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Heads up! Air Force Week coming to Offutt

By: Jason Glenn

Nebraska and Western Iowa skies will resonate with the sounds of jet engines and sonic booms this August as Air Force Week comes to the Heartland.

"Offutt Air Force Base will host one of the three celebrations being held in the United States this year highlighting the United States Air Force and its contributions in protecting our nation," announced Gov. Dave Heineman on Monday afternoon in a press conference at the base.

The annual event is a showcase for the U.S. Air Force, bringing aircraft, systems and senior leaders to town and demonstrating the service's capabilities to the general public.

One of the most senior of those leaders, Gen. John Corley, commander of Air Combat Command, was on hand for the announcement and pointed out that the Aug. 9 through 17 festivities will also include plenty of opportunities for local residents to meet their men and women "in blue" personally.

"Come and join us, grab a hold of an airman," Corley said. "Get to know your airmen, get to talk to those airmen. You'll be proud of the Air Force just as we are proud of the support from these communities."

Also on hand for the afternoon conference were Bellevue Mayor Ed Babbitt, Omaha Mayor Mike Fahey and Council Bluffs Mayor Jim Hanifan.

The week will kick off with an event in Omaha before hitting the road for demonstrations in numerous locations around Nebraska and Western Iowa. The week will wrap up with the Defenders of Freedom Open House and Air Show back at Offutt Aug. 16 and 17. That event will be the biggest open house ever hosted by the base and feature more performers, like the Air Force Thunderbirds, and displays than ever before.

"We are going to bring in as many aircraft as we can to showcase our entire Air Force capabilities," said 55th Wing Commander Brig. Gen. James Jones.

Heineman concluded his remarks by saying the event presented a rare opportunity to see the Air Force's immense power up close. "[The Omaha metro area] is no stranger to big events, but this celebration is something very special."

For more details, visit www.airforceweek.com.