

# Col. John D. Caldwell

## Commander/Leader

Col. John D. Caldwell is the Commander and Leader for the United States Air Force Air Demonstration Squadron, the Thunderbirds, Nellis Air Force Base, Nev. He is responsible for a 130-person squadron that plans and presents precision aerial maneuvers to exhibit the capabilities of the F-16 and the high degree of professional skill required to operate those aircraft. As Thunderbird 1, Caldwell leads the Thunderbirds signature flying formations with as many as seven other pilots. Caldwell is in his third season with the team.

Caldwell graduated from the USAF Academy in 2002 and completed Euro-NATO Joint Jet Pilot Training Program in 2003. Caldwell then graduated from the F-16 Replacement Training Unit at Luke AFB, Ariz., in 2005 where he garnered the Red River Rat Trophy, the 2005 AETC Frances Gabreski Top Air-to-Air Student award and Top Graduate honors. Prior to the Thunderbirds, he was the Commander of the 28th Test and Evaluation Squadron, Eglin AFB, Fla.



### EDUCATION

2002 Bachelor degree in Aeronautical Engineering, USAF Academy, Distinguished Graduate, Top Aeronautical Design Student  
2007 Squadron Officer School, Distinguished Graduate  
2009 United States Air Force Weapons School  
2013 Master of Science degree in Aerospace Science & Technology, Embry Riddle University  
2014 Air Command and Staff College, by correspondence  
2015 Master of Science degree in Defense Analysis, Naval Postgraduate School, Distinguished Graduate, Outstanding Thesis Award, Outstanding Air Force Student

### ASSIGNMENTS

Aug 2002 - Oct 2002 Operations Scheduler, 27th Fighter Squadron, Langley AFB, Va.  
Oct 2002 - Nov 2003 Student Pilot, Euro-NATO Joint Jet Pilot Training Program, Sheppard AFB, Texas  
Nov 2003 - Jan 2004 Student Pilot, Introduction to Fighter Fundamentals, Sheppard AFB, Texas  
Feb 2004 - Feb 2005 Student Pilot, F-16 RTU, 308th FS, Luke AFB, Ariz.  
Feb 2005 - Aug 2007 Chief of Standardization and Evaluation/Instructor Pilot, 524th FS, Cannon AFB, N.M.  
Sept 2007 - Jun 2009 Instructor Pilot/Flight Commander, 61st FS, Luke AFB, Ariz.  
Jun 2009 - Dec 2009 Student Pilot, USAF Weapons School, Nellis AFB, Nev.  
Jan 2010 - Dec 2011 Chief of Weapons and Tactics, 555th FS, Aviano Air Base, Italy  
Jan 2012 - Jun 2014 F-16 Division Commander, 85th TES, Eglin AFB, Fla.  
Jun 2014 - Dec 2015 Student, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, Calif.  
May 2016 - Jun 2016 Director of Operations, 85th TES, Eglin AFB, Fla.  
Jun 2017 - Aug 2018 Commander, 28th TES, Eglin AFB, Fla.  
Aug 2018 - Present Thunderbird #1, Commander/Leader, USAF Air Demonstration Squadron, Nellis AFB, Nev.

### FLIGHT INFORMATION

Rating: Command Pilot  
Total flight hours: More than 3,100  
Combat hours: 667  
Aircraft flown: T-37, T-38A, F-16

### MAJOR AWARDS AND DECORATIONS

Distinguished Flying Cross  
Meritorious Service Medal with one oak leaf cluster  
Air Medal with eight oak leaf clusters  
Air Force Commendation Medal with three oak leaf clusters  
Air Force Achievement Medal

### EFFECTIVE DATES OF PROMOTION

Second Lieutenant May 2002  
First Lieutenant May 2004  
Captain May 2006  
Major Feb 2012  
Lieutenant Colonel Jan 2016  
Colonel Mar 2021