



# BIOGRAPHY



## UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

### COLONEL JAMES J. BLECH

Colonel James J. Blech is the Commander of the 47th Operations Group, Laughlin Air Force Base, Texas. He is responsible for overseeing the direct training of United States Air Force and allied partners, while also leading 1,100 active duty, civilian, and reserve personnel. As the largest pilot training base in the world, Laughlin graduates more than 350 student pilots each year. The group operates 209 aircraft, consisting of the T-1A, T-6A, and T-38C valued at more than \$1.3 billion, and flies more than 81,000 hours and 56,000 sorties per year.

Colonel Blech entered the Air Force through the United States Air Force Academy in 2003 and earned his pilot wings at Laughlin Air Force Base in Del Rio, Texas in 2005. His early career was marked by multiple aircrew and staff deployments to the Middle East and Europe in support of operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Libya. Colonel Blech has served as a staff officer for the Under Secretary of the Air Force for International Affairs and as the Chief of the Commander's Action Group, United States Transportation Command. Prior to his current assignment, Colonel Blech attended the National War College at Fort McNair, Washington, District of Columbia.

Colonel Blech is a Command Pilot with over 3,000 flying hours in the KC-135R/T, including more than 1,400 combat hours flown in support of Operations Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom Inherent Resolve and Freedom's Sentinel. His wife, Lieutenant Colonel Stephanie Blech, is a KC-135 pilot and is a United Air Force Academy Liaison Officer in the Air Force Reserve. They have two children, Cora (6) and Audrey (4).



#### EDUCATION

- 2003 Bachelor of Science in Humanities, U.S. Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, Colo.
- 2009 Squadron Officer School, Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.
- 2010 KC-135 Weapons Instructor Course, U.S. Air Force Weapons School, Nellis AFB, Nev.
- 2011 Master of Arts in International Relations, American Military University, Manassas, Va.
- 2015 Master of Arts in Military Operational Arts and Sciences, Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell AFB, Ala.
- 2022 Master of Arts in National Security Studies, National War College, National Defense University, Fort McNair, Washington, D.C.

#### ASSIGNMENTS

1. July 1999 – May 2003, Cadet, U.S. Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, Colo.
2. June 2003 – July 2004, Specialized Undergraduate Student Pilot, Moody AFB, Ga.
3. July 2004 – April 2005, Specialized Undergraduate Student Pilot, Laughlin AFB, Texas
4. April 2005 – September 2005, Student, KC-135 Pilot Transition Course, Altus AFB, Okla.
5. September 2005 – June 2009, Instructor Pilot, Safety Officer, Assistant Flight Commander, and Chief of Readiness, Grand Forks AFB, N.D.
6. June 2009 – July 2012, Flight Commander and Chief of Weapons and Tactics, Fairchild AFB, Wash.
7. July 2012 – July 2014, U.S. Air Force Weapons School Instructor, 509th Weapons Squadron, Fairchild AFB, Wash.
8. July 2014 – June 2015, Student, Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell AFB, Ala.
9. June 2015 – June 2017, Executive Officer and Chief, Security Cooperation Policy, Doctrine and Requirements Branch, International Affairs, Office of the Under Secretary of the Air Force, Washington, D.C.
10. June 2017 – January 2019, Commander, 349th Air Refueling Squadron, McConnell AFB, Kan.
11. January 2019 – June 2021 – Chief, Commander's Action Group, United States Transportation Command, Scott AFB, Ill.

12. July 2021 – June 2022 – Student, National War College, National Defense University, Fort McNair, Washington, D.C.
13. July 2022 – Present – Commander, 47th Operations Group, Laughlin AFB, Texas

**FLIGHT INFORMATION**

Rating: Command Pilot  
Flight hours: Over 3,000  
Combat hours: 1413  
Aircraft Flown: T-6A, T-1A, KC-135R/T

**MAJOR AWARDS AND DECORATIONS**

Defense Superior Service Medal  
Meritorious Service Medal, four oak leaf clusters  
Air Medal, nine oak leaf clusters  
Aerial Achievement Medal  
Air Force Commendation Medal  
Joint Service Achievement Medal  
Air Force Recognition Ribbon, two oak leaf clusters

**EFFECTIVE DATES OF PROMOTION**

Second Lieutenant	May 28, 2003
First Lieutenant	May 28, 2005
Captain	May 28, 2007
Major	July 1, 2013
Lieutenant Colonel	December 1, 2016
Colonel	March 1, 2021

*(Current as of July 2022)*