

Auf Wiedersehen

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A quarter-century after it began, the historic German pilot-training program at Luke Air Force Base is drawing to a close.

Ceremonies today and Thursday will mark the end of a 25-year international cooperative effort that racked up some notable achievements.

During its lifetime, the program trained some 2,700 pilots, instructor pilots, fighter-weapon instructors and advanced fighter pilots for the German air force and navy.

With that, the program contributed materially to the security of the

Western alliance, Sen. Barry Goldwater, R-Ariz., said.

Begun in 1957, the program also helped Germany become a full-fledged partner in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization by restoring its aerial capability.

Now "Those Wonderful Men in the Cactus Starfighter Squadron," as a book by that name called them, are returning home — to Cologne on the Rhine, and Karlsruhe near the Black Forest, and Augsburg in Bavaria.

The F-104 training program at Luke is being terminated because the Ger-

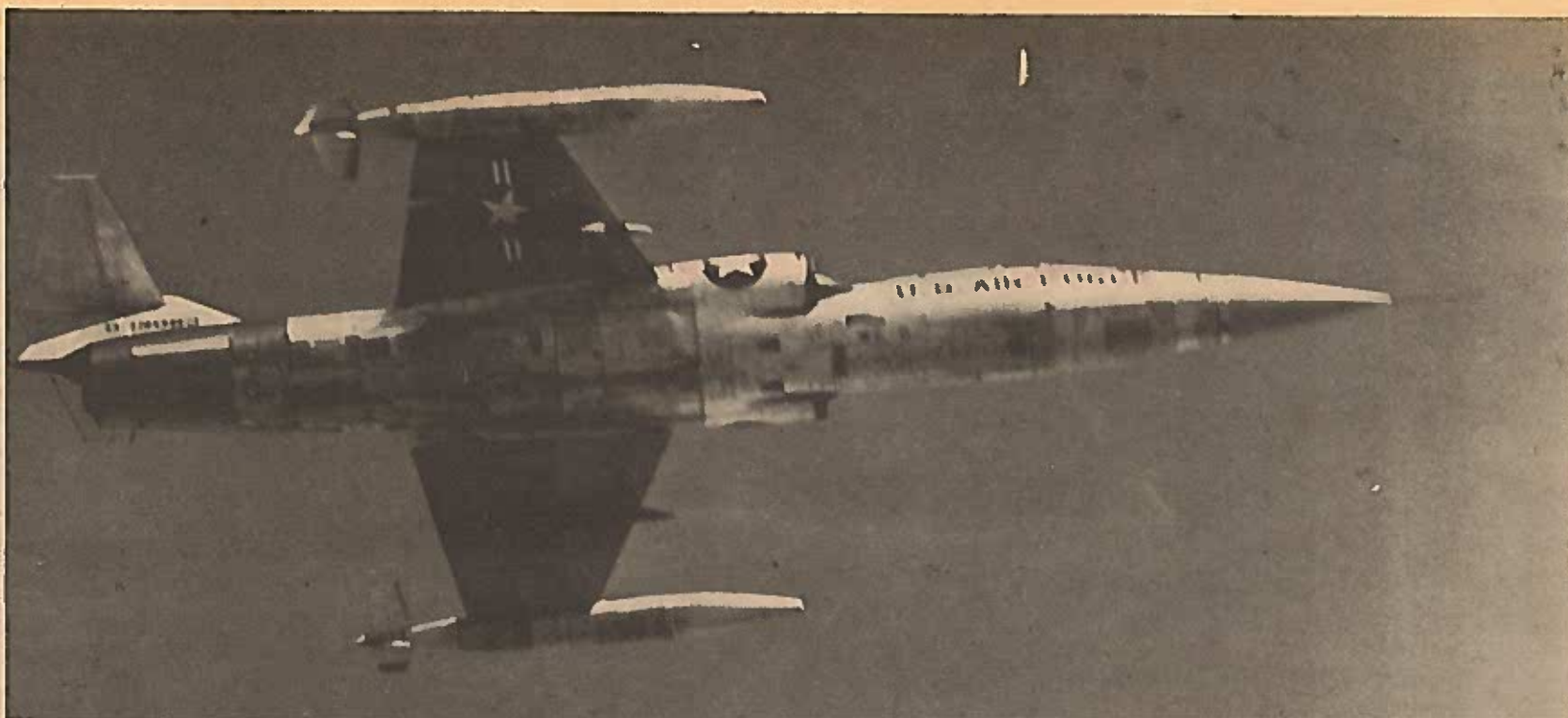
man air force has switched to a new multipurpose jet as its mainstay — the advanced, swing-wing Tornado.

The Tornado, a two-place, twin-engine aircraft, is a joint British-Italian-German project. The German pilots selected to fly it will be trained in England.

However, the heritage built by the German fliers in Arizona remains.

The Arizona program was a historic demonstration that two nations, bitter enemies in two world wars, can join in friendship and mutual respect to build for the future.

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A Starfighter F-104 in flight is photographed from below.

● Germans

From Page 1

"The German pilot-training program in Arizona not only developed closer ties between members of the two countries, but also produced some of America's finest ambassadors," said U.S. Air Force Col. Walter Harrison, project officer for end-of-program ceremonies at Luke.

The program, he noted, "served as a shining example of what cooperation and teamwork can accomplish."

And, he added, "This spirit ... will endure long after the last Starfighter leaves the skies of Arizona."

The same thought was echoed by Luftwaffe Lt. Col. Heinrich Thueringer, 40, commander of the 2nd German Air Force Training Squadron at Luke.

The program, he said, has provided "an insider's knowledge of the American way of life" for the German fliers, and "spread some knowledge of the German way of life" in the United States.

And that, he said, "brings about better understanding."

Lt. Cmdr. Klaus Pflueger, 38, the German unit's deputy commander, voiced a similar sentiment on a personal level.

"I love this country," he said in an interview. "I will be going back with one eye smiling and one in tears."

Former President Ford underscored the value he placed on the program when he stopped at Luke in 1974 and greeted the senior member of that year's Luftwaffe graduating class, Lt. Juergen Dessau.

Ford was the first and only chief of state to visit the program.

Other statesmen also have expressed their high regard for the international effort.

Former Secretary of State Alexander Haig, when he was Supreme Allied Commander in Europe in

the 1970s, said of the Luftwaffe pilots who came to Arizona:

"In the environs of Luke Air Force Base, in America's Southwest, these fledgling pilots have enriched the local lifestyle, and their families have become active, constructive additions to the surrounding communities.

"Both countries have gotten to know each other better because of this experience. It has strengthened the alliance and (is) one of the finer examples of what 'interdependence of nations' really means."

An insight into what the pilot-training program meant to Germany was supplied by Germany's former defense minister, Dr. Franz Josef Strauss.

Germany, he pointed out a few years ago, had been "forbidden to fly military aircraft for 11 years after World War II."

In order to move into the Jet Age, he said, "We had to call on a brave, young generation to literally plunge into new and complex equipment, instruction and weapons systems in one long, all-encompassing jump."

These men "made Germany alive again, and its strength was welcomed by its allies," he said.

Strauss also cited the international friendship benefits of the program, noting that in Arizona, "our pilots have made lasting friends for themselves and for our country."

The German pilots "have entered fully into the community life where they have trained and have given unselfishly of their time and talents" in charitable causes, he said.

The first class of 15 German pilots flew the then-standard jet fighter, the Republic F-84 Thunderstreak.

Arizona was selected for two major reasons — the weather and the wide-open spaces.

The initial class brought together a remarkable array of fliers.

Seven of the pilots were aces, with a combined total of 798 victories in aerial combat in World War II, mostly on the Russian front.

They included:

- Maj. Erich Hartmann, the top fighter ace of all, who had scored 352 aerial victories in the war — more than four times the tally of Manfred von Richthofen, the famed "Red Baron," in World War I. All but seven of Hartmann's "kills" were Soviet aircraft.

- Lt. Guenther Rall, the third-ranking ace, who had shot down 275 planes — again, mostly Russian.

- Capt. Friedrich "Fritz" Obleser, who downed 127 opponents in World War II.

- Capt. Fritz Wegner, credited with seven air-combat victories in the war.

Rall, Obleser and Wegner are to return to Luke for the end-of-program ceremonies.



Lt. Cmdr. Klaus Pflueger (left), deputy commander, and Luftwaffe Lt. Col. Heinrich Thueringer, commander of the 2nd German Air Force Training Squadron at Luke, soon will head home to Germany.

Rall is the retired former chief of staff of the German air force.

Obleser is the Luftwaffe's chief of staff.

Wegner is commander of Germany's Tactical Air Command.

All long ago attained the rank of general.

Also due to fly in for the ceremonies is another retired German air force general, Walter Krupinski.

He also is a ranking ace of World War II, with 197 aerial victories. He visited Luke many times in his capacity as commanding general of the German Tactical Air Command.

The biggest change in the German pilot-training program at Luke occurred in 1964 with the introduction of the needle-nosed Lockheed F-104 Starfighter jet as Germany's standard multipurpose fighter.

For the past 19 years, all German pilots at Luke have been trained in this twice-the-speed-of-sound aircraft nicknamed "the missile with a man in it."

One hundred eighteen German pilot-training classes have flown the Mach 2 aircraft.

And there have been losses.

Sixteen Germans and six American instructor pilots have died in 44 Starfighter crashes, records show.

"The F-104 is a demanding aircraft — single seat, single-engine, high speed," Thueringer told a reporter.

When the jet was modified with additional equipment, it became "complicated to fly and maintain" and that resulted in accidents, he said.

However, "There have been no fatal F-104 accidents at Luke since 1976" and the number of bail-outs and aircraft lost also have decreased since then, he said.

Credits

Stories for this special section commemorating the close of the German pilot-training program at Luke Air Force Base were researched and written by *The Phoenix Gazette's* aviation-military reporter, Peter Reich.

The cover was designed by Brian Daws, art manager of the Promotion Department of *The Phoenix Gazette/The Arizona Republic*.

Color photographs were taken by Nyle Latham, also of the R/G's Promotion Department.

Numerous photographs in the section were reproduced from the collection of Tom Rhone, a retired U.S. Air Force chief master sergeant who has been recording activities of the men of the German Starfighter Squadron at Luke since 1965.

Sister cities: Glendale, Memmingen form family ties

The city of Memmingen, in Bavaria, was founded more than three centuries before Columbus journeyed to the New World.

The city of Glendale, in Arizona, was founded less than a century ago, in 1892.

Thanks to the German air force pilot-training program at Luke Air Force Base, however, the two municipalities are sister cities — and have been for the past seven years.

This relationship promises to be a lasting memento to the program long after the last German pilot leaves Arizona.

In 1976, when Max Klass was mayor of Glendale, the City Council adopted a resolution declaring Memmingen, some 75 miles from Munich, to be "an official Sister City of Glendale for the purpose of creating good will and mutual understanding between the people of our two great cities and countries."

The resolution noted "both cities have significant agrarian activity and adjacent air force bases."

Moreover, the resolution declared, "over 2,000 German air force officers have lived in Glendale for periods of nine months to three years during the last 10 years, and strongly supported the community service programs of Glendale."

Oberbuergermeister (Chief Mayor) Johann Bauer of Memmingen, and Buergermeister (Mayor) Georg Volkheimer, were equally desirous of establishing a formal sister-city relationship with Glendale.

As Volkheimer noted that same year:

"The United States through the Marshall Plan helped Germany start again after World War II. The money helped us rebuild cities that were destroyed.

"We had little to eat until 1948 and America sent us parcels of food.

"Germany is grateful to the United States for substantial help when we needed it."

The sister city concept was originated in the 1950s by President Dwight Eisenhower as a way to promote peace by encouraging people in different parts of the world to get to know each other better.

There are thousands of sister cities around the globe.

But the link between Glendale and Memmingen is something special — a tribute to "the very wonderful relationship" between the visiting German pilots and the Arizona city, as current Glendale mayor, George Renner, put it.

Many of the same German pilots who lived in Glendale while learning to fly the F-104 Starfighter at Luke subsequently were — and in some cases still are — stationed at the German air base at Memmingen.

An important segment of Germany's Starfighter fleet — Fighter-Bomber Wing 34 — is based there.

Renner said the visiting German pilots made "many significant contributions to Glendale,"

among them, "helping rebuild the Glendale Boys Club."

The German pilots did that by contributing thousands of dollars and numerous man-hours in a "big brother-little brother" spirit to that community effort.

The boys club project was financed by fund-raising enterprises such as an annual soccer match between a team of German pilots and cadets from the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs.

A check for \$3,000 presented to the club June 20, 1969, was representative of the gifts bestowed by the visitors.

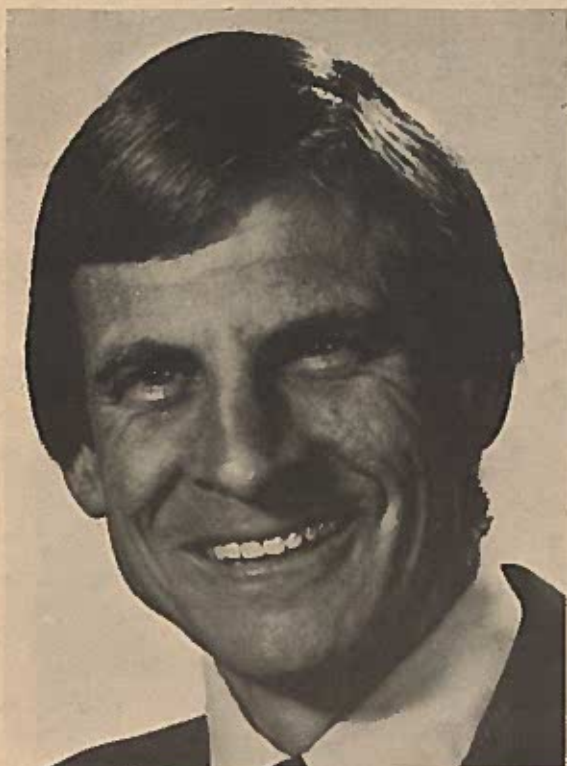
It was presented by the Air Force Academy's soccer coach, Capt. Hank Eichin, and Luftwaffe Maj. Peter Hell, an instructor pilot.

As a result, the Boys Club of Glendale was able to move from its old, ramshackle quarters into a Mormon Church that became available when the congregation moved to a larger building.

Hell subsequently lost his life in the crash of a Starfighter jet on the Gila Bend gunnery range in May 1970.

One of the rooms in the new club was named in Hell's honor.

In a broader sense, Renner said, "The city of Glendale benefitted from the cultural experience of having the Germans with us — and we're going to miss them."



George Renner



German pilots donated \$3,000 to the Glendale Boys Club in 1969.



Max Klass

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Jet maintenance jobs at Luke end

Udo Steinborn gave up the security of a lifetime position with the German air force to move to Arizona.

And now he may be out of a job.

The Luftwaffe sent Steinborn to Arizona in 1968 with the German pilot-training program. He wound up a chief master sergeant in charge of the logistics liaison office between the Luftwaffe and Lockheed at Luke Air Force Base, and remained at Luke for five years.

"I was signed up for life with the Luftwaffe and could have stayed in to age 55," he recalled in an interview.

But Steinborn, 42, said he and his wife, Anke, "fell in love with Arizona."

So he resigned from the Luftwaffe, emigrated to the United States and started a new life in sun country.

Steinborn got a job with Lockheed Aircraft Service Co., the civilian firm that performs all maintenance work on the Lockheed F-104 Starfighter jets used in the German pilot-training program at Luke.

Lockheed put him in virtually the same position he had held as chief master sergeant.

"I just changed hats and chairs," he said with a smile.

The Steinborns settled down to live the good life in Arizona.

"We built a cabin in the mountains, and went fishing and swimming," he said.

His two daughters — Andrea, 18, and Sabine, 15 — have become "totally Americanized, though they still speak German," he said.

Andrea will begin attending Arizona State University this summer, majoring in business administration.

Anke has a job with the Lufthansa German Airline pilot-training program in Litchfield Park.

And he has become an American citizen.

But now the German military pilot-training program at Luke is ending. All but 218 of the nearly 1,000 Lockheed employees who once worked on the project were gone by February. Steinborn is not certain what will happen to him.

"If the company finds another position for me, I'll stay with the company," he said. "Lockheed is an excellent firm."

But if he is unable to remain with Lockheed, Steinborn said he'll "try to stay in the Valley" and find a job in "logistics-warehousing-shipping."

Grateful for past benefits and philosophical about the situation, he said: "Everything comes to an end."

Larry J. Cochran, industrial relations supervisor for LASC, which is a division of the Lockheed Corp., expressed confidence the firm will be able to find a new slot for Steinborn.

Frank Marek, LASC base manager at Luke, said the outstanding maintenance performed by his people kept about 80 percent of the F-104s used in the German pilot-training program at Luke in commission at all times.

Marek said his people managed to achieve "an abort rate of only 2½ percent — half the Tactical Air Command standard for the F-104."

"Those are very enviable figures," he said.

By the end of 1982, F-104s had flown 268,756 hours, Marek said.

"This has been a very stable work force," Marek said. "The majority of our people have 15 to 19 years' seniority at Luke."

This seniority — the fact that the same people maintained the airplanes for so many years — "helps account for the low abort rate and the high in-commission rate," Air Force Col. Walt Harrison said.

Harrison, who manages the maintenance program for the F-104 Starfighter jets used by the Germans at Luke, added, "These guys knew their airplane inside and out."

Tom Ogden, 42, is one of them.

Ogden, interviewed while working on an F-104



Tom Ogden, 22 years at Luke.



Udo Steinborn, 15 years.



Frank Marek, Lockheed base manager.

Photos by

Gary Ulik

The Phoenix Gazette

that was about to take off on a training flight, said he has been at Luke for 22 years — 3½ years with the Air Force and 18½ with Lockheed.

Now he's not sure where he'll go.

Ogden said Lockheed's Georgia Division has indicated it might hire him to work on its C-5 jet transport program, but that's not certain yet.

If he doesn't transfer to Lockheed-Georgia, he said, "I'll stay in the Valley and become a chimney sweep — top hat, tails and all."

He said he started a chimney sweeping business, Top Hat Chimney Sweeps, as a sideline last year.

Whatever he does, he'll miss his fellow crew chiefs, Ogden said. "We were a pretty close-knit group. We not only worked together, we did things together in our spare time."

He'll also miss the F-104.

"It's been a good airplane to work on," he said. "It'll stay up with the best of 'em, even today."

Ogden is among the select group of 16 crew chiefs

who will service the German air force F-104s when they fly their final Luke missions today.

Another F-104 crew chief, Jerry Bullock, also 42, said he's been working on Starfighters for more than 20 years.

"I was in the Air National Guard at Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport when the Guard had F-104s there in the early 1960s," he said. "I've been with Lockheed at Luke for 19 years."

When the Luke program ends, Bullock said, he'll "look for a job elsewhere."

But, the Arizona-born Bullock added, "It would have to be a good job to make it worthwhile to leave the Valley."

Another crew chief, Clint Pore, 45, said he was a Navy aviation mechanic working on the Blue Angels' jets before coming to Luke and Lockheed 18 years ago.

When the program ends, he said, "I'll join the ranks of the unemployed — temporarily, I hope."

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M.J. Randon, 17 years at Luke.



George Maywald arrived in 1941.

Photos by
Gary Ulik
The Phoenix Gazette



Jerry Butler, 17-year veteran.



Clint Pore, 18 years at Luke.



Paul Lopez, 19-year veteran.

● Crews

From Page 4

Pore said he'll switch to another job field — gardening or landscaping, maybe — rather than leave the Valley.

An armament mechanic employed by Lockheed, M.J. Randon, 45, said he was with the Army's 11th Airborne unit before joining Lockheed at Luke 17 years ago.

Randon, one of the weapons specialists who loads the cannon, rockets, missiles and bomb dispersers fitted to the Luftwaffe F-104s used in the Luke program, said he may return to school when the program ends.

He believes "business machine and computer repair" offers a good future.

Flight-line supervisor Jerry Butler, 43, said he joined the German training program with Lockheed in 1966 after serving with the U.S. Air Force as an aircraft mechanic.

He worked on F-100 and F-102 jet fighters in "France, Germany and the Philippines" before coming to Luke.

"I'm hoping I'll get placed (in another position) with Lockheed," he said. "I'd like to stay with them. It's like being part of a family."

But, he said, "If I can't, I'll go into something else — like the home-building business."

He says he has "dabbled" in that already.

Butler said seeing the program end "leaves you with a sad feeling."

Paul Lopez, 39, a maintenance controller, has been with Lockheed at Luke for 19 years and says he won't leave the Valley after the program shutdown.

"I'm going to open my own business — an industrial towel business — and see what happens."

"I was born in the Valley and I'd like to stay here," he said.

George Maywald, 60, can claim the earliest tie of all to Luke Air Force Base.

Maywald, also a maintenance controller, came to Luke in June 1941, six months before Pearl Harbor.

"I was a flight-line mechanic working on (propeller-driven) AT-6 Texan trainers," he said.

He remained with the Air Force through World War II, got out in 1945 but re-enlisted in 1949.

He wound up working on B-29 bombers in Alaska, C-119 "Flying Boxcars" in Japan and C-130 propjet transports in Texas.

He joined the German air force training program at Luke in January 1966.

Maywald, for one, doesn't worry about getting another job when his ends.

"I'll retire," he said. "I'm gonna build a house right off the end of the Luke runway and keep an eye on their airplanes."

Maywald has many fond memories of the Valley.

"I remember in the early days, in 1941, you'd be walking down just about any street in your uniform and people would stop and invite you to dinner or a show."

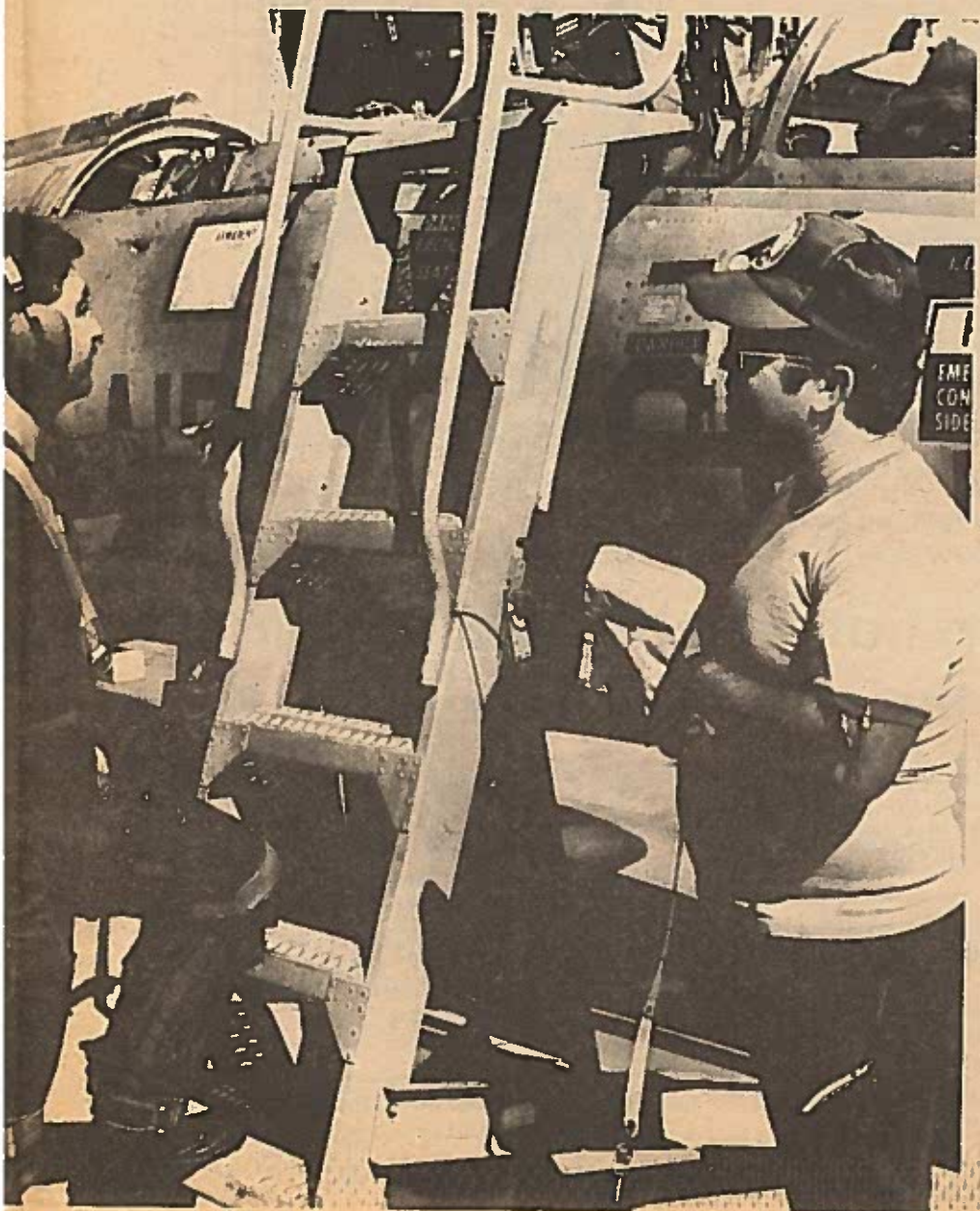
Marek said Lockheed is working with such firms as McDonnell Douglas, General Dynamics, General Electric, Hughes and Goodyear in an effort to find positions for the people whose jobs are ending.

LASC's Cochran said he has been spending "95 percent" of his time "trying to place people."





The final flight



Pictured clockwise from left, an F-104 Starfighter jet takes off at Luke Air Force Base for one of its final flights. Pilot Maj. David Bashow climbs into the cockpit for his last flight as Donald Meakin, an 18-year Lockheed employee at Luke, assists. Capt. Uli Giesenregen (left) prepares for his flight with help from maintenance employee Jerry Bullock. Maj. David Bashow and U.S. instructor-pilots Maj. Charles Haden and Maj. Joseph Joslin "clown around" as Bashow is ready to make his last flight. It has been a tradition at Luke to tease German trainees as they make their final training flight, first dousing them with ashes, then with buckets of water after they land.

'Unser Mann' captures pilots on film

Throughout the Luftwaffe, Tom Rhone, a retired U.S. Air Force chief master sergeant, is affectionately known as "Unser Mann in Arizona" — Our Man in Arizona.

And for good reason.

Rhone, who has been assisting the men of the German Starfighter Squadron at Luke Air Force Base since 1965, has recorded the group in thousands of photographs, numerous articles and in a book that has a sequel in the works.

He has promoted and participated in the squadron's Christmas parties, soccer matches and community projects, including the rebuilding of the Glendale Boys' Club.

He served as "father of the bride" at weddings involving German pilots and stood in as godfather to German children at baptismal ceremonies.

As for the picture-taking, Rhone, 65, figures he has shot well over a thousand rolls of film covering the nearly 1,000 German air force students in the 119 classes of F-104 pilots at Luke.

His filing cabinets bulge with photographs and negatives.

And he still chuckles when he recalls some of the gimmicks playful pilots employed to make their class pictures unique.

"Members of one class insisted on having their photo taken in the swimming pool — in their flight suits," he said.

"Others dressed up like Mexican bandits, complete with rifles."

It made the Luke security people a little uneasy to see those armed types climbing over the Starfighter jets, he remembers.

"We finally had to show the security people that the rifles weren't loaded, that it was all a gag," Rhone said.



Tom Rhone

Another class insisted on donning "the ugliest rubber masks they could find" for its picture, he said.

"They wanted to demonstrate the training had made them 'older and wiser,'" Rhone said.

Pictures aren't the only things the German pilots leave behind, however.

Interest from the International Friendship Foundation's endowment fund will continue to be disbursed to Arizona charities as a "living memo-

rial" to the program, said retired USAF Col. Barney Oldfield, who was co-editor with Rhone of "Those Wonderful Men in the Cactus Squadron."

The foundation's proceeds come from projects such as the annual Oktoberfest that Rhone helped stage at Luke and from sales of the Rhone-Oldfield book, which tells the history of the German pilot-training program through the mid-1970s.

Rhone, who is foundation chairman, said he'll continue to run the operation from an office at Luke after the German program ends.

Rhone said he has been devoting time and money to the foundation since he retired in 1978 from Litton Industries Inc., which manufactures the inertial navigation systems used in the F-104s flown by the German pilots.

It was shortly after he joined Litton of Beverly Hills, Calif., in 1964, that Rhone was sent to Arizona to "make yourself useful to the Luftwaffe pilot-training program at Luke."

And, the Pennsylvania native confessed, he has loved every one of the 18 years he has spent doing that.

The feeling obviously is mutual.

The Germans think so highly of Rhone they presented him with that country's Federal Distinguished Service Cross in ceremonies Feb. 11.

The award came from German President Karl Carstens and was presented by Dr. Berthold K. Koester of Phoenix, honorary consul of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Koester said the medal was authorized by Carstens in recognition of "Mr. Rhone's outstanding efforts to establish a friendly and successful cooperation of the United States Air Force and the German Air Force Training Squadron at Luke, and to help the German airmen at Luke with many problems."



A graduating class dons flight suits and poses in the pool.

A 1970 photo by Tom Rhone shows Lt. Col. Horst Wilhelms (right) trying out his oxygen mask.



Members of class No. 100 mark their 1978 graduation with champagne, top hats and a Rolls Royce.

Top hats celebrate with flair at their 1978 graduation

Every Luftwaffe class graduating from the F-104 Starfighter training program in Arizona celebrated the occasion in style.

But the spirited pilots of class No. 100 in 1978 marked the event in the most splendiferous manner of all.

They donned formal attire — complete with tails, ascots, top hats and canes.

They rented a Rolls Royce — with liveried chauffeur.

And they took the impressive motorcar down to the flight line,

parked it next to the nose of their Starfighter jet, and posed with both for their class picture — while having a pretty girl in French-maid costume serve them champagne from a silver ice bucket.

They even brought along a stuffed Snoopy dog — the goggled, Red Baron-battling cartoon canine — replete with dog house, as mascot.

Small wonder Class No. 100 remains inscribed for all time in the annals of the Luftwaffe's Starfighter Training Program as "The Top Hats — the Champagne Class."

Messerschmitt visited Luke 13 years ago

German aeronautical wizard Willy Messerschmitt flew to Arizona 13 years ago to address the Luftwaffe's 1970-F graduating class at Luke Air Force Base.

Messerschmitt's visit had a special significance for the German pilots.

He was the man who for decades had designed some of Germany's top airplanes.

The durable ME-109 fighter (also known as the Bf-109) was Messerschmitt's creation. It was one of Germany's two leading propeller-driven fighter aircraft in World War II, sharing the spotlight with the Focke Wulf 190.

More than 35,000 ME-109s were built. A souped-up version before World War II set a speed record that stood for 30 years.

Several of the pilots in the first Luftwaffe training class at Luke in 1957 became World War II aces while flying ME-109s.

The ME-110, the twin-engined "Destroyer" used by the Germans throughout World War II, was another Messerschmitt design. It was employed in a variety of roles, from bomber-escort to night fighter.

The ME-210 and ME-410 were subsequent developments of that design.

History's first operational jet fighter, the ME-262 "Sturmvogel" (Stormbird), also was a Messerschmitt creation.

It could fly a hundred miles an hour faster than the best propeller-driven fighters available to the Allies, such as the Spitfire, Mustang and Thunderbolt.

The ME-262 jeopardized the Allied bomber offensive against Hitler's "Fortress Europe," but —



Maj. Peter Cramer, executive officer with the German squadron, shows Willy Messerschmitt around Luke Air Force Base during the

airplane designer's visit to Arizona in 1970. Messerschmitt addressed the Luftwaffe graduating class.

fortunately for our side — it came along too late in the war to be a significant factor.

On the occasion of his 70th birthday in 1968, Messerschmitt was to tell an interviewer that "200 more" ME-262s could have "stopped the invasion of Normandy" in 1944.

History's first rocket-propelled fighter, the ME-163 "Komet" (Comet), was yet another Messerschmitt creation.

Although disliked by pilots because of its dangerously corrosive fuel and oxidizer (in a crash on takeoff, these could kill a pilot even if he survived the crash), the stubby ME-163 could fly faster, for short periods, than any other aircraft in the sky at the time — close to 600 mph.

While visiting Luke in 1970, Messerschmitt also

claimed he had designed a four-jet, long-range reconnaissance plane during the war that could have been converted into a commercial jetliner.

The plane never was built.

Had it been, Messerschmitt said, "I could have had a passenger jet flying nonstop from Frankfurt to New York by 1947 or 1948, almost 10 years before the Boeing 707."

Ironically, Messerschmitt's factory in Germany in the 1960s built, under license, a plane he had no hand in designing, but which had become the new Luftwaffe's top jet.

It was the Lockheed F-104G Starfighter — the same aircraft flown by the German pilots at Luke.

Messerschmitt died in 1978, at age 80.

Starfighter sees service in 15 nations

It is called "the missile with a man in it."

It could fly at twice the speed of sound at a time (the mid-1950s) when some jet fighters could not pierce the sound barrier.

"It" is the Lockheed F-104 Starfighter — the plane West Germany picked as its primary combat aircraft in the early 1960s.

The F-104 is the type most of the 2,700 German fliers trained at Luke Air Force Base since 1957 have flown.

The fighter ultimately saw service with the air forces of 15 nations — the United States, Canada, Germany, Japan, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, Denmark, Spain, Norway, Turkey, Greece, Jordan, Pakistan and Taiwan.

Besides being manufactured by Lockheed in California, the F-104 also was built under license in Canada, Germany, Holland, Belgium, Italy and Japan.

More than 2,600 Starfighters have been built worldwide, according to James W. Ragsdale, director of public relations for the Lockheed-California Co. in Burbank.

Of these, more than 900 went to Germany and more than 450 to Italy, he said.

Sixty-six of the F-104s from Luke were sold recently to the Nationalist Chinese on Taiwan, who have been flying Starfighters since the late 1950s. A Pentagon spokesman said the price exceeded \$31 million.

Taiwan was one of the first friendly foreign nations allowed to purchase the Starfighter.

According to the International Institute for

Strategic Studies in London, Taiwan had more than 100 Starfighters in its inventory before the sale, including nine trainers.

Thus, although no F-104s have been produced since 1979, the aircraft continues in service a quarter century after the first one became operational with the U.S. Air Force.

Besides Germany and Taiwan, Italy, Greece and Turkey still fly the F-104.

Germany plans to keep its F-104s flying at least until 1988 — 30 years after the aircraft became operational.

Considering that the famed British Spitfire was around for only about 15 years, and Lockheed's World War II P-38 Lightning remained operational for only about seven, that's an astonishing lifespan for a fighter.

The F-104 was a remarkable aircraft from the start.

Conceived from U.S. Air Force experience in Korea, it was designed by Kelly Johnson's famed "Skunk Works" group to outfly and outfight any other aircraft in the sky.

The first prototype, the XF-104, flew on Feb. 7, 1954.

Some 14 months later, a YF-104A, with a new, more powerful engine, hit Mach 2 — twice the speed of sound.

In 1958, an F-104A set a speed record of 1,404 miles an hour.

A year later, another Starfighter reached a record altitude — more than 103,000 feet.

Although designed as an air superiority fighter,

the F-104 turned out to be able to do other things as well.

It subsequently was used as a photo reconnaissance craft, all-weather interceptor, air-to-ground attack plane and even as an astronaut trainer and high-altitude NASA research craft.

Starfighters have been armed with a variety of weapons, from M-61 "Gatling Gun" cannons to heat-seeking missiles.

The F-104G version — the kind the Luftwaffe flies — can carry more than 4,300 pounds of bombs.

In the mid-1960s the United States sent some Starfighters to Vietnam, but the F-104s never got the opportunity to engage any enemy MIG fighters and wound up being used as a ground attack aircraft.

West Germany picked the F-104 after looking at both the French Mirage jet and the American Grumman Super Tiger, a derivative of the F-11 design.

The Germans wanted their F-104s to perform bombing and reconnaissance duties in addition to air-to-air combat.

That meant the F-104 had to be structurally strengthened to allow high-speed, low-level operations, and fitted with added electronic gear so it could find its targets and deliver its bombs in all kinds of weather.

That added weight to the aircraft and made it more difficult to maintain and fly.

By 1976, the Luftwaffe had lost 178 Starfighters in crashes of all kinds, records show.

Colonel recalls his years as instructor

U.S. Air Force Col. Walt Harrison first joined the German pilot-training program at Luke Air Force Base in 1964 — as an American instructor pilot in the F-104 Starfighter jet.

He now is project officer for end-of-program ceremonies marking the conclusion of the international effort.

He has spent most of the intervening years with the program and has racked up a host of memories, both of the people and the aircraft involved.

Of the German pilots, he said:

"If it weren't for their accents, you'd be hard-pressed to separate the German boys trained at Luke from their American counterparts."

Though their homelands are on opposite sides of the Atlantic Ocean, pilots of the two countries are a remarkably similar breed, he said.

And their performance was on the same level.

"They were equally capable and astute," he noted.

Moreover, he said, "In conducting joint exercises in Europe ... with some of the people trained at Luke, we found the German pilots coordinated very well — better than some other NATO allies, actually, it seemed to me."

Of the Starfighter, in which all the German pilots at Luke have trained since 1964, Harrison said:

"It's still one of the most enjoyable airplanes to fly and, esthetically, perhaps the most beautiful. It's getting a little old now, of course, but it still looks like it's doing 500 knots just sitting on the ramp."

F-104 pilots like the bird, he said, not only for its high speed and grace, but because of its relatively small size.

"Fighter pilots tend to associate themselves with smaller aircraft," he said. "In a small plane, it's more difficult for the other guy to see you, and you even provide a smaller blip for his radar."

The F-104 is only "half the size of an F-15," Harrison said, "and only two-thirds the size of an F-16."

Off-duty, the German and American pilots shared similar interests as well, he said.

"I'm a hunter," he said, "and I took a number of the German visitors out in our mountains to hunt elk, antelope, deer, javelina, doves and quail."

In turn, he said, "they took me hunting when I visited Germany — for chamois (small mountain goats), deer, rabbits and partridge."

He even was "knighted" as a German "Jaeger" (hunter) on one trip to Germany, he recalled.

Fighter pilots, as might be expected, seem to take naturally to guns and shooting, he said.



Col. Walt Harrison has spent 19 years at Luke Air Force Base as an instructor pilot.

"Learning to judge your lead, in an airplane as with a shotgun, is similar," he pointed out.

Indeed, he recalled, "One German instructor pilot, who'd fired a shotgun only once before, broke 18 of 25 targets on the skeet range the first time I took him out."

There were some outstanding German students, he remembered.

"In the very first F-104 class there was this chap Dieter Zeck who just did everything right," Harrison said. Zeck won all three of his class awards — academic, navigation award and "top gun" (best bombing and gunnery scores), he said.

"Over the years, only about a half-dozen of the nearly 1,000 pilots going through the (F-104) course have managed to win all three awards," Harrison said. "In most classes, three different guys take those awards."

Zeck now is a test pilot for a German aeronautical firm that is helping build the Tornado jet — the aircraft Germany has picked as successor to the Starfighter — he said.

Harrison said he still corresponds with about a dozen of his former students.

And he still has fond memories of the great parties involving the German pilots.

"Those guys are really robust party people," Harrison said admiringly.

"At one Luke party, everyone dived into the swimming pool, fully dressed — in January."

A native of South Carolina, Harrison, 49, is a 28-year veteran of the Air Force.

At Luke, he has held a variety of positions with the German program.

He was squadron commander of the 69th Tactical Fighter Training Squadron (F-104) at Luke from 1972 to 1974, a position he termed "perhaps my most enjoyable."

Before that, he had been weapons officer for the 58th Wing. Subsequently, he became director of F-104 operations for the wing.

For the past two years, he has been "contract manager" for the F-104 maintenance program at Luke.

"I'm the Air Force type that looks over the shoulder of the contractor (Lockheed)," he said. "I'm also the de-facto commander for maintenance, reporting directly to the commander of the 58th training wing, Col. Malcolm Bolton."

Between his Luke assignments, Harrison spent a year in Vietnam, where he flew 435 combat missions as a forward air controller (FAC) and in F-100 fighter jets. He also has spent six years as a U.S. Air Force officer in Germany.

The German pilot-training program in Arizona has been "the longest-running, most successful pilot-training program ever conducted," he believes.

"This was an American training program for German students administered by the Tactical Air Command and paid for by the Germans," Harrison said.

"Many of the Germans who were here became Americanized — they understand how we think and operate — and now many of them hold responsible positions in the German air force."

"That's bound to enhance the understanding between United States and German forces," he said.

Since 1965, about 20 percent of the F-104 instructor pilots at Luke have been Germans, Harrison said.

In the 19 years of F-104 operation, almost 2,000 pilots, instructor pilots, fighter-weapons instructors and advanced fighter pilots have graduated from the Luke program into the NATO alliance, Harrison said.

Valley economy benefits from program

The German pilot-training program at Luke Air Force Base has contributed more than half a billion dollars to the Valley economy during its 25 years here.

Brig. Gen. Henry D. Canterbury, commander of the Tactical Air Command's 832nd Air Division at Luke, pegged the amount at \$600 million.

Air Force Col. Walt Harrison, who has managed the maintenance program for the F-104 Starfighter jets used by the Luftwaffe pilots, agreed.

And so did officials of neighboring Valley cities and towns.

"We're sorry to see them leave," Charles Christiansen, general services manager for the city of Phoenix, said. "They were a real asset to the aviation community in the Valley."

And, obviously, he said, "Phoenix shared in a portion of the millions of dollars the program brought to the Valley."

Not only that, Christiansen said, "It seems they liked us, too, because I understand quite a few of the German visitors have elected to emigrate to the United States and make their permanent home in the Phoenix area."

Ernest Kleinschmidt, town manager of Goodyear,

said termination of the program definitely will affect his town.

"Some of the Lockheed people lived in Goodyear and some even participated in the town's government," he said. "They've been good supporters of our area, and their leaving definitely will have an economic impact on us."

Goodyear has a population of about 3,000.

Glendale Mayor George Renner and Bill Toops, president of the Glendale Chamber of Commerce, expressed similar views.

Luke, they noted, generates the highest payroll of any enterprise affecting Glendale.

Toops said much of the multimillion-dollar payroll disbursed to people associated with the German program was spent in Glendale and the phase-out is bound to have an economic impact on the city of about 100,000 people.

Many of the civilian employees of the Lockheed Aircraft Service Co., which maintained the F-104s for the Germans at Luke, lived in Glendale and/or purchased goods there, Toops said.

"We hate to see them go — for many reasons," he said.

Harrison said Lockheed was paid \$16 million by the German government in 1982.

Since 1965, the firm has been paid an average of about \$17 million a year by the Germans, he said — a total of close to \$300 million.

Frank Marek, Lockheed Air Service base manager at Luke, said more than 1,000 Lockheed employees were associated with the program at its peak, in 1968-69.

By the end of the program, fewer than 100 still were around, he said.

Harrison said the German government paid \$36 million in 1982 to operate the pilot training program.

That amount included "training, maintenance and fuel costs," he said.

The annual payments — up from \$15.6 million when the program began in 1964-65 — did not include the price of the 102 Lockheed F-104 Starfighter jets used in the program at its peak, Harrison said.

He said the Germans paid approximately \$2.2 million apiece for the Mach 2 (twice-the-speed-of-sound) aircraft when they purchased them in the early 1960s.

Nor did the annual amount include the pay of the German pilots, although some of that money was spent in the Valley, Harrison said.



Pilots in the German F-104 class of 1966 don Western hats for their class picture.

Germans see Arizona as the 'Wild West'

"The American Southwest always has been a dreamland for German boys," Lt. Col. Heinrich Thueringer says.

Thueringer, commander of the 2nd German Air Force Training Squadron at Luke Air Force Base, explained that to German men, Arizona is "the Wild West, the land of cowboys and Indians."

Indeed, he said, there was "no more glamorous recruiting attraction possessed by the Luftwaffe than (the offer of) a two-year program of instruction in the American Southwest."

Photographs recording the German pilots' off-duty activities while in Arizona bear him out.

They show many of the visitors donning Western garb as they relived the romantic days of a century ago.

In Tombstone, one set of pictures shows, they visited the site of the famed Gunfight at the OK Corral — and toured Boot Hill.

They purchased copious quantities of Indian jewelry.

Several went looking for gold in the Superstition Mountains — only to return empty handed and disappointed, as so many prospectors before them.

At a rodeo (a favorite spectator sport), the German pilots shook hands with Michael Landon, "Little Joe," of the long-running TV series "Bonanza" — a program some had seen in Europe with German-language dialogue dubbed in.

And they talked horses and horse-



Student pilot Melchior Stuedlein once took a three-week horseback trip during his duty in Arizona.

power with the cast of yet another TV series with a Western motif — "F-Troop."

A book, "Those Wonderful Men in the Cactus Starfighter Squadron," edited by retired Air Force Col. Barney Oldfield and retired Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Tom Rhone, tells still more about the visitors' activities:

"Scottsdale still echoes from rousing and boisterous singing at Peter's Hofbrau. Tempe and Arizona State University ... where the girls are. Steaks and fun ... at Pinnacle Peak and Reata Pass.

"The rodeo at Veterans Memorial Coliseum. Watching Roadrunner hockey and the National Basketball Association Phoenix Suns.

"Sailing and skiing on water at Roosevelt Lake."

Program's end calls for 'new beginnings'

The termination of the German pilot-training program at Luke Air Force Base is more than an end of an era.

It will require some new beginnings for American support personnel and equipment.

Brig. Gen. Henry D. Canterbury, Luke commander, said the phase-out means the end of the 69th Tactical Fighter Training Squadron.

"The squadron flag is being retired," Canterbury said.

The approximately 15 U.S. Air Force personnel associated with the program at its end (80 percent of the instructor pilots in the program were Americans) will be assigned elsewhere, the general said.

"Some will go into the F-16 (Fighting Falcon) program at Luke, others will be reassigned to other bases," he noted.

The two dozen F-104 Starfighter jets left in the German program will be "mothballed," he said.

Most will be readied for shipment, by truck and ship, to their new owners, the Nationalist Chinese government on Taiwan, he said.

Final training flights in the F-104s at Luke were scheduled today.

"We have no plans to replace the F-104 squadron," the general said. "However, our foreign pilot training program in F-5s at Williams Air Force Base will continue."

It will take about three months to dismantle the entire organization, make final disposition of the assets and move out of the buildings the general said.

About 12 buildings of all kinds — hangars, warehouses and offices — will become available to the U.S. Air Force as a result of the phase-out.

"The facilities will be put to good use," Canterbury promised. "Luke has been brimming over with airplanes and people. We can really use the additional space."

Of the German program, Canterbury said it "materially strengthened one of our major allies," and called it "mutually very beneficial" and "very successful."



Canterbury

Memories

World War II fighter ace remembers his tour at Luke

Lt. Gen. Fritz Wegner, commander of the Luftwaffe's Tactical Air Command, was a member of the original class of German pilots at Luke Air Force Base in 1957.

On the occasion of the conclusion of the program, *The Phoenix Gazette* asked the general, a World War II fighter ace, for his thoughts on what the 25-year effort has meant.

He sent the following reply from his headquarters in Cologne:

"Observing the dusk of an era of military aviation which I have actively participated in raises sad emotions.

"Over the years, Luke AFB has become a part of the Luftwaffe, especially in the hearts of our pilots — and I am a pilot, too.

"I had the privilege to be a member of that first German class in 1957. Later on I went through a three-months advanced course on F-104s at Luke. Eventually, I was the commander, German Air Force Training Command, U.S.A., at Fort Bliss, Texas, from 1974 through 1976.

"During this time, I flew F-104s out of Luke quite frequently. Therefore, I am very familiar with all aspects of the German Air Force and Navy flying training activities there."

He said it was unforeseeable on the day the training began that "... a quarter century of American-German cooperation was introduced, the quality and dimensions of which were to set new standards in respect to joint large scale fighter-pilot training of two friendly forces." He said, "The ideal conditions under which our pilots received their training at Luke were provided primarily by the men and women of the United States Air Force, but to a considerable extent also by the employees of various U.S. aviation industries."

The top-notch maintenance and support operation and training organization plus "the extremely favorable climatic conditions in the Southwestern region of the U.S. just HAD to make the F-104 ... program at Luke one of the most effective projects the Luftwaffe ever has undertaken," Wegner said.

The general went on to praise "the outstanding inter-human relations between Americans and Germans, be it in uniform or in civilian attire" encountered "on base or anywhere else in Arizona."

He noted the first year of the program, students and instructors who 12 years earlier "had been at war against each other" flew together.

Senator says pilot program benefited all

The United States as well as Germany benefited materially from the German pilot-training program in Arizona, Sen. Barry Goldwater, R-Ariz., said.

"I think I'm safe in saying there hasn't been a program in the United States that has done as much good for our country as the German program," the senator said.

And, he added, the people involved are going to be missed.

Goldwater said the project, which is being phased out after 25 years, was almost like a student-exchange program, considering the "many American pilots serving in Germany."

The young German pilots who came to Luke Air Force Base to receive their jet training "didn't just stay around Luke," the senator noted. "They went all over Arizona, and to many other parts of the United States as well," he said.

In fact, he added, they often "would return to Germany more like (American) Westerners than Germans."

Almost all of them bought Western attire, he said.

Goldwater, himself a pilot, recalled visiting Stuttgart, Germany, "about 10 years ago," and chancing upon a party in which "German pilots, dressed in cowboy hats and boots, were up on a stage, singing Western songs."

It gave him "a great feeling," Goldwater said.

"Think of the great good" the German pilot-training program "did for the United States in its relations with Germany," the senator said in a telephone interview from his Washington office.

And he cited yet another benefit: Having the German pilots train in the United States, becoming fluent in English and flying American aircraft like the F-104 Starfighter enabled the fliers of both nations to achieve such close rapport that German and American air contingents in Europe became "almost like one air force."

Goldwater said he was delighted to have some of the German pilots visit his home and be able to "help wherever I could."

The senator is scheduled to be the principal speaker at a farewell dinner marking the end of the German pilot training program in the United States tonight at The Pointe Tapatio.



Goldwater



First class

Seven German World War II fighter aces were in the first class of 15 Luftwaffe pilots to begin jet fighter training at Luke in 1957. They were (from left) Capt. Friedrich Obleser, now a lieutenant general and German Air Force chief of staff; Lt. Col. Guenther Rall, now a retired lieutenant general and former

Luftwaffe chief of staff; Capt. Paul Schauder, Capt. Fritz Wegner, now a lieutenant general and commanding general of the German Tactical Air Command; Maj. Erich Hartmann; Capt. Dieter Bernhard and Lt. Gerd Tetteroo. The seven are shown in front of a Republic F-84 Thunderstreak jet at Luke Air Force Base.



Tom Rhone

Last class

Three German navy fliers and four German air force pilots comprise the last graduating class of the German pilot-training program. From left, they are navy ensigns Heribert A.

Ante, Dieter A. Blank and Reinhard Dresbach; air force 1st Lt. Helmut Schuetz (kneeling); and 2nd Lts. Frank U. Brenneke, Peter Klement and Wolfgang Meyn.

Top officials join in ceremonies

Top officials from government and the armed services in both the United States and Germany are slated to be at Luke Air Force Base today and Thursday for ceremonies marking the end of the German pilot-training program.

German dignitaries scheduled to fly here for the two-day event include:

- Lt. Gen. Friedrich Obleser, chief of staff of the German air force and a member of the original German training class at Luke in 1957.

- Lt. Gen. Fritz Wegner, commander of the German Tactical Air Command and another member of the 1957 class.

- Rear Adm. Hans-Hermann Vohs, deputy chief of staff of the German navy.

- Brig. Gen. Walter Schmitz, commander, German air force training in the United States.

- Lt. Gen. Guenther Rall (ret.), former German air force chief of staff and another member of the 1957 Luke class.

- Lt. Gen. Walter Krupinski (ret.), former commanding general of the German tactical air command and first commander of German air force training in the United States.

- Lt. Col. Heinrich Thueringer, commander of the 2nd German air force training squadron at Luke.

- Lt. Cmdr. Klaus Pflueger, deputy commander, 2nd German air force training squadron.

Also, the lord mayor and mayor of Menningen, Germany, the "sister city" of Glendale.

Heading the American delegation will be Gov. Bruce Babbitt and U.S. Sen. Barry Goldwater, R-Ariz., who will be the principal speaker at a farewell banquet tonight at The Pointe Tapatio Resort.

U.S. Air Force representation will be led by Gen. Wilbur L. Creech, commander of the Tactical Air Command, from Langley Air Force Base, Va., and Lt. Gen. William R. Nelson, commander of the 12th Air Force (of which Luke AFB is a part) from Bergstrom AFB, Texas.

Events planned

TODAY

8 a.m. to noon — Arrival of dignitaries from the U.S. Air Force. (German air force officials arrived Tuesday.)

12:30 p.m. — U.S. Air Force Tactical Air Command commander's luncheon, Luke Officers' Club. By invitation only.

2 p.m. — Flight line ceremonies marking conclusion of the German pilot-training program.

3 p.m. — Reception by German officers at the Luke Officers' Club. By invitation only.

7 p.m. — Formal reception, banquet and graduation ceremonies at The Pointe Tapatio Resort, 11111 N. Seventh St. By invitation only.

THURSDAY

8 a.m. — Golf tournament at Orange Tree Country Club. By invitation only.

1 p.m. — Tour of Luke, including F-15 and F-16 facilities. By invitation only.

5 p.m. — Abschiedsfest, (farewell party) with German officers as hosts. By invitation only.