

Scott Air Force Base is bursting with pride

Segue • SIUE



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For a century, Scott Air Force Base (AFB), located in St. Clair County near Belleville, has supported numerous infrastructure, communications and aviation missions for the United States Military. As the fourth oldest base in the U.S. Air Force with an active runway, Scott is 30 years older than the Air Force itself, which was founded in 1947.

During this Sunday's episode of Segue, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville's premier radio show that airs on WSIE 88.7 FM The Sound, Chancellor Randy Pembroke sits down with Col. Laura Lenderman, Commander of the 375th Air Mobility Wing at Scott AFB, to talk about her wing's mission, her Air Force career, as well as some of the base's upcoming Centennial Celebration activities.

Lenderman arrived at Scott as a young girl with her family in the 1980s, when her father, Col. Gordon Cook, served as the executive officer to the vice commander of Military Airlift Command. As a child, she always admired the Air Force way of life and resolved that she wanted the same for her own family.

"We were always very active in the Scott and local community, and as a young girl, I realized that this was a great way of life," Lenderman said. "I wanted to serve my country, and hopefully return to Scott on active duty, since it's always been a special place that I call my Air Force home."

After receiving her bachelor's from Duke University, she attended undergraduate pilot training at Columbus Air Force Base in Mississippi. She then served tours at several bases throughout North Dakota, Washington and Oklahoma, flying the KC-135 Stratotanker. She performed presidential advance duties for Air Force One and the 89th Presidential Airlift Group, and commanded the 15th Air Mobility Operations Squadron at Travis (Calif.) Air Force Base. Aside from her extensive military experience, she has also thrived academically, earning three master's in business administration, military operations, and airpower arts and sciences.

Lenderman returned to Scott after 30 years to serve as the executive officer to the commander of Air Mobility Command in 2010. She left to become vice commander of the 380th Air Expeditionary Wing in Southwest Asia. After fulfilling duties at the Pentagon, she returned to Scott in 2015 to take command of the base she had loved so much growing up.

The 375th Air Mobility Wing provides aeromedical evacuation for patients, and operational airlift support for high-priority passengers and cargo with its fleet of C-21 aircraft. The wing is an associate partner with the Illinois Air National Guard's 126th Air Refueling Wing in performing the global air refueling missions with the KC-135 aircraft. The wing also partners with the Reserve's 932nd Airlift Wing flying executive airlift missions with the C-40 aircraft.

The 375th supports 31 other mission partners, including the U.S. Transportation Command, Air Mobility Command and 18th Air Force, totaling more than 13,000 active-duty Guard, Reserve, Department of Defense civilians and contract personnel.

"I can imagine that in any moment, based on something that may occur around the world, the situation can change dramatically at the drop of a hat," Pembroke says.

“We are always preparing for situations where we have to deploy,” she replies. “Any time you open the newspaper, look online or watch the news on television and see something happening in the world, you can bet that the people at Scott Air Force Base are playing a part in our nation’s response.

“There’s always an incredible sense of service and accomplishment when you wake up in the morning, put on that uniform, and go to support the people on and off base in service to your country,” she says.

During the past 100 years, Scott has been home to several different missions, starting as a pilot training base during World War I, transitioning to a lighter than air station in the interwar years, and the nation’s premier communications school during World War II. Scott has borne witness to the birth of the Air Force, ushered in the modern jet age and today has grown into the nation’s premier transportation and cyber hub. As the home of the U.S. Transportation Command, Air Mobility Command, and the Surface Deployment and Distribution Command, Scott AFB also provides humanitarian support to people in need all around the world.

“Our humanitarian work is one of our most heartwarming and personally rewarding missions we can provide at Scott,” she says. “The motto of our wing is ‘help from above,’ and I believe that rings true throughout our entire installation. If anyone in the world needs help, we are simply a phone call away.”

On Jan. 6, Illinois Gov. Bruce Rauner made a visit to Scott to congratulate the base on its centennial anniversary and proudly proclaim 2017 as the Year of Scott Air Force Base. As part of the base’s celebration, it will also host a plethora of events to honor its history and invite the public to see everything that Scott has to offer.

To celebrate its centennial, the base invites the public to “Race Through Scott’s Past” with its special 5K run/walk. The event will be held at 2 p.m. on Friday, April 21 on the base’s parade grounds. After the race, guests can enjoy free food, bounce houses, prize drawings and more. For more information about registering, visit scott.af.mil or call (618) 256-1218.

From 9 a.m.-5 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, June 10-11, Scott hosts a free air show and open house event, featuring performances from several groups, including the Aerial Acrobatics of the U.S. Army Special Ops Black Daggers, Tora Tora Tora and the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds. Over 40 different military aircraft will be on display for viewing. For more information about this event, visit the Scott AFB website.

On Friday, July 14, the base hosts a Centennial Car Show at the event center. Judging begins at 4 p.m., and the awards ceremony follows at 5 p.m. First and second place trophies will be awarded for best original stock and modified vehicles before and after 1972, as well as best street rod, truck and motorcycle. Admittance and vehicle registration is free.

In case of rain, the event will be held July 21. For more information, contact (618) 256-4230 or visit 375fss.com.

To catch this entire conversation, tune in at 9 a.m. Sunday to WSIE 88.7 FM The Sound.

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