



GRADS RALLY TO SUPPORT CLASS OF 2027

Back to the Future

Cadet squadron returns to former Starship 19 designation

By Jeff Holmquist



During his 2022 visit to USAFA, entrepreneur Elon Musk was presented an A-jacket with a space-related patch — Starship 19 — prominently displayed on the front.

In the audience at Arnold Hall, then-C3C Mark Lema immediately sat up and took notice. Cadet Lema was scheduled to join Cadet Squadron 19, known as the Wolverines, the following academic year. But he'd never heard about Starship 19, the patch that cadets in that particular squadron wore from 1976 to 1993.

Lema, who hopes to join the Space Force upon graduation in 2024, was curious why his future squadron had switched to Wolverines 19 three decades prior. His inquisitiveness eventually launched Lema and several of his enthusiastic squadronmates on a lengthy quest to return CS-19 to its historic roots.

The squadron celebrated its journey back to the Starship 19 designation at a Polaris Hall ceremony Aug. 12. Several distinguished alumni of the squadron attended the event, including Gen. (Ret.) David Goldfein '83, former chief of staff of the Air Force, and Gen. (Ret.) Terrence O'Shaughnessy '86, former commander of U.S. Northern Command and North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD).

"We're moving in the right direction of having a new squadron name that ties back to history," Lema says. "But it also ties to the future and our newest military branch — the Space Force."

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

CS-19 has had a bit of an identity crisis through the years. In the early years, the squadron unofficially called itself the Road Dogs.

During the 1961-62 academic year, when squadron emblems became more official and were approved by the Pentagon's Heraldry Office, the squadron's cadets chose Playboy 19 for their moniker.

When women were first admitted to the Cadet Wing in 1976, understandably the squadron's identity shifted, and then-C1C Brent Glines '76 designed a new Starship 19 patch. Star Trek creator Gene Roddenberry allowed cadets to use an image of the Starship Enterprise and the phrase "Where No Man Has Gone Before" on the new squadron patch.

In response to a letter from then-Cadet Stephen Herlt '77 asking permission, Roddenberry fully endorsed the idea while also mentioning his own service in the Army Air Corps during

C1C Mark Lema shows off the new Starship 19 patch that the squadron donned for the first time following an Aug. 12 ceremony.

World War II.

"You not only have permission to use our starship on your squadron patch, but also my very best wishes to the entire group and its officers," he wrote. "May it convey good luck in carrying you all to places in both inner and outer space 'where no man has gone before.'"

GRAD INFLUENCE

Geoff Phillips '81 unwittingly laid the initial groundwork for the name change as he prepared for his 40th class reunion in 2021.

"I spent my four-degree year in Stalag 17," he recalls, "but then I spent my three-degree, two-degree and Firstie years in Starship 19."

In the late 1970s, having just recently switched from Playboy to Starship, the squadron members including Phillips busily painted murals and built a space-themed CQ (charge of quarters) desk to match the new nickname. Years later, his former squadronmates were perplexed when CS-19 suddenly switched its identity.

As Phillips began digging into the history behind the transformation from Starship to Wolverine in 1993, he found no official documentation or justification for the change.

"They inexplicably changed to Wolverines," Phillips says.

Talking with the squadron commanders from the classes of 1992 and 1993, Phillips discovered that cadets were hastily gathered up in the squadron activity room and given five

choices for a new nickname. The majority voted for Wolverines.

"Because it sounded kind of rough and tough," Phillips reports. "There was no process ... there was no uniform board. That was it, and they moved on."

His reunion research resulted in a 20-page document about the history of CS-19's monikers, with little thought that it might spark future discussions about another squadron rebrand.

LIKE MINDS

A space officer for his entire Air Force career, after attending the USSF presentation during his 40th reunion in 2021, Phillips volunteered to assist USAFA's new Space Force detachment with the development of its Space Training and Readiness (STAR) curriculum and a new summer space program called Azimuth.

Lema happened to be part of the cadre team for Azimuth. During that interaction, Cadet Lema found out that Phillips was a former CS-19 member during its original Starship era, and the two started talking.

Phillips shared his previous research with the cadet, and the pair eventually hatched the idea of returning the squadron to its roots.

"Cadet Lema really drove the train on this," Phillips says. "He was the guy who kept the ball moving forward as a cadet."

Lema figured the path forward would be simple, perhaps just having to convince Academy leadership that a change was warranted, but it turned out there was no official process for switching a squadron nickname, and the effort stalled.



"I had no idea the roller coaster I was strapping into," Lema admits.

"I warned Cadet Lema," Phillips adds. "My guess was the bureaucracy was going to show up, and sure enough it did."

With the assistance of Phillips, who helped compile the necessary staff summary sheets, documentation and presentations, CS-19 cadets navigated the uncertain path ahead.

The proposal eventually ended up on the USAFA Uniform Board's agenda and was approved in November 2022, thanks in part to an endorsement from USAFA Historian Dr. Brian Laslie suggesting that the squadron return to its legacy nickname.

USAFA Superintendent Lt. Gen. Richard Clark '86 then signed the official paperwork in March of this year.

Even though the change took longer than he'd hoped, Lema says he's excited that he'll spend his Firstie year as part of the reconstituted Starship 19.

"The squadron's history is incredible, but also it's about the future," he says. "We're now the Space Force's academy, and I think we should start taking pride in that. It just makes sense to have space-themed squadrons here."

PATCH ART

The new CS-19 patch, designed by

Star Trek creator Gene Roddenberry, a B-17 pilot during World War II, gave CS-19 permission to use the Starship Enterprise and one of the show's famous sayings on its patch.





LEFT: CS-19 cadets replace their Wolverine patches with Starship 19 patches during the Aug. 12 redesignation ceremony in Polaris Hall.

RIGHT: Legacy members of CS-19 were on hand for the Starship 19 redesignation celebration, including Gen. (Ret.) Terrence O'Shaughnessy '86, former commander of U.S. Northern Command and North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD), shown holding the flag, and Gen. (Ret.) David Goldfein '83, former chief of staff of the Air Force, to the right of the flag holders.

C2C Cassidy Rosa, is similar to the legacy emblem, but with a few important twists.

"The old patch was great, but we thought it might be better to update that patch," Lema explains. "It looks a lot more modern, but also with that vintage feel to it."

Squadron members turned the Starship Enterprise around, so it's headed out to space instead of toward Earth. Lema says that change points to the military's future dominance beyond our planet.

A new Polaris star has now joined the four previous stars — one each in the standard class colors.

And the previous saying, "Where no man has gone before," is now the Latin phrase "Vive Diu Et Prospercere" — translation, "Live Long and Prosper."

"Most of the cadets in our squadron just love that slogan," Lema says. "And we wanted to include the Latin because it adds an interesting flair. It's kind of like a conversation starter."

The new patch, Lema reports, is already very popular.

"We went from one of the least likeable patches to one of the best," he suggests. "We've heard some great feedback. It's helped to put our squadron on the map."

REDESIGNATION CEREMONY

Maj. Cara Bousie, CS-19 air officer commanding, opened the Aug. 12 ceremony in Polaris Hall. She thanked the

many squadron alums in attendance at the event.

"Seeing this much legacy in the room has my heart exploding," Bousie said. "We really do stand on the shoulders of giants."

It's been about 30 years since Starship switched to Wolverines, she noted, but it's time to return to the legacy moniker. With approximately 10% of graduates commissioning into the Space Force annually, Bousie said it's important to add to the space-related squadron patches in the Cadet Wing.

"We make this change with pride and a lot of excitement," she said.

Gen. Goldfein told the crowd that as chief of staff, he initially wasn't sold on the idea of having a separate Space Force. At the time, he was worried that the Air Force would lose the joint synergy it enjoyed with space operations through the years. But today, he's a staunch supporter of the new service.

A member of CS-19 during all four years of his USAFA career, Gen. Goldfein said he was thrilled to learn that his old squadron was returning to Starship 19.

"We're getting back to our roots," he said. "To all those who led the effort to make this day happen, who designed this patch that will be worn for all time, congratulations. I'm glad to be a part of it."

Gen. O'Shaughnessy, who now works with SpaceX, spoke about the integration of commercial and military space efforts and presented CS-19 with an ac-



tual panel from the company's first test flight of the SN-15 Starship. He said he hopes the display inspires future members of the Space Force and Air Force.

Speaking to the underclassmen in the room, Gen. O'Shaughnessy said that by the time they graduate, Starship will be on the moon. By the time the cadets make the rank of captain, he predicted, Starship will have traveled to Mars.

"Space is our future," he said. "You will live this future."

At the conclusion of the ceremony, CS-19 stood to respond in unison one last time as Wolverines. Then together, they removed their retiring patches.

Finally, at Bousie's prompt of Starship 19, the squadron members responded back and placed the new patch on their shoulders.

SQUADRON SUPPORT

The graduate community and parents rallied to support the Starship 19 squadron improvement fund during the 1Day1USAFA day of giving. The initiative reached its \$7,000 goal. The funds will be used to help the squadron refurbish its surroundings toward the Starship theme. 

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— C3C Mark Lema