



James L. Less

NASA Pilot

James L. Less is a research pilot and aerospace engineer at NASA's Armstrong Flight Research Center in Edwards, California. He is a project pilot for the X-59 aircraft.

Experience

Less has worked at Armstrong since 2010 conducting flight research and airborne science missions as pilot for the F-15, F-18, T-34, and King Air, as well as the Stratospheric Observatory for Infrared Astronomy (SOFIA), a modified 747SP jetliner, and various remotely piloted aircraft, including the MQ-9 Ikhana and aircraft from the center's subscale research laboratory.

Prior to joining NASA, Less served as an officer and pilot in the U.S. Air Force for nearly 21 years. Upon graduating from Euro-NATO Joint Jet Pilot Training, he flew F-111 aircraft at Cannon Air Force Base in New Mexico and the F-117 Stealth Fighter at Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico.

After attending the U.S. Air Force Test Pilot School at Edwards Air Force Base in California, he tested all blocks and models of the F-16 aircraft and then served as an instructor at the school. Less later worked in the F-35 Joint Program Office in Washington and commanded the 46th Operations Support Squadron at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida before returning to Edwards as the Hypersonic Test Force director.

Less commanded the initial operational deployment of the Battlefield Airborne Communications Node, flying combat missions over Afghanistan before finishing his Air Force career as deputy operations group commander at Edwards. He retired with the rank of lieutenant colonel.

Education

Less graduated magna cum laude from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York, with a bachelor's degree in aeronautical engineering. He was a Distinguished Graduate of the Reserve Officer Training Corps when earning his U.S. Air Force Commission. He also earned a master's degree in mechanical engineering from the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta, Georgia.

Honors

Less is a member of the Order of Daedalians and the Society of Experimental Test Pilots. His military honors include the Air Medal, Aerial Achievement Medal, Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, NATO/ISAF Medal, and Southwest Asia Service Medal.