

# SELFRIIDGE FLYER

Volume 9, Issue 1

*"127<sup>th</sup> Wing – We stand ready"*

January 2026



READINESS. MISSION NEXT. OUR TEAM.

# 127th Wing names 'Outstanding Airmen,' outlines new priorities

By Senior Master Sgt. Daniel Heaton  
127TH WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The Michigan Air National Guard's 127th Wing lauded its Outstanding Airmen of the Year, welcomed a new commander and saluted the more than 500 wing Airmen who deployed in 2025 during year-end ceremonies at Selfridge Air National Guard Base on Dec. 7. During the ceremony, U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Leah Voelker was named the wing's commander, replacing Brig. Gen. Matthew Brancato, who moved to a position at National Guard Bureau headquarters near Washington, D.C.

Voelker has been a member of the Michigan Air National Guard since commissioning as an officer in 2001. She has spent the bulk of her career as a member of the 127th Wing at Selfridge, starting as a C-130 Hercules pilot and later flying KC-135 Stratotankers before moving into a progressive series of command positions.

During the ceremony, Voelker, joined by the wing's command chief, Chief Master Sgt. Bruce Hedrick, named the wing's Outstanding Airmen of the Year.

They are:

■ Airmen 1st Class Kelton Lovell,

127th Air Refueling Group, Airman of the Year

■ Tech. Sgt. Kimberly Lai, 127th Medical Group, Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year

■ Master Sgt. Kristin James, 127th Medical Group, Senior Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year

■ Master Sgt. Raymond Stiers, 127th Maintenance Group, First Sergeant of the Year

■ Tech. Sgt. Ashley Emswiler, Recruiter of the Year

■ Senior Airman Albert Ondrus II, Honor Guard Airman of the Year

■ Capt. Matthew Wierzbowski, 127th Air Refueling Group, Company Grade Officer of the Year

■ Joshua Knutson, Title 5 Employee of the Year

■ Richard Campbell, Title 5 Manager of the Year

■ The 127th Logistics Readiness Squadron, 127th Wing Commander's Trophy for group accomplishments

The honorees were selected from the approximately 1,500 Citizen-Airmen who make up the 127th Wing, one of the largest wings in the Air National Guard and one of only a small handful who have two flying missions.

The 127th Wing currently flies the

A-10 Thunderbolt II attack aircraft, along with the KC-135 aerial refueling aircraft. The wing will be transitioning to the F-15EX Eagle II fighter aircraft to replace the A-10 beginning in 2028 and the KC-46 Pegasus tanker to replace the KC-135 beginning in 2030.

In 2025, the 127th Wing supported two major deployments. Several of the wing's KC-135s, aircrews and support personnel deployed overseas in June and returned in late October. A large contingent of the wing's headquarters and support staff personnel are currently deployed to the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility and will return in early spring. In addition, as in most years, several individual Airmen and small groups deployed throughout the year to fill mission needs at locations across the country and around the world. The wing's final A-10 deployment, prior to the conversion to F-15EX, is slated for 2026.

"Whether at home station or forward deployed, our Michigan Airmen are making an impact for our Air Force and for our nation," Voelker said.

During the ceremony, in her first formal address to the wing as commander, Voelker outlined her

priorities for the years ahead: Readiness, Mission Next and Our Team.

## READINESS

The wing must continue to operate at a high level in its current aircraft and support missions.

## MISSION NEXT

The term she coined to describe the upcoming transition. She said every Airman will play a role in ensuring that the 127th Wing is ready to meet the new mission requirements. She noted that many of the buildings at Selfridge are nearing 100 years old and that buildings being constructed now for future missions likely will also serve multiple generations of Airmen at Selfridge, which only emphasizes the need to "get it right" during the aircraft conversion period.

## OUR TEAM

Voelker noted that no one person can accomplish the mission. "It takes all of us, using our combined strengths, to get the mission done," she said.

The 127th Wing is among the largest and most complex wings in the Air National Guard and Voelker noted that it is the "flagship" organization for the Air National Guard.

## SELFRISE FLYER

Volume 9, Issue 1



### SELFRISE BASE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Selfridge Base Community Council President John Stolz

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.

Wing Commander  
Brig. Gen. Leah Voelker

Deputy Wing Commander  
Lt. Col. Bryan Amara

Wing Command Chief Master Sergeant  
Chief Master Sgt. Bruce Hedrick

### 127TH WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

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Senior Master Sgt. Daniel Heaton  
Master Sgt. Chelsea E. Fitzpatrick  
Tech. Sgt. Andrew Schumann  
Tech. Sgt. Nicole Erb  
Staff Sgt. Nathan Wingate  
Senior Airman Jacob Hessen

### PUBLISHER'S STATEMENT

The Selfridge Flyer is a publication of the Selfridge Base Community Council and is not an official publication of the Department of Defense. Contents of the Selfridge Flyer are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, the DoD, or MediaNews Group. Published by MediaNews Group, a private firm in no way connected with the U.S. Air Force.

**On the cover:** U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Leah Voelker, left, commander, 127th Wing, and Chief Master Sgt. Bruce Hedrick, command chief master sergeant of the 127th Wing, right, present the 2025 recipients of the outstanding airmen, civilian employee and commander's trophy awards at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Dec. 7, 2025. **U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY SENIOR AIRMAN JACOB HESSEN**



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**FULL MODERNIZATION**

# ‘Mission Next’ takes shape at Selfridge Air National Guard Base

By Senior Master Sgt. Daniel Heaton  
127TH WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The Michigan Air National Guard’s 127th Wing is implementing the concept of “Mission Next,” a sweeping modernization effort that will bring both the F-15EX Eagle II and KC-46 Pegasus aircraft missions to Selfridge Air National Guard Base.

The conversion, one of the most significant in the 127th Wing’s history, includes nearly \$1 billion in construction and infrastructure upgrades and will create hundreds of new training and job opportunities.

“Our Selfridge Airmen are fully committed and leaning into this effort to bring the most modern, most capable aircraft to our state and to be ready to fully execute our next missions at the highest level,” said U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Paul D. Rogers, Michigan National Guard adjutant general and director of the Michigan Department of Military and Veteran Affairs. “We are grateful to Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and our committed congressional delegation for prioritizing this initiative, ensuring that Michigan remains an integral piece in the nation’s defense strategy.”

In preparation for the first F-15EX arriving in 2028, Rogers and other leadership from MING and 127th Wing traveled to Boeing’s F-15EX assembly plant near St. Louis to review delivery timelines and program milestones.

“‘Mission Next’ is a complex, carefully sequenced effort,” said U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Leah Voelker, 127th Wing commander. “Every piece — construction, equipment, training and talent — must come together with precision so we can execute today’s mission with excellence while confidently stepping into our next chapter.”

During a visit to Selfridge ANG

Base on April 29, 2025, President Donald Trump announced the F-15EX would replace the 127th Wing’s A-10 Thunderbolt II aircraft mission, operated since 2008. He also reaffirmed that the Wing would receive brand-new KC-46s to replace its KC-135 Stratotanker fleet, in service with the 127th Wing since 2006. The first KC-46s are expected to arrive in 2030.

Construction to support the dual-mission transition is already underway.

A \$28 million, 41,900-square-foot hangar for fighter maintenance is scheduled for completion in February 2026. Overall, the base is slated for an estimated \$985 million in new construction through 2031.

“This isn’t just new buildings,” said U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Daniel J. Kramer II, assistant adjutant general and commander of the Michigan Air National Guard. “While this will be the most significant change to the Selfridge skyline since the original permanent structures were built in the 1930s, we are also shifting the runway and installing new power and sewer lines. This is a full-scale modernization of Selfridge infrastructure.”

Even as “Mission Next” accelerates, the 127th Wing continues worldwide operations.

The 171st Air Refueling Squadron and 191st Maintenance Squadron, known as the “Michigan Six-Pack,” recently returned from a short-notice deployment to the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility.

Many Airmen from the 127th Mission Support Group, 127th Medical Group and the 127th Wing headquarters element are currently deployed in the region. The 107th Fighter Squadron, known as the “Red Devils,” along with the 127th Maintenance Group, is scheduled for its final A-10 deployment in 2026.

“It’s truly inspiring to watch the



U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Andrew Axe, 107th Fighter Squadron commander, right, shows Brig. Gen. Leah Voelker, 127th Wing commander, bottom center, and Lt. Col. Shannon Vickers, 127th Operations Group commander, the cockpit of an F-15EX Eagle II aircraft in St. Louis, Missouri, Nov. 13, 2025. Michigan National Guard leadership visited the Boeing production plant in advance of the 127th Wing’s planned 2028 mission conversion from the A-10 Thunderbolt II to the F-15EX. COURTESY PHOTO

attitude, effort and resilience our Airmen bring to today’s mission while embracing the demands of what comes tomorrow,” Voelker said. “The coming years will be transformational for Selfridge, and I’m confident our Airmen are ready

to rise to every challenge as a team.”

To support the updated aircraft and mission sets, nearly all of the 127th Wing’s nearly 1,000 aircraft-related duty positions will require new training, ranging from formal Air Force technical schooling to

extensive on-the-job instruction.

The transitions from A-10 to F-15EX and from KC-135 to KC-46 will be the first time since the 127th Wing will receive two new aircraft types directly from the production line.

## ESSENTIAL TO FLY

# Airmen fuel freedom with every mission

By Airman 1st Class Jacob Hessen  
127TH WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Every mission in the sky starts with work on the ground, and that's where the fuel management specialists, also known as petroleum, oils and lubricants Airmen, come in. Serving with the 127th Logistics Readiness Squadron's Fuels Flight at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, these Airmen are the backbone of the Air Force.

POL is a vital career field that ensures the Air Force always has the fuel it needs, keeps the engines running and moves the mission forward. Jet fuel might be the main attraction, but there is more to the job than meets the eye. Fuels Airmen also maintain fuel storage and dispensing systems, ensure inventory accuracy, analyze fuel and cryogenic products, run a lab and maintain a vehicle fleet.

The critical fuels management mission is in high demand at Selfridge with the new F-15 Eagle II EX and KC-46 Pegasus aircraft conversions on the horizon. Tech Sgt. Nicholas Bousquette, operations noncommissioned officer in charge of the fuels management flight, says the field is full of opportunities.

"My favorite part about this career field is all the different opportunities that we get. Every single type of aircraft the Air Force and other services fly, we do all the fuel," Bousquette said. "I've been part of missions in the past where I never even imagined that I'd ever be part of something that big."

Fuel isn't just the lifeblood of flying missions. Every government vehicle, gener-

ator and aircraft on base depends on them. They even supply cryogenic products, like liquid oxygen, so pilots can breathe. Without fuel, the Air Force stays grounded.

For Staff Sgt. Devin Houle, a fuels management specialist, the POL career field sent him places and opened doors he never dreamed of.

"When I turned 18, I never thought I'd be working for the President," Houle said. "President Obama, I filled his Air Force One, and then I was given the exact same opportunity for President Trump and then again, for Biden."

Both sergeants emphasize that POL is about far more than keeping aircraft in the sky. It's about growth, adaptability and opportunity. Learning technical skills, earning certifications, and even fueling Air Force One are just some of the experiences that highlight the career's breadth. For many, the journey begins with one of the Guard's greatest advantages: education benefits.

Houle used those benefits to earn his bachelor's degree and is now working toward a doctoral degree in physical therapy.

"I wanted the ability to go to school while seeing the world," Houle said. "Every aircraft, truck and piece of equipment needs fuel. If you want to travel, POL takes you to every base in the world."

To learn more about the fuels management specialist career field, enlistment bonuses or other opportunities in the Michigan Air National Guard, go to [127wg.ang.af.mil](http://127wg.ang.af.mil) and click the "join" link at the top.

U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Nicholas Bousquette, fuels management journeyman, 127th Logistics Readiness Squadron, fuels flight, Michigan National Guard, removes liquid oxygen from a 50-gallon issuing tank to a beaker at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Michigan, Nov. 2, 2025. The blue liquid oxygen is pressurized oxygen that is cooled to minus 297 degrees Fahrenheit, turning it into a boiling liquid that must warm and turn to gas before Airmen can test its purity. **U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY SENIOR AIRMAN JACOB HESSEN**



U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Nicholas Bousquette, fuels management journeyman, 127th Logistics Readiness Squadron, fuels flight, Michigan National Guard, removes a hose from a 50-gallon issuing tank at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Michigan, Nov. 2, 2025. This oxygen goes on aircraft for pilots to breathe at high altitudes, keeping missions safe and effective. **U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY SENIOR AIRMAN JACOB HESSEN**



U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Nicholas Bousquette, left, and Staff Sgt. Devin Houle, both fuels management specialists with the 127th Logistics Readiness Squadron, Michigan National Guard, transfer liquid oxygen from a 3,000-gallon storage tank to a 50-gallon issuing tank at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Michigan, Nov. 2, 2025. This oxygen is essential for pilots to breathe comfortably while flying at high altitudes. **U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY SENIOR AIRMAN JACOB HESSEN**

**A WINNING MISSION**

# Michigan Airmen fly, fix to ready for fight

By Senior Master Sgt. Daniel Heaton  
127TH WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Fly, fix, fight.

As part of the Michigan Air National Guard's 127th Wing drill weekend, Airmen flew and fixed aircraft to ready the fight at Selfridge Air National Guard Base on Jan. 9-11, 2026.

Gen. Kenneth S. Wilsbach, Air Force chief of staff, laid out the "Fly, Fix, Fight" motto to Airmen in his first message to the force on Nov. 3, 2025, outlining his leadership priorities.

"Our shared purpose is simple and enduring: to fly and fix so we are ready to fight. At our core, we fly and fix aircraft. It is the heart of who we are and what we do," Wilsbach said. "Every Airman, no matter their specialty, contributes to the generation of airpower to support the joint fight. From the flightline to the cockpit, from logistics to networks, every part of our Air Force delivers combat power. Together, we afford our nation the ability to deter aggression and when necessary, to fight and win."

Over the weekend, KC-135 Stratotanker and A-10 Thunderbolt II aircraft flew. Scores of maintainers fixed aircraft and, at a medical "rodeo," upwards of 900 Airmen verified they were up-to-date with routine medical requirements, ensuring they continue to be qualified for duty.

On Jan. 10 alone, a dozen A-10s launched from the base to take part in a training exercise at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base in Arizona, and five KC-135 Stratotankers took off, participating in a variety of missions and training sorties.

Meanwhile, in a KC-135 hangar, a trio of junior Airmen worked on fixing a hydraulic actuator on the port side wing of one of the large refueling aircraft.

It is the small things that allow the larger mission to happen.

"This was written up as a problem, a small hydraulics leak and we want to get this aircraft back into service," said Staff Sgt. Charles Travis, who works in the hydraulics shop of the 191st Maintenance Squadron. The 191st Airmen are the "Fix" part of the equation.

On a chilly Saturday, with a little snow flying outside, Senior Airman Lucas Bulac and Airman 1st Class Cameron White worked inside a hangar on the KC-135, troubleshooting the problem and fixing the aircraft — getting it ready to fly and, if necessary, to contribute to the fight.

Bulac and White are both traditional members of the Michigan Air National Guard,



U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Cameron White, left, and Senior Airman Lucas Bulac, right, both members of the 191st Maintenance Squadron, Michigan Air National Guard, work on an actuator on the port side wing of a KC-135 Stratotanker at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Michigan, Jan. 10, 2026. The Airmen are both traditional members of the Michigan Air National Guard, serving generally one weekend per month and two weeks of active duty per year, serving both state and federal missions. **U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Master Sgt. DAN HEATON**

serving generally about one weekend per month and a couple of weeks of active duty per year. When not in uniform, Bulac is a full-time student at Oakland University, where he is studying criminal justice. White works in the food service industry and is planning to return to school himself. Travis, who was supervising Bulac and White, serves full-time at Selfridge.

Bulac has been with the Michigan Air

National Guard for about three years; White for two. Travis served as an F-15 Eagle maintainer in the active-duty Air Force before joining the Michigan ANG several years ago.

"I like working on the aircraft because it is always something challenging, something you put your hands on, but you also have to use your brain to figure out," Bulac said.

Bulac and White are both in skills upgrade training, so the small write-up on the KC-135



U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Lucas Bulac, a hydraulics specialist, 191st Maintenance Squadron, Michigan Air National Guard, cleans a cotter pin at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Michigan, Jan. 10, 2026. Bulac, who is a full-time student at Oakland University, maintains KC-135 Stratotanker aircraft as a traditional member of the Michigan Air National Guard, serving generally one weekend per month and two weeks of active duty per year, serving both state and federal missions. **U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Master Sgt. DAN HEATON**

provided an opportunity for them to hone their own skills, while also performing a needed "Fix" on an aircraft.

"This is a core task for them, and it gets this aircraft back in the fight," Travis said.

For White, the larger part of the task was obvious.

"This is the mission today: fix this problem, so we are ready to go. It is as simple as that," he said.

**DETER, DEFEND, DOMINATE**

# Combat readiness inspection showed 127th Wing's strength

By Tech. Sgt. Nicole Erb  
127TH WING PUBLIC  
AFFAIRS

The 127th Wing of the Michigan Air National Guard successfully completed a combat readiness inspection at Selfridge Air National Guard Base on Sept. 14, 2025. The CRI is an evaluation of a unit's readiness, whereby inspectors come from higher headquarters to observe the wing's ability to rapidly generate and sustain combat power in support of national defense requirements.

Over the course of four days, inspectors assessed mission execution, compliance, safety and the wing's ability to operate under realistic contested conditions, such as a 24-hour power and computer network outage, jammed radios and numerous drone attacks.

"This inspection validates our ability to fly, fight and win," said Brig. Gen. Matthew G. Brancato, then-127th Wing commander. "We are showing the nation that when they need us, we are ready to deter, defend and dominate."

During the inspection, 127th Wing Airmen were evaluated in critical mission areas including aircraft generation, maintenance, command and control, and force protection. The results affirmed the wing's ability to deploy fighter, maintenance and support personnel in a demanding environment.

"This exercise is a test to see how quickly and efficiently we can deploy people and cargo in a highly

contested environment in support of the future fight," said Lt. Col. Brady Shagena, 127th Logistics Readiness Squadron commander. "In our past inspections, we have been untouchable, but bringing the challenge to the home base is a great opportunity for us to test our agility while deterring our enemy and defending our home unit."

Exercise planners assigned to the 127th Wing's inspector general's office emphasized the scope and complexity of the inspection.

"This is an important exercise with a posed threat to our home base," said Senior Master Sgt. Catherine Finocchiaro, 127th Wing inspector general superintendent and exercise planning chief. "Our adversaries may try to keep us from deploying and generating aircraft. Exercising as if we are attacked on home base gives new perspective, allowing us to identify any gaps and improve our lethality and readiness."

A team from the Asymmetric Threat Training Support Program, in conjunction with Michigan Army National Guard members of Camp Grayling Joint Maneuver Training Center, flew drones during the exercise to represent enemy threats. The drones dropped a non-toxic powder to simulate chemical attacks, activating alert response teams.

"This is my first exercise with the military," said Airman Dillon Rose, 127th Wing comptroller flight finance specialist. "Seeing



U.S. Airmen from the 127th Logistics Readiness Squadron, Michigan Air National Guard, conduct buddy checks as they don chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear defense protective equipment at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Michigan, Sept. 12, 2025. CBRN defense was a component of Exercise Bronco, a four-day combat readiness inspection, that tested the 127th Wing's ability to generate, deploy and fight from home station under pressure, ensuring the 127th Wing Airmen have the capabilities needed to dominate the future fight. **U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Master Sgt. DAN HEATON**

the drone drop fake chemicals and having to put on all this gear made the exercise a very surreal experience for me."

Difficult working conditions, such as power outages supporting an energy resilience and readiness exercise and chemical warfare activities and explosions, all pose serious threats to the mission and operations of the base.

Airmen had to adjust operations with computer networks degraded, while wearing full chemical and biological protective gear, gaining readiness-on-demand experience.

"When you count on the internet for many of your operations to go safely and smoothly, pivoting and overcoming a power outage is monumental to the success

of the medical group's operations," said Master Sgt. Sharmane Hicks, 127th medical group aerospace medicine operations superintendent. "We understand the critical mission of deploying our Airmen and know our limitations and exceptions, but we had to make decisions and translate the new processes to our teams to overcome these challenges successfully."

The CRI gave Airmen of the 127th Wing the opportunity to understand what types of potential threats advisories might use and an opportunity to succeed in spite of them.

"Every chance to exercise could be our last attempt to improve before we need to act on a threat," Shagena said.

## LEADERSHIP

# Voelker takes command at Selfridge

By Senior Master Sgt. Daniel Heaton  
127TH WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS

U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Leah Voelker assumed command of the 127th Wing and Selfridge Air National Guard Base in a formal ceremony at the base on Dec. 7, 2025.

Voelker, a KC-135 Stratotanker pilot who has served her entire 24-year military career in the Michigan Air National Guard, replaces Brig. Gen. Matthew G. Brancato, who had served as the wing's commander since August 2023. Brancato moved to the National Guard Bureau headquarters near Washington, D.C., where he is now serving as the director of the bureau's strategy, design and requirements directorate.

"General Voelker is the right person, at the right time, to lead the 127th Wing into a season of unprecedented change, with new missions and new aircraft on the horizon," said Brig. Gen. Daniel J. Kramer II, assistant adjutant general and commander of the Michigan Air National Guard.

As commander, Voelker will lead a force of 1,500 Citizen-Airmen at Selfridge, including squadrons operating A-10 Thunderbolt II attack aircraft and KC-135 aerial refueling aircraft.

The wing will transition to flying the F-15EX Eagle II fighter aircraft in 2028 and the KC-46 Pegasus aerial refueler in 2030. In addition to her leadership responsibilities with the wing, Voelker also serves as the commander of the air base, which is home to more than 5,000 service members within more than 40 tenant units from across the Department of War and the Department of Homeland Security.

"Together, we will take on these challenges and continue to not only meet the standard, but to set the standard that our Air Force and our nation expects of us," Voelker told the assembled Citizen-Airmen of the 127th Wing during the ceremony.

Voelker said the wing's goals for the year ahead are Readiness, Mission Next and Our Team. In 2025, more than 500 127th Wing Citizen-Airmen deployed outside of the United States. More deployments are scheduled for 2026, even as the wing has begun the transition to the new aircraft and new missions. To support that transition, nearly \$1 billion in infrastructure upgrades and new construction is scheduled to take place at Selfridge through 2031.

"We have a formidable task before us, but our Michigan Airmen have proven time and time again that they are up to the challenge. Already our Airmen, both here at Selfridge and deployed to locations around the world, have shown that they have the expertise, the resilience and the dedication that our state and nation have come to expect from the 127th Wing," she said.



U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Leah Voelker, commander, 127th Wing, Michigan National Guard, presents the guidon at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Michigan, Dec. 7, 2025. Voelker received the guidon from Brig. Gen. Daniel J. Kramer II as she succeeded Brig. Gen. Matthew Brancato as wing commander. **U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY SENIOR AIRMAN JACOB HESSEN**

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