Blue Angels Mark 80 Years, Certified for 2026 Airshow Season



The Blue Angels fly in formation during winter training in El Centro, California, Feb. 24, 2026. After rigorous training and evaluations, Rear Adm. Max McCoy, Chief of Naval Air Training, officially certified the team “airshow ready.” (U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Maxwell Orlosky)

By Morgan Galvin of Chief of Naval Air Training. March 10, 2026

EL CENTRO, Calif. – The U.S. Navy Blue Angels successfully completed their annual certification for the 2026 airshow season on Feb. 23, marking the squadron’s 80th anniversary. The “airshow ready” designation was granted after the team completed its demanding winter training, ensuring they meet the highest standards of safety and performance before

embarking for their 2026 season.

Since their founding in 1946, the Blue Angels have served as ambassadors of naval aviation. Rear Admiral Max McCoy, Chief of Naval Air Training (CNATRA), gave final approval for the team's 80th season after observing their last practice demonstration in El Centro.

"Earning this certification is always an honor, but it carries special weight this year as we prepare to celebrate the squadron's 80th anniversary," said Capt. Adam Bryan, Blue Angels' commanding officer. "This team has worked incredibly hard to be ready to honor that legacy and represent the men and women of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps. We are eager to get the season started."

This year's certification was overseen by CNATRA with a unique understanding of the squadron's mission, as McCoy is the first former Blue Angel to oversee the Naval Flight Demonstration Squadron as CNATRA. McCoy was assigned to Naval Flight Demonstration Squadron in 2001 and 2005.

"For 80 years, the Blue Angels have represented the absolute pinnacle of naval aviation and this anniversary is a testament to a legacy of excellence that few organizations ever achieve," said McCoy. "Certification for this historic season was exceptionally rigorous because the standard must be met. This squadron demonstrated unwavering precision and commitment, proving they are not only ready to fly, but ready to continue the Blue Angel legacy with the honor it deserves."

With their certification complete, the Blue Angels will now begin their season tour across the United States. The Blue Angels team consists of 158 active-duty Sailors and Marines, including pilots, aircrew, maintainers, and many other support personnel.

The Blue Angels will host the last show of the season, the

Blue Angels Homecoming Air Show at Naval Air Station (NAS) Pensacola on November 6.

Pensacola, Florida is where the Blue Angels call home during the show season and conduct practices in preparation for events across the country.

Headquartered at Naval Air Station Corpus Christi, Texas, the Chief of Naval Air Training (CNATRA) oversees five training air wings and 17 training squadrons across Florida, Mississippi, and Texas. These squadrons conduct primary, intermediate, and advanced flight training for student naval aviators, naval flight officers, and air vehicle pilots. CNATRA remains steadfast in its mission to train, mentor, and deliver the highest quality naval aviators prepared to win in competition, crisis, and conflict.