

SELFRIDGE FLYER

Volume 8, Issue 5

"127th Wing — Your Hometown Air Force"

September 2025



STANDING READY

New vision looks to honor legacy while shaping the future of airpower

By 127th Public Affairs
127th Wing

For more than a century, Selfridge Air National Guard Base has been a cornerstone of Michigan's military heritage.

From training pilots in World War I to flying combat and refueling missions across the globe today, Selfridge has always stood ready to serve our state and our nation.

The 127th Wing is proud to carry that legacy forward as we prepare for the next chapter in our history. That chapter begins with a new vision:

"Forged in legacy, unrivaled in lethality, empowering Airmen to deter, defend, and dominate."

This statement is not just words on a page; rather it is a promise to our Airmen, our families and our com-

munity.

▪ **Forged in Legacy:** Our base is one of the oldest continually operating military airfields in the nation. Every generation of Airmen who have served here built the foundation we stand on today. Their sacrifices and achievements remind us that we are part of something bigger than ourselves.

▪ **Unrivaled in Lethality:** Today, our A-10 Thunderbolt II and KC-135 Stratotanker missions make the 127th Wing one of the most versatile units in the Air National Guard. In the years ahead, we will transition to two of the Air Force's most advanced platforms: the F-15EX Eagle II and the KC-46 Pegasus. These aircraft will sharpen our combat edge and ensure Selfridge remains at the forefront of America's airpower.

▪ **Empowering Airmen:**

Our people are our most decisive advantage. We are committed to developing leaders at every level, supporting families, and fostering an environment where every Airman can thrive. When our Airmen are empowered, our Wing and our nation are stronger.

▪ **To Deter, Defend, and Dominate:** Our mission is clear. We stand ready to deter those who would challenge our nation, defend the homeland we love, and dominate any fight when called upon.

This vision serves not only the 127th Wing, but also honors the partnership between our service members, their families, and the Michigan communities that support us.

For our community, this vision is a promise that Selfridge will remain a strong partner and a source of



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pride.

For our nation, it is a pledge that the 127th Wing

will continue to deliver excellence in peace and in war for the next hundred years.

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SELFRIDGE BASE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

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Jonathan Vandenbossche

The Selfridge Base Community Council's mission is to continue improving outstanding relationships between both the civilian and military-service communities centered at Selfridge Air National Guard Base.

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On the cover: A rainbow forms behind a KC-135 Stratotanker aircraft following a thunderstorm at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Michigan, Aug. 11, 2025. The KC-135 provides global aerial refueling capability, extending the range and endurance of U.S. and allied aircraft.

U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO
BY TECH. SGT. DREW SCHUMANN



ON TIME AND ON MISSION

127th Wing lays groundwork for aircraft transition

By Penelope Carroll

127th Wing Public Affairs

The 127th Wing has begun the early stages of preparation for the arrival of the F-15EX Eagle II aircraft, marking a significant step toward the future of fighter operations at Selfridge Air National Guard Base.

The aircraft transition, scheduled to begin in 2028, will replace the A-10 Thunderbolt II, ushering in a new era of speed, range and multirole capability. The Wing is simultaneously in transition for the KC-46 Pegasus to replace the KC-135 Stratotanker, scheduled to begin in 2030.

In recent months, the 127th Wing has partnered with the Air National Guard, Air Mobility Command and Air Combat Command to conduct initial planning for infrastructure, manning and operational requirements, with a site activation task force visit in early June that brought more than 100 experts to the base. This preliminary work ensures the base and its Airmen are ready to receive and sustain the advanced fighter platform.

"The June Site Activation Task Force was a pivotal moment for Selfridge," explained Chief Master Sgt. Erik Wolford, chief of the F-15EX/KC-46 Program Integration Office for the Michigan National Guard. "It brought together the right expertise to assess where we are today and chart a clear path forward. The SATAF set the conditions for us to move quickly and deliberately toward a successful conversion, ensuring Selfridge remains a cornerstone of air power and innovation for Michigan and the nation."

Air Force, Air National Guard and Selfridge base engineers have completed initial site surveys and conceptual designs for hangar replacements, facility modifications, maintenance bays and training spaces tailored to both the F-15EX and the KC-46 Pegasus. Capt. Jason Cabra, Selfridge deputy base engineer, notes that the engineers are looking at approximately 20 projects, includ-



U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY TECH. SGT. ANDREW SCHUMANN

U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Matthew Olde, the F-15 director of programs and operations at Defense Contract Management Agency Boeing St. Louis, exits an F-15EX Eagle II aircraft at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Michigan, June 11, 2025. Olde brought the aircraft to the base as part of a site activation task force visit, one of the initial steps to ensure that when both the F-15EX and KC-46 Pegasus missions arrive at Selfridge ANGB, the 127th Wing will be fully prepared with the right infrastructure, personnel, and support to stand them up and operate them effectively.

ing new construction, refurbishing current facilities and combining mission spaces, where possible.

"Some of these facilities will be divested, others recapitalized, and multiple new modern military facilities will be constructed and fundamentally change the Selfridge skyline," he said. "This facility modernization pivot with the new fighter and tanker weapon systems will ensure continued relevance of Selfridge, integrating the existing legacy infrastructure with the state-of-the-art war-fighting capabilities."

Plans include upgrades to the

existing electrical distribution system to support the new aircraft's advanced maintenance and training power requirements. Additionally, preliminary runway and taxiway assessments have been conducted to ensure the airfield meets the operational demands of the new jets.

"The runway encroachment solution projects, known as the runway 'shift' projects, are at 35% design, and the design will mitigate risk to the surrounding communities, military and civilian personnel, and associated properties and equipment by removing any south clear zone non-compatible

deficiencies," Cabra said. "These runway improvement projects focus on aircraft operational safety and more efficient functions for current and future missions."

The 127th Wing leadership team is also busy reviewing manning documents and billet structures to align with F-15EX and KC-46 operational requirements. Early coordination is underway to identify training pipelines for pilots, maintainers and support personnel, ensuring a seamless transition in skill sets from the older aircraft to the new.

"This is an exciting chapter for the 127th Wing," Wolford said.

"While we honor the unmatched legacy of the A-10s and the KC-135s, our Airmen are already leaning forward to ensure we are ready to bring the new missions online — on time, on mission and fully capable."

As one of the Air National Guard's premier fighter units, the 127th Wing's preparations today will pave the way for seamless aircraft conversions. Over the coming years, Airmen, community members and mission partners will see continued progress as Selfridge moves toward operationalizing the Eagle II and the Pegasus.

TEAMWORK

127th AMXS weapons load crews compete in annual Load Crew of the Year competition

By Airman 1st Class Jacob Hessen

127th Wing Public Affairs

Weapons load crews from the 127th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron faced off in the annual Load Crew of the Year competition at Selfridge Air National Guard Base on Aug. 2.

The high-intensity event — commonly known as a “loado” — tested the speed, precision and technical skill of the Airmen who keep the A-10 Thunderbolt II armed and mission-ready.

“Each quarter, all load crews are evaluated on a designated ‘Quarterly Load’ by the standardization team, graded on speed, safety and technical accuracy,” said Master Sgt. Josef Mack, 127th AMXS superintendent. “The crew with the best overall performance each quarter earns a spot to compete in the annual Load Crew of the Year competition, where the quarterly winners face off to determine the Load Crew.”

Four teams competed in a timed and evaluated load scenario, showcasing their ability to safely and efficiently arm the A-10 with GBU-38 bombs, AIM-9 Sidewinder missiles and 30mm rounds. Judges assessed the crews on a range of criteria, including safety procedures, accuracy, teamwork and overall proficiency.

“This competition highlights our pride in what we do. It allows load crews to showcase their skills and prove they can perform the job quickly, safely and without error,” said Tech. Sgt. Tanner Ban, 127th AMXS. “It’s also a great morale booster and reinforces the importance of excellence in every load.”

The A-10, renowned for its close air support capabilities and its iconic GAU-8/A 30mm cannon, relies heavily on weapons loaders to deliver firepower with precision and speed. Competitions like this reinforce core maintenance standards and prepare crews for real-world operations that demand rapid lethality under pressure.



U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY TECH. SGT. DREW SCHUMANN



U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY TECH. SGT. DREW SCHUMANN

Above: U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Anthony Ruda, an aircraft armament systems technician assigned to the 127th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, Michigan National Guard, mounts an AIM-9 Sidewinder missile onto an A-10 Thunderbolt II aircraft, during a weapons loading competition at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Michigan, Aug. 2, 2025. The annual competition tests load crews on speed, safety and technical proficiency.

Left: U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Kyle Martinez, left, Staff Sgt. Anthony Ruda, center, and Staff Sgt. Brandon McIntyre, right, armament systems specialists assigned to the 127th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, Michigan National Guard, carry an AIM-9 Sidewinder missile during a weapons loading competition at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Michigan, Aug. 2, 2025. The annual competition tests load crews on speed, safety and technical proficiency.

ACED IT

Michigan Airmen complete first fully night-vision A-10 combat turn

By Master Sgt. Chelsea E. FitzPatrick
127th Wing Public Affairs

Approximately 30 Airmen from the 127th Maintenance Group, Michigan Air National Guard, broke new ground this summer when they successfully completed a combat turn on an A-10 Thunderbolt II aircraft in complete darkness, using night-vision goggles.

The milestone, accomplished Aug. 6 at the Alpena Combat Readiness Training Center, marked the first time an Air National Guard maintenance unit performed the combat operation entirely using NVGs.

"This is about pushing our capabilities forward," said 2nd Lt. Joseph DiGiovanni, a weapons officer assigned to the 127th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron. "If we can turn an A-10 in the dark, with NVGs, it means we're ready to keep these aircraft in the fight no matter the environment."

An integrated combat turn allows an aircraft to be received, refueled, rearmed and relaunched in minimal time, keeping fighters in the fight for longer periods.

Conducting the maneuver with night-vision goggles expands the "Agile Combat Employment" team's ability to operate in contested or degraded environments.

The successful ICT was the culmination of a training event designed to enhance the skills of Airmen responsible for key ACE tasks, performed under low or zero-light conditions.

In addition to the combat turn, participants familiarized themselves with munitions loading,

aircraft marshaling, radio use and combat medical skills, all in darkness.

The Alpena CRTC provided the austere setting for the proof-of-concept, giving the ACE Team a realistic environment to test its tactics.

For Airman 1st Class Austin Finley, his first training experience at Alpena CRTC set the bar high for both his career and his unit's potential.

"Coming in new, I didn't know what to expect, but the older guys have taken the time to help me out," Finley said. "That kind of support motivates me to keep pushing forward."

Only two years into his career, Finley earned a seat with the elite group of maintainers from various areas of aircraft support.

The ACE Team has championed many firsts in recent years, including landing and relaunched the first military aircraft on a domestic U.S. highway in 2021, conducting the first ICT on a domestic U.S. highway in 2022 and receiving and relaunched the first MC-130J Command II and MQ-9 Reaper aircraft on a domestic highway in 2023.

"If this is the kind of training I get to do right away, it feels like the sky is the limit for my future," Finley said.

The successful trial underscores the 127th Wing's role in advancing ACE concepts as the Air Force modernizes to meet future threats.

Now, team leaders are writing manuals on the specialized night-vision ICT operations for the rest of the Air Force.

The guidance includes both a recommended curriculum and best practices to get fighters and attack aircraft ready to return to



U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY MASTER SGT. CHELSEA E. FITZPATRICK

Airmen with the 127th Maintenance Group, Michigan Air National Guard, stand by to receive an A-10 Thunderbolt II aircraft in Alpena, Michigan, Aug. 5, 2025. The maintainers trained at the Alpena Combat Readiness Training Center to enhance agility and efficiency in combat operations.

"This is about pushing our capabilities forward,"

— 2nd Lt. Joseph DiGiovanni

the fight, navigating land while on foot at night, providing medical care to battlefield casualties, defending the location with weapons, securing their position and many other skill sets.

"Agile combat employment is about being unpredictable and resilient," DiGiovanni said. "Executing a combat turn under night-vision conditions pushes us closer to that goal and demonstrates that our people are lethal and ready for tomorrow's fight."



U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY MASTER SGT. CHELSEA E. FITZPATRICK

U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Joshua Call, left, and Airman 1st Class Austin Finley, right, both aircraft armament systems technicians with the 127th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, Michigan Air National Guard, celebrate after a successful training exercise in Alpena, Michigan, Aug. 5, 2025. Call, an Air Force veteran turned Air National Guardsman, helped train Finley on his first training trip outside of Selfridge Air National Guard Base.

SPOTLIGHT

Tech Sgt. Jason Turner awarded Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal

By Bruce J. Huffman
127th Wing Public Affairs

Tech. Sgt. Jason Turner, an aircraft armament systems specialist with the 127th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, Michigan Air National Guard, was awarded the Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal on Aug. 2 in recognition of his exceptional dedication to community service.

For more than nine years, Turner has selflessly volunteered his off-duty time serving his community, helping complete more than 30 projects with his civilian employer in the Saginaw and Bay City areas and honoring veterans by placing hundreds of ceremonial wreaths on headstones at the Great Lakes National Cemetery in Holly.

According to Department of Defense guidelines, the MOVSM

is awarded to armed forces who perform outstanding volunteer service of sustained, direct and consequential nature.

"It's as if the award was created with him in mind," said Capt. Charles Diciuccio, 127 Aircraft Maintenance Squadron operations officer, who nominated Turner for the award. "MOVSM recipients view volunteerism as a way of life."

Turner is now part of a small, elite group of servicemembers who have been awarded the MOVSM for their community service. Some notable MOVSM recipients from Selfridge are former 127th Wing Command Chief Master Sgt. Tony L. Whitehead, who retired as the senior enlisted advisor to the chief of the National Guard Bureau, and U.S. Sen. Gary Peters, who served in the Naval Reserve at Selfridge for

22 years.

"Being involved with the people of my community and local veterans and improving their way of life is one of the most gratifying feelings I've ever had," Turner said. "It's nice to make a difference by simply caring and getting involved for our veterans and members of the community."

Turner has participated in volunteer projects including park revitalizations, home repairs, wheelchair ramps and painting. He continues to use his carpentry skills to help veterans and members of the community. He also volunteers annually laying wreaths on veterans' graves to honor their service and legacy.

"We are all proud of Tech. Sergeant Turner for his dedication and service in and out of uniform," Diciuccio said. "Thank you for your service."



PHOTO COURTESY OF SELFTRIDGE AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE

U.S. Air Force Tech Sgt. Jason Turner, an aircraft armament systems technician, 127th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, Michigan Air National Guard, lays a wreath on the grave of a veteran at Great Lakes National Cemetery, Holly, Michigan. Turner volunteers every year to place wreaths on veterans' graves to honor their service and legacy.



U.S. AIR FORCE PHOTO BY TECH. SGT. DREW SCHUMANN

U.S. Air Force Capt. Charles Diciuccio, a maintenance operations officer with the 127th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, Michigan National Guard, presents the Air and Space Achievement Medal to Tech. Sgt. Jason Turner, a weapons expeditor assigned to the 127th AMXS, during a ceremony at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Michigan, Aug. 2, 2025. Turner was recognized for his volunteer work in the local community.

HELP IS AVAILABLE

You're not alone: Air Force suicide prevention

Story courtesy of the Department of Air Force Integrated Resiliency

Suicide remains a heart-breaking reality in the military and civilian communities alike:

- In 2023, there were 523 total force suicides across all service branches, up from 493 in 2022, marking a 5% increase overall. Among active-duty members, suicides rose 12%, from 331 to 363 cases.

- Yet, in Q1 of CY 2025, the Air Force active component saw a decline with 71 suspected or confirmed suicides, a reduction of 5 compared to Q1 2024.

- Earlier in 2024, there were 17 suicides in the first quarter, just one more than in the same period in 2023.

These numbers aren't just data. They represent lives, wingmen and loved ones. Awareness and action can tip the scale toward hope.

Know what to look for

Suicide often doesn't come with a warning label, but there are signs:

- Expressions of hopelessness, being a burden or overt talk of ending one's life



TIME + DISTANCE

Putting time and distance between a suicidal person and a lethal means of suicide may save a life. The odds of survival go up for **three** reasons:

- 1 A personal crisis is often brief.
- 2 Lethality of an attempt often depends in part on the method (e.g., firearms, drugs/medications, etc.).
- 3 90% of those who attempt suicide and survive, do not attempt suicide again.

If someone you know is at risk, help reduce access to lethal means until they are no longer in distress.

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- Withdrawal from family, friends or favorite activities

- Elevated substance use, impulsivity or finalizing affairs

In many cases, those at risk never sought help despite job, legal, financial, relationship and mental health struggles.

Be there, be real

FOR AIRMEN

- Use ACE — Ask, Care, Escort: Ask directly about thoughts of suicide, care by listening, and escort them to help.

- Know Resources — Services like Military OneSource and Family Advocacy are available on base and online.

FOR THE PUBLIC

- Reach Out — Be that listening ear to local service members and veterans.

- Raise Awareness — Share accurate information and promote good mental health.

- Support Safe Storage — Properly securing firearms, especially around those in crisis, is a lifesaving step.

Statistic

523 total force suicide deaths (2023)

5 fewer in Q1 CY 2025 within Air Force

Insight

Underscores urgency of community action

Shows that prevention can and does make a difference

Suicide prevention isn't a training event. It's a mindset and a practice.

- Airmen, you serve with honor; let your care extend beyond the mission.

- Civilians, your understanding and advocacy matter in creating environments where asking for help is strength — not shame.

- Together, let us Ask,

Care and Escort — because connection, knowledge, and swift action matter.

If you're in an immediate crisis, in uniform or not, call 988.



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