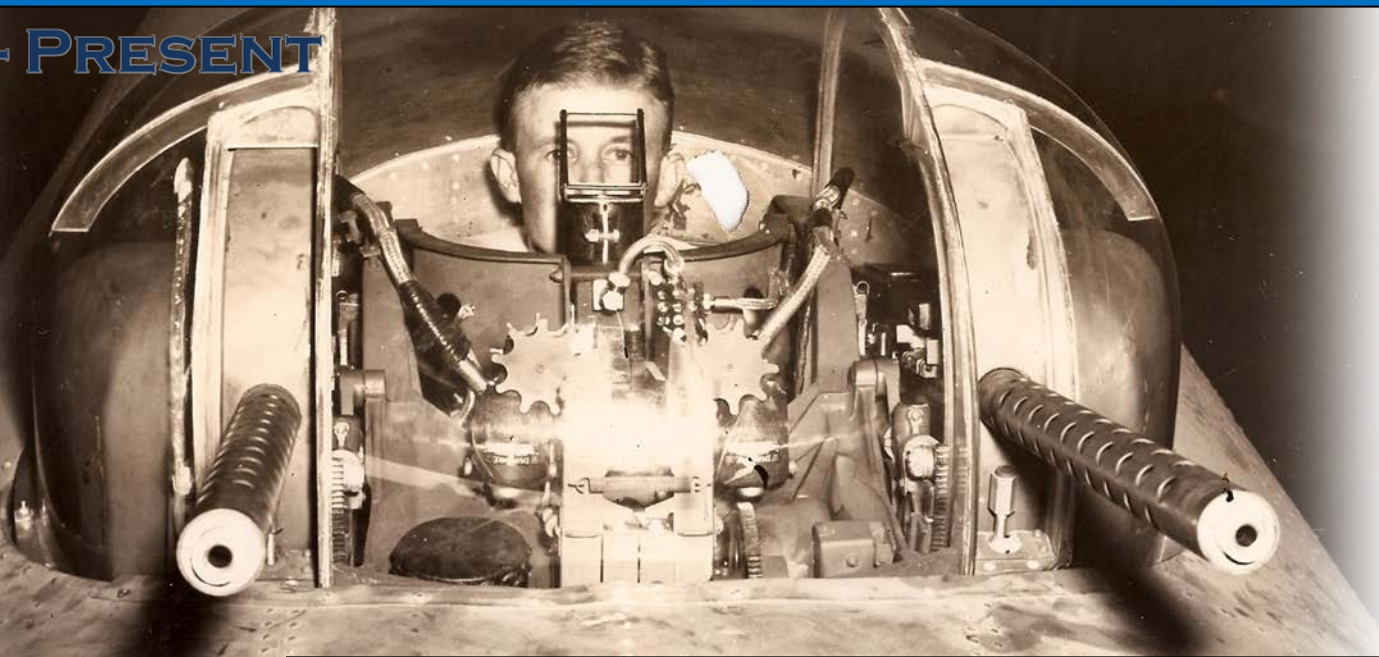


MacDill Air Force Base



U.S. AIR FORCE

1939 - PRESENT



Above: An Airman trains with aircraft turret guns at MacDill Field for later duty on a B-17 bomber during World War II.

MacDill Air Force Base is located seven miles south of Tampa, Florida, on the southwestern tip of the interbay peninsula in Hillsborough County. This area once had been used as a military staging area during the Spanish-American War but did not become a military installation until much later. In 1939, the War Department selected Tampa for the new Southeast Air Base and the Works Projects Administration and Army Corps of Engineers labored more than three years to carve an airfield out of the vacant, often submerged, land.

MacDill Field was officially activated on April 16, 1941, and named in honor of U.S. Army aviation pioneer and World War I veteran, Colonel Leslie MacDill. The first primary mission of the base during World War II involved training Airmen to fly and operate bomber aircraft – such as the B-17 “Flying Fortress” or the B-26 “Marauder.” From 1942-45, many thousands of American men passed through MacDill’s gates to train as bomber pilots or crew members and then quickly moved on to other military assignments, eventually destined for the deadly fight raging over Europe’s skies. Following the end of hostilities in Europe, MacDill began to train e B-29 “Superfortress” crews in January 1945.

In January 1948, MacDill Air Force Base became one of the few original bases for of the US nuclear deterrent force, Strategic Air Command. Throughout the 1950s, activities on the base focused on operating the B-47 “Stratojet.” However, outpaced by more modern bombers and missiles based at installations under construction along the nation's northern tier, by 1960, the base faced an uncertain future. The Department of Defense announced the aircraft would depart by 1962. However, the 1961 Berlin Crisis and 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis led to a reprieve of the planned cutbacks and highlighted MacDill's strategic value. During this time, MacDill assumed another important role providing support for a prominent unified command, U.S. Strike Command, assigned to the base in 1961.

In 1963, the bombers gave way to the fighters when MacDill became a Tactical Air Command training base. Throughout the Vietnam War and up until the first Gulf War in 1991, Tampa became a home for the F-4 “Phantom II” and later the F-16 “Fighting Falcon.” Between 1979 and 1993 approximately half of all F-16 pilots trained at MacDill.

Above: Unit patches and a bomber jacket from the 307th Bombardment Group at MacDill in the early 1950s.



Below: Two pilots leave the flightline with F-16 “Fighting Falcon” jets at MacDill. The base was home to fighter aircraft from 1962 up to 1993.



MacDill Air Force Base



The 6th Wing (1994 - Present)

In 1991, the era of the fighters at MacDill began to wane. Due to military downsizing, the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission required the base to cease all flying operations by 1993. The action effectively transferred more than 100 F-16 fighters to Luke AFB, Arizona. When the last F-16s left the base in 1994, MacDill AFB had no active duty aircraft for the first time.

In 1994, MacDill became home to the 6th Air Base Wing. This new wing had a primary mission of operating the base in support of U.S. Central Command, U.S. Special Operations Command, and a large number of other mission partners and tenant units. However, this mission would grow. In 1994, MacDill played a prominent role in U.S. operations to restore Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and his government after an attempted military coup. With operations in Haiti highlighting MacDill's significance in the region, the 1995 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission recommended to retain the airfield under Air Force control. Eventually, this led to MacDill's new mission in refueling.



Left: A jumpmaster of U.S. Special Operations Command (at MacDill) directs parajumpers aboard a C-130 "Hercules."
Right: A model of the KC-135 "Stratotanker" greets visitors at the front gate of MacDill Air Force Base.

In 2008, the base wing experienced more changes as part of a major restructuring by the Air Force. This time, MacDill and the 6th welcomed the Air Force Reserve's **927th Air Refueling Wing** as a joint partner in the aerial refueling mission at MacDill. Currently, these two units – one active duty and the other reserve – work together using the same KC-135 "Stratotankers" to more efficiently carry out the Air Force's missions. Today at MacDill, the **6th Air Refueling Wing** provides aerial refueling squadrons and combat support Airmen to fill contingency taskings around the world. The wing has twenty-four KC-135 "Stratotankers" and more than 2,700 personnel assigned. Additionally, the 6th Air Refueling Wing is the host unit of MacDill Air Force Base and provides base operating support to Headquarters U.S. Central Command, Headquarters U.S. Special Operations Command, and 31 other mission partner units.



