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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **The Wilmington Air Park Hosts the Ohio Air National Guard for First of Its Kind "Live in '25" Training Exercise**

April 10, 2025 - *Wilmington, Ohio* - The Clinton County Port Authority (CCPA) and the Ohio Air National Guard (OHANG) are proud to announce a historic joint exercise, "Live in '25," marking the first time in OHANG history that all four wings will collaborate for an exercise at a non-military installation.

Wilmington Air Park, a regional hub of cargo flights and MRO operations, in Southwest Ohio, is set to host this important OHANG readiness exercise on From May 1 through May 6, 2025, emulating the kind of environment where American units might need to operate in a potential future conflict.

Col. Curtis Voltz, Commander of the 180<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing, attended a recent Port Authority Board meeting and shared, "During the Live in '25 event, the Ohio Air National Guard will complete their operations simultaneously with other ongoing airport operations. This Agile Combat Exercise opportunity will enhance the training the units complete throughout the year."

"This exercise represents more than just a training opportunity," said Pat Haley, Mayor of Wilmington. "It's a testament to our community's heritage and our continued support of our military personnel. By opening our community to military training, we're not just supporting national defense, but creating new economic opportunities for our region."

Clinton County Commissioner Mike McCarty emphasized the broader regional impact: "Military operations have always been crucial to our county's economic and strategic landscape. These partnerships showcase how local infrastructure can play a pivotal role in supporting national security while driving economic growth."

Walt Rowsey, Chairman of the Clinton County Port Authority, highlighted the strategic vision behind the partnership: "Our goal has always been to maximize the potential of the Wilmington Air Park. By attracting diverse operations – from cargo logistics to military training – we're ensuring the long-term productivity and relevance of this critical asset for Ohio."

"We're honored to play a role in supporting the OHANG's national defense mission," said T. Alex Beres, Executive Director of the Clinton County Port Authority and the Air Park. "Our team has been working closely with OHANG leadership over the last year to set up this event for success and create the best-quality environment for these pilots and crews."

"Wilmington Air Park began its life as a military airbase so supporting military aircraft is in our DNA," Beres said. "When Ohio Air National Guard units land, conduct hot pit refueling, take off and do their other operations in this exercise, we'll support them with the same world-class facilities and assets that make us one of the busiest cargo-focused and industrial airports in the country. Our state is on the

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forefront of a new wave of innovative defense related activities, and this is just another great effort to do what we can to support our Nation's military readiness and show that it can be done right here in Ohio, by Ohioans."

For Kirby Tolliver, a local resident and former Clinton County Air Force Base worker, the exercise carries deep personal significance. "Seeing military activity return to Wilmington after 54 years is incredibly emotional. When Clinton County AFB closed in 1971, it left a void in our community. I not only served at the base, but I grew up watching the guard practice parachuting exercises during their summer camps. This exercise proves that Wilmington remains a vital strategic location for military operations."

"When I returned to Wilmington in 1960, I was searching for work," reflected Bob Baker, another local resident who served at the former base. "Finding a position with the 160th Air Refueling Group wasn't just employment—it was a blessing. The heartbreak was palpable in 1971 when we learned the 160th was being transferred to Lockbourne AFB. Our community bent but never broke. Now, seeing the Guard's return after all these years, it's a homecoming."

The "Live in '25" exercise will showcase the versatility of the Wilmington Air Park, which has already established itself as Ohio's highest volume cargo airport and a key economic driver for the region.

### **About the Clinton County Port Authority**

The Clinton County Port Authority is a special purpose government formed to operate transportation infrastructure and lead economic development efforts. Designated by Clinton County, the City of Wilmington, and the CIC of Wilmington as the lead Economic Development agency for the County, it coordinates with the Dayton Development Coalition and JobsOhio to attract jobs to, and retain jobs in, the area. It has been voted a Best Workplace for the last five years. The Port Authority owns and operates the Wilmington Air Park, an integrated aviation and logistics business park located on 1,900 acres with nearly three million square feet of industrial, office and hangar space. It is the highest volume cargo airport in Ohio and ranked 23rd in the United States and was named Best Airport in Ohio in 2020, 2021, and 2022. Learn more at [www.ChooseClintonCountyOH.org](http://www.ChooseClintonCountyOH.org) and [www.WilmingtonAirPark.com](http://www.WilmingtonAirPark.com).

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