



# United States Air Force

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## ***Air Force Cuts Aviation Support at Public Events*** ***Cuts include cancellation of The USAF Thunderbirds***

WASHINGTON – As the U.S. Air Force braces for potential sequester, leadership has cancelled all aviation support to public events for at least the remainder of the fiscal year and is standing down the Thunderbirds aerial demonstration team to save flying hours to support readiness needs.

Effective today, active-duty, Reserve and Guard units will cease all aviation support to the public. This includes the cancellation of support to all air shows, tradeshow, flyovers (including funerals and military graduations), orientation flights, heritage flights, F-22 demonstration flights and open houses, unless the event includes only local assets.

Additionally, the Air Force will cancel the Thunderbirds' entire 2013 season beginning April 1.

The Thunderbirds and Heritage Flight crews will complete their certification procedures for safely flying aerial demonstrations in case the budget allows resumption of scheduled events in 2013, but and the Air Force will cease participation in Heritage flights following certification.

The Air Force will reduce flying hours by as much as 18 percent -- approximately 203,000 hours -- and impacts will be felt across the service and directly affect operational and training missions.

“While we will protect flying operations in Afghanistan and other contingency areas, nuclear deterrence and initial flight training, roughly two-thirds of our active-duty combat Air Force units will curtail home station training,” said Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A. Welsh III.

Since all aerial support to public and military events is flown at no additional cost to the taxpayer using allotted training hours, the Air Force had no choice but to cancel support to these events.

“Engaging with the public is a core Air Force mission and communicating and connecting with the public is more important today than ever before. However, faced with deep budget cuts, we have no choice but to stop public aviation support,” said Brig. Gen. Les Kodlick, director of Air Force Public Affairs. “The Air Force will reevaluate the program at the end of the fiscal year and look for ways to curtail the program without having to cancel aviation support altogether.”

The Air Force will continue to seek additional ways to remain engaged with the American public.

For more information, please contact Air Force Public Affairs at [aerial.events@pentagon.af.mil](mailto:aerial.events@pentagon.af.mil) or 703-695-9664. For information specific to the USAF Thunderbirds, please call Air Combat Command Public Affairs at (757) 764-5007.