



MEDIA RELEASE

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Tennessee Air National Guard graduates first class of foreign students

NASHVILLE – Ten students from the Republic of Poland graduated October 30th from the first C-130 flying training class in the Tennessee Air National Guard’s 118th Airlift Wing during ceremonies at Nashville's LP Field.

The class began training on Monday, August 18, less than one year following the announcement of the new flying training mission for Nashville's 118th Airlift Wing. The class consisted of four C-130 pilots, two navigators, two engineers, and two loadmasters.

“The 118th put this mission together in just eight months when it generally takes two years,” Col. Douglas Delozier, Wing Commander, told a crowd of 130 officers, enlisted and civilian guests at the graduation ceremonies.

Special guests at the dinner celebration included 5th District Congressman Jim Cooper, Maj. Gen. Richard E. Perraut, Secretary of the Air Force Foreign Affairs; and Brig. Gen. Zbigniew Galec, Republic of Poland Air Operations Center.

Delozier acknowledged the support received from Congressman Cooper, Maj. Gen. Perraut, the Air Force Education and Training Command, and Tennessee Air National Guard State Headquarters. "Their efforts greatly enhanced our ability to meet goals earlier than expected," Delozier said.

Congressman Cooper spoke of his pride in the 118th Airlift Wing, the importance of this mission, and of his opportunities to work with the Polish government on missile defense issues, “The Polish people are some of the kindest people I have ever worked with.” Cooper stated, “The relationships we are creating through this program, build a future based on friendship and respect.”

Lt. Col. Mieczyslaw Gaudyn, student and commander of the Polish aircrew, spoke highly of the training, professionalism and camaraderie shared with their Tennessee instructors and commanders. The pride in their accomplishments was evident as the Polish students walked across the stage to receive graduation certificates from the 105th Squadron Commander, Lt Col. Chuck Echols.

(more)

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"We will forever remember the Tennessee hospitality and generosity," Gaudyn said. He made special mention of a welcoming cookout planned just two weeks into their training, as well as other 118th personnel who invited them to their homes.

The 118th Airlift Wing will begin its next class of Polish students in the next week.

CUTLINES:

Photo # 1

Capt. Timothy Heichel honors the Ten Polish graduates as they proudly display their certificates.

Photo #2

Congressman Jim Cooper congratulates a Polish student on his completion of C-130 aircrew training with the 118th Airlift Wing.

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