

ON FIVE

NOV 2021



Please see next page for information about photo

148th FW honors 9/11 (cover photo)

Four F-16CM Fighting Falcons fly over the Minnesota State Capitol as fire fighters, law enforcement and military personnel render a salute on September 11, 2021 during the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs 9/11 Observation.

The 148th Fighter Wing also honored the 20th Anniversary of 9/11 by providing 4-ship F-16 flyovers at the following events:

- University of Minnesota Duluth military appreciation football game at Malosky Stadium
- Minnesota Twins 9/11 Observation at Target Field

Safstrom Promoted to Major General

Major General Jon Safstrom was appointed as Air National Guard Assistant to the Commander, Continental United States North American Aerospace Defense Command Region and First Air Force (Air Forces Northern), Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla on October 1, 2021. In this capacity, Safstrom advises on all policies and programs relating to the Air National Guard. He assists the Commander to organize, equip and operate air defense forces for the continental U.S., including the three distinct missions: homeland air defense for the continental United States, aerial support of civil authorities, and theater security cooperation for North America. Additionally, he also serves as a NORAD Deputy Combined Forces Air Component Commander and serves as the United States Air Force Title 10 Responsible Officer in the absence of the commander.



Safstrom, a native of Duluth, Minnesota, earned his commission through the Reserve Officer Training Corps upon graduation from the University of Colorado with a degree in Civil Engineering in 1988. After ten years of active duty service in the U.S. Navy, he joined the Minnesota Air National Guard's 148th Fighter Wing where he has commanded at the squadron, group and wing levels. General Safstrom is a command pilot with over 3,700 hours, primarily in the F-16 and F/A-18, to include over 300 hours in combat. He has deployed numerous times throughout his career in support of Operation's RESTORE HOPE, SOUTHERN WATCH, NOBLE EAGLE and IRAQI FREEDOM.

Prior to assuming his current position, Safstrom served as the Assistant Adjutant General - Air, Minnesota National Guard where he was responsible for the mission readiness and operation effectiveness across a broad spectrum of programs and activities involving two flying wings and over 2,200 military and civilian personnel.

THE ONLINE ON FIVE

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Rukavina Retires after 41 Years of Service

Former Minnesota Air National Guard Command Chief, Chief Master Sgt. Mark Rukavina retired in early November after serving our state and nation for 41 years.

Chief Master Sgt. Rukavina began his military career in March 1980 when he enlisted at the 148th Fighter Wing. He completed Basic Military Training at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas and graduated from Electrical Power Production Technical School at Sheppard AFB, Texas in November 1980. Chief Master Sgt. Rukavina has had various positions within the Civil Engineers Squadron to include Power Production Journeyman, Power Production Supervisor, and Structural Superintendent. He was selected as the Civil Engineers Squadron Chief Enlisted Manager in August 2005.

Chief Rukavina deployed in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM to Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan from January to July 2010 and in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM to Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar from July to September 2005. In 2017, Rukavina was selected as the Minnesota Air National Guard Command Chief where he served as the senior enlisted advisor for over 2,000 enlisted members assigned to the 148th Fighter Wing, 133rd Airlift Wing and Minnesota's Joint Force Headquarters.



Erikson Named MNANG Command Chief

MN NG Public Affairs

In a social media post published on September 22, 2021, Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Minnesota National Guard, Command Sergeant Major Brian Soper announced the selection of Chief Master Sergeant Lisa Erikson as the next Minnesota Air National Guard State Command Chief. "CMSgt Erikson's proven record as a trusted leader and dedicated Senior Non Commissioned Officer will serve her well as she takes on the top enlisted position in the Minnesota Air National Guard, said Soper.

A Change of Responsibility ceremony took place October 16, 2021, at the Veterans Service Building in St. Paul, Minnesota.



Minnesota Air National Guard Command Chief Master Sgt. Lisa Erikson

148th Fighter Wing Openings

- *Command Post
- *Avionics Test Station and Components
- *Tactical Aircraft Maintenance
- *Aerospace Ground Equipment
- *Aircraft Fuel Systems
- *Aircraft Electrical and Environmental Systems
- *Fuels
- *Maintenance Management Production
- *Maintenance Management Analysis
- *Ground Transportation
- *Munitions Systems
- *Aircraft Armament Systems
- *Knowledge Operations Management
- *Cyber Security
- *Cyber Transport
- *Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning Systems
- *Pavements
- *Water and Fuel Systems
- Engineering
- *Operations Management
- *Explosive Ordnance Disposal
- *Personnel
- *Services
- *Education and Training
- *Administration
- *Security Forces
- *Health Services
- *Public Affairs

Questions and referrals can be sent to MSgt Denise Owen, TSgt Casey Underdahl or TSgt Chris Armstrong

Miketin Selected as Command Chief

By: Audra Flanagan

Last month, Chief Master Sgt. Jozef Miketin assumed responsibility as the 148th Fighter Wing Command Chief. In this role, Miketin will advise commanders on the readiness, training, development and utilization of 900+ enlisted members assigned to the wing. He is the tenth individual to hold this position at the 148th since 1988.

“One of my most important duties as Command Chief is to connect with and understand the enlisted force at all levels,” Miketin said. “Building relationships and understanding what truly affects Airmen is an important aspect of the welfare and morale of the wing as a whole.”

A native of Esko, Minnesota, Miketin enlisted in the Minnesota Army National Guard in 1998 as a wheeled vehicle mechanic. While attending college for a civilian law enforcement degree, Miketin transferred to the 79th Military Police Company. In 2003, Miketin was deployed to Iraq with the 79th Military Police Company where he served as a fire team leader. As a result of his efforts in Iraq, Miketin was awarded the combat patch, Combat Action Badge and Army Commendation Medal.

In 2006, Miketin enlisted at the 148th Fighter Wing as a security forces specialist. In this capacity, Miketin has served as a fire team leader, squad leader, flight chief, training manager, operations superintendent, security forces manager and chief enlisted manager.

Earlier this year, Miketin served as the senior enlisted leader of 100 Airmen during the 2021 Presidential Inauguration in Washington D.C. and the April state active duty mission, Operation Safety Net, designed to protect the public during the trial of Derek Chauvin in Brooklyn Center and St. Paul, Minnesota.

“My vision as Command Chief is to strengthen our legacy of excellence and further professionalize the force. We are often called upon at a moment’s notice,” said Miketin. “I will work to ensure our Airmen operate in an environment of readiness and resilience. Professional development, as well as tactical and technical education, are critical to mission success. Airmen deserve to have the tools needed to excel in their positions.”

Miketin has an Associate of Arts in Law Enforcement from Fond Du Lac Tribal and Community College, a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Business Management from the College of Saint Scholastica, and a Master of Business Administration in Business Leadership from the College of Saint Scholastica. He’s employed with the Duluth Police Department as a Sergeant in the Patrol Division.

Miketin, who has extensive experience in both civilian and military settings, says “Airmen can expect open and honest communication along with visible and active leadership.”

Miketin currently serves as a traditional, or part time, member of the 148th but will transition into an active duty role on December 1, 2021.

148th Fitness Testing



Flight of Honor Ceremony

By: Audra Flanagan

On Oct. 17, 2021, the Minnesota Air National Guard hosted its first Flight of Honor induction ceremony. The Flight of Honor recognizes past and present Airmen from the 133rd Airlift Wing, the 148th Fighter Wing, and Joint Force Headquarters, Minnesota Air National Guard, who distinguished themselves with notable professional achievement and service or heroism.

The annual memorialization event will be hosted at the 148th Fighter Wing in 2022 and will alternate between the two Wings. For the Inaugural event, seven nominees were selected:

- Maj. Gen. (ret) Wayne C. Gatlin (148th Fighter Wing)
- Maj. Gen. (ret) John Dolny (133rd Airlift Wing)
- Brig. Gen. (ret) Ray Miller (133rd Airlift Wing)
- Col. (ret) Mary Ann Bechik Mecom (133rd Airlift Wing)
- Col. (ret) Julia E. Eszlinger-Jensen (133rd Airlift Wing)
- Chief Master Sgt. (ret) Jerome Blazevic (148th Fighter Wing)
- Master Sgt. (ret) Derrick Schmitt (133rd Airlift Wing)

Maj. Gen. Wayne C. Gatlin's military career began in 1944 when he earned his pilot designation. He was assigned to the Eighth Air Force in England where he flew the P-47 and P-51 fighter aircraft. He logged 55 combat sorties during World War II and was credited with destroying one German ME-262 jet and damaging another. After World War II, Gatlin briefly served in the Texas Air National Guard.

Gatlin, born and raised in Duluth, Minnesota, returned to Duluth in 1950 to join the Minnesota Air National Guard. He was the individual high scorer at the 1954, 1955 and 1956 Air National Guard gunnery competitions. He became commander of the 179th Fighter Squadron in 1960, then later advanced as commander of the 148th Fighter Interceptor Group, a position he held until 1978. He assumed the role of Chief of Staff of the Minnesota Air National Guard and was promoted to Major General in 1980. Gatlin served as Chief of Staff until August 25, 1984 – the same day he flew his last sortie. Gatlin was the last actively flying WWII combat pilot in the entire Air National Guard and completed 42-years of service. He logged 6,747 hours in over a dozen aircraft.

Gatlin, an avid photographer, documented 34-years of the 148th Fighter Wing's history with his photos. Gatlin was active in his community as well as the Minnesota Air National Guard. He served as a Board Chair at St. Mary's Hospital in Duluth, President of the Duluth Rotary Club, President of the Minnesota National Guard Association, and a member of the Air Defense Command Reserve Policy Board.

Chief Master Sergeant Jerome Blazevic was drafted into the U.S. Army at Fort Snelling and attended basic training at Camp Fanning, Texas, "A" Company, 14th Infantry Regiment. He attended advanced training at Camp Pickett, Blackstone, West Virginia as a rifleman and was later assigned as a chaplain's assistant, deployed to Europe on the S.S. Hampden-Sydney Victory and was assigned to Hq Co, 2nd Replacement Depot. Blazevic served as a driver for legal officers at the Nuremburg War Trials. During this time, he was asked by a priest as a favor to drive civilians part-way along his route on several occasions. In this capacity, Blazevic was providing Jewish survivors transportation on their way to the newly established state of Israel. He returned to the United States in April 1947 and was honorably discharged at the rank of Corporal. Blazevic returned to his job as a foreman at Diamond Tool and Caulk in 1948.

In 1954, Blazevic enlisted at the 179th Fighter Interceptor Squadron as a Medical Administrative specialist and was soon hired as a technician in the medical section where he served until his retirement in 1985. Blazevic graduated from the NCO Academy

Bulldog Day



Flight of Honor Ceremony (Story Continued)

and served as an instructor. He helped start the Minnesota National Guard Enlisted Association and later served as its president. Blazevic developed “Operation Patriotism”, an American flag historical presentation used by the 148th Fighter Wing representatives and Air National Guard organizations throughout the nation. During his military career, Blazevic was selected as Noncommissioned Officer and Senior Noncommissioned Officer of the Year for his outstanding duty performance, leadership and community service.

Blazevic tirelessly served his community while in the military and following his retirement. He served as the Scoutmaster for Troop 13 in Duluth, Minnesota for 30 years. Under his leadership, several scouts earned the rank of Eagle Scout. He served as an American Red Cross instructor for over 40 years where he taught youth to swim and trained lifeguards. Blazevic helped organize a local Memorial Day parade for the American legion. He coordinated numerous Veterans Day events at schools and throughout the community. From 1998 to 2010, Blazevic volunteered with Veterans on the Lake Resort in Ely, Minnesota where he guided Veterans, some who were disabled, during fishing outings and campfire events.

The 148th Fighter Wing’s Flight of Honor display is currently being constructed on the south side of Building 250 near the entrance to the Great Lakes Inn.



44 Incentive Flights in 2021

By: Audra Flanagan

44 Airmen received F-16 Orientation Flights, also called Incentive Flights, in 2021. The Air Force and Air National Guard conducts orientation flights to ensure a better understanding of a weapons system and its role in federal missions.

148th Fighter Wing Chief of Safety, Lt. Col. Paul “Blade” Thornton serves as the Wing’s Orientation Flight Program Manager. “My favorite part about this program is tying each Airman’s job to the flying mission and getting to show them firsthand the end result of their hard work,” said Thornton. “I truly believe that every Airman at the 148th plays an important role in getting these aircraft to fly, fight and win. My hope is that once they get to experience the rush of flying in an F-16, they will be even more motivated to execute their role in making the flying mission happen.”

The 148th Fighter Wing provides orientation flights, when the mission permits, to the Wing’s top performers. This includes the Wing’s Airmen, NCO, Senior NCO and Company Grade Officer of the Year. Additionally, each of the five groups have the ability to submit top performers.

Another component that is important to the Orientation Flight program is Distinguished Visitor flights. DV flights provide Members of Congress, senior federal, state or local government officials a unique perspective to the Wing’s flying mission.

“From the takeoff, to the high G turns, to seeing what these jets are capable of was nothing short of amazing,” said Recruiter, Tech. Sgt. Casey Underdahl, who re-

Around The Wing



Incentive Flights (Story Continued)

ceived an orientation flight in September.

Flight line Supervisor, Senior Master Sgt. John McEwen, said “crew chiefs enjoy this program because it builds our connection with our members and their families.” As a recipient of an incentive flight in 2021, McEwen added that “I had thoughts on what it’s like to fly, but seeing the planning required and seeing the pilots actually fly was an eye-opening experience.”

While orientation flights normally last just over an hour, it takes a lot more time to prepare. “Many people and organizations go above and beyond to make these flights happen,” said Thornton. The following organizations collaborate to make the programs a success:

- 179th Fighter Squadron conducts EGRESS training, emergency parachute training, pilots and supervisors of flying mission plan to ensure a safe and educational experience.
- Ops Group, HARM, CSS and Airfield Management complete preflight requirements, create certificates, drive family members onto airfield, AFE conducts flight gear fitting.
- Maintenance Group provides the best F-16s in the Air National Guard and launch and recover F-16s.
- Medical Group conducts flight evaluations and aerospace physiology training.
- Public Affairs provides photography before and after orientation flights.
- Security Forces Squadron vett of civilian guests
- Group program managers work with selected Airmen once nominated through the entire scheduling process.

