

A Word from Willie

Society of Wild Weasels Newsletter
September 2026



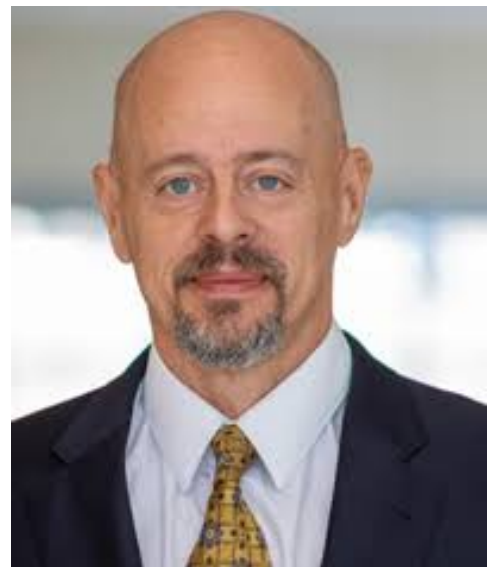
CINCWW's Corner

Hey - We have new INCOMING CINCWW

Fellow Wild Weasels,

It is an honor to step into the role of Chief Wild Weasel. For decades, our organization has stood for excellence, camaraderie, and an unwavering commitment to our shared legacy and mission. As I assume this responsibility, I am deeply aware of the history we carry forward and the high standards set by those who came before us.

First and foremost, I want to express my deepest gratitude to Budman. Under his energetic leadership, the Society achieved significant milestones that have benefited not only those of us with a few flying hours on the clock, but



more importantly, the newer generations coming up after us. We owe him a debt of thanks for his dedicated stewardship, and I look forward to building upon the solid foundation he helped establish. I've got big shoes to fill!

As I take the helm, my primary focus for the next 60-90 days will be listening & learning. While it is tempting to lay out a list of new goals right away, I believe effective leadership begins with getting a clear, comprehensive lay of the land. Over the next two to three months, I will be meeting with board members, committee leaders, and general members to review our ongoing programs, assess our organizational health, and ensure we are directly serving the needs of our community.

I want to hear from you.

Your insight is invaluable in shaping the future of our Society. Whether you have ideas for new initiatives, feedback on current programs, or simply want to share your thoughts on where we should focus our energy, please reach out to me directly at dan.debree@tamu.edu.

Following this initial period, I look forward to sharing our refined strategic goals and priorities for the coming year. Until then, our focus remains clear: honoring the Wild Weasel heritage, supporting our membership, preserving the traditions that define us, and continuing to pursue the goals/programs Budman has put in place.

Thank you for your trust and support. I am excited to work alongside each of you.

YGBSM,

Dan "Trash" DeBree

Chief Wild Weasel

OUTGONG CINCWW

Fellow Weasels,

We are having a membership drive, and it is in phases outlined below:

Phase 1—reach out to our family and possible honorary members for additions. We have built a sign up on the WW Website at [Family and honorary members sign up page – Society of Wild Weasels](#)

Phase 2—research our expired members and ask them to come back to the Society. This is two-fold if they have an email we contact them and if not we mail them a letter. One of our great interns Liam is making this happen.

Phase 3—work our free 18-month membership for intel, engineers and testers, please help us with this effort. The sign-up link is [Engineers and Testers 18 month membership sign up – Society of Wild Weasels](#)



A big thank you to Dave Melton who conducts online interviews for us and writes them up! Dave is on his 6th interview and has been great at getting these out to our membership through Word from Willie!

I would be remiss if I didn't think JJ our stalwart Word from Willie editor who keeps us all meeting deadlines!! Thanks JJ!

Hats off to Muskrat and Uke for their continued support of the Luke F-35 graduating classes and events. They have done a couple since our last Word from Willie and we appreciate it. A special Word from Willie thanks!

Thunder Thornton was the guest speaker and our liaison for the Eglin F-35 graduation. He worked with Shagi a Wild Weasel Society recognized Top Instructor in 2026 to talk about the heritage for these future SAM killers! Thanks so much Thunder!!!!

The 169th Fighter Wing has had a very busy year and the Society sent them TShirts and coins for their great efforts! We are very proud of this great Weasel unit.

We were contacted by a grandson of Col Driscoll who wanted to educate his kids on their grandfather. We were to host a zoom meeting with Stanry, Dave Brog, Jerry Knotts and Bearly who had served with him! Well-done guys!

The 35th Anniversary of Desert Storm culminated in a zoom call with a panel of our former Commanders. Gen Peksens, Col Karp, Col Patton, Col Walton and Gen Gelwix did a great job of

explaining some of their challenges and lessons learned. This included both the Weasels in Proven Force and the Weasels in the 35th FW. We will be adding that to the You tube which is almost updated and ready for podcasts on your experiences.

Our own Tom Ferguson is the founder of Wild Weasel Coffee. I had to order 5 F-4G roasts! He is available at Twf676@aol.com/tom@wildweaselcoffee.com.

WILD WEASEL COFFEE CO.

FOUR-ROAST PRODUCT PREVIEW

Four Missions. Four Roasts. One Purpose.



YGBSM
F-100F SUPER SABRE



RADAR LOCK
F-105 THUNDERCHIEF



SAM SLAYER
F-16 WILD WEASEL



HARM STRIKE
F-4G WILD WEASEL

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT PREVIEW

A coffee series built around the aircraft, missions, and heritage of the Wild Weasel community.

Concept artwork and packaging shown for discussion purposes.

Joe Shriber had a great idea on trying to get a Jeremiah Weed replacement. He has suggested a contest to determine a alcohol of choice for the Weasels. We have embraced that and the winner gets two free Wild Weasel Tshirts. We will soon have a voting tab on the Wild Weasel website for you to vote. Joe recommends the following and it is very nice corn whiskey. So get your nominations by 30 Oct and then we will set up a vote. *This will require some taste testing but as I tell my wife—its for the Wild Weasel Society, I need to do this!*



Bob Lodge Medal of Honor

Please keep sending those to your Senators/Representatives or give us permission at WildWeaselReports@gmail.com. We have sent 20 on behalf of our Weasels.

Chuck DeBellevue is leading an effort endorsed by the Air Force Association to have Major Bob Lodge awarded the Medal of Honor. There is a campaign ongoing led by Congressman Pfluger (our champion in getting the VA cancer study done) and I would like the Weasels to show their support. If you haven't read about Bob Lodge, it is well worth 15 minutes of your time! Here is the link to the AFA presentation:

<https://www.afa.org/?s=Bob+Lodge>

Here are links to email your Senators/Congressman to write them and let them know it is long overdue for this hero!

<https://www.senate.gov/senators/senators-contact.htm>

<https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>

In addition, if you give us permission we will file on your behalf like we did for the cancer study. Please send us an email to WildWeaselReports@gmail.com to give us permission.

Lastly, great effort by JJ and Trash and others on the new website. We will probably go live in the next two to three weeks. We need your feedback

VR

Budman Redmond

Society of Wild Weasels Chief in Charge

YGBSM

FILO

Weasel Happenings

Interview with F-35 (Un-named) Wild Weasel Pilot

September 1, 2026

Author - David Melton

Interviewer's Note: The subject of this interview is a Wild Weasel pilot with experience in the current military campaigns against Iran and the Houthis in Yemen. At the time of this writing, this is an ongoing conflict. There are concerns about potential retaliation should his identity be known, and as such, personally identifying information will be deliberately excluded below. He will be given an opportunity to review the draft prior to publication to ensure his security concerns have been met, and both I the Interviewer and also the Editor will scrutinize it to ensure his safety and that of other personnel participating in the conflict. For simplicity, we will use the terms "I" for Interviewer, and "P" for Pilot throughout this article to identify the speaker.

I: Tell us about yourself and your military background.

P: I was an Air Force Academy graduate. I was pipelined to the F-15E and did about eight years in it, to include graduate from the Air Force Weapons School. I did about one and a half assignments in a deployable unit and an assignment as a Formal Training Unit instructor. During my operational assignments, I did three deployments. Two were to the Middle East, one supporting Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF1) at a classified location, and one supporting both OEF1 and Operation Spartan Shield, which was the old Iran deterrence program that's now dead. I also did a security package deployment to Korea.

After I did that, I was part of the cadre at the F-35 Weapons School. I helped develop the tactics for the airplane when it was pretty new. I was one of the first roughly two hundred F-35 pilots in the Air Force. That was about ten years ago. After that, I became Director of Operations at an operational squadron and ultimately an operational Squadron Commander, during which time I deployed four total times across the globe.

After my operational squadron command, I became a Deputy Operations Group Commander, which is when I deployed for the combat tour in Operation Rough Rider (the March-May 2025 campaign against the Houthis in Yemen). All told, I deployed six times in the F-35. Three were to the Middle East, one to the Pacific, and two to Europe. The first time I really flew the Wild Weasel mission in combat was the last deployment, in 2025, during Operation Rough Rider where we flew in support of F-15E, F-16, F/A-18, F-35, and B-2 strikes. I had not been particularly familiar with the SEAD mission as an F-15E guy. It wasn't until I went to the F-35 and we started adopting it as one of our primary operational missions that I really got familiar with it.

I: How was that transition for you?

P: I was fortunate because I went to the F-35 Weapons School cadre, so I was surrounded by some people who had transitioned a little bit earlier. They were some of the smartest fighter pilots in the world. Several of these cadre were from an F-16 background and had graduated and instructed at its Weapons School. They had done the Weasel mission before. So it wasn't totally jarring, because I had the best people in the world to help me make that transition.

I: What can you tell us about the F-35 Weapons School?

P: It's similar to other USAF Weapons School programs. The duration is controlled by the Air Force, so it's the same as the others: about five to five and a half months. We designed it to focus on Offensive Counter-Air (OCA), with the pinnacle being SEAD. We also heavily emphasize that our Weapons Officers are to be approachable, not just among F-35 pilots but also other Weapons Officers. We focus on their leadership as mission planning cell chiefs and mission commanders of strike packages. The other Weapons School programs try to do this too, but we had the benefit of guys with backgrounds in every fielded USAF fighter as well as a dual TOPGUN and MATWS-1 F/A-18C instructor from the USMC to build the program. With all that wide expertise, we were really able to push out of the late 90s mindset and develop tactics against advanced threats and develop really advanced tactical leaders.

In the F-35 program, we focus primarily on two aspects of OCA. One is SEAD, and the other is "Attack Operations", attacking ground targets that directly support an enemy's ability to threaten our air superiority. Examples include communications relays and runways. We do a little training in the escort role, which is direct air-to-air against other fighters. But our focus to support the OCA mission is primarily on air-to-ground in one of these two roles.

I: Now to the big story. What can you tell us about the F-35 as used in the Wild Weasel role in the recent conflicts with Iran and the Houthis?

P: With regard to Iran, the Israelis did a really good number on the imported air defenses, predominantly from Russia, during the Twelve-Day War. It was basically a TKO. So the air defenses that we in the USAF have faced in Iran have been a little bit less than expectations from before the conflict, before 2025. In Yemen, the air defense threat with the Houthis was actually more than anticipated.

The Iranians did something that I can't go into in great detail, but basically a traditional Integrated Air Defense has three main pieces of the kill chain. The first is Air Surveillance, which is their understanding of the air picture. Then you have Battle Management, which is determining what to target and what system to target it with. The last part is Weapons Control, which is the specific shooter's system operation to engage our aircraft. By Operation Epic Fury (OEF2), the Iranians had a very non-traditional, decentralized system, probably because their

original system had been broken so early on. This resulted in us having to change our expectations of how engagements would go and how we have to protect the strike packages or other protected entities. Their kill chain is very much a mix of things, and that actually has complicated matters for us. I can't elaborate any further though.

The Houthis had a similar capability that was surprising, primarily due to their creativity in how to make those same three pieces of an Integrated Air Defense work. It's less of an Air Defense mindset than we expected. The Houthis recognize their strategic centers of gravity, but they are not primarily focused on defending their airspace. Their focus is on downing a US airplane. This is a different mentality than we traditionally faced or trained against. You expect an engagement timeline focused on them protecting something, but instead it goes differently because it is more important for them to down an airplane than to protect their airspace. This causes a lot of changes in where the engagements come from and how we have to posture ourselves. They also realize how capable we are, so they don't expose their systems until the last moment.

The sensors on the F-35 are VERY good at detecting radars and missile launches. The F-16 is not as capable at this. Stealth capability is also important, but less so in this conflict. The optimization of the mix of aircraft is more important right now. In the SEAD role, we are sharing the mission between the F-35 and the F-16, optimizing each aircraft's strengths and covering weaknesses. The F-16 carries the HARM missile, which we do not yet in the F-35. We, in the F-35, bring a more accurate way of cueing bombs into the fight. We use the F-16 for immediate suppression. Our effect is a little bit slower but more precise. Especially with the Houthis being so focused on hit-and-run, we developed our tactics to have whoever is getting shot at defend and then having someone else right there to put a bomb on the shooter.

The Triple-A threat is still very real. The Iranians in particular have put out a lot of open source videos on their ability to track aircraft with optics and engage with both SAMs and Triple-A. It doesn't take a long time to develop a good solution with guns. We've seen this threat in both Iran and Yemen.

I: Do you use a similar tactic as against the SAMs?

P: Yes, although it depends on what weapons control they are using. But the hardest one is if it's optically controlled.

I: Overall, have we very effectively degraded the Iranian and Yemeni air defenses, between our actions and the Israelis?

P: Yes, definitely. But I think, as my personal opinion, that we do need to think of it differently. For the last twenty years we have been supporting ground forces. We got used to that. We got used to air supremacy. We had that because we could clear out everything on the ground. What we are seeing now in both Iran and Yemen is that, when we only use airplanes and don't have

forces on the ground, you can only find so much. You can't see every asset they have. You can't keep them from moving assets into an area that you had already "cleared". It's hide and seek. We have air superiority, but you can't have total air supremacy without ground or surface forces to find everything and keep an area clear.

We are highly successful in striking the things we are trying to strike. There is little they can do to stop us. But it doesn't mean that there is no threat. Our pilots are still getting shot at. The enemy uses low risk tactics. They hide themselves well and accept the thumping they are getting to get a chance to shoot at our aircraft. We have degraded their air defenses to the point that they can't stop us from doing what we want to do, but we can't achieve it at the level of risk we would prefer. This has driven us to make some modifications to the First In, Last Out approach the Wild Weasels have used since the beginning. We still have that mindset, but we have had to make some changes, although I cannot go into specifics.

I: How much has the F-35 displaced the F-16 in the Wild Weasel role, given your statement that the two aircraft have been working together in the recent conflicts?

P: We kind of showed up in the F-35 and said "We're doing SEAD", and the aircraft was definitely designed and developed with the SEAD mission in mind. But we didn't try to tell the F-16 community they weren't doing that mission anymore. We tried to learn from and partner with them, as they were the experts at the time. This is similar to how the F-22 augmented the F-15C before the F-15C was retired.

We wanted to optimize the SEAD package, which is not just the F-35 and F-16, but also includes Space and Cyber assets, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance assets, E/A-18 Growlers, EC-130 and now EA-37B Compass Call platforms among others. We work with them a lot. It's a whole team together. From the beginning, the F-35 program has valued working with all of those folks to protect our forces with all the multi-layered effects we can get from this multi-domain warfare.

We explored what we could do with the sensors and stealth capabilities of the F-35. This allows us to get into some areas the others can't and so we explored doing that part of the SEAD mission on our own. We had to figure out where the line was, when we could involve the F-16s, which were super helpful, and when we couldn't. Similar to how the F-16 developed over the years, they didn't get the full Weasel mission until the development of the Block 50 and HARM Targeting System pod. Before that, they were partnered with the F-4G to point out the threat to them and they would bomb it, doing a Vietnam-style hunter-killer team. That's very similar to what we are doing with the F-35 now in the old Weasel "hunter" role due to our ability to generally get closer and also due to our limited weapons carriage capability in our "stealth mode" and lack of HARM, and the other fighters like the F-16s as the suppressors/killers.

I think eventually the F-35 will carry the torch as the Fighter piece of SEAD. We are soon to get the next evolution of the HARM concept, called the AARGM. I think we will continue to grow

and adapt some of their missions as the F-35's capabilities expand, the threat evolves, and older fighters are retired. I am sure we will develop new tactics with the F-15EX, F-47, and our own Block 4 capabilities, and the Weasel mission will continue to evolve with them as well.

I: Suppose a new pilot is coming into the F-35. What is the pipeline for him to become a Wild Weasel? Is there a Weasel School like there was in the Vietnam days?

P: No, we actually took a page from the F-16 program on this question. There was a time when the F-16 program would graduate people and then bring them back for Block 50 conversion training - essentially Weasel School - and they found it was too inefficient and expensive. So they started integrating it directly into their F-16 qualification training. We are using that approach. We have not gotten to the point in the F-35 community where we have segmented the community. I personally think there will eventually be so many F-35s that the Air Force will start to split the missions within the community and by units. You may eventually have dedicated SEAD squadrons. But today it isn't that way.

Right now, the training syllabus has a SEAD qualification up to a certain point in the initial qualification course. It includes academics, knowledge of all the systems and the jet, about six simulated missions and about six actual flights. However, as a community, we are still trying to identify when we want to allow an F-35 pilot to wear the patch of a Wild Weasel.

Right now the approach is that after they get their Mission Qualification Training at their operational assignment, they will have to go through a major week-long planning exercise for an operationally relevant SEAD mission, lead by the Weapons Officers, called Verification. It ends with an extremely detailed Board at the Squadron and Wing levels that tests whether they have the knowledge and mentality to wear the Weasel patch. Typically we want the pilots to go through a training cycle before we put them through Verification. After they complete Verification and get their patches, they are Wild Weasel qualified wingmen. Similarly when they later upgrade to be flight leads, they have to get a Weasel qualification in that role also. Maybe about thirty-five percent of that syllabus is focused on SEAD.

I: So it's essentially a qualification that every F-35 pilot is expected to achieve in the course of his normal development and upgrade process?

P: Correct. Right now all the squadrons are tasked to do the SEAD missions, so all the F-35 pilots need to have the Weasel knowledge and character.

Also the technology of the F-35 is so fantastic that a lot of the very specialized work that used to be done in the old days by the EWO to detect, identify, and locate threats is now mostly done by the airplane. This is why we see these single-seat, multi-role aircraft and squadrons being successful in the SEAD mission while also being able to execute other missions like strike, air-to-air escort, Close Air Support, or Defensive Counter-Air. This is the same as F-16 SEAD units.

I: Is there anything else you want to say to our readers?

P: If you look at Operation Epic Fury, it took the Iranians somewhere around forty-five days to shoot down one of our aircraft, despite hundreds and hundreds of strikes. That is all built on the foundation created in 1965. The mentality the initial Weasels created still lives strong, even though the tactics and technology have changed. It is still at the core of what we do. We took a fifteen to twenty year break from having to use it operationally, but we were able to do it again because of that core they passed on to us.

Great Current News on the WW Mission Links:

(click for web link)

How ‘Wild Weasel’ missions became essential in the fight with Iran

Mentions F-16s from 480th FS Spangdahlem AB and F-35s from 48FW RAF Lakenheath.

<https://taskandpurpose.com/news/air-force-wild-weasel-iran/>

<https://taskandpurpose.com/news/f16-icarus-yemen-distinguished-flying-cross/>

<https://www.f35.com/f35/news-and-features/F-35s-Advance-Wild-Weasel-Mission.html>

Membership Update

Fallen Wild Weasels

Kenneth James Fraser, WW #994, EWO, F-105G, 31 Mar 2026
John Allen Corder, WW #2339, Pilot, F-4D, 1 May 2026
Allen J. Thrush, WW #1800, Pilot, F-4G, 20 Oct 2023
Lester Williams, WW #636, EWO, F-4C, 15 Jun 2026
George W. Acree, WW #289, Pilot, F-105F/G, F-4E, 30 Jun 2026
William Paul Bagley, WW #1855, EWO, F-4G, 18 Jul 2026
Allen Thompson Lamb, WW#16, Pilot, F-100F/F-4D, 19 Jul 2026

Our Condolences to their families, friends, and brothers in arms. Hand Salute! Rest in Peace!

New Members

James “Wedge” Greider, WW #2951, Pilot, F-4G
Mike “Loadhacker” Sloniker, WW #2952, Honorary Member
Christopher Gordon, WW #2953, Honorary Member
Richard “Robo” Leonard, WW #2954, Honorary Member
Robert Alfred Lodge, WW #2955, Pilot, F-4C, Posthumous
Greg Gerrits, WW #2956, Honorary Member

Surviving Family Members

Darrell Westcott, WW #76
Patrick Donovan, WW #15
Jerry Narken Broit, WW #750
Michael O’Brien, WW #847

If you know of family members who qualify, have them contact us at:

LABudF4G@gmail.com

L.A. Bud

Weasel Watch



F-4G



F-16CJ

I have been working with the Bremont Watch Military Special Projects Team to create a Wild Weasel watch.

- For the F-4G watch, Bremont needs only a few more orders to move ahead. All you need to reserve your beautiful time piece is an \$800 deposit.
- F-16CJ watches can be ordered now.
- The Watch is the ALTITUDE MB METEOR
 - <https://us.bremont.com/products/alt42-mt-ti-bkbbk-l-s> .
- The Watch is **\$3,700** (including duties and shipping within the US) to aircrew. Bremont subsidizes a portion of the cost from the \$5,300 retail price as a tribute to the military.

Contact me at blackburnmanor@mac.com and I will email you the official poster and order form.

Pinky
WW #1911
Robert Blackburn, Jr.
blackburnmanor@mac.com

Weasel Coins

Kevin Hale has designed a great 35th Anniversary coin which you can sign up for on our web site. <https://wildweasels.org/desert-storm-memorial-coin-sign-up/>

Here are the proofs:

FRONT



BACK



SIZE:D=1.75"

Weasel Medical

<https://wildweasels.org/medical/>

<https://www.facebook.com/MACHCoalition1/>

<https://milaviator.org/>

<https://www.nationalacademies.org/projects/HMD-BPH-25-04>

2026 Funding

Available balance

• Ending balance as of June 11 26	\$52,581.47
• Current Posted Balance	\$52,581.47
• Pending withdrawals/debits	\$0.00
• Pending deposits/credits	\$0.00
• Available balance	\$52,581.47

Why the Wild Weasel Society Would Benefit from Your Charitable IRA Distribution

If you are 73 or older, the IRS requires you to take annual minimum distributions (RMDs) from your IRA. For many retirees, those distributions increase taxable income—even if the funds are not needed for daily expenses. Fortunately, there is a smart way to both reduce your tax burden and support causes you care about: a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD).

A QCD allows you to transfer up to \$100,000 per year directly from your IRA to a qualified nonprofit such as the Wild Weasel Society. The amount given counts toward your required

minimum distribution but is excluded from your taxable income. That means you can satisfy the IRS requirement, lower your taxes, and make a meaningful impact at the same time. You can earmark your funds for education if you want.

Link for Wild Weasel Give Direct

<https://donate.givedirect.org/?cid=15484&n=386259>

Or, please send a check to:

Society of Wild Weasels

P.O. Box 877

Silver Spring, MD 20918

Another great charity is the Air Warrior Courage Foundation; here is their link:

[Donations – Air Warrior Courage](#)
