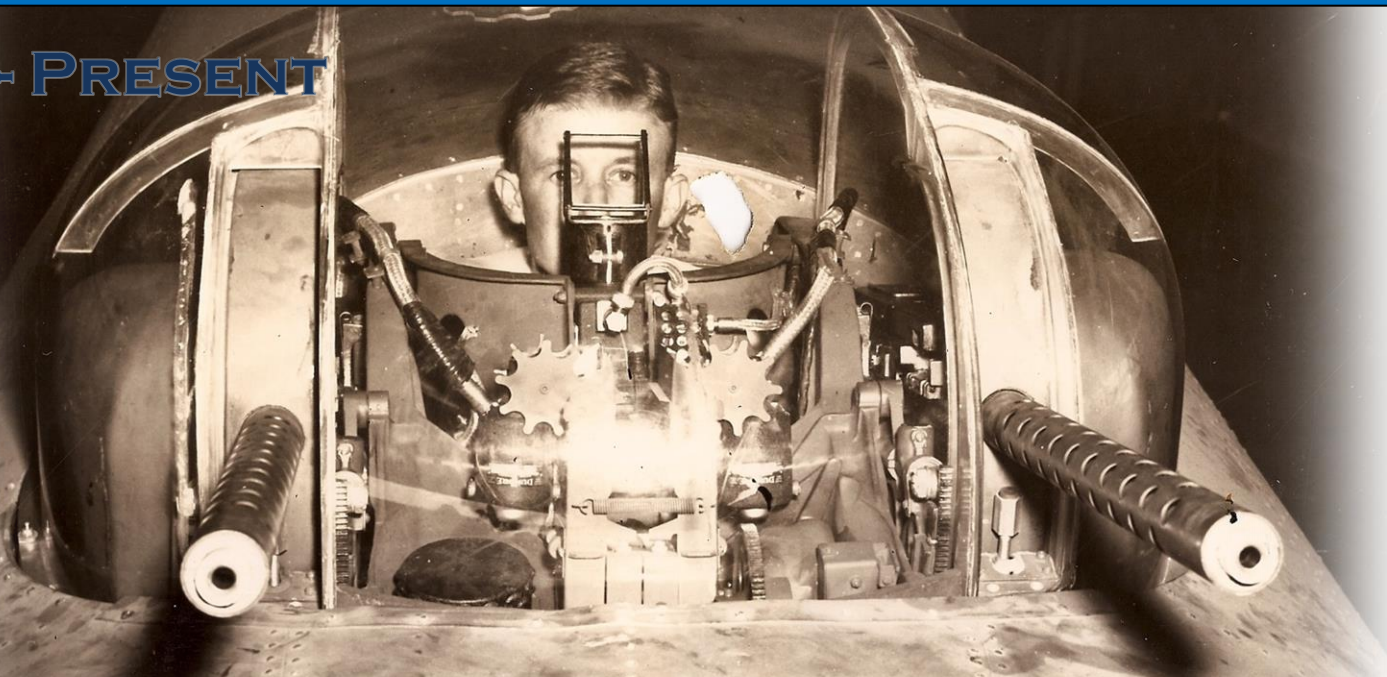


# History of MacDill



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.

**M**acDill 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 to receive one of several new military airfields and Hillsborough County leaders worked out arrangements for the transfer of the 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 original mission of the base during World War II involved training Airmen to fly and operate bomber aircraft – such as the B-17 “Flying Fortress” and 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 crews of the B-29 “Superfortress” in January 1945, which lasted through 1953.

After Air Force independence, in January 1948, MacDill Air Force Base became an operational base for Strategic Air Command, and activities focused on training bomber crews for the Cold War era. However, by 1960, the base faced an uncertain future. The R announced it would close most of it by 1962 – due in part to the advent of the “missile age” that de-emphasized the bombers. However, hostilities with Cuba in the early 1960s highlighted the strategic location of the base and led to a reprieve of the planned cutbacks. 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 “Phantoms” and later the F-16 “Fighting Falcons.” 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.



U.S. AIR FORCE

# 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 Realignment and Closure 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 aircraft for the first time in its history.

Also in 1994, MacDill became home to the 6th Air Base Wing. Although one of the oldest units in military aviation, this wing was new to MacDill and served as the host for all other organizations at the installation. The 6th was assigned its first mission at MacDill to operate 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 Realignment and Closure Commission reversed course and now recommended to retain the airfield under Air Force control. In two years time, this led to MacDill's new mission in aerial refueling. With refuelers no longer tied to bombers, Air Mobility Command could now establish its first Regular Air Force tanker unit in the nation's southeast.



**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** performs aerial refueling, airlift, and contingency response missions for U.S. and allied forces around the world. The wing has more than 2,700 personnel to operate the base as well as maintain and operate its twenty-four assigned KC-135 "Stratotankers." Additionally, the 6th Air Refueling Wing is the host unit of MacDill Air Force Base and provides direct support to U.S. Central Command, U.S. Special Operations Command, and 31 other tenant units.