSOCIATION



DECEMBER 2024



WARHAWK NATION 2024



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Newsletter Inputs Encouraged!

The V.O. tends to be Offutt-centric, but please help us diversify coverage by sending articles, letters and photos to the editor at:
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NEWS & NOTES

SHOPPING

Please visit the association website to see all items!



Long Sleeve 55th Association Shirt
Red, White, Navy Blue. (S-XXXL). Cost \$63
+ \$6.50 Shipping (\$69.50).

Short Sleeve 55th Association Polos
White, Red, Royal Blue, Dark Navy. (S-XXXL).
Cost \$40 + \$6.50 Shipping (\$46.50).

Long Sleeve 55th Association ¼ Zip Pullovers
White, Royal Blue, Red, Navy, Grey (S-XXXL).
Cost \$43 + \$6.50 Shipping (\$49.50).

In addition, there are also hats and tumblers available.

Questions? Please contact Denny Haun at papahaun@cox.net
Denny Haun, 918 Oxford Circle Papillion, NE, 68046
Please make checks for the full amount of purchase to: 55th Wing Association.



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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

(Contact Information Update)

Name _____ Spouse _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

email: _____

Are you a Veteran? Yes No Branch of Service _____
(Dates of Service) _____

Are you a former member of the 55th Strat Recon Wing? _____

When were you a member of the 55th Strat Recon Wing? _____
(Dates of Service)

Are you a current or former member of the 55th Wing? _____

When were you a member of the 55th Wing? _____
(Dates of Service)

Which 55th Unit(s) were you a member? _____

Are you on active duty? If so, with what unit? _____ Rank _____

What is your present occupation? _____

Return this form with dues, if applicable. \$20 per year or \$55 for three years to:
55th Wing Association, P.O. Box 13165, Offutt AFB, Neb. 68113

NEWS & NOTES

TAPS

MCCOY, Kathleen L., 92, August 13, 2024, Papillion, Nebraska. Kathy was the widow of the 6th Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force **James M. McCoy**, who passed away July 3, 2022, at the age of 91. Chief McCoy was also the first Senior Enlisted Advisor of Strategic Air Command. Kathy was at her husband's side throughout his 30-year career. She was the gracious matriarch of their large extended family.

HARRIMAN, Richard H., 93, September 1, 2024, Papillion, Nebraska. Retired Lt. Col. Harriman, a native Iowan, was an RB-47 co-pilot then aircraft commander in the 343rd Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron at Forbes Air Force Base, Kansas. Dick came to Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, with the 55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing in the late 1960s. He was also one of the last pilots to fly the RB-47 which now is displayed at the Air Force National Museum in Dayton, Ohio. He retired from active duty in 1973 but continued to fly privately up to his 90th year.

BURROUGHS, Dave, M., 74, September 9, 2024, Thurman, Iowa; wife **Colleen**. Retired Lt. Col. Burroughs, born in Chicago, served in the Air Force for 21 years, including as an RC-135 navigator in the 55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing during the 1980s. At age 65, Dave and Colleen learned to scuba dive and traveled and dove all around the world.

PARKS, Reginald D., 65, October 2, 2024; Bellevue, Nebraska. A 1972 graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy, Reggie was an RC-135 navigator, then electronic warfare officer in the 55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing, retiring in 1992. He was a great fan of fireworks and entertained his neighbors with a show every Fourth of July for many years.



DORSEE, Linda, L., 85, October 10, 2024, Bellevue, Nebraska. Linda was the wife of retired Lt. Col. **Noble Dorsee** for 34 years. He served as an EC-135 navigator in the 2d Airborne Command Control Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, in the 1970s.

**Please send TAPS notifications to Ryan Hansen at rynohansen@hotmail.com or 908 Martin Drive, Bellevue, NE, 68005. It is not an imperative that the departed be a member of the Association. If someone has a 55th connection, they will be remembered. Please include next of kin and an address to whom an association condolence message may be sent by the president. The date of demise, age, location, connection to the 55th (base, time frame) and Air Force specialty would be appreciated.*

BIRTHDAY BALL

The 55th Wing Birthday Ball is scheduled for March 29, 2025, at the Marriott Courtyard in LaVista, Nebraska.

Marking the wing's 85th anniversary in 2025, this annual event will once again be the culmination of Heritage Week, which includes the Tales of the 55th, and the induction of the wing's newest hall of fame members and excellence trophy recipient.

In addition, the 55th Wing Association's biennial reunion will also coincide with the aforementioned events. More information is forthcoming, but please mark your calendars as we approach 2025.



FROM *the* PRESIDENT



Fightin' Fifty-Fifth Faithful, Friends, Family & Followers,

Our "FLIGHT 2024" flight path is descending to its final approach fix with a visual on "Runway 25." How has our sortie tracked over the last few months since the last (Summer Newsletter) turn point? Well, you're about to find out!



The 55th Operations Group headquarters staff (sans flying squadrons) is now entrenched in the Riggs Building (Bldg. 500) after vacating multiple temporary post-flood re-location sites over the last five years. Once again (like in Bldg. 458 destroyed by floodwaters), the Fightin' Fifty-Fifth wing command and OG staffs are now co-located and a short walk down a common hallway.

In mid-Jul, many association members were blessed to attend Offutt's 2024 Defenders of Freedom Airshow. This well-attended event was Offutt's first airshow since the runway reopened—following the 2018 planned reconstruction start and 2019 historic flood! Once again, The Thunderbirds ROARED!

Unit Birthdays: Over the summer, the 338th Combat Training Squadron (Hellcats) and 45th Reconnaissance Squadron (Wildcats) celebrated significant 55th Wing anniversaries: 25th and 30th respectively. Like the RC-135 fleet, their organizational time in the Fightin' Fifty-Fifth has truly flown by!

No longer a "Max Missive" Newsletter, our new editor, Ryan (Ryno) Hansen, has included coverage of your association's annual Veterans Day ceremony highlighted by Col. Aaron "A-Ron" Gray, 55th Wing deputy commander. Another notable contribution came from "Gunfighter" guests (Jordan family) providing a meaningful reminder from Gen U's repertoire: "Great Units are not constituted magically or by accident. Great Units do not happen by granting the designation or a unit number, Great U's occur only because the people within them work as a team, with pride, esprit de corps, high morale, determination, patience and dedication. Great Units are inspired by their belief in their mission of "Freedom" and their trust, faith and confidence in those who serve next to them and those who lead them."

Keep your calendars clear for the week of March 24, 2025 when we'll celebrate the Fightin' Fifty-Fifth's 85th birthday simultaneously with our biennial reunion to be held in Omaha. Please, "plan to fly; and, fly the plan." Logo planning and donation process have already kicked off!

To close, eventually, the sun DOES SET on all of us; and I encourage you all to reflect on our cherished members identified in "TAPS" who have taken their last flight.

Looking forward to our next association event, the annual Holiday Open House in the Riggs North Museum. More on that later. HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

"Fightin' Fifty-Fifth "Flight 2024", you are, CLEARED TO LAND!"

Videmus Omnia!

Spy V

ECG receives first EA-37B aircraft

Modern, cost effective jet to replace EC-130s

The 55th Electronic Combat Group received its first EA-37B Compass Call for pilot training Aug. 23, 2024, at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona.

The EA-37B, a wide-area airborne electromagnetic attack weapon system, is a heavily modified version of the Gulfstream G550.

Aircraft 19-5591 will be flown by the 43rd Electronic Combat Squadron and maintained by the Contractor Logistics Support Aircraft Maintenance team at D-M. The aircraft will provide aircrews their first opportunity to begin pilot mission planning and training.

“The EC-130 has served its purpose for years, but this new airframe and its delivery mean that we have a combat-credible threat,” said Col. Mark Howard, 55th Wing commander. “The EA-37B, with its increased range, speed and agility, will allow Airmen onboard the aircraft to make real-time, adaptive, agile decisions for airpower.”

The aircraft sustains joint force military advantage in the electromagnetic battlespace and builds a more lethal force by modernizing electromagnetic attack capabilities to deny peer competitors’ tactical networks and information ecosystems.

Additionally, the aircraft denies, degrades and disrupts adversary communications, information processing, navigation, radar systems and radio-controlled threats. It also employs offensive counter-information and electromagnetic attack



Gen. Ken Wilsbach, commander of Air Combat Command, poses with Lt. Gen. Thomas Hensley, 16th Air Force commander, Col. Mark Howard, 55th Wing commander, and Chief Master Sgt. Andrew Small, 55th Wing command chief, among others in front of the 55th Electronic Combat Group’s first EA-37B Compass Call at Davis-Monthan AFB, Arizona, August 23, 2024.



Gen. Ken Wilsbach, commander of Air Combat Command, delivers the first EA-37B Compass Call to Davis-Monthan AFB, Arizona, August 23, 2024.



The EA-37B Compass Call replaces the legacy EC-130H as a more modern and cost-effective, commercial derivative aircraft.

capabilities in support of U.S. and coalition tactical air, surface and special operations forces.

As the Air Force’s newest electromagnetic attack platform, the EA-37B will replace the legacy EC-130H as a more modern, and cost-effective, commercial derivative aircraft. Nine of 14 EC-130H aircraft have been divested to date.

“The EC-130 has been one of the flagships of Davis-Monthan since the early 1980s, and the arrival of the EA-37B along with the stand up of 11th Air Task Force shields a new

era for D-M, said Col. Scott Mills, 355th Wing commander, which is the host wing at D-M.

“As we look to take on the growing threat, the bottom line for the Airmen of D-M and the 55th ECG is we are ready today to face that threat,” he added.

A second aircraft is expected to be delivered for training to D-M by the end of 2024.

25th Anniversary – First TOPCAT 01 recalls squadron startup

On September 20, 2024, the 338th Combat Training Squadron hit its 25th anniversary. I am elated to have had a front row seat and integral role in this paradigm shift of the 55th Operations Group.

As most historical buffs know, the 338th got its first notoriety flying bomber escort missions out of England in P-38s and P-51s as part of the 55th Pursuit Group. It was obvious to the 55th OG initiated Tiger Team that if our justification to establish a formal training unit was approved, the unit needed to have the 338th colors.

BACKGROUND

In 1995, I was asked by Col. Collin Flynn, 55th OG commander, to attend a meeting with Col. Mike Kudlacz, 55th Wing commander, to discuss training inefficiencies. He wanted to find a solution to these issues while also looking for ideas on what to do with the 343rd Reconnaissance Squadron.

If you’re unaware, in 1979 Brig. Gen. Reggie Urschler, 55th Wing commander, established the 343rd as a Raven only squadron, while the 38th RS was comprised of front-end aviators and aircraft maintainers. The 45th RS was a nose to tail reconnaissance unit and that made more sense to Kudlacz. After my meeting, the assumption was that I had been given marching orders to transition the 343rd into a formal training unit while eliminating the Raven only squadron as it currently existed. Needless to say, I became a marked man and essentially persona non grata in the Raven world for years to come -- maybe even so today.

PRE-CTS STAND-UP

Before there was a 55th OG training division and the 338th CTS, wing aircrew training was diverse, self-paced, self-critiqued and inefficient with questionable standardization across the 55th Wing’s operational squadrons. Flight deck crewmembers, for example, would go to Castle Air Force Base, California, for initial KC-135 qualification training, upgrade training and instructor upgrade training. They would spend six weeks in school and six more weeks doing simulators and flights learning tanker procedures before returning to Offutt as a qualified KC-135 aircrew member.

Upon return to Offutt, pilots and navigators were told to forget most of what they learned and to reorient themselves to the RC-135. Our mission objectives were vastly different, and as a result, our pilots and navigators often found themselves ill-prepared for training when they returned from Castle.

TIGER TEAM, OGT & CTS

In February 1997, a Tiger Team was commissioned with a mission that, in my humble opinion, can only be described as one of the most-important and paradigm-shifting self-help projects since the post-transition to the RC-135 aircraft and move from Forbes Air Force Base, Kansas. Our objective was to first develop a 55th OG training division and ultimately stand up a FTU.



Our team was able to convince the wing commander to assemble a group of aircrew instructors and take over an abandoned portion of Building 49. The group of acquired squadron instructors and the Tiger Team members started developing the student training curriculum and syllabi plus became a team of do-it-yourselfers, who cleaned, painted, paneled and carpeted the soon-to-be formal training facility.

The 55th OGT was officially formed in January 1998 with pilots, navigators and electronic warfare officers now receiving wing-standardized academic and ground training (flightline training would still be an operational squadron requirement but augmented with OGT’s instructors). EWOs received initial qualification and upgrade training, while pilots and navigators received difference training.

In late 1998, the OGT team received formal approval to accomplish all ground and simulator training at Offutt. Along with this approval came the financial backing to begin researching, requesting proposals, developing statements of work and ultimately the awarding of a Contracted Aircrew Training and Courseware Development contract.

By early 1999, all pilot, navigator and EWO academic, ground and simulator training syllabi were accomplished by the in OGT. Finally, we received approval to have our own FAA recognized static call sign, “TOPCAT,” which the 338th still uses today.

On September 20, 1999, the 338th CTS was officially activated. Maj. Gen. Dave MacGhee, ACC director of operations, was slated to officiate, but his flight got canceled, so Brig. Gen. Ron Sams, 55th Wing commander, was more than happy to step in and pass the squadron guidon for my assumption of command.

The next chapter was now to improve 55th Wing training. In 2000, civilians took over ground and simulator training, allowing active-duty instructors to focus exclusively on flightline training. Also, that year, we set out to expand and augment the active-duty instructors with Nebraska Air National Guard members. Thus, the 170th Group and 238th CTS eventually became a reality.

LEGACY

The 338th CTS and its sister squadron, the 238th, have prospered since their activation. I am told the 338th has become the largest, best and most diverse FTU in ACC. That is quite an accomplishment and due to the aviator’s due diligence over the past 25 years. To everyone who helped build this legacy, bravo!

To those on active-duty, continue to strive for excellence and build upon the legacy of those who came before you. The 55th Wing is known as an exemplary organization and that is because of you!

- Retired Lt. Col. R. J. McMahon

Annual Veterans Day tribute held

Deputy commander, command chief on hand for ceremony

Active duty members, alumni, family and friends attended the 55th Wing Association's Veterans Day tribute at the 55th Wing headquarters November 7, 2024.

Col. Aaron Gray, 55th Wing deputy commander, retired Col. Joe Spivey, association president, and retired Col. Mohan Krishna, association vice president, all spoke at the annual ceremony.

In honor of those who have passed on, association member John Johnson presented a wreath while association member Dan Jenson rang the historic bell, which dates back to the officer's club at Royal Air Force Upper Heyford, England, in 1965.

Following the official ceremony, attendees were treated to drinks and finger food in the 55th Wing Museum, located inside the headquarters facility.

The event has become the unofficial kickoff to all of the annual Veterans Day events that take place in the local area.



Col. Aaron Gray, 55th Wing deputy commander, Chief Master Sgt. Andrew Small, 55th Wing command chief, pose for a photo with attendees next to the 55th Wing Association Memorial outside the 55th Wing headquarters following the association's annual Veterans Day tribute November 7, 2024.



Col. Aaron Gray, 55th Wing deputy commander, speaks to attendees at the ceremony.



Retired Col. Joe Spivey, association president, speaks to attendees at the ceremony.



Association member, John Johnson, presents a wreath during the Veterans Day tribute.



Dan Jenson, association member, rings the historic bell at the 55th Wing headquarters.

Change of Commands – Four groups under new leadership

The 55th Wing held four group change of command ceremonies this summer.

The 55th Maintenance Group ushered in Col. Kenneth Fetters as its new commander during a ceremony at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, June 27, 2024.

Fetters replaces Col. Robert Clement, who retired from the Air Force after 34 years.

“What a time to serve our United States,” he said. “I am confident that [135s] will remain a key factor in planning and it is all of you who have kept and will keep the mission of protecting our nation going.”

Col. John Isacco assumed command of the 55th Operations Group at Offutt July 1, 2024.

He has served in the Fightin’ Fifty-Fifth throughout his career as will now lead the largest operations group in the Air Force with 11 squadrons and two detachments.

“Our family is excited to be back in Omaha, Isacco said. “We’re extremely grateful for this opportunity and proud to be part of such an amazing team.”

The 55th Communication Group welcomed Col. Rachel Freestrom, who assumed command during a ceremony at Offutt July 19, 2024.

Freestrom replaces Col. Matthew Hensley, who is headed to Air Combat Command at Langley Air Force Base, Virginia.

“Our message is ready Airmen, nuclear deterrent operations, aircraft regeneration, information warfare through cyberspace,” Freestrom said.

Col. Jeremy Smith, took command of the 55th Electronic Combat Group at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, July 26, 2024.

Smith arrives at the ECG from the Pentagon, where he was an Investigating Officer in Senior Official Inquiries. He replaces Col. Melanie Olson, who was the first female commander in ECG history.

“I am truly honored and humbled for the opportunity to serve as the 55th ECG commander,” he said



Col. Kenneth Fetters assumed command of the 55th Maintenance Group June 27, 2024.



Col. John Isacco assumed command of the 55th Operations Group July 1, 2024.

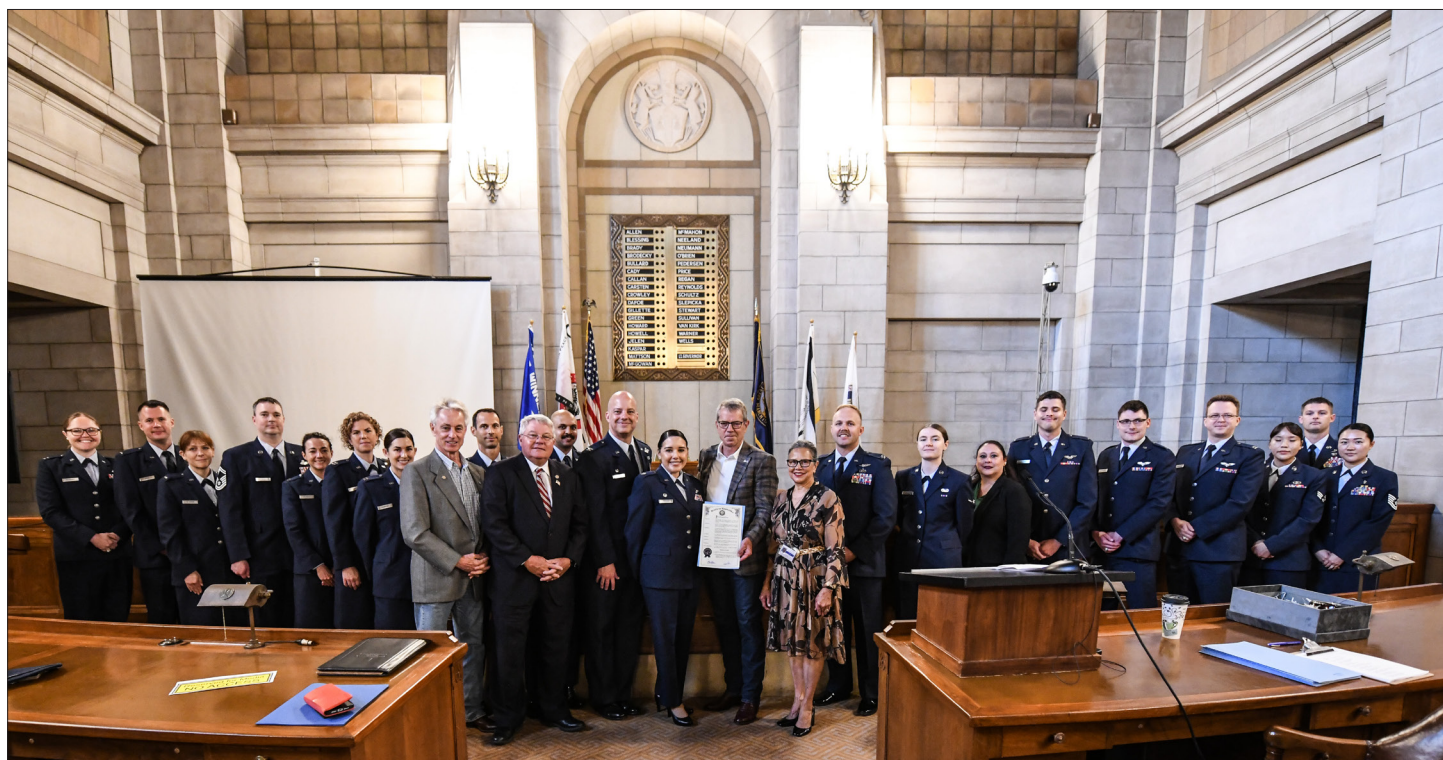


Col. Rachel Freestrom assumed command of the 55th Communication Group July 19, 2024.



Col. Jeremy Smith assumed command of the 55th Electronic Combat Squadron July 26, 2024.

45th celebrates 30 years of service at Offutt



On July 1, 2024, the 45th Reconnaissance Squadron marked their 30th year of service at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska.



To commemorate the occasion, State Senator Rita Sanders, 45th District of Nebraska, introduced a resolution in the 2024 Nebraska State Senate congratulating the squadron on their accomplishments.

The Senate unanimously passed the resolution unanimously and Nebraska Governor Jim Pillen signed a proclamation declaring the squadron's thirtieth birthday, July 1, 2024, as Wildcat Day in the State of Nebraska.

Pillen urged all citizens of Nebraska to take note of the day as such and expressed his gratitude on behalf of the people of Nebraska.

"You are part of the most significant, most powerful Air Force base in the world," said Pillen. "I tell people all across Nebraska, about Offutt Air Force Base, how extraordinary people

are here and how everybody that is stationed at Offutt, falls in love with the people of Nebraska. We are grateful for that, but mostly for all your extraordinary work to keep us safe and the recon that takes place."

The resolution and proclamation by the civic leaders of the state of Nebraska are a public recognition of the collective effort between local government and the United States Air Force to protect the homeland, its citizens and U.S. interests around the world.

Originally activated as the 423rd Night Fighter Squadron at Orlando Army Air Base, Florida in 1943, the squadron would be redesignated as the 155th Photographic Reconnaissance Squadron in the Summer of 1944 as it flew F-3 Havoc reconnaissance aircraft out of Royal Air Force Chalgrove, England, for reconnaissance missions in the European Theater. The squadron served with distinction, including flying reconnaissance support in the Battle of the Bulge.



(Top) Members of the 45th Reconnaissance Squadron pose with Nebraska Governor Jim Pillen at the capitol building in Lincoln, Nebraska, June 17, 2024. (Above) Pillen signs a proclamation declaring June 1, 2024 as Wildcat Day.

After World War II, the squadron was redesignated as the 45th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, Night Photographic, and assigned to the Air National Guard until 1949 when it was deactivated.

The squadron was reactivated and deactivated several times to serve the United States throughout both the Korean and Vietnam Wars.

On 1 July 1994, the squadron was designated as the 45th RS and activated at Offutt.

Global Strike Command stands up 95th Wing

Unit to provide a unified command path, effective command, control

The provisional standup of the 95th Wing took place November 1, 2025 at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska.

This new wing is one of the many efforts underway to reorganize the department for Great Power Competition.

The creation of the 95th Wing under Air Force Global Strike Command will enable effective command of forces to ensure readiness, and in time of conflict, the delivery of strategic and national-level capabilities to multiple combatant commanders.

The wing will provide a unified command path to assure the readiness of the 595th Command and Control Group's National Airborne Operations Center, and Nuclear Command, Control and Communications mission. It will also establish a Total Force partnership to better resource the 253rd C2CG, and 610th Command and Control Squadron unique missions to other combatant commands. The consolidation will provide an enterprise view of broad command and control capabilities and improve the ability to lead, advocate and provide for resources, training and readiness.



Leaders from 8th Air Force and the 95th Wing (Provisional) pose with a Square B tail designator on the wing of an E-4B at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, November 1, 2024.

Additionally, the 95th Wing will establish a Total Force command relationship to associate Air Force Reserve Command and Air National Guard units with the regular Air Force under AFGSC to improve C2 and normalize funding paths to organize, train and equip units.

The new mission will add approximately 70 military authorizations at Offutt over the next few years with personnel expected to begin arriving in spring 2025, with full operational capability in 2027.

Nebraska Veteran Resource Center opens at Exchange

The Nebraska Department of Veterans Affairs held a ribbon cutting ceremony for a first-of-its-kind resource center at the base exchange mini mall, Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, October 31, 2024.

The Offutt location is the first in the nation to offer military, veteran, and dependent support services in a public-facing storefront within a base exchange. This innovative center is part of Nebraska's efforts to retain service members and their families in the state post-service.

"At Offutt, we are committed to providing our service members and their families with the support they need both during and after their military careers," said Col. Mark Howard, 55th Wing commander. "The Nebraska Resource Center is a testament to this dedication,"

Julie Gregory, exchange services manager, has developed a cooperative relationship with the VA to have the pilot program last for one year. After that year, the program will be reevaluated to see if it was successful enough to warrant a longer-term commitment.



Scott M. Bonner, Exchange regional vice president, John Hilgert, director of Nebraska Department of Veterans Affairs, Gov. Jim Pillen, and Col. Mark Howard, 55th Wing commander, cut the ribbon to officially open a first-of-its-kind resource center at the base exchange mini mall, Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, October 31, 2024.

"The resource center will provide support to the military community at Offutt in a convenient format, making it easier for those who have served to access their hard-earned benefits and find new opportunities," said Justin McIntyre, Offutt Base Exchange general manager.

The resource center is currently staffed by Krystal Salisbury-Hendricks who is a state accredited veteran service officer from the NDVA. She will assist veterans in accessing state and federal benefits,

reviewing service records, completing forms, guiding appeals, and more. The center will also offer resources on employment, occupational licensure, tax reforms, housing, recreational activities, and support for families.

The Nebraska Department of Veterans Affairs partnered with the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the state of Nebraska, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and the Omaha Chamber of Commerce to open this center.