

HISTORY OF COLUMBUS AIR FORCE BASE

Throughout its history, Columbus Air Force Base has played a major role in the challenges that our nation and the Air Force have faced. The base has enhanced the cause of democracy by training pilots for World War II, the Korean War, Vietnam, and the Gulf War.

The installation's history began on 26 June 1941 when the War Department approved an Army Air Field for the Columbus, Mississippi area. Behind this approval were months of concerted efforts by the local citizens. On the afternoon of 14 February 1941, 100 of the area's leading citizens banded together at the Gilmer Hotel to organize an association to secure defense industries.

The citizens' efforts paid off when the War Department announced that a pilot training base would be established in Columbus. On 12 August 1941, Columbus officials leased the tract of land to the United States for one dollar per year.

The base began as a training facility for fighters and bombers. Planned as a twin-engine advanced flying school, the new air base came under the control of the Southeastern Air Corps Training Center at Maxwell Field, Alabama. The Mion Company began construction on 12 September 1941. On 13 January 1942, 100 enlisted men arrived to form the first skeleton organizations on the base.

No one designated or suggested a name for the new base until 22 January 1942. On that date, the War Department announced the installation would be named Kaye Field, in honor of Captain Sam Kaye, a World War I flying ace from Columbus. That designation went into effect on 24 February. However, the name issue soon became one of confusion because another nearby base-Key Field in Meridian, Mississippi--had a similar sounding name. To correct the problem, the War Department changed the base's name to Columbus Army Flying School in March 1942.

The Columbus flying school received its first aircraft--nine Lockheed AT-10s and twenty-one

AT-8s--in early 1942. Barksdale Field, Louisiana, provided the first students. Twenty-five cadets arrived at Columbus in February 1942. They had already completed a considerable part of their training when the Air Corps moved them. The cadets entered training at Columbus on 9 February 1942 and graduated on 6 March 1942.

During World War II, the training load gradually increased until Columbus was graduating 195 pilots per month. A total of 7,766 students came to Columbus for pilot training during the war. Of these, 7,412 graduated and received their silver wings and commissions.

The school used a number of trainers, including the AT-8, AT-9, AT-10, and B-25. For administrative travel, Columbus used the AT-6 and BC-1A.

When the war ended in 1945, the base strength had reached a peak of 2,300 enlisted men, 300 officers, and an average of 250 pilot cadets per class. The end of hostilities significantly slowed training activities, so in 1946 the War Department directed the inactivation of the base.

Columbus was void of activity for four years until communist troops violated South Korea's borders and fighting broke out in 1950. To handle increased pilot requirements for the Korean War, Air Training Command activated Columbus AFB on 20 December to be used as a station for a contract flying school. The contractor who provided pilot training was California Eastern Airways. That training continued until 1954, when ATC directed that mission be moved by early 1955 to Moore Air Base, Texas.

On 1 April 1955, HQ USAF transferred Columbus AFB from ATC control to Strategic Air Command (SAC) and Second Air Force. The base began an active building program to support its new mission, to be part of SAC's base dispersal system. The city deeded an additional 3,000 acres to the base so that a northwest-southeast runway could be built, along with a 480-unit housing project. It was not until December 1957, however, that officials at HQ

SAC announced the base would become the home of a B-52 squadron and a KC-135 jet refueling tanker squadron. To manage these units, on 1 July 1958, Strategic Air Command activated the 4228th Strategic Wing.

The first Stratotanker, piloted by the wing commander, landed on the new runway on 7 January 1959. Then on 28 May, the first B-52 arrived. In February 1963, SAC inactivated the 4228th Strategic Wing and activated the 454th Bombardment Wing, Heavy, in its place. The 454th conducted air refueling operations and trained in bombardment operations. Beginning in the summer of 1965, the wing's headquarters staff, tactical aircraft and crews, and maintenance personnel became a part of SAC combat forces in the Pacific and Southeast Asia. During their involvement in the Vietnam War, the 454th Combat Support Group operated Columbus AFB.

On 1 July 1969, after 14 years as a SAC base, HQ USAF transferred Columbus back to Air Training Command and to its original mission of training pilots. In preparation for the transfer, ATC had activated the 3650th Pilot Training Wing at Columbus on 15 February. The first undergraduate pilot training class, 71-01, entered training on 17 July.

Three years later, on 1 June 1972, ATC discontinued the 3650th and activated the 14th Flying Training Wing in its place. The 14th continues today as the host organization at Columbus and trains the world's best pilots.



1950s Front Gate

14TH WING LINEAGE

29 Jul 47 Established as 14th Fighter Wing, a temporary wing
 15 Aug 47 Organized
 26 Jul 48 Discontinued the temporary wing
 26 Jul 48 Activated 14th Fighter Wing as a permanent wing
 2 Oct 49 Inactivated
 28 Feb 66 Redesignated the 14th Air Commando Wing and activated
 8 Mar 66 Organized
 1 Aug 68 Redesignated as 14th Special Operations Wing
 30 Sep 71 Inactivated
 22 Mar 72 Redesignated the 14th Flying Training Wing
 1 Jun 72 Activated 14 FTW

WING COMMANDERS

Col William A. Boutwell	1 Jun 72
Col Robert B. Tanguy	9 Jun 72
Col James S. Creedon	17 Jul 73
Col Horace W. Miller	8 Mar 76
Col Winfield S. Harpe	10 Jul 78
Col Richard A. Pierson	4 Jun 80
Col Alexander Zakrzewski, Jr	4 Jun 81
Col Chester W. Griffin, Jr	5 Nov 82
Col James P. Ulm	8 Aug 84
Col Charles R. Edwards	8 Jan 87
Col James L. Higham	6 Jan 89
Col Nick P. Ardillo, Jr	12 Sep 91
Col Robert H. Foglesong	5 Apr 93
Col Garry R. Trexler	8 Dec 93
Col Michael G. Lee	18 Aug 95
Col John J. Catton, Jr	21 Jun 97
Col Teresa M. Peterson	10 Jul 98
Col Thomas J. Quelly	19 Jun 00
Col Stephen D. Schmidt	9 Aug 02
Col Stephen W. Wilson	24 Mar 04
Col David K. Gerber	9 Jun 06
Col Roger H. Watkins	25 Jun 08
Col Barre R. Seguin	28 Jul 10
Col James R. Sears, Jr	27 Jun 12
Col John J. Nichols	11 Jul 14

AIRCRAFT FLOWN AT COLUMBUS

AT-6	AT-8	AT-9
AT-10	A-29	B-25
PA-18	T-34	B-52
KC-135	T-37	T-38A/C
AT-38	T-1A	T-6A



AT-10



B-52



T-6A Texan II

A BRIEF HISTORY OF COLUMBUS AFB



For additional information, please contact the Wing Historian at (662) 434-7098.