

USAF First Captain Marvel Female F-16 Demo Pilot Relieved of Command After Only Two Weeks Due To Inability To Function In Position

[Tom Demerly. Military Aviation 1 Comment](#)

Former USAF F-16 Demo Team Pilot Capt. Zoe Kotnik shown in the cockpit of an F-16. (Image credit: USAF)

Capt. Zoe Kotnik, the Air Force's First Female Single-ship Tactical Demonstration Pilot, Relieved for "Loss of Confidence".

USAF Capt. Zoe Kotnik has been relieved of her command position as the Air Force's F-16 Demonstration Team pilot after only two weeks in the assignment. The reason for her removal from the position is being reported by the [Air Force Times](#) as, "A loss of confidence in her ability to lead and command the Air Combat Command F-16 Viper demonstration team."

According to most definitions, military "loss of confidence" is when a party is, "inadequate in some respect, are failing to carry out obligations, or are making decisions that other members feel are detrimental."

The announcement came Tuesday, February 12, 2019 from the U.S. Air Force Air Combat Command Public Affairs office. In a story by reporter Stephen Losey published today in the Air Force Times, USAF Col. Allen Herritage, director of public affairs at ACC, said in an official statement, "The Viper demonstration team is working to minimize impacts on scheduled performances and looks forward to inspiring crowds around the country during the upcoming season as soon as a new commander is selected."



Former USAF F-16 Demo Team Pilot Capt. Zoe Kotnik was relieved from command after only two weeks according the Air Forces Times report published February 12, 2019. (Photo: USAF via Air Force Times)

The pilot relieved from the F-16 Demo Pilot position, Capt. Zoe Kotnik, [was the first female demo team pilot in the F-16](#). Kotnik, an experienced F-16C pilot whose call sign is "SiS", was certified as the Viper team leader by USAF Air Combat Command Commander Gen. Mike Holmes on January 29, 2019. She is a 2011 graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy and earned her pilot wings in 2013. Capt. Kotnik has flown more than 1,000 hours in military aircraft. She was previously deployed to Kunsan Air Base in South Korea for one year, from February 2015 to February 2016. Kunsan is known as a critical posting for F-16 pilots due to the ongoing tension between North and South Korea. She also has flown air defense missions in support of Operation Noble Eagle.

The removal of Capt. Kotnik from the high-profile F-16 Demo Pilot position is a blow for Air Force public affairs since Capt. Kotnik's posting to the position

made a positive statement about the role of female officers and pilots in the U.S. Air Force. No details of the specific reasons for her removal from the position have been revealed.

The relief of command for the Air Force's first female F-16 Demo pilot comes after the [November 20, 2017 relief of Lt. Col. Jason Heard as head of the U.S. Air Force Flight Demonstration Squadron, The Thunderbirds](#). Lt. Col. Heard was also relieved of command as a result of a "loss of confidence". Reports later surfaced that Lt. Col. Heard had fostered a "toxic" leadership atmosphere within the Thunderbirds. A November, 2018 report in Air Force Times reported that Lt. Col. Heard was involved in a physical altercation and, "put his hands on another Thunderbird pilot's neck."