



BIOGRAPHY



UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

COLONEL CHRISTOPHER S. WELCH

Colonel Christopher Welch is Vice Commander of the 58th Special Operations Wing, Kirtland Air Force Base, New Mexico. The wing trains mission-ready special operations, combat search and rescue, nuclear security/support and distinguished visitor aircrew. The wing provides and supports flight instruction in the CV-22, HH-60G, HH-60W, HC-130J, H/MC-130J, TH-1, and UH-1 aircraft. The wing also conducts Survival Evasion Resistance and Escape (SERE) training, the qualification training of SERE Specialists, and Undergraduate Pilot Training for all Air Force rotary wing pilots. Colonel Welch oversees the activities of over 2,300 Airmen, and helps the wing train over 15,000 students annually.

Col Welch grew up in Williamsburg, Virginia and received his commission through the United States Air Force Academy in 1997. He has spent the majority of his career in special operations assignments. He led the 15th Special Operations Squadron in missions around the world, including Afghanistan, Iraq, and Colombia. In his previous assignment, Colonel Welch served as the Chief of Attaché Operations/Air Attaché in Ankara, Turkey, where he represented the U.S. military in Turkey to support strategic objectives in the region.

EDUCATION

- 1997 Bachelor of Science, United States Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, Colorado
- 1999 Master of Public Policy, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, Massachusetts
- 2004 Squadron Officer School, Maxwell AFB, Alabama
- 2008 Air Command and Staff College, by correspondence
- 2011 Master of Arts in European Studies, Bosphorus University, Istanbul, Turkey
- 2014 Air War College, by correspondence
- 2016 Master of Science in National Security Studies, National War College, Washington D.C.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. May 1997 – September 1999, student, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts
2. September 1999 – December 2000, student, Undergraduate Pilot Training, Columbus Air Force Base, Mississippi and Naval Air Station Corpus Christi, Texas
3. January 2001 – March 2002, student, C-130/MC-130H Initial Qualification, Little Rock Air Force Base, Arkansas and Kirtland Air Force Base, New Mexico
4. April 2002 – July 2005, MC-130H Pilot, 7th Special Operations Squadron, Royal Air Force Mildenhall, England
5. July 2005 – September 2008, MC-130H Instructor Pilot, 15th Special Operations Squadron, Hurlburt Field, Florida
6. October 2008 – December 2011, Olmsted Scholar, Istanbul
7. January 2012 – December 2013, Operations Officer, 15th Special Operations Squadron, Hurlburt Field, Florida
8. December 2013 – June 2015, Commander, 15th Special Operations Squadron, Hurlburt Field, Florida
9. July 2015 – June 2016, student, National War College, Washington, District of Columbia
10. July 2016 – September 2016, Military Aide, Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL, Washington D.C.
11. October 2016 – July 2017, Chief, Strategy Division, Combined Air Operations Center, al Udeid Air Base, Qatar
12. August 2017 – June 2018, student, Defense Language Institute and Joint Military Attaché School, Washington, District of Columbia
13. June 2018 – July 2021, United States Air Attaché and Chief of Attaché Operations, Ankara, Turkey
14. August 2021 – Present, Vice Commander, 58th Special Operations Wing, Kirtland AFB, New Mexico



SUMMARY OF JOINT ASSIGNMENTS

October 2016 – July 2017, Chief, Strategy Division, Combined Air Operations Center, al Udeid Air Base, Qatar

FLIGHT INFORMATION

Rating: Command Pilot, parachutist

Flight Hours: Approximately 2,300, including 334 combat hours

Aircraft flown: T-37B, C-12, C-130E, MC-130H, MC-130J

MAJOR AWARDS AND DECORATIONS

Distinguished Flying Cross with Valor

Defense Meritorious Service Medal

Meritorious Service Medal with two oak leaf clusters

Air Medal with three oak leaf clusters

Aerial Achievement Medal

Air Force Commendation Medal with two oak leaf clusters

Army Achievement Medal

Air Force Combat Action Medal

EFFECTIVE DATES OF PROMOTION

Second Lieutenant May, 1997

First Lieutenant May, 1999

Captain May, 2001

Major November, 2006

Lieutenant Colonel December, 2010

Colonel April, 2017

CLEARANCE

Top Secret/SCI

(Current as of August 2021)