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## **First MQ-9 in TN for Domestic Military Exercise**

**NASHVILLE, Tenn.** – Airmen from the 118th Wing, Tennessee Air National Guard, will participate in a historic event, when an MQ-9 lands for the first time in Tennessee ahead of the exercise, Whiskey Fury 2023. Tentatively, the MQ-9 is scheduled to land at the Smyrna Airport, June 7. The time of the landing is subject to change depending on the weather. It will remain on display for public viewing throughout the Great Tennessee Air Show, June 10-11.

After the airshow, remotely piloted aircraft flight crews from the 118th WG will begin MQ-9 exercises, demonstrating the MQ-9's new Satellite Launch and Recovery (SLR) capability for the first time; from takeoff to landing on U.S. soil. SLR is the ability to conduct both takeoffs and landings, with the pilot operating the aircraft via satellite connection, with minimal ground crew support.

June 12-16, 118th WG Airmen will fly the MQ-9 to several points over Middle Tennessee, flying between 5,000 and 20,000 feet, and simulating potential emerging missions. Flying at this elevation will potentially make the MQ-9 visible from the ground. They will also conduct SLR from several airports in the area, including the Smyrna Airport, Arnold Air Force Base, and Fort Campbell Army Airfield. For the duration of the exercise, the MQ-9 will be controlled by 118th WG Airmen. It will also have a chase aircraft operated by the Civil Air Patrol, per Federal Aviation Administration regulations.

"This exercise represents a monumental step towards fulfilling the MQ-9's role in the Air Force's vision of Agile Combat Employment (ACE). Through SLR, we can quickly react to dynamic situations and reposition the MQ-9 wherever it is needed," said Lt. Col. John Woods, the 118th Operations Support Squadron assistant director of operations. "This same technology allows the MQ-9, with proper approvals, to respond to domestic emergencies such as wildfires, hurricanes, etc. Bottom line, this is an incredibly safe and effective platform that saves lives both at home and abroad."

Currently FEMA Region Four, which encompasses the southeast U.S., does not house the MQ-9. The MQ-9's ability to provide real-time, aerial imagery of disaster areas to on-ground first responders is a valuable asset during crisis response operations. This vantage point and rapid access to an aerial view of damaged areas has the potential to save countless lives and limit damage to property and infrastructure.

For more information on this exercise, please contact the 118th WG Public Affairs Office at 615.660.8062.

**- 30 -**