

PART OF TAMPA, A MILITARY TOWN

1. NATIVE AMERICANS SETTLED THE TAMPA BAY AREA 10,000 YEARS BEFORE THE SPANISH CONQUISTADORS ARRIVED.

Florida's tribes comprised approximately 10,000 individuals, with the Timucua tribe most prominent in northern Florida, and the Calusa to the south. In 1513, the Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de Leon claimed the region for Spain and named it La Florida. Hernando De Soto followed with his expedition to Tampa Bay in 1539. The land remained a Spanish colony until acquired by the United States under the terms of the Adams-Onís Treaty in 1819. The US established Florida as a territory in 1821 and installed General Andrew Jackson, a hero of the War of 1812, as its governor.

2. TAMPA GREW OUT OF FORT BROOKE, A SIGNIFICANT MILITARY BASE IN THE NEW TERRITORY OF FLORIDA.

Fort Brooke was established in January 1824 by Colonel George Mercer Brooke and James Gadsden. Gadsden, a former attaché to General Jackson, selected the site at the mouth of the Hillsborough River for the defense of the new US frontier to keep the British and the Seminole tribe apart. In 1835, the Seminoles ambushed soldiers from Fort Brooke, killing most of the Tampa garrison at Dade's Battlefield. Fort Brooke became headquarters for the Army of the South in the Second Seminole Indian War. Beginning with Fort Brooke, Americans occupied Tampa and embarked on its long history as a military town. Gadsden Point on the southeastern tip of this peninsula and Gadsden Park north of MacDill AFB are both named in Gadsden's honor.



Timucua Village



Map of Florida, c.1822



Andrew Jackson

James Gadsden



Fort Brooke

3. OVER TIME, TAMPA'S INCREASED DEVELOPMENT PROVIDED THE PERSONNEL AND RESOURCES TO SUPPORT A MAJOR MILITARY INSTALLATION.

After a challenging early history of epidemics, Indian Wars, hurricanes, and the Civil War, Tampa Bay began to boom in the 1880s. In 1881, US Army engineer Captain Francis LeBaron discovered the largest reserves of phosphate in America along the Peace River, later contributing to the region's development. In 1884, Henry Plant, a prominent developer in Tampa, poured millions into the area's infrastructure, completing the Tampa line of his railroad at Port Tampa City. In 1886, Vicente Martinez Ybor founded the first cigar factory in the city which still bears his name today.

4. IN 1898, THIS PENINSULA BECAME A STAGING GROUND FOR COLONEL TEDDY ROOSEVELT AND THE ROUGH RIDERS DURING THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR.

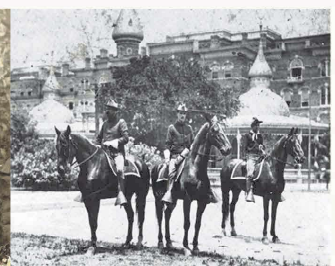
In preparation for their departure to vindicate the loss of the battleship USS Maine in Cuba, 25,000 to 30,000 US regular troops rallied in Tampa at Henry Plant's suggestion. This force included the renowned 1st US Volunteer Cavalry Regiment. The main force encamped in Ybor City, West Tampa, Tampa Heights, and nearby Port Tampa. The 1st Volunteer Cavalry Regiment made extensive use of Fort Homer Hesterly, while the officers and press occupied Henry Plant's Tampa Bay Hotel. The Rough Riders launched their liberation of Cuba from Tampa Bay using Henry Plant's railroad line to Port Tampa. The Rough Riders boarded the USS Yucatan and marched toward victory in the famous Battle of San Juan Hill.



Map of Tampa, 1898



LTC Teddy Roosevelt, 1898



Rough Riders in front of Tampa Bay Hotel

5. ON JAN 1, 1914, TAMPA BAY MADE AVIATION HISTORY WHEN THE WORLD'S FIRST AIRLINE FLIGHT CROSSED OVERHEAD.

St. Petersburg, founded in 1892, was an isolated community due to the geography surrounding it. It took 11 hours to travel by horse and buggy to reach the county seat in Tampa. Entrepreneur Percival Fansler devised the St Pete-Tampa Airboat Line to cut that journey to 23 minutes by air. The 18-mile air route proved to be a world-class opportunity to showcase civilian aeronautics. On its maiden flight, pilot Tony Jannus executed an emergency landing of the Benoist XI flying boat, quickly repairing the aircraft before continuing the successful journey to Tampa.

6. LONG BEFORE ANYONE CONSIDERED THE SOUTHERN TIP OF INTERBAY PENINSULA FOR A FLYING FIELD, THE LOCAL COMMUNITY CONSIDERED IT "BACKWATER".

With Tampa Bay still largely unsettled, the automobile brought its first generation of visitors known as "Tin Can Tourists." By the Roaring 1920s, developments subdivided the Interbay Peninsula surrounded by construction such as the Gandy Bridge and the creation of Davis Island. However, the Florida Land Bust of 1926, the Stock Market Crash of 1929, and the Great Depression stopped development in its tracks, bankrupting many businesses and forcing millions out of work. By 1939 the Interbay Peninsula was better known for George End's Depression-era rattlesnake cannery on Gandy Boulevard than for its future economic, social or military opportunity. No one could have predicted at the time that the swampy wilderness at the Interbay Peninsula would become a premier US Air Force base.



Davis Island Aerial, c. 1926



George End's Rattlesnake Cannery on Gandy

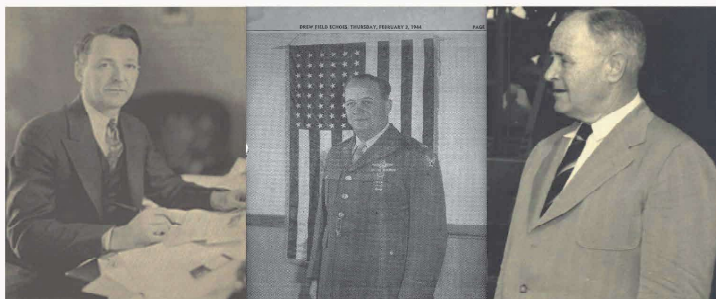


Gandy Bridge, 1924

STRATEGICALLY LOCATED FOR DEFENSE

1. IN 1935, US REPRESENTATIVE J. MARK WILCOX RECOMMENDED NEW MILITARY BASES AT THE CORNERS OF THE CONTINENTAL UNITED STATES CAPABLE OF PROJECTING BOMBARDMENT AND COASTAL DEFENSE GROUPS.

Fear of invasion from the Atlantic made homeland defense a primary concern for the War Department. The location of the Southeast Air Base on the west side of the Florida peninsula afforded it the protection of land mass to the east. Also, the Tampa Bay area was in close proximity to Puerto Rico and the strategically important Panama Canal. The proposed Southeast Air Base was to serve as the keystone, completing the defensive perimeter of both. The site remained undetermined at its inception.



Rep. James Mark Wilcox

COL Melvin Asp

Tampa Mayor Robert E. Lee Chancey



Air Base Perimeter Defense in 1935 Wilcox Act

3. SITE SELECTION FOR SOUTHEAST AIR BASE BEGAN IN EARNEST WITH TAMPA AS THE US ARMY AIR CORPS' PRIME CANDIDATE.

Tampa's infrastructure included key elements needed to give rise to a major military installation. Tampa possessed an established railway, two deep-water ports, adequate housing, and recreational opportunities. A 5,767-acre site on south Interbay peninsula met requirements for development. On July 13th, 1939, the War Department announced that construction of the 10 million dollar air base would commence on October 1st, 1939.

DID YOU KNOW?

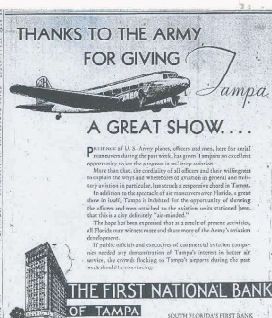
The air base was almost located 90 miles south in Arcadia, Florida, but thanks to a successful exercise held in the city, the Army decided to locate the air base in Tampa. Initially, Tampa leaders supported the city of Arcadia, Florida in its efforts to expand its WWI-era aerodrome, Carlstrom Field.

2. IN 1938, TAMPA'S LOCAL COMMUNITY WORKED ALONGSIDE THE US ARMY AIR CORPS TO DEMONSTRATE TAMPA BAY'S POTENTIAL TO HOST A NEW MAJOR US AIR BASE.

Although receptive to hosting maneuvers, Great Depression-era Tampa Mayor Robert Chancey remained more concerned about the financial burden that hosting the exercise would bring to the community. However, US Army Air Corps officers Melvin Asp and Charles Skaw worked with local business leader Jerry Waterman to convince the Mayor of the economic potential of a relationship with the Air Corps. The maneuvers were a success, and the enthusiastic support of the local population left a lasting impression on US Army leadership. As a result, Army leadership sought to bring Southeast Air Base to Tampa Bay.



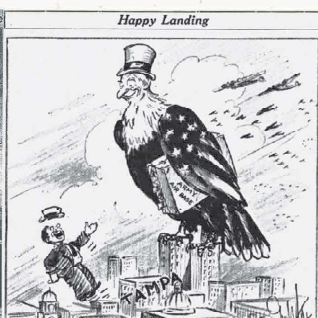
Carlstrom Field in Arcadia FL



1938 Newspaper Advertisement



1938 Newspaper Photograph



1939 Newspaper Cartoon

TAMPA

THE NAMESAKE OF COLONEL LESLIE MACDILL



MacDill's Club Aeronautique Card



MacDill at Aerial Gunnery School, St. Jean de Monts, France, c. 1918

1. COLONEL LESLIE MACDILL WAS AN AVIATION PIONEER AND RISING STAR IN THE EARLY US ARMY SIGNAL CORPS.

Leslie MacDill was born on February 18, 1889, in Monmouth, Illinois. He graduated from Hanover College in 1909 and Indiana University in 1911. He was commissioned as an officer in the US Army's Coastal Artillery Corps on April 13, 1912. However, the allure of aviation changed the course of his life. After attending flying school, the then Lt MacDill earned his wings on July 2, 1915 at the Signal Corps Aviation School in San Diego, California. Among the initial cadre of military aviators (number 319), he became one of the most experienced fliers in the US Army Air Corps.



MacDill's American Expeditionary Forces Identification Card

2. DURING WWI, COL MACDILL WAS ON THE LEADING EDGE OF AIR COMBAT, COMMANDING THE AERIAL GUNNERY TRAINING SCHOOL AT ST. JEAN DE MONTE, FRANCE.

In 1920, Col MacDill graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, earning an early Doctor of Science degree in aeronautical engineering. Col MacDill progressed through the ranks and became a member of the War Department's general staff by 1935. He was one of the most highly educated aviation pioneers in the general staff of his time. US Army Air Corps leadership relied heavily on his highly analytical, mathematical mind. Col MacDill's operational expertise and sound advice shaped today's US Air Force.



Leslie MacDill

MacDill's Plane Wreckage, 1938

3. COL MACDILL CONTINUED TO DISTINGUISH HIMSELF IN PIONEERING AVIATION IN PEACETIME, FLYING IN THE INTEREST OF SCIENTIFIC INVESTIGATION AND DEVELOPMENT.

During the 1930's, he flew hundreds of times from Bolling Field on a variety of experimental aircraft. On the morning of November 9, 1938 MacDill and mechanic Private Joseph Gloxner experienced a mechanical failure shortly after take-off in a BC-1 basic combat training plane from Bolling Field. Both were fatally wounded. Witness testimony stated MacDill tried desperately to turn back, but eventually steered the plane away from two houses, killing both Airmen. Col MacDill left behind his wife, Marilla Augusta, and two daughters, Katherine Rose, 14, and Rose, 11. In December 1939, a committee of his peers recommended the Southeast Air Base bear the name MacDill Field in his honor.

DID YOU KNOW?

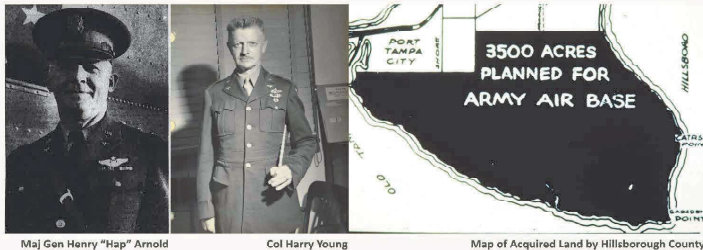
The first preparations for clearing the land that later became MacDill Air Force Base began on November 28, 1939, and then on November 30, 1939, Secretary of War Harry H. Woodring announced that the future base would be named for Col MacDill.



A 1940s ENGINEERING MARVEL

1. PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT'S NEW DEAL PUT AMERICANS BACK TO WORK IN TAMPA BUILDING MACDILL AND OTHER PUBLIC WORKS PROJECTS DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION.

MacDill Field was one of four Work Projects Administration (WPA) large projects in Tampa Bay. The Peter O. Knight and Drew Airports served as the air bridge to Tampa; Bayshore Boulevard provided an overland route to the new base, and Homer W. Hesterly Armory later became the headquarters for Third Air Force. In 1939, Hillsborough County repurchased 3,472 acres from landowners while the government acquired the remaining 2,700. On September 6, 1939, the first work crew arrived to survey the site.



Maj Gen Henry "Hap" Arnold

Col Harry Young

Map of Acquired Land by Hillsborough County

2. ALTHOUGH THE SITE ON THE SOUTHERN TIP OF THE INTERBAY APPEARED HABITABLE ON PAPER, DEVELOPING THE LAND WAS A TREMENDOUS UNDERTAKING.

Workers arrived by the thousands to mostly vacant, rattlesnake-infested land known as Catfish Point, consisting of numerous ponds and tracts of wasteland. The extensive effort to clear the swamps using primitive equipment brought 2,637 Work Projects Administration (WPA) workers untold misery. The priorities included the removing of palmettos, the excavating of drainage ditches, and trailblazing, which required crews to remove 1,757,557 cubic yards of dirt—enough to fill 44,000 railroad cars. Engineers tested the soil to ensure it would support the weight of an air base. Trees cut during construction became lumber to build the base.

3. IN 1940, THE US ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS DESIGNED AND BUILT THE RUNWAYS AND HANGARS.

That year, the new Chief of the US Army Air Corps, Maj Gen Henry "Hap" Arnold approved engineering plans to allow vertical construction of the new base, and nominated then Colonel Clarence Tinker as its first commander. The Army Corps of Engineers designed infrastructure containing 2,656 cubic yards of concrete for 20 acres of paving, built 6 miles of temporary roads, 13 miles of storm sewers, and strung 29 miles of overhead electrical wires. WPA civilians ultimately turned over the final development of the base to less than 1,000 military personnel and contractors.



Post Card Depicting Early Life At MacDill Field

4. BY 1941, THE NEED FOR MILITARY FACILITIES AND HOUSING OUTPAID GROWTH AT MACDILL.

MacDill was home to approximately 2,500 men before the first aircraft was delivered. As more troops arrived, living conditions quickly deteriorated. Most early base personnel lived in tents in what became known as "Boom Town." The tent city was centered upon what one Airman humorously termed "the corner of Sand Avenue and Dust Boulevard." Most officers were without housing altogether. In response to the population growth, the City of Tampa partnered with the base to accommodate additional Airman by contracting entire developments such as Gadsden Homes, which later became Gadsden Park.



Land Clearing

Installing Water Main

Barracks Area



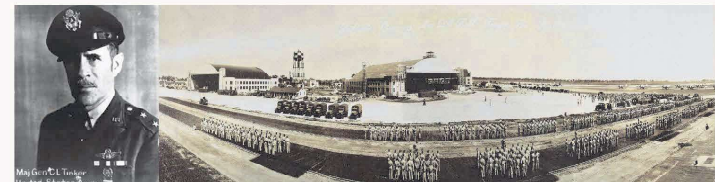
Water Tower

Airfield Concrete Pour

Aerial of Guard Houses and Fire Station

5. SIGNIFICANT CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS WERE STILL UNDERWAY WHEN CREWS COMPLETED THE AIRFIELD IN 1941.

Anchored by vast hurricane-proof aircraft hangars, hundreds of temporary barracks called "B-Huts" sprang-up across the support area of MacDill Field. Serving as warehouses, barracks, medical and aviation facilities among other purposes, B-Hut construction continued at a remarkable pace. Crews rushed to complete all the infrastructure required of a modern city and airport such as two water towers, fuel, electrical, sewer, and water distribution systems. Workers also completed a dock to accommodate a fleet of crash recovery watercraft, passenger ferries, and other support boats. MacDill Field's commander, Colonel Clarence Tinker, who would later become the Air Forces' first Native American General Officer, dedicated MacDill Field on April 16, 1941.



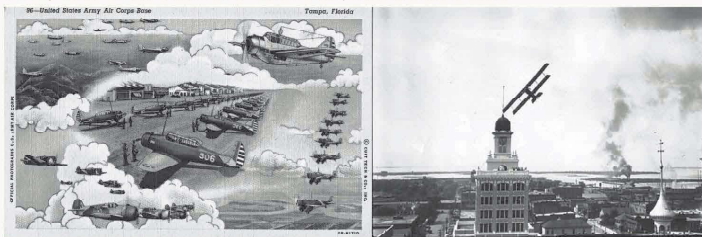
Maj Gen Clarence L. Tinker

Dedication Ceremony of MacDill Field

A PART OF "FLORIDA'S AIRBASE CITY"

1. IN 1941, BEFORE MACDILL FIELD'S COMPLETION, THE US ARMY AIR FORCES HEADQUARTERS SELECTED TAMPA TO HOST A DEFENSE EXERCISE.

With US involvement in WWII on the horizon, military planners envisioned the real possibility of an invasion of the United States by a European force. To prepare for a potential attack, US Army Air Corps leaders selected MacDill to host the defense exercise. Since most vulnerable military facilities were near the ocean, the air maneuvers in Tampa tested the Air Corps' ability to repel an invasion from air, land, and sea. The US Army Air Corps deployed its most advanced bomber and interceptor aircraft from around the country to test its new early warning radar technology. The Army Air Corps found itself utilizing these very capabilities a week after the exercise when the Japanese attacked another coastal military base at Pearl Harbor.



Postcard

1938 Air Maneuvers Over Downtown Tampa

2. A SIGNIFICANT COMPONENT OF THE US ARMY AIR FORCES, THIRD AIR FORCE, WAS RELOCATED FROM MACDILL TO BENJAMIN FIELD IN WEST TAMPA.

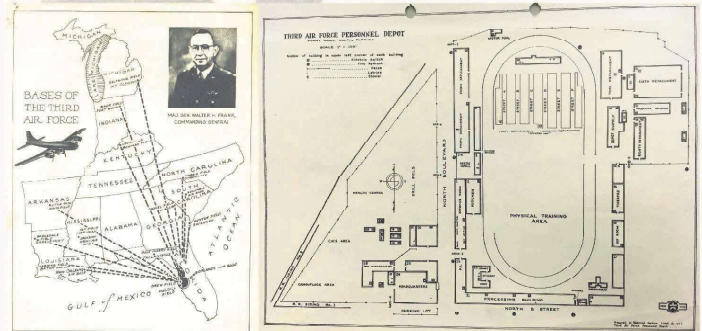
One of the original four Numbered Air Forces, Third Air Force was responsible for the air defense of the Southeastern United States. Third Air Force's area of responsibility extended as far as Selfridge Field in Michigan to the north and beyond the Mississippi River to the west. The Navy meanwhile retained the responsibility to defend the east coast of Florida from naval attack along the Atlantic seaboard. During WWII, Third Air Force Headquarters occupied the Army service area surrounding Tampa's Fort Homer W. Hesterly Armory.



Benjamin Field At Hesterly Armory

4. THE US ARMY AIR FORCES ESTABLISHED HILLSBOROUGH ARMY AIR FIELD IN TEMPLE TERRACE TO MEET EVER-INCREASING DEMANDS TO TRAIN MILITARY AVIATORS.

Although Hillsborough County initially had plans for this airfield to become Tampa's civilian airport, the Army Air Forces repurposed the airfield for P-51 Mustang fighter pilot training. Hillsborough county made use of the extensive bombing and gunnery ranges constructed in the area to support training operations at MacDill. After WWII, Hillsborough Army Air Field closed and later became home to to Busch Gardens and the University of South Florida.



Bases of Third Air Force

Third Air Force Personnel Depot Map

5. THE TAMPA BAY HOTEL THAT SERVED AS A STAGING GROUND FOR THE ROUGH RIDERS IN THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR BECAME THE SITE OF A VITAL PERSONNEL DEPOT FOR THIRD AIR FORCE AIRMEN.

The hotel, which became the University of Tampa before WWII, transitioned into a personnel processing center during the conflict. The personnel depot primarily functioned to accommodate Airmen transitioning between units. Third Air Force took full advantage of the extensive lawns Henry Plant created to construct barracks, parade grounds, and military processing facilities. After WWII, the personnel depot became part of the University of Tampa.



Tampa Bay Hotel



Plant Field US Army Post Card



Tampa License Plate

3. DREW FIELD, A CIVILIAN AIRFIELD IN NORTH TAMPA, GREW INTO A MAJOR ARMY AIRFIELD RIVALING THAT OF MACDILL DURING WWII.

Drew Field's runways were operational before the completion of MacDill's runways. To increase air capabilities quickly, the Army leased Drew Field for use as a military airfield. By 1941, the US Army Air Forces installed its first commander at Drew Field, Tampa native and 6th Group aviator, Colonel Melvin Asp. To connect the two airfields, the Army Corps of Engineers constructed Dale Mabry Highway. Drew Field continued to operate as a military airfield until 1946, training instructors, heavy bomber crews, dive bomber crews, fighter aircraft pilots, aircraft engine mechanics, air warning service personnel, radar operators, maintainers, and many others. After WWII, Drew Field became home to Tampa International Airport and Drew Park.



Drew Field Postcard



Drew Field Echoes Newspaper

6. MACDILL JOINED PLANT, DREW, AND HILLSBOROUGH ARMY AIR FIELDS TO HELP MAKE TAMPA "FLORIDA'S AIRBASE CITY."

As WWII continued, Third Air Force requirements exceeded MacDill's designed capacity. The demand for bombers in Europe led the III Bomber Command at MacDill to increase its training pipeline. Subsequently, bomber losses revealed an acute need for escort fighter aircraft. As the Air Force's mission in Europe continued to expand, so too did airfields around Tampa Bay. At Drew Field, the responsibility of the III Fighter Command grew in the same manner as the III Bomber Command. These included Army Air Fields at Pinellas, Bartow, Sarasota, Orlando, and Lakeland among others.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Army Air Corps engineered Dale Mabry Boulevard to connect MacDill Field and Drew Field.

THRUST INTO WORLD WAR II

1. IN DECEMBER 1941, MACDILL AIRMEN RESPONDED TO JAPAN'S ATTACK ON THE US MILITARY IN HAWAII.

MacDill's initial response to the attack on Pearl Harbor was chaotic due to the lack of information and plans. MacDill's aircraft flew daily submarine patrols, and the base was on "High Alert" for a week, with crews standing by their planes. As leaders came to understand the true state of events, they removed MacDill crews from alert posture and directed their activities to combat training and advanced reconnaissance. MacDill bombers patrolled the Atlantic coast, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Caribbean. Aircraft not assigned to search missions were fully fueled and loaded for action.



WWII Recruiting Poster

Early WWII Postcard

2. MACDILL ENTERED WWII IN COMBAT, FLYING DAILY ARMED RECONNAISSANCE MISSIONS IN THE HUNT FOR GERMAN SUBMARINES.

In the first eight months of WWII, Germany assaulted Allied shipping with great success, bringing the action of WWII within sight of Florida residents. In Operation DRUMBEAT, Germany disrupted a quarter of Allied shipping and port operations, destroying nearly 400 Allied freighters and tankers along the US Atlantic and Gulf coasts. MacDill Airmen were among thousands of military and civilian personnel involved in submarine hunting, reversing the German naval offensive in the summer of 1942. By the end of 1942, the US Navy with the support of US Army Air Forces amassed several victories against the German U-boat fleet, restoring Allied naval supremacy on the Atlantic frontier.

3. FROM DECEMBER 24, 1941, THROUGH FEBRUARY 22, 1942, MACDILL SERVED AS A RALLYING POINT FOR "PROJECT X," A FLYING FORCE ORGANIZED TO SAVE US FORCES EMBATTLED IN THE FAR-FLUNG PACIFIC THEATER.

Under a highly classified concept of operations, "Project X" crews sought to open an air bridge to beleaguered US forces trapped during the Japanese invasion of the Philippine Islands. Conceived in desperation, "Project X" drew a total of 662 aircrews and maintenance personnel as well as 63 B-17Es and 15 LB-30 aircraft from all four corners of the United States. Knowing their objective only as "Destination X", the commanders at MacDill briefed the aircrew only upon their arrival, planning their route, calibrating their equipment and conducting last-minute training for their round the world journey. Flights of less than ten aircraft were dispatched at a time. To ensure operational secrecy, the crews flew across a less contested route through the Southern Hemisphere, amassing an air armada south of the Philippine Islands.



B-26s fly over current day Hangar 2, c.1942

4. MINORITY SERVICEMEMBERS AT MACDILL ADVANCED THE WAR EFFORT.

Approximately 900,000 black men served in the Army during WWII. Most served in support units as engineers, quartermasters, vehicle operators, and other specialties. At MacDill, these units lived and worked in a nominally "separate but equal" area on the north side of the installation. The black Engineering Aviation Battalions advanced the front lines of Airpower by independently constructing and operating expeditionary airfields around the world. These battalions received an average of six months of training with heavy equipment and built roads and bridges before deploying overseas. While at MacDill, these units also maintained and operated much of the inner workings of the installation. Contributions of Black Americans during the war paved the way for inclusion and desegregation of the Armed Forces in 1949.



Airman Guarding Aircraft



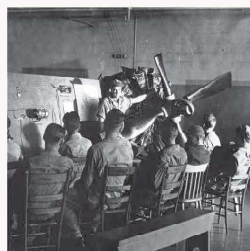
Engineering Aviation Battalion

5. IN 1943, THE WOMEN'S AIR CORPS AND ARMY NURSE CORPS CONTRIBUTED TO THE EFFORTS AT MACDILL.

World War II provided unprecedented opportunities for women to take jobs exclusively reserved for men, particularly in industry. Women's contributions at MacDill included operating the station Hospital, Photographic lab, Post Exchange and the Base Headquarters. Approximately 350,000 women served with distinction in the Armed Forces during WWII. Women served in the air as well, towing aircraft, aerial targets and serving as flight nurses, flying instructors, engineering test pilots, and ferry pilots.

6. BEYOND FLYING, TENS OF THOUSANDS OF SERVICEMEN TRAINED AT MACDILL FIELD FOR COMBAT SUPPORT OCCUPATIONS.

To build the US Army Air Forces into a superior force, MacDill instructors trained military and civilian personnel for a wide array of occupations. These specialties supported the more extensive war effort including homing pigeon operations, food preparation, firefighting, administration, and even writers and artists. MacDill Servicemen also operated a fleet of vessels to support aircraft operations and detained roughly 500 German Prisoners of War.



Maintenance Training at MacDill



WAC Recruiting Poster



First WACs arrive at MacDill 1943

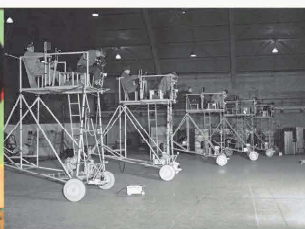
A HUB OF BOMBER TRAINING FOR EUROPE

1. BY MID-1942, THE US ARMY AIR FORCES TRANSITIONED MACDILL FROM A COMBAT RECONNAISSANCE MISSION, TO TRAINING B-17 FLYING FORTRESS BOMBER CREWS.

With the US Navy amassing victories over Nazi submarines, the US Army Air Forces rapidly began to focus their efforts on taking the battle to Nazi Europe. Training B-17 crews at MacDill was critical to executing the strategic bombing campaign in Europe. The first US Army Air Forces heavy bomber, the B-17, was exceptionally complex when compared to its predecessors. Airmen at MacDill gained invaluable experience maintaining and operating the aircraft. MacDill amassed an impressive safety record for the time period, suffering no fatal mishaps among its early B-17 crews.



Early MacDill Field Postcard Featuring B-17



MacDill Bombardier Training

2. ON JUNE 1, 1942, THE BASE TRANSITIONED FROM B-17 TO B-26 MARAUDER TRAINING.

Only three months after its first flight, the Army Air Forces ordered "off the shelf" B-26s with no prototype and then rushed them into production. The aircraft received mixed ratings while at MacDill, with pilots complaining about its excessive fighter like maneuverability and its limited landing capabilities due to its short wings and slow landing speeds. The public took note of the B-26's early mishap rate and adopted the mantra "One day in Tampa Bay". The US Army Air Forces made great strides to resolve the B-26's early issues, and by the end of the war, the Marauder had the best safety record of all Allied bombers. Nine of the twelve B-26 combat groups fighting in Europe trained at MacDill. For a little more than a year and a half, the primary mission of MacDill remained as a B-26 aircrew training base.



MacDill Field Welcome Guide



B-26 Aircrew 1942

3. THE MISSION AT MACDILL SHIFTED BACK TO B-17 HEAVY BOMBER TRAINING IN NOVEMBER 1943.

At the end of 1943, the skies over Tampa were filled once again with the sounds of the four-engine B-17 Flying Fortress. By this time the newer versions of the B-17, the B-17F, and B-17G, were available. MacDill's III Bomber Command was also responsible for organizing, training, and equipping all bombers and crews bound for Europe. A component of Third Air Force, it held jurisdiction over Army Air Fields as far west as Peterson Field, Colorado, and as far north as Selfridge Field, Michigan.



Maintainer Services B-17 At MacDill



B-26s Parked At MacDill Field c. 1943



View MacDill Field Out of B-17E Pilot's Window

DID YOU KNOW?

Anywhere from 50,000 to 120,000 soldiers trained a variety of occupations at MacDill during WWII in addition to bomber crew training.

4. DURING THIS PERIOD, MACDILL'S FLIGHT LINE ACCOMMODATED NOT ONLY AIRCRAFT ASSIGNED TO THE BASE, BUT ALSO TRANSIENT AIRCRAFT FROM LOCAL AND REGIONAL BASES.

From 1944-1945, even the most iconic B-17, The *Memphis Belle*, returned to service after combat in Europe to train crews at MacDill. MacDill's history and the legacy of the strategic bombing of Germany are inseparable. The training MacDill provided laid the foundation for a large number of bomber crews who fought for victory in Europe.



B-29 Taking Off at MacDill. c. 1945

5. IN JANUARY 1945, BASE PERSONNEL CONVERTED THE BASE FROM THE B-17 TO B-29 SUPERFORTRESS ULTRA-LONG-RANGE HEAVY BOMBER.

First flown in 1942, the B-29 was originally designed to reach Europe from the United States, as it was capable of flying 5,592 miles continuously. It featured a pressurized flight deck, integrated fire control systems and the most powerful engines ever designed. However, this transformative technology took four years to develop, and hostilities in Europe ended before its debut there. With the B-29 at their command, MacDill Airmen operated cutting edge aviation technology as WWII drew to a close.



MacDill B-29 Assigned to the 3rd AF 323rd, c. 1945



MacDill Newspaper Cover, 1945

A STRATEGIC AIR COMMAND BATTLEFRONT

1. ONCE ALLIES, THE UNITED STATES AND THE SOVIET UNION EMERGED FROM WWII AS SUPERPOWERS, MANEUVERING AGAINST EACH OTHER IN A COLD WAR THAT DOMINATED THE LATE 20TH CENTURY.

The USSR and the US vied for global influence and sought to chart the world's course as either communist or Democratic. With the Soviets developing nuclear weapons and fomenting communist insurrections around the world, the United States countered with a strategy of "containment". The US Army Air Forces separated from the US Army in September 1947, and MacDill Field was redesignated to MacDill Air Force Base. In 1948, it was operationally assigned to America's nuclear deterrent force, Strategic Air Command.



US Air Force Recruiting Poster



2. AMERICAN DEFENSE CAME TO RELY MAINLY ON NUCLEAR DETERRENCE, WHICH EXPANDED THE IMPORTANCE OF MACDILL, STRATEGIC AIR COMMAND, AND THE NEW US AIR FORCE.

With the strikes at Hiroshima and Nagasaki proving the ability of aircraft to end the war before it began, Airpower became the nation's first line of defense. After WWII, the Air Force's primary mission became protecting the US and its European allies with the threat of US nuclear retaliation. In the time before ballistic missile submarines and intercontinental ballistic missiles, MacDill was one of ten B-29 bases capable of delivering nuclear weapons. To enhance the reach of its heavy bombers into the Soviet Union, Strategic Air Command developed a new fleet of aerial refuelers. The KC-97, a transport aircraft heavily modified to perform air refueling, debuted at MacDill in 1951.



B-47 At MacDill AFB

KC-97 Tanker Assigned to MacDill AFB

3. DURING THE MID 20TH CENTURY, MACDILL BOMBER CREWS DEPLOYED BOTH TO SERVE AS A NUCLEAR DETERRENT FORCE IN GREAT BRITAIN AND TO FIGHT A CONVENTIONAL WAR IN KOREA.

In 1948, Soviet pressure created a crisis in Eastern Europe by closing the Iron Curtain and blockading West Germany. While other Air Force crews conducted the Berlin Airlift, MacDill crews provided strategic deterrence. The 307th Bomb Group deployed to stand nuclear alert at Royal Air Force (RAF) Marham and Royal Air Force (RAF) Waddington in England from July 1948 to May 1949. In 1950, the Korean War began, and bomber crews from the 307th Bomb Wing at MacDill were among the first to participate in Cold War combat missions in Korea. Soon the entire 307th Bomb Wing deployed to Okinawa, Japan, where it ultimately remained.



Air Division Commander Discusses Base Defense

Alert Force Scrambles into a B-47

4. DURING THE 1950s, MACDILL AIRMEN OPERATED TWO STRATEGIC AIR COMMAND BOMB WINGS AND ITS NEW B-47 STRATOJET BOMBER.

Organized under the 6th Air Division, the 305th and 306th Bomb Wings relocated to MacDill to prepare for the arrival of the B-47 in 1951. The state-of-the-art B-47 Stratojet was the first all-jet, swept-wing aircraft in the US inventory. General Curtis LeMay selected MacDill Air Force Base as the installation to debut the most critical weapon in the Air Force's strategic arsenal at the time. From 1953-1957, the 305th and 306th supported more than a half dozen B-47 REFLEX deployments across Western Europe, in England, and French Morocco. Though short lived by today's standards, for six years the B-47 remained Strategic Air Command's platform of choice for nuclear surety and provided a bridge between the B-29's retirement, and the arrival of the B-52 Stratofortress.

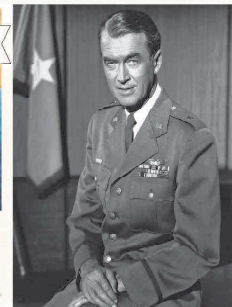


Base Newspaper Header c. 1950s

5. IN 1953, PARAMOUNT STUDIOS SELECTED MACDILL TO FILM THE MOTION PICTURE STRATEGIC AIR COMMAND.



Paramount Movie Poster



Brig Gen Jimmy Stewart

The movie, starring June Allyson and Jimmy Stewart—himself a real-world WWII combat veteran and Citizen Airman, featured gripping aerial footage of B-36s and B-47s. The movie exposed to ordinary Americans the life and death importance of the Air Force's strategic mission. In the motion picture, Jimmy Stewart was recalled to Active Duty and assigned as Vice Commander of one of the bomb wings at MacDill Air Force Base.

THE ORIGIN OF FLEXIBLE RESPONSE

1. THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE ANNOUNCED IN NOVEMBER 1960 THAT IT WOULD CLOSE MACDILL AIR FORCE BASE.

As President Eisenhower grew wary of ever-increasing defense spending, the Air Force reduced its inventory of legacy systems, and shifted its efforts to establish its new intercontinental missile force closer to targets in the Soviet Union. The US "massive retaliation" policy could now rely on Atlas, Titan, and Polaris intercontinental ballistic missiles to supplement manned bombers and provide nuclear deterrence against a Soviet "First Strike Attack". Fearing the Soviet's submarine-launched ballistic missiles, the 305th Bomb Wing and its B-47s left MacDill in June 1959 for the northern tier at Bunker Hill Air Force Base, leaving only the 306th Bomb Wing at MacDill in 1960. However, the Air Force ordered that the Wing to be reassigned to nearby McCoy AFB in Orlando without personnel or equipment. That left only the Sixth Air Division headquarters behind to close the base and depart MacDill by April 1961.



Berlin Wall

2. SECURITY THREATS IN EUROPE AND CUBA LED TO A REPRIEVE ON THE PLANNED CLOSURE OF MACDILL.

Following the rise of Communist leader Fidel Castro and his seizure of US assets in Cuba, the US severed its relations with the island nation in January 1961. MacDill AFB, sitting a mere 331 miles away from Cuba, now seemed worth keeping open. Without military options, the Central Intelligence Agency formulated a plan to organize train and equip Cuban-American exiles to infiltrate the island-nation and depose Castro. This plan, known as the "Bay of Pigs Invasion", ultimately failed. On the other side of the Atlantic, in April 1961 the Soviet Union attempted to blockade the free people of Berlin. As the Soviets constructed the Berlin Wall, President Kennedy recalled almost 150,000 reservists to active duty. According to Kennedy, the Bay of Pigs provided him only two options, "inglorious retreat or unlimited defeat".

3. FRUSTRATED BY A LACK OF TACTICAL OPTIONS TO RESPOND TO WORLD CRISES, IN SEPTEMBER 1961, PRESIDENT KENNEDY ESTABLISHED MACDILL'S FIRST UNIFIED COMMAND.

US Strike Command (USSTRICOM) was a unified command comprised of tactical/non-nuclear Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps units and an Army/Air Force Communications Support Element that later became the Joint Communications Support Element. USSTRICOM enabled a joint force to deliver a "Flexible Response" to crises arising in areas beyond existing

US theater commands by providing "Swift Tactical Response in Every Known Environment" (STRIKE).



4. MACDILL WAS KEY TO STOPPING THE FLOW OF SOVIET NUCLEAR MISSILES TO THE CARIBBEAN DURING THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS IN 1961.

During the crisis, the Air Force enhanced its US nuclear deterrence posture and provided tactical assets for selective air attack of Soviet airfields, air defense and missile sites in Cuba. From October 22, 1962, to November 2, 1962, MacDill hosted more than 200 aircraft and crews, including the soon to depart 306th Bomb Wing B-47 strategic bombers, RB-66, and RF-101 tactical reconnaissance aircraft, KB-50J refuelers, and F-100 and F-84F fighters. By October 24, 1962, the US Army's 8/15th Artillery joined the mix, establishing a MIM-23 Hawk Mobile Surface to Air Missile Batteries at MacDill, Patrick, and Homestead AFB to defend the airspace over South Florida. Airmen at MacDill processed photographs of targets in Cuba, enabling President Kennedy to view and assess the threat personally. The Soviets ultimately withdrew their missiles before nuclear war occurred.



Kennedy Briefed By Air Force Officials on Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962



President Kennedy Arrives At MacDill AFB, 1963

5. IN 1963, PRESIDENT KENNEDY VISITED THE NEW USSTRICOM HEADQUARTERS AT MACDILL – HIS FIRST VISIT WOULD BE HIS LAST.

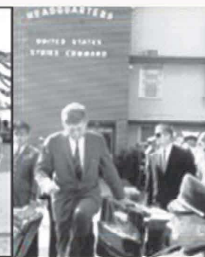
On November 18, President Kennedy's motorcade departed MacDill and drove along Grand Central Boulevard to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the first commercial airline flight. President Kennedy also solicited the Tampa Chamber of Commerce for their support to his embargo of Cuba. The President's visit demonstrated to the nation Tampa's new identity as a nerve center for military operations and commerce. The Chamber later renamed Grand Central Boulevard "Kennedy Boulevard" in honor of the President after his assassination on November 22, 1963—only four days after his visit to Tampa.



Base Newspaper Announces Visit



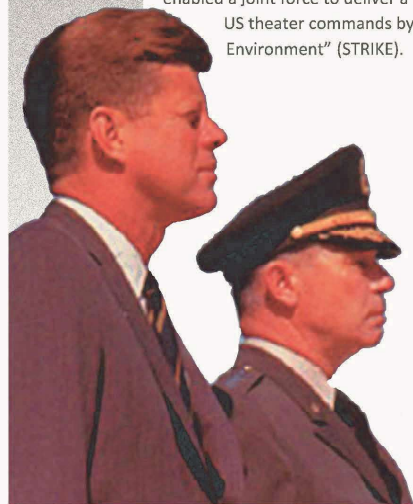
Kennedy's Motorcade Grand Central Blvd in Tampa



Kennedy at US Strike Command

6. USSTRICOM AND ITS SUCCESSOR, US READINESS COMMAND (USREDCOM), SERVED AS AN EARLY TEST OF JOINT OPERATIONS AND THE GENESIS OF OTHER COMMANDS THAT FOLLOWED AT MACDILL.

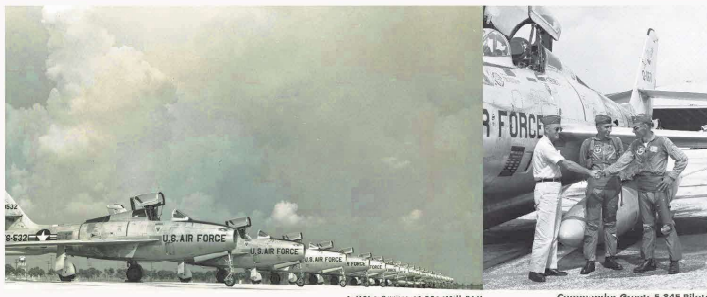
As a non-nuclear crisis response force, USSTRICOM spent peacetime as a tactical reserve force responsible for conducting operations in areas of the world not assigned to an existing theater command. USSTRICOM briefly gained the responsibility to conduct operations in the Middle East and Africa. In 1972, USSIRICOM lost all direct operational command responsibility and gained a new designation: US Readiness Command. The chaotic events of 1980, which included the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the failed Iran hostage rescue mission resulted in the creation of a new Middle East focused arm of USREDCOM: the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF). By 1983, RDJTF became US Central Command (USCENTCOM). In 1987, USREDCOM inactivated, and US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) took control of its personnel and facilities.



A TACTICAL AIR COMMAND TRAINING BASE

1. IN 1962, MACDILL AIR FORCE BASE CONVERTED FROM BOMBERS TO FIGHTERS.

Although Air Force missiles and bombers reigned supreme in Strategic Air Command, smaller aircraft took an increasingly central role in Air Force operations. As the Cold War developed into limited proxy wars around the world, the Air Force identified a need for aircraft capable of specialized roles such as armed escort, tactical reconnaissance, electronic warfare, ground attack, and air superiority. As MacDill's bombers transitioned to other bases at the beginning of the 1960s, the 836th Air Division, as well as the 12th and the 15th Tactical Fighter Wings arrived at MacDill with F-84Fs Thunderstreaks reclaimed from the Air National Guard.



F-84Fs Arrive at MacDill AFB

Commander Greets F-84F Pilots

2. IN 1964, THE F-4C PHANTOM II REPLACED THE F-84F AT MACDILL.

Since the F-84F fighter's debut in the early 1950s, the Air Force searched for a fighter-bomber aircraft to replace it. In 1963, the Air Force finally succeeded in fielding a pair of fully combat-capable aircraft, the F-105F Thunderchief and the F-4C Phantom II. Less than one year after the arrival of the F-84F, MacDill became the only Air Force base to be fully equipped with the Phantom II. Combat losses for the F-105 Thunderchief in Vietnam ultimately forced the Air Force to remove it from service and fully invest itself into the F-4 program as its frontline fighter-bomber. Capable of carrying twice the payload of a B-17 bomber, the Air Force's Phantom II fleet doubled that of the Navy's. By March of 1964, MacDill became the first base in the Air Force to have two operationally ready F-4C Wings.



F-4C Arrives at MacDill, 1963

F-4 at MacDill, 1963

3. IN 1965, THE US FIRST COMMITTED COMBAT TROOPS TO SOUTHEAST ASIA TO CONTAIN COMMUNISM AND AIR FORCE UNITS FROM MACDILL WERE AMONG THE FIRST TO RESPOND.

Strategic Air Command conducted its first bombing operations in March, and by June, MacDill's entire 45th Tactical Fighter Squadron was the first F-4 unit in Vietnam. During that deployment, MacDill F-4 crews scored the first US aerial victories, shooting down two MiG-17s. Instead of continuing full unit deployments, Tactical Air Command shifted permanently to replacing individual crews and aircraft combat crews lost in Vietnam, a process called combat crew replacement. In 1968, the 15th Tactical Fighter Wing also brought the B-57G Canberra to MacDill to train crews for service in Southeast Asia. At that time, MacDill's "Search and Rescue" mission transitioned from shipborne to airborne with the introduction of H-43B Huskie and UH-1P Huey helicopters.



F-4 Parked Apron, 1963

836th Air Division Ceremony, 1968

F-4Es at MacDill, 1973

4. IN 1969, THE 1ST TACTICAL FIGHTER WING ARRIVED AT MACDILL TO REPLACE THE 12TH AND 15TH TACTICAL FIGHTER WINGS.

The 1st Tactical Fighter Wing transitioned from an air defense mission to a deployable tactical fighter wing, upgrading from F-106s to F-4s and assuming the operational commitments of the outgoing 15th Tactical Fighter Wing. To celebrate the wing's arrival, MacDill hosted former 1st Pursuit Group flyer WWI "Ace of Aces" and Medal of Honor recipient Eddie Rickenbacker as a guest of honor. The following year, the US had decreased its involvement in Southeast Asia enough to transition the 1st Tactical Fighter Wing from service with Aerospace Defense Command to steady state training F-4E pilots for use across the Air Force. The unit transitioned from the 836th Air Division to Ninth Air Force. Just three years later, the Air Force selected the 1st Tactical Fighter Wing for an upgrade to the F-15 Eagle and sent it to Langley AFB, Virginia.



Eddie Rickenbacker Visits MacDill, 1969

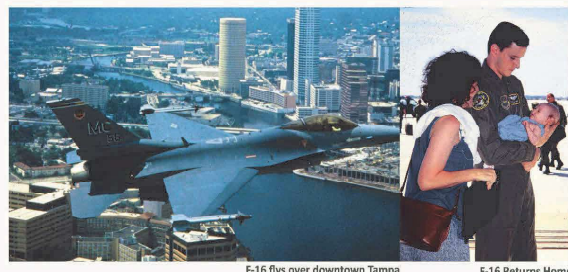
5. IN 1975, THE 56TH TACTICAL FIGHTER WING REPLACED THE 1ST TACTICAL FIGHTER WING, OVERSEEING A LENGTHY PERIOD OF BASE HISTORY AND ITS TRANSITION TO THE F-16 FIGHTING FALCON.

With the arrival of the 56th Tactical Fighter Wing, MacDill's Phantoms exchanged their "First Fighter" (FF) tall codes for the (MC) tall code. The command also ordered the F-4Es replaced with F-4Ds. Approximately seventy-five 56th Tactical Fighter Wing F-4Ds occupied MacDill's hangars and parking aprons. In 1979, the 56th upgraded from the F-4 to the F-16 Fighting Falcon. Although the training mission of ground and aircrew continued throughout this time, it was not until October 1981 that Tactical Air Command redesignated the 56th Tactical Fighter Wing as the 56th Tactical Training Wing. The new F-16 wing took on the task of training a new generation of American pilots who had never seen combat.



6. IN 1990, MACDILL'S AIRMEN PARTICIPATED IN THE GULF WAR.

In Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM, Air Force F-16 crews joined the defense of Saudi Arabia and liberation of Kuwait from an invasion by Iraq's dictator, Saddam Hussein. Although many expected months of arduous and dangerous combat, the air war lasted just two weeks. In that time, Air Force F-16 pilots (half of which trained at MacDill) amassed an impressive combat record, flying 13,000 strike sorties, the most of any coalition aircraft.



F-16 flies over downtown Tampa

F-16 Returns Home

A HUB OF AIR MOBILITY

1. IN 1991, A CONGRESSIONAL COMMISSION ORDERED THE FLYING MISSION AT MACDILL TO COME TO AN END.

With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the Cold War came to a close. Without the need for a significant deterrent force, Americans desired a smaller military. Congress' Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) ordered the 106 F-16s assigned to the 56th Fighter Wing transferred to Luke AFB, Arizona. The action would leave no aircraft and no flying mission at MacDill for the first time in half a century.

2. WITH THE REDEPLOYMENT OF FORCES AT THE END OF OPERATION DESERT STORM, THE F-16S OF THE 56TH FIGHTER WING COMPLETED THEIR PLANNED TRANSFER TO LUKE AFB.

Despite its strategic value and billions of dollars in infrastructure, the Department of Defense expected the closure of MacDill's airfield and the Joint Communications Support Element would achieve substantial savings. Military leaders accepted, however, that the billion-dollar replacement cost of moving US Central Command and US Special Operations Command, meant the base could not close completely. Soon a new Air Force wing would arrive to operate MacDill as an administrative support base for the combatant commands and remaining tenants.



St Pete Times Announces Closure of MacDill, 1991

3. IN 1992, OPERATION UPHOLD DEMOCRACY REMINDED LEADERS OF THE STRATEGIC VALUE OF MACDILL'S LOCATION AND OUTSTANDING FLYING FACILITIES.

More than 100 USAF C-130 Hercules tactical airlift airmen deployed to MacDill to prevent a coup from deposing the elected government of Haiti. The operation demonstrated the continued importance of MacDill and the strategic value of its geographic location. In much the same way that MacDill served a vital role in the Cuban Missile Crisis, Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY saved MacDill from closure. The Air Force ordered MacDill's airfield to be retained but still did not assign it any aircraft.



C-130s Deployed to MacDill For UPHOLD DEMOCRACY, 1991



C-130s Deployed to MacDill For UPHOLD DEMOCRACY, 1991

4. IN 1993, THE NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION (NOAA) RELOCATED ITS AIR OPERATIONS CENTER TO MACDILL, PARTIALLY REACTIVATING THE FLIGHT LINE.

With the apron empty at MacDill, NOAA received permission to lease a hangar and make use of the vacant airfield. The NOAA Corps aircrew conducted atmospheric research for the nation, protecting US life and property on taskings such as flying hurricane reconnaissance missions. The NOAA Air Operations Center operated at MacDill for 14 years until its relocation in 2017.



Hurricane Hunter Outside Hangar 5 c. 1990s



Ceremony for KC-135 Activation at MacDill, 1996

5. IN 1996, KC-135 STRATOTANKERS TRANSFERRED TO MACDILL AND ESTABLISHED AN AIR REFUELING MISSION FOR THE BASE.

After the inactivation of Strategic Air Command, Air Mobility Command became the higher headquarters for tankers. Air Mobility Command seized the opportunity to clear a tanker shortfall in the southeast United States by basing the first of two planned squadrons of KC-135 tankers at MacDill. Strategic air mobility, generated by these air refueling assets, enabled US Airpower to deploy to conflict zones around the world at a moment's notice and sustain air operations in theaters across the globe. In 2017, the second squadron of KC-135s activated at MacDill.



6 ABW Commander Col Charles Ohinger Displays New Wing Flag



KC-135 Receives MacDill Tailflash c. 1996

6. WITH ITS STRATEGIC LOCATION, OPERATIONAL CAPABILITIES, AND COLOCATION WITH TWO COMBATANT COMMANDS, MACDILL AIRMEN EXCELLED AT AIRLIFT.

In the late 1990s, US Central Command possessed one EC-135 Airborne Command and Control aircraft operated and maintained by the host Air Refueling Wing. In 2000, the 310th Airlift Squadron reactivated with CT-43 aircraft before upgrading to C-37s in 2003. The C-37 Gulfstream aircraft operated as part of the host wing until 2019, returning occasionally to the base in support of US Special Operations Command, US Central Command, US Southern Command, as well as other national leaders.



EC-135 Assigned to USCENTCOM at MacDill c. 2000



C-37 Gulfstream Assigned to 310 Airlift Squadron c. 2010

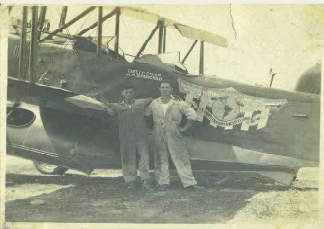
THE HOME OF THE 6TH WING

1. THE 6TH COMPOSITE GROUP TRACES ITS ROOTS TO 1919 WHEN THE US ARMY AIR SERVICE ORGANIZED IT TO DEFEND THE PANAMA CANAL.

Initially named the 3rd Observation Group, the unit was redesignated the 6th Composite Group in 1922. The Sixth served as the US Army Air Service's arm for America's most important overseas mission at the time: the air defense of the vitally important asset, the Panama Canal. Airmen from the Sixth flew patrol missions on a wide variety of early military aircraft, conducted maneuvers, supported goodwill flights, and Charles Lindbergh's flight in Central and South America. The unit became the 6th Bombardment Group in 1937 and continued to serve in the Canal Zone during the Battle of Pearl Harbor until October 1943.



Depiction of France Field, Panama, Home of the 6th Composite Group



PVT Jesse C. Snyder, a Maintainer with the 6th Group, 1928

2. IN 1944 THE 6TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP REACTIVATED TO SUPPORT THE AIR OFFENSIVE AGAINST JAPAN.

As part of the 20th Air Force, the Group's B-29 Stratofortresses relocated to North Field on the small island of Tinian to strike major targets in Japan. The Group received two Distinguished Unit Citations for their service in the bombing campaign. That campaign ultimately brought an end to WWII when B-29s carrying the 6's "Circle R" tail marking struck arsenals in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.



B-29 Loader



B-29s Bombing Japan



6th Bombardment Group B-29 Crew

3. IN THE EARLY 1950s, THE KOREAN CONFLICT AND THE COLD WAR RESURRECTED THE NEED FOR STRATEGIC BOMBERS.

Out of the 6th Bombardment Group, the Air Force created a new echelon, the 6th Bombardment Wing, which reactivated at Walker AFB, New Mexico in 1951. From the nation's southwestern tier, the Wing flew massive B-36 Peacemakers and, later, iconic B-52 Stratofortresses. As the Soviet missile threat increased during the Cold War, so too did the 6th Bombardment Wing's mission. From 1962 to 1965, the 6th Bombardment Wing gained Atlas intercontinental ballistic missiles, and became the 6th Strategic Aerospace Wing. However, in 1967, Walker AFB closed and the 6th Strategic Aerospace Wing found a new home.



6th Bombardment Wing B-52s Over New Mexico

4. THE WING MOVED WITHOUT PERSONNEL OR EQUIPMENT TO EIELSON AIR FORCE BASE AND BECAME SAC'S ALASKA BASE OF OPERATIONS, THE 6TH STRATEGIC WING.

Known after that as the 6th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing, the unit flew reconnaissance missions with the state-of-the-art RC-135 aircraft until 1988. The Wing also directed aerial refueling assignments of the Alaskan Tanker Task Force and supported numerous Air Force and Navy exercises for the Alaskan Air Command. In addition, the Wing maintained a detachment at Shemya Air Force Station in the Aleutian Islands, operating the US airfield in closest proximity to the Soviet Union.



6th Strategic Wing RC-135 At Eielson AFB

DID YOU KNOW?

The 6th Wing is one of the oldest units in the Air Force, having celebrated its centennial in 2019.

5. THE 6TH STRATEGIC RECONNAISSANCE WING BECAME THE 6TH AIR BASE WING, FINDING A HOME AT MACDILL AIR FORCE BASE IN 1994.

The departure of the 56th Fighter Wing's F-16s in the early 1990s left MacDill's flight line vacant for the first time in its history. Reactivated as an Air Base Wing, the 6th assumed management of the combatant command support mission on behalf of the Air Force. By September 1994, the operational tempo at the base increased dramatically with support to Operation RESTORE DEMOCRACY in Haiti, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Air Operations Center. In 1996, the 43d Air Refueling Group transferred from Malmstrom AFB to MacDill AFB and inactivated. The KC-135 Stratotanker aircraft and crews returned the flying mission to MacDill resulting in the redesignation of the 6th Air Base Wing to the 6th Air Refueling Wing.



KC-135 Elephant Walk at MacDill AFB 2012



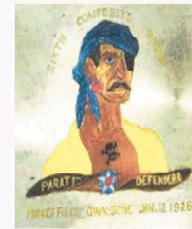
KC-135 Flying Over Sunshine Skyway Bridge

6. THE WING'S EMBLEM CHANGED LITTLE SINCE ITS ORIGIN IN THE PANAMA CANAL ZONE.

The emblem featured four elements: 1) the Group's first aircraft, 2) a full masted sailing ship, 3) the new passage thru the Panama Canal, and 4) the bust of a pirate. The sailing ship, water, and shoreline represented the Wing's past operations in the Caribbean theater. The falling star represented its WWII B-29 bombardment heritage. The Curtiss Model R-4 aircraft had one wing painted black, harkening back to its time flying reconnaissance missions in RC-135s in Alaska. Its motto remained unchanged since 1924: PARATI DEFENDERE--Ready to Defend.



Original Emblem 1924



Emblem on Spirit of St. Louis



Modern Emblem

THE HOME OF CENTRAL COMMAND



ORIGINS & ESTABLISHMENT

After WWII, the United States addressed its strategic interests in the Middle East by working through regional partners, at first with the United Kingdom, and then with Saudi Arabia and Iran. This arrangement collapsed when an anti-American government replaced the Shah during the 1979 Iranian Revolution. On March 1, 1980, President Carter established the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force at MacDill Air Force Base as a result of the Iranian Revolution.



More than 60 countries have participated in CENTCOM operations and security co-operation efforts



The Combined Task Force 150 was a coalition naval force charged with patrolling the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean.



In February 1945, President Roosevelt met with King Ibn Saud on the USS Quincy to discuss military and economic cooperation between the U.S. and Saudi Arabian.



Starting in 1949, the USS Valcour (pictured here) served as the flagship for the Middle East Force



In response to the Lebanese Crisis of 1958, U.S. Marines were deployed in support of the Lebanese national government



Between November 4, 1979, to January 20, 1981, 52 American diplomats, military personnel and citizens were held hostage by the government that came to power in the 1979 Iranian Revolution.



Since 1983 CENTCOM naval personnel have worked with Coalition partners to counter terrorism, stop piracy, and protect the free flow of commerce.



In 1987 and 1988, Operation EARNEST WILL protected Kuwaiti oil tankers from Iranian attacks.

1940s

1950s

1970s

1980s

THE COALITION

WORKING WITH PARTNERS HAS BEEN A HALLMARK OF US CENTRAL COMMAND OPERATIONS SINCE THE LIBERATION OF KUWAIT, KNOWN AS OPERATION DESERT STORM, IN 1990.

In 2001, the Coalition Coordination Center or "Coalition Village", was established to coordinate activities with coalition partners. Over the years more than sixty countries have maintained liaison offices in the Coalition Village, supporting diverse missions in the region.

OPERATIONS

US CENTRAL COMMAND IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ONE OF THE MOST VOLATILE AREAS IN THE WORLD, AND AS A RESULT, THE COMMAND HAS CONDUCTED ACTIVE OPERATIONS FOR MOST OF ITS EXISTENCE.

The first major operation, EARNEST WILL, which involved escorting oil tankers to protect them from Iranian attacks, began in 1988. Since then USCENTCOM has conducted operations in every part of the area of responsibility to deter and counter aggression, provide humanitarian relief, and to counter terrorism.



After the 1990 invasion of Kuwait, USCENTCOM, lead by General Schwarzkopf, conducted Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM. In a ground campaign that lasted just 100 hours, coalition forces liberated the Kuwaiti people from Saddam Hussein's regime.



In 1992, a coalition was formed to support Operation RESTORE HOPE's humanitarian mission in Somalia. This rendering shows Australian Soldiers providing security while humanitarian organizations deliver food to a Somali community.



Coalition Air Forces participated in Operation SOUTHERN WATCH to enforce the no-fly zone in Iraq. Pictured above is a British Royal Air Force Tornado GR1 preparing for take-off.



From 1992 to 2003, Operation SOUTHERN WATCH enforced a "no-fly" zone over Southern Iraq when Iraq refused to comply with United Nations Security Council Resolution 688.



Immediately following the attacks of September 11th, 2001, Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) was launched against Al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan. Special Operations troops partnered with the Afghan Northern Alliance to overthrow the Taliban in December of 2001. Riding with their Afghan partners, they were dubbed "The Horse Soldiers."



In March 2003, USCENTCOM led Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF) to overthrow Saddam Hussein's regime.

1990s

2000s

THE HOME OF SPECIAL OPERATIONS



ORIGINS & ESTABLISHMENT

US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) traces its origins to a failed mission: Operation EAGLE CLAW, the April 1980 attempt to rescue 52 American Embassy personnel being held hostage in Tehran, Iran. The mission ended in disaster when a helicopter collided with a refueling plane in the swirling sand and darkness of the Desert One staging base. Eight Servicemen died. The US Congress established the Holloway Commission to investigate the tragedy, and among its recommendations, was the establishment of a joint Special Operations command. Later, the Nunn-Cohen Amendment to the 1987 Defense Authorization Act called for a unified combatant command headed by a four-star general for all special operations forces. The command which became USSOCOM was officially activated on 16 April 1987.

MISSION

US Special Operations Command synchronizes the planning of special operations and provides Special Operations forces to support persistent, networked, and distributed global combatant command operations to protect and advance our Nation's interests. That includes the following missions:

- Civil Affairs
- Counterinsurgency
- Counterterrorism
- Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction
- Direct Action
- Foreign Humanitarian Assistance
- Foreign Internal Defense
- Hostage Rescue and Recovery
- Military Information Support Operations
- Preparation of the Environment
- Security Force Assistance
- Special Reconnaissance
- Unconventional Warfare



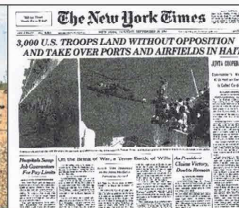
Burned wreckage of an MC-130 at Desert One during Operation EAGLE CLAW.



U.S. Special Forces soldier trains El Salvadorian military.



Iraqi counter-terrorism troops celebrate with a captured ISIS flag during Operation INHERENT RESOLVE.



New York Times Front Page in result of Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY



U.S. Navy SEALs helped rescue merchant captain Richard Phillips after his ship, the Maersk Alabama, was seized by Somali pirates in 2009.

1980s

Some of USSOCOM's earliest missions were training the El Salvadoran military to fight a Communist insurgency and protect commercial shipping in the Persian Gulf during Operation FARNEST WILL. The first successful integration of special operations forces and conventional forces occurred during Operation JUST CAUSE. The mission served to capture Panamanian strongman Manuel Noriega and restore democracy to that country.



Drug Enforcement agents arrest Panamanian strongman Manuel Noriega.



MH-60 helicopter lands on floating resupply point during Operation Earnest Will in the Persian Gulf.



U.S. Special Forces soldier trains a Saudi soldier during Operation DESERT SHIELD.

1990s

USSOCOM was heavily involved in Operations DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM in missions such as training foreign militaries and hunting Saddam Hussein's SCUD missiles in the western deserts of Iraq. Task Force Ranger was part of the larger Operation RESTORE HOPE in Somalia where the "Black Hawk Down" mission occurred. Special operations forces played a role in Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY in Haiti and in peacekeeping operations in the Balkans as well as many other humanitarian and peacekeeping missions around the world.



USAF Pararescueman MSgt Scott Fales, who was awarded the Silver Star for his actions in Mogadishu, with MH-60 Black Hawk designated Super 68 in Somalia.



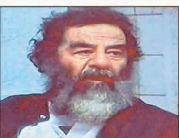
The Unconventional Warfare campaign in Afghanistan in 2001 found Special Forces soldiers riding on horseback with their Afghan allies.

2000s

The new century was not even a year old when USSOCOM was thrust into major actions such as Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM. Train and Assist missions such as Operation FREEDOM'S SENTINEL in Afghanistan and the counter-ISIS fight, Operation INHERENT RESOLVE in Iraq followed. In addition, special operations forces have engaged in high-profile hostage-rescue missions and numerous counterinsurgency, civil affairs, foreign internal defense, and humanitarian operations.



U.S. Special Forces soldier coordinates with Russian counterparts during operations in the Balkans in the early 1990s.



Saddam Hussein in custody after Operation IRAQI FREEDOM.