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Thunderbirds, Golden Knights scheduled for JBLM Air Expo 2012

JOINT BASE LEWIS-McCHORD, Wash. – The U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds and the U.S. Army's "Golden Knights" announced today they will perform at Joint Base Lewis-McChord's "Air Expo 2012" July 21-22 at McChord Field. The announcement came today at the International Council of Air Shows convention in Las Vegas, Nev.

"We're excited to have the Thunderbirds and the Golden Knights headline what promises to be an all-star lineup of performers," said Lt. Col. Jon Olekszyk, the Air Expo director. "We couldn't have asked for a better way to kick start our first official 'joint' Air Expo than with the premier Air Force and Army demonstration teams."

JBLM was formed when Fort Lewis and McChord Air Force Base merged and became fully operational on Oct. 1, 2010. The Army and Air Force units here have a rich history of working together – long before the concept of joint basing was born. And that history, combined with current joint operations, played a large role in the theme of Air Expo 2012 – "One Team Defending Freedom."

"Events like our Air Expo and the July 4th Freedom Fest are in part our way of thanking the people around the Puget Sound area for their support of our Soldiers, Airmen and families," said Col. Thomas Brittain, the JBLM garrison commander. "We're very excited to have the Thunderbirds and Golden Knights, but we're also anxious for the public to see the capabilities of our Airmen, Soldiers and equipment right here at JBLM."

The Air Expo is free and open to the general public.

JBLM Soldiers and Airmen will be on hand with airframes and vehicles from JBLM as part of dozens of ground static displays. In most cases, people attending the Air Expo can not only see a C-17 Globemaster III and a CH-47 Chinook helicopter up-close, but they can actually go inside and speak directly with the aircrews who fly them.

The Thunderbirds and Golden Knights are just two of the more than 20 military and civilian flying performers who are expected to take to the air for breath-taking acrobatics or demonstration flights.

The U.S. Air Force Air Demonstration Squadron, better known as the Thunderbirds, is an Air Combat Command unit, based out of Nellis AFB, Nev., composed of eight pilots (including six demonstration pilots), four support officers, four civilians and about 110 enlisted people performing in more than 29 Air Force specialties. A Thunderbirds' aerial demonstration is a mix of formation flying and solo routines. The pilots perform approximately 40 maneuvers in a demonstration. The entire show, including ground and air, runs about one hour.

The U.S. Army Parachute Team, nicknamed "The Golden Knights," is the Army's official aerial demonstration team. The team includes more than 90 people, including jumpers, pilots, administrators, parachute technicians, and media relations and supply specialists. The Golden Knights perform more than 100 demonstrations a year with the help of the team's four dedicated aircraft. The team travels around the United States, performing parachute demonstrations at air shows, major league football and baseball games, and special events, connecting the Army with the American people.

As with any major event, business sponsorship opportunities are available to help offset the costs of the Air Expo. The 2010 Air Expo drew more than 250,000 spectators to the installation. Businesses interested

in being a part of this free, major family event can call the Air Expo 2012 office at 253-966-2256 to get more information. For more information, visit the Air Expo's website is at www.lewis-mcchordairexpo.com.

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