



Westmoreland County Airport Authority

148 Aviation Lane, Suite 103, Latrobe, PA 15650

(P) 724-539-8100 (F) 724-539-2441

THUNDERBIRDS RESUME PERFORMANCES: WILL FLY AT ARNOLD PALMER REGIONAL IN JULY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, May 23, 2018

The U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds Demonstration Squadron has safely resumed its 2018 Show Season.

Gen. Mike Holmes, Commander of Air Combat Command, authorized resumption of Thunderbird performances starting at Air Power over Hampton Roads at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Virginia.

In a social media statement posted this week, the team announced that it is continuing with scheduled performances in honor of Maj. Stephen “Cajun” DelBagno, the slot pilot who was killed during a practice flight at the team’s practice range in Nevada on April 4, 2018.

“Our team suffered a tragedy,” a team spokesman said. “We stood down our mission, and the Thunderbird family mourned alongside his in the weeks that followed. Demonstrating the resilience of the United State Air Force, the team rebuilt and retrained. We stand before you today, ready to fly and ready to inspire.”

DelBagno “was a passionate aviator...and he perished doing what he loved,” the spokesman added. “We’re honoring Cajun this year by continuing to share his love of aviation with all of you. This one's for you, Big Cat.”

Holmes made the determination to resume performances based on recommendations of leadership from the U.S. Air Force Air Demonstration Squadron, 57th Wing and U.S. Air Force Warfare Center, as well as a careful review of the team’s safety, training and operational practices.

“The Thunderbirds look forward to safely resuming public shows,” said Lt. Col. Kevin Walsh, Thunderbird 1, Commander/Leader. “It has been challenging to get us to this point, but the team is resilient, focused and ready to get back to our mission of recruiting, retaining and inspiring.”



Westmoreland County Airport Authority

148 Aviation Lane, Suite 103, Latrobe, PA 15650

(P) 724-539-8100 (F) 724-539-2441

The return to regular performances is a pivotal milestone for the Thunderbirds as they recover from their first fatal mishap in 36 years.

“We are extremely grateful for the support, faith and confidence of our senior Air Force leadership as we prepare to showcase our United States Air Force to the public once more,” Walsh said. “As we hit the road, we’ll carry on our wingman’s legacy with pride.”

An investigation remains underway into the cause of the mishap. A report will be made available to the public once complete.

The Thunderbirds will perform at the Shop 'n Save Westmoreland County Airshow on Saturday and Sunday, July 28 and 29, 2018.

For more information on the show, please visit www.palmerairport.com

FOR MORE INFORMATION, please contact:

Gabe Monzo

Executive Director

Westmoreland County Airport Authority

gmonzo@palmerairport.com

724-539-8100 - office

724-640-6182 - cell