

Wisconsin Dept. of Military Affairs: Wisconsin Air Guard unit celebrates final F-16 flight from Truax Field

Posted on Thursday, Oct 6, 2022

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

MADISON, Wis. — The 115th Fighter Wing's final F-16 Fighting Falcon aircraft departed Oct. 5, following a sendoff ceremony commemorating their 30-year service at Truax Field.

Col. Bart Van Roo, commander of the Wisconsin Air National Guard's 115th Fighter Wing, was joined by state, local and military leaders who gathered with 115th Fighter Wing members and retirees to pay tribute to the legacy of the F-16 at Truax Field.

"I want to thank so many of our extremely supportive groups — our honorary commanders past and present, the Badger Air Community Council, the Madison Area Chamber of Commerce, the leadership of the 495th Fighter Group, the 128th Air Refueling Wing, Volk Field, and to all our retired members, especially to our commanders and chiefs," Van Roo said. "Thank you all for your support — you have spent the last 30 years helping us share our message of capability to our state and nation."

The F-16 Fighting Falcons first arrived at Truax Field in 1992, replacing the A-10 Thunderbolt II. The aircraft are the unit's eighth primary airframe since its inception in 1948, and were an integral part of multiple world-wide deployments over the last 30 years.

"Today is one of many major milestones in our conversion to the F-35," said Col. Charles Merkel, 115th Fighter Wing vice commander. "But today, it's about the F-16 and all the Airmen who were a part of the F-16 mission here. To all the current

members, and to all the former members who have contributed to 30 years of flying the viper — you've left an incredible legacy of combat deployments and homeland defense.”

The ceremony also featured the awarding of challenge coins to 11 Airmen, representatives of each of the groups across the wing who have supported F-16 missions at home and around the globe over the past three decades.

“There were two themes that emerged that really represent the difference in this organization — our culture of excellence, and our people's desire to maintain that,” Van Roo said. “We decided the best way to represent all we have achieved in this last 30 years is to tell the story of our people.”

Construction and training continue at the base in anticipation of the arrival of the 115th Fighter Wing's ninth primary airframe, the F-35 Lightning II, in the spring of 2023.

“It's fitting that the home of the next F-35 squadron in the Air Force and in the Air National Guard is right here at Truax,” said Brig. Gen. David May, Wisconsin's deputy adjutant general for Air. “In the hands of the 115th Fighter Wing Airmen, E-1 to O-6, we will show the world what dedication to excellence truly means, anytime, anywhere.”

A small contingent of F-16s from other units will temporarily operate from Truax Field to conduct homeland defense training while the 115th Fighter Wing transitions to the F-35.