

COMMEMORATIVE AIRFORCE

THE FLYER

THE B29 | B24 SQUADRON NEWSLETTER

SINCE 2008

Q 01 2024

ISSUE

122

AIRPOWER 2024 TOUR HISTORY

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THE FLYER

Q1 2024 | ISSUE 122

ROSS MARTIN | EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
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JEREMY LASHBROOK | SQUADRON LEADER
PHIL WEBB | EXECUTIVE OFFICER
RANDALL HASKIN | OPERATIONS OFFICER
JEFF TRAMONTANO | ADJUTANT & MEMBERSHIP OFFICER
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THANK YOU TO ALL VOLUNTEERS & MEMBERS
OF THE B29 | B24 SQUADRON AND BEYOND WHO MAKE THIS PUBLICATION POSSIBLE





ROSIE'S REMINDERS

March Squadron Meeting

When: March 16th @ 8:00am

Theme: "Warbirds & Coffee"



Come on out to the Dallas hangar for donuts, coffee, and a historical look at "coffee at war", a debrief / discussion of the "Masters of the Air" series, a maintenance update, and an intro into becoming a maintenance volunteer. Stick around for a Saturday maintenance "MX" day and help support our maintenance team and our aircraft.

The March meeting will be streamed online for those who are unable to attend in person. Watch your email for more information on how to join the online stream. Stream info is below:

B29/B24 Squadron Online Steam—via Microsoft Teams

Meeting ID: 938 687 343 425 0

Passcode: neY9yR

Join the meeting online - [click here](#)

REPORTS



SQUADRON

**OFFICER
REPORTS**

Q1 2024



SQUADRON LEADER

JEREMY LASHBROOK

Happy New Year to all squadron members and friends. We have an exciting and busy year ahead. I want to thank you for the opportunity to serve as the B-29/B-24 Squadron Leader. When I joined the Commemorative Air Force 6 years ago, I could have never imagined it would lead me here. I want to give a big thank you to Archie Taylor for his leadership to the squadron over the last several years. Archie has an unwavering dedication to our organization. We all owe him and the other outgoing officers a debt of gratitude.

This is a wonderful squadron, and I am proud to be a member. For those of you that I haven't had the chance to get to know yet, I live in Cabot, Arkansas with my wife and two children. I retired from the US Army in 2019 where I spent a 26-year career as a rotor and fixed wing pilot. After retirement, I began an aviation contracting business and work as a Designated Pilot Examiner. I have been a member of the B-29/B-24 Squadron since 2019 and have the great fortune of being a B-29 Pilot in Command and an Instructor in both the B-24 and Stearman. I recently completed terms as both the Wing Leader of the Razorback Wing and the Operations Officer of the WASP Squadron. These positions were a great place to learn some of the inside workings of a CAF unit.

I want to share with you my goals for the next year. It will take us all to make these goals a reality, but I have no doubt that with our volunteers, supporters, and staff we will be successful.

- Conduct all our operations as safely as possible.
- Enjoy keeping FiFi, Diamond Lil and the Stearman flying for future generations.
- Execute a safe and profitable Air Power History Tour.
- Engage our unit members and volunteers in our mission. Ensure that we have a place and job for EVERYONE that wants to get involved.
- Increase fundraising efforts to help support our squadron aircraft and mission.

Thank you all for what you do in being a part of and supporting the B-29/B-24 Squadron.

Keep 'em Flying!

Jeremy S. Lashbrook

B-29/B-24 Squadron Leader



ADJUTANT

JEFF TRAMONTANO

As the new Squadron Adjutant I'd like to take a quick moment to introduce myself. My name is Jeff Tramontano and I live in Prosper, TX with my wife and two young future aviators. I currently fly for American as an 320 First Officer and teach in the A320 at ATP Jets. I've been with the squadron since 2018 and have worked in the maintenance hangar, as well as a bomber Co-Pilot primarily in FIFL.

Rolling into the new year, my initial goals are to get acting members re-enrolled for 2024 and then get right into recruitment. Our operation is very different than a lot of CAF squadrons. As we tour the nation, we truly operate a unique business in our mission to Educate, Inspire and Honor. This type of operation requires a huge amount of talent in many different areas of expertise. Like any Aviation unit or organization, not everyone is a pilot and there are dozens of support staff and general volunteers behind the scenes keeping the operation moving. Everyone is essential. As with many volunteer operations there is an ebb and flow to volunteers as they come and go to support their passion projects like the CAF. We all sacrifice personal time outside of family and work commitments, and for that I'd like to thank each and everyone one of you for your incredible commitment. I would also like to thank everyone's families for lending us their loved ones!

There are many headwinds we have to combat like rare, out of production parts and rising operational costs. One of the biggest and perhaps unseen threats is maintaining a dedicated and talented cadre of volunteers willing to devote their own personal time to our mission

My goal is to develop methods for retention and new talent attraction so we can continue to operate these fantastic aircraft well into the future. To that end, I'd like to ask each and every squadron member to consider at least 1-2 people they think may be a great fit for our group, and try to recruit them. Whatever talent they may have from history buff to ramp rat to Aeronautical Engineer, if they have a passion for our mission we want them all. Pitch them, then bring them out to a meeting or tour stop. Bring them to the hangar and show them what we do! Over the next year when you meet someone out on tour or even locally that's truly passionate and shows true interest, pitch membership to them. Even if they don't bite immediately, you may have planted the seed for a new member in a few months or years. So don't give up and check back in with them if they don't immediately join.

Longer term for 2024, I would like to establish mentorship programs for certain very specific volunteer positions like pilot, scanner, ride desk or maintenance etc. I will be calling on our trained and experienced members to volunteer face time or phone time to show new members the ropes and encourage and fuel their enthusiasm. This will provide an easier path for nurturing specific job positions, and gives new volunteers a clear guided path to success in those positions. If you already are on board for such an endeavor, reach out to me as I would also love to brainstorm on the most effective way to begin this program.

One thing I've said time and time again since joining the squadron was that I was "with my people" here. History buffs, patriotic Americans, airplane nerds and gear heads alike, what a great thing to be involved with. Let's work together towards making this a great place to spend our time and find more of our people to continue our mission well into the future.



OPERATIONS

RANDALL HASKIN

Blow off the cobwebs, update your manuals and checklists, and let's get ready to tour. First, however, let's get up to speed on everything that's been happening in Flight Operations since the 2023 Tour ended in September. With all the airplanes in winter maintenance it would be natural to think that your Ops staff would be taking a break, too, but nothing could be further from the truth. We've spent a lot of time analyzing how things went in 2023 and using that to plan for 2024.

The most time has been spent designing and planning the 2024 tour. First let's discuss tour planning, which has been the baby of Matt Hood this year, and what you see on the schedule is primarily the result of his hard work (thanks BIG!). We've used a data-driven approach to comb through a decade's worth of information about past tours, looking at gate attendance, rides sold, and even rides lost due to weather and other factors. With great help from the financial analysis of Curtis Limerick we have attempted to select tour stops that have historical trends for generating the best revenue and which we haven't over-attended in the most recent years of the tour. There has also been careful coordination with Maintenance and the Ramp Manager to ensure that distances between stops are reasonable and that we have required maintenance opportunities to the plan.

The resulting schedule you see is a bit shorter and fewer stops than 2023, but with built-in opportunities for local out-and-back "Texas Tour" stops both before and after. The hopes is that we will spend at bit less time out on the road and not have our crew and volunteers run out of time away from families/work.

The second lesson learned had to do with manning and scheduling. Although there was a good manning and scheduling plan when the tour kicked off, we had several events between the Spring and Summer tours that left us functionally short-staffed in EVERY crew position out on the road. We scrambled to cover Standard Crew positions nearly every tour stop, and that had massive logistical ripple effects that made the tour costs higher than they were in the past. We will discuss some of these things at Ground School so everyone will be better informed and hopefully we can avoid these self-induced wounds in 2024. It also put stress on a small group of crew members who had enough time available to be out on the road for long stretches and fill those schedule openings.

With regard to manning, in 2024 we are hoping to slightly increase our number of qualified crew in every position, starting with recruiting some new tour members at Ground School. The squadron's Flying Evaluation Board, which evaluates the qualifications of new crew members and selects pilots and FEs to tour in 2024, will be meeting after Ground School is complete.

The aim for scheduling was to have the Tour plan solidified back in December and available for people to plan their personal 2024 schedules. As of when this column is being written in mid-January, the Tour schedule is more or less firm and there are already numerous crew who have committed to some of the stops already. My hope is at Ground School we're able to get more people to fill schedule openings so we can have a mostly-full schedule well before we depart on tour.

MAINTENANCE UPDATE

There are several maintenance challenges with both bombers ahead of the upcoming tour season. A status update will be provided at the March membership meeting. The meeting will be streamed online (check your email for details on how to join the online presentation - coming soon).

As always, we need volunteers to help with maintenance activities. No maintenance or mechanical experience is necessary. If you're interested in helping with our aircraft maintenance needs at the Dallas hangar, please email Scott Lewellan at: slewallen@cafhq.org

If you know of anyone who may want to help please don't keep the squadron a secret. Reach out to friends, neighbors, co-workers, etc. and help us keep 'em flying. Thank you.

2024 Ground School is in the books!

Thank you to all of our instructors, volunteers, and members who were involved in the planning, coordination, training, and execution of this year's ground school.

A big thanks also to our membership and volunteers who attended and participated. We hope to see you out on tour this year. If you have any questions about touring reach out to one of the ground school mentors or contact Ross Martin (d.ross.martin@gmail.com).

AIRPOWER HISTORY TOUR GROUND SCHOOL

»» 2024 ««



2024 B29/B24 SQUADRON GROUND SCHOOL



MASTERS [★] OF THE AIR

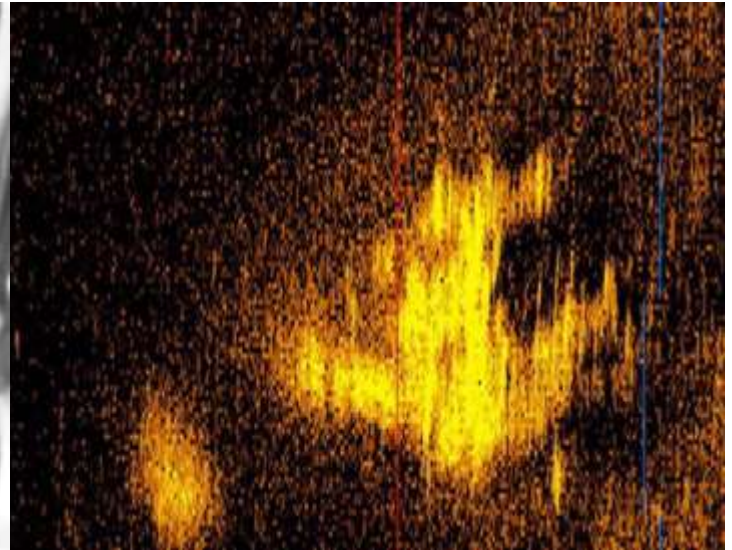


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OLD MYSTERY - NEW CLUES



IMAGES: Shutterstock / Deep Sea Vision

The disappearance of legendary aviator, Amelia Earhart is one of the 20th century's greatest unsolved mysteries. Tantalizing new clues have emerged from ocean exploration company Deep Sea Vision who recently released compelling sonar images of what could be Earhart's Lockheed Electra aircraft on the ocean floor of the Pacific.

The new images appear to show the ghostly shape of an aircraft that strongly resembles Earhart's Lockheed Electra in both size and shape. Amelia Earhart and her navigator, Fred Noonan, disappeared in 1937 on a voyage to circumnavigate the planet over the Pacific Ocean. Had they succeeded, Earhart would have been the first female pilot to fly around the world. No traces of Earhart or Noonan or of their aircraft have ever been recovered which has fueled countless numbers of theories to their actual fate. Some speculation advanced the notions that the pair ran out of fuel and crashed, to having crashed near Howland Island and swam ashore eventually starving, to being captured by Japanese forces who were in the area and expanding their control of islands in the run up to World War II. None of these theories have ever been conclusively proven.

The new sonar images were taken approximately 100 miles from Howland Island which is where Earhart and Noonan were expected to land to refuel but never arrived. Deep Sea Vision captured the images surveying 5,200 miles of seafloor between September and December of 2023. Deep Sea Vision, founded by retired US Air Force Intelligence officer, Tony Romeo, himself a pilot, plans on returning to the site of the images sometime in 2024.



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Website: <https://www.b29b24px.org>

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CONTACT ROCKY OR ALMA SMITH FOR MORE INFORMATION

Check out the next two pages which contain quick facts in pocket form about FiFi & Diamond Lil. You can print, fold, and/or laminate these cards and keep them with you on tour to help answer visitor's questions.



DOCENT DUTIES

Part of the squadron's mission is to educate the public on the significance of our aircraft and the reasons we continue to maintain and operate them. Many visitors and patrons, especially children, often are not familiar with our aircraft, know little about the men and women who built and flew them, their historical significance, or their roles in World War II and beyond. One of our jobs as volunteers is to showcase our aircraft especially since our squadron has the privilege of operating the "Queens of the CAF Fleet"!

Keep in mind that visitors, riders, VIPs, veterans, and others are our customers who help pay the bills that allows all of us to fly, operate, and interact with our amazing aircraft. Ensuring our visitors leave having learned a bit about the CAF, our squadron, and our aircraft as well as having had a great experience is a large part of why we fly.

Please take a moment to print and familiarize yourselves with the cards and their information if you plan on touring this year. A quick refresher, even for our seasoned squadron veterans out there, is never a bad thing!

If you have questions about our aircraft, their history, or docent duties, please reach out to Ross Martin, squadron mentors, or other squadron members. See you on tour!

Email: d.ross.martin@gmail.com

BOEING B29 "SUPERFORTRESS" - TOURING QUICK REFERENCE CARD

AIRCRAFT TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Manufacturer:	Boeing Aircraft Corporation		
Designation:	B-29A "Superfortress"		
Primary Role:	Heavy Bomber		
Other Roles:	Incendiary bombing, naval mining, signals intelligence, weather & photographic reconnaissance		
Years Produced:	1943-1946		
Number Built:	3,970 aircraft		
First Flight:	September 21, 1942		
Retired:	June 21, 1960		
Crew: (11)	Pilot, Co-Pilot, Navigator, Bombardier, Flight Engineer, Radio Operator, Radar Observer, Right, Left, & Tail gunners, and Central fire control		
Engines:	Wright R-3350-23 Duplex-Cyclone 18-cylinder, air-cooled, turbo-supercharged, radial piston engines		
Max Speed:	365mph	Cruise Speed: 220mph	Power: 2,200 HP per engine (8000 HP total)
Service Ceiling:	31,850 ft	Range: 3,250 miles @ 25,000ft with 5000lb bomb load (5,830 no bombs)	
Fuel Capacity:	5,600 gallons (could carry additional fuel with optional internal/external tanks)		
Bomb Capacity:	Short Range (20,000lbs), Long Range (12,000lbs), Very Long Range (5,000lbs)		
Guns:	Two top & bottom GE twin .50 caliber turrets, aft twin .50 cal, and one aft 20mm cannon		
Bombs:	Atomic, Incendiaries, General Purpose (120lb, 250lb, 500lb, 1,000lb, 2,000lb)		
Bombs:	Could be modified to carry two 22,000 lb (10-ton) "Grand Slam" bombs externally		
Production Plants:	Seattle, WA - Renton, WA - Wichita, KS - Glenn L. Martin Plant, Omaha, NE Bell Aircraft, Atlanta, GA. (FiFi was built at the Renton, WA plant)		
Variants:	"Silverplate" B-29s were the only planes modified to carry atomic bombs. KB-29s were a fuel tanker variant, The B-50 was the first aircraft to fly around the world non-stop, C-97s were a cargo airlifter, and the Model 377 "Stratocruiser" was a commercial airline version		

NOTABLE FACTS

The B-29 was one of the most technologically sophisticated aircraft of the 1940s. It was the first pressurized military aircraft, uses a tricycle landing gear, and its guns were controlled by a GE built analog computer which was cutting edge and highly accurate for its era

There are 22 B-29 airframes that survive in museums today. Only two B-29s are flyable. Several airframes and partial frames still exist in various states of preservation in storage and at several known wreck sites

"FiFi" is a B-29A model delivered to the US Army Air Corps on July 31st 1945. FiFi never left the US. The first atomic bomb was dropped on Japan one week after FiFi was delivered

October, 1958 - FiFi is transferred to China Lake Naval Weapons Center, CA to be used as a target for missile training along with 36 other decommissioned B-29 airframes

In 1971, the CAF negotiates with the Air Force and Navy and secures ownership of FiFi. After 9 weeks of repairs in the desert of China Lake, FiFi is flown to Harlingen, TX for 3-years of restoration. FiFi was the first warbird to do national tours showcasing American WW2 airpower

B-29 development was the most costly wartime project of WW2. The B-29 project cost \$3 billion (\$45 billion today) and exceeded the cost of the Manhattan project \$1.9 billion (\$31.9 billion today) which produced the atomic bomb

FiFi has appeared in TV and movies including: Enola Gay: The Men, The Mission, The Atomic Bomb(1980), Roswell(1994), The Right Stuff(1983), and the AMC series "Better Call Saul"

More B-29s were lost to catastrophic engine failure, fires, and other teething problems than to enemy action in WW2

Captured B-29s that landed in Russia were reversed engineered by the Soviet Union becoming the Tupolev TU-4. The Soviets built 847 B-29 "copies" which they operated until the 1960s. China operated TU-4s until the 1980s.

BOEING B29 "SUPERFORTRESS" - TOURING QUICK REFERENCE CARD

CONSOLIDATED B24 "LIBERATOR" - TOURING QUICK REFERENCE CARD

AIRCRAFT TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

- Manufacturer:** Consolidated Aircraft Corporation
- Designation:** B-24A "Liberator"
- Primary Role:** Heavy Bomber
- Other Roles:** Anti-Submarine warfare, maritime patrol, cargo/personnel transport, fuel tanker, medical evac
- Years Produced:** 1940-1945
- Number Built:** 18,500+
- First Flight:** December 29, 1939
- Retired:** 1968 (Last Operated by the Indian Airforce) Rapidly phased out after World War 2. PB4Y-2 "Privateer" variant served in the Korean War.
- Crew:** (7-11) (Variant Dependant)
Pilot, Co-Pilot, Navigator, Bombardier, Radio Operator, Ball Turret, 2 Waist Gunners, Tail Gunner, Top Turret Gunner, Radar Operator (on equipped aircraft)
- Engines:** Pratt & Whitney R-1830 Twin Wasp Supercharged Engines
(Other B24 models used a turbo-supercharged version of the R-1830 engine)
- Max Speed:** 297mph **Cruise Speed:** 215mph **Power:** 1,200 HP per engine (4,800 HP total)
- Service Ceiling:** 28,000 ft **Range:** 1,700 miles at maximum takeoff weight of 61,500 lbs
- Fuel Capacity:** 3,000 US gallons
- Bomb Capacity:** Short Range (8,000 lbs), Long Range (5,000 lbs), Very Long Range (2,700 lbs)
- Guns:** Ten (.50 caliber M2 Browning machine guns) - B-24J Model
- Production Plants:** Consolidated, Fort Worth, TX, Consolidated San Diego, CA, Douglas Aircraft, Tulsa OK
Ford Motors, Willow Run, Michigan and North American, Dallas, TX
- Variants:** C-87 "Liberator Express" - Military Transport Variant, C-109 - Fuel Transport Variant, PB4Y-1 Naval / Marine variant used for anti-ship patrols & photographic reconnaissance missions

NOTABLE FACTS

- The B-24 still holds the world records for the most produced bomber, heavy bomber, multi-engine aircraft, and American military aircraft. Over 18,500 were produced. At the height of production, one B-24 rolled off an assembly line every 54 minutes!
- Only 13 B-24 airframes currently survive from over 18,500 manufactured. Lil is the only B-24 currently flying.
- "Diamond Lil" is an "A Model" with Serial Number "18" and was the 25th Liberator built. Originally built for France, she was re-allocated to the British after the German invasion of France. A landing accident on the East Coast as she made her way to the UK prevented delivery and Lil was returned to Consolidated in San Diego, CA. She was converted to a company transport (C-87) and also served as a flight test aircraft for the development of later B-24 Liberator models.
- Lil was sold to the Continental Can Co. in 1948 and was converted to an executive transport. She was later sold to the Mexican oil company (PEMEX) in 1955. The CAF acquired Diamond Lil in 1969.
- B-24's utilize the "Davis Wing" which is itself a "wet wing" which holds the fuel. The Davis wing provided high lift and storage space due to its size and was considered to be an advance in wing design however it was quickly superseded by other aerodynamic advances.
- Lil consumes roughly 200 gallons of fuel per hour (50 gal per engine, per hour). With maintenance, parts, etc. it costs roughly \$6,000 dollars per hour to fly & operate Diamond Lil.
- B-24 Liberators were instrumental in closing the "Mid Atlantic Gap" due to their long range and were vital to anti-submarine / U-Boat actions.
- Notable persons who flew B-24s: Lous Zamperini, Actor Walter Matthau, Actor Jimmy Stewart, Joe Kennedy Jr., Senator & former presidential candidate George McGovern, Former Speaker of the House, Jim Wright

CONSOLIDATED B24 "LIBERATOR" - TOURING QUICK REFERENCE CARD



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McDonnell XF-85 "Goblin"

1940s Experimental Interceptor - Tested using B-29s

The McDonnell XF-85 Goblin was a prototype fighter aircraft designed during World War II. As long range bombers grew in size and range in the 1940s, fighter aircraft like the P-51 Mustang, designed to escort them over enemy territory, could no longer keep up due to fuel and range limitations. The XF-85 was an attempt to remedy this issue by placing a fighter interceptor inside the bomb bay of the Convair B-36 bomber which was already in development. The fighter could deploy from the bomber and return in the event enemy aircraft were encountered during a mission.

Also called a "parasite fighter" the XF-85 and several other similar experiments were evaluated. The Navy had previous experience in the 1920s with parasite fighters having successfully launched and recovered Curtiss F9C "Sparrowhawk" biplanes from its dirigible airships the Akron and Macon.

The XF-85 was a small aircraft having a potato shape and a forked tail-stabilizer. Flight tests of the early aircraft appeared promising, however the small size of the aircraft and the engineering limitations of having to fit inside a bomb bay meant it was inferior to other jet fighters of its era that it may have faced in combat.

It was expected that B-36s would fly missions with both bombers and "carrier" variants containing only fighters for defense.



XF-85 "Goblin" - USAF National Museum



XF-85 Suspended From a B-29



XF-85 Hangar Test



Convair B-36 next to a B-29

The B-36 is a massive aircraft!

Planners envisioned one B-36 carrying four fighter aircraft instead of a bomb-load in the "carrier" configuration.

Utilizing a complicated trapeze system, the XF-85 would be released and recovered. In practice, the system was difficult to use. During docking procedures to recapture the Goblin, disturbed airflow and turbulence from the mothership's engines made docking extremely hazardous and difficult. Several accidents occurred in various attempts to redock the Goblin with its bomber mothership. After several redesigns and modifications successful docking was achieved but the process remained taxing and difficult for both fighter and bomber pilots.

With the emerging capabilities to perform in-flight refueling of fighter aircraft in the late 1940s, lackluster performance of the XF-85 in comparison to other jet aircraft, and high demands on the pilot during docking, the USAF cancelled the program in October 1949. The two prototype Gobblins flew seven times and amassed 2 hours of flight time. Of the seven flights, only three were successful in mating with the bomber mothership. Test pilot Edwin Schoch was the only pilot to fly the aircraft. Despite the cancellation of the project, the USAF continued to experiment with parasite fighters in various forms throughout the 1950s with projects "Tip Tow", "FICON", and "TOM-TOM".

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CONTACT INFORMATION

B29 | B24 SQUADRON OFFICERS

Position	Name	Phone	Email
Squadron Leader	Jeremy Lashbrook	(817) 944-3226	jeremylash@gmail.com
Executive Officer	Phill Webb	(850) 449-5318	sh60bphil@aol.com
Operations Officer	Randall Haskin	(702) 913-7282	randall.haskin@outlook.com
Adjutant/Membership Officer	Jeff Tramontano	(214) 903-5221	B29b24adjutant@cafhq.org
Maintenance Officer	Niels Agather	(817) 946-9950	vnagather@agathertx.com
Safety & Training Officer	Burney Baskett	(956) 433-9537	bbaskett181@gmail.com
Finance Officer	Curtis Limerick	(972) 897-3177	climerick@outlook.com
Development Officer	Neil Broussard	(337) 205-1114	neil.broussard@icloud.com
Education Officer	Konley Kelley	(214) 995-5184	konartist@verizon.net
Squadron Volunteer Leaders			
"The Flyer" Newsletter Editor	Ross Martin	(214) 744-3484	d.ross.martin@gmail.com
PX Co-Captain	Alma Smith	(214) 284-9128	alma@b29b24px.org
PX Co-Captain	Rocky Smith	(214) 565-8562	diverock@hotmail.com
Marketing			
Public Info Officer/Media Team	Jacques Robitaille	(972) 977-4245	jrobi1116@outlook.com
Squadron Staff			
Lead Mechanic	Scott Lewallen	(972) 948-4420	slewallen@cafhq.org
Administrative Manager	Jeremy Ott	(972) 387-2924	jott@cafhq.org

B29 | B24 SQUADRON

Website: www.cafb29b24.org

Website: www.airpowertour.org

Ride Desk: (432) 413-4100

Hangar: (972) 387-2924

YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/B29B24Squadron>

Mailing Address: PO BOX 763577 Dallas, TX 75376, USA

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CREDITS

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