

## 351 MISSILE WING



### MISSION

#### LINEAGE

351 Bombardment Group (Heavy) established, 25 Sep 1942  
Activated, 1 Oct 1942  
Redesignated 351 Bombardment Group, Heavy, 11 Aug 1944  
Inactivated, 28 Aug 1945  
Redesignated 351 Bombardment Group, Very Heavy, 11 Mar 1947  
Activated in the Reserve, 9 Apr 1947  
Inactivated, 27 Jun 1949

351 Strategic Missile Wing (ICBM-Minuteman) established, and activated, 9 Aug 1962  
Organized, 1 Feb 1963

351 Bombardment Group, Very Heavy and 351 Strategic Missile Wing (ICBM-Minuteman)  
Consolidated, 31 Jan 1984. Consolidated organization designated 351 Strategic Missile Wing  
(ICBM-Minuteman)

Redesignated 351 Missile Wing, 1 Sep 1991  
Inactivated, 31 Jul 1995

#### STATIONS

Salt Lake City AAFld, UT, 1 Oct 1942  
Geiger Field, WA, Nov-28 Dec 1942  
Biggs Field, TX, 2 Jan-27 Feb 1943  
Pueblo AAB, CO, 1 Mar-Apr 1943  
Polebrook, England, 17 Apr 1943-9 Jun 1945

Sioux Falls AAFld, SD, Jul-28 Aug 1945  
Scott Field (later, AFB), IL, 9 Apr 1947-27 Jun 1949  
Whiteman AFB, MO, 1 Feb 1963

### **ASSIGNMENTS**

II Bomber Command, 1 Oct 1942-Apr 1943  
1 Bombardment Wing (later, 1st Combat Bombardment Wing [Heavy]), 17 Apr 1943  
92 Combat Bombardment Wing (Heavy), 1 Nov 1943  
94 Combat Bombardment Wing (Heavy) (later, 94 Combat Bombardment Wing, Heavy; 94 Bombardment Wing, Heavy), 15 Dec 1943-10 Jun 1945  
Second Air Force, 30 Jun-28 Aug 1945  
Second Air Force, 9 Apr 1947  
73 Bombardment Wing, Very Heavy (later, 73 Air Division, Bombardment), 17 Oct 1947  
96 Air Division, Bombardment, 4 Jun 1948-27 Jun 1949  
Strategic Air Command, 9 Aug 1962  
17 Strategic Aerospace (later, 17 Strategic Missile 17 Strategic Aerospace) Division, 1 Feb 1963  
4 Strategic Missile (later, 4 Air) Division, 30 Jun 1971  
40 Air Division, 1 Jul 1973  
19 Air Division, 1 Dec 1982  
Eighth Air Force, 13 Jun 1988  
100 Air Division, 1 Jul 1990  
Eighth Air Force, 26 Jul 1991  
Twentieth Air Force, 1 Sep 1991-31 1995

### **WEAPON SYSTEMS**

B-17, 1942-1945  
AT-6, 1947-1949  
AT-11, 1947-1949  
Minuteman 1, 1964-1967  
Minuteman II, 1966

### **COMMANDERS**

None (not manned), 1 Oct-Nov 1942  
Col William A. Hatcher, Jr., Nov 1942  
Col Eugene A. Homig, 1 Jan 1944  
Col Robert W. Burns, 2 Sep 1944 (temporary), 12 Oct 1944 (permanent)  
Col Merlin I. Carter, 29 Mar-Aug 1945  
Col James H. Howard, Apr 1947-unkn  
Col Billy G. Dilworth, (by Jul) 1948-unkn  
None (not manned), 9 Aug 1962-31 Jan 1963  
Col Harold D. Courtney, 1 Feb 1963  
Col George T. Chadwell, 14 Dec 1963  
Col James C. Adkins, 4 Oct 1966

Col George R. Brendle, 10 Oct 1966  
Col William J. Grossmiller III, 30 Sep 1971  
Col Charles W. Parker, 1 Jun 1973  
Col William M. Kottas, 25 Jul 1974  
Col Clifford D. Cork, 27 May 1976  
Col Ralph E. Spraker, 12 Jun 1978  
Col Norman E. Miner, Jr., 5 Jun 1980  
Col Roger C. Smith, 15 Jun 1982  
Col Michael T. Graydon, 19 Jan 1984  
Col Robert B. Smith, 13 Aug 1986  
Col Thomas E. Kuenning, Jr., 22 Jun 1988  
Col Michael J. Roggero, 1 Jul 1990  
Col John J. Politi, 26 Jul 1991  
Col Joseph E. Sutter, 28 May 1992  
Col G. D. Blackmore, 2 Jun 1994

## **HONORS**

### **Service Streamers**

#### **Campaign Streamers**

World War II

Air Offensive, Europe

Normandy Northern France

Rhineland

Ardennes-Alsace

Central Europe

Air Combat, EAME Theater

#### **Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

#### **Decorations**

Distinguished Unit Citations

Germany, 9 Oct 1943

Germany, 11 Jan 1944

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

1 Jul 1965-30 Jun 1966

1 Jul 1967-30 Jun 1968

1 Jul 1969-30 Jun 1971

1 Jul 1980-30 Jun 1982

1 Jul 1991-30 Jun 1993

1 Jul 1993-31 Jul 1995

## **EMBLEM**



Azure, issuant from sinister base a demisphere with axis bendwise or, rimmed and grid lined sable, surmounted by three spires bendwise gules and of the third, in chief a lightning bolt bend sinisterwise of the fourth, and in dexter flank an arched olive branch vert, all within a diminished bordure of the second. **SIGNIFICANCE:** The wide expanse of blue sky with the small portion of the globe below represent the unit as guardian of many nations. It also signifies the global capability of the missile force and the heights from which the weapon system can strike. The three spires portray the alert, ever watchful and ready condition of the three assigned missile squadrons. The lightning bolt symbolizes the power, speed, and instantaneous reaction capability inherent in the unit's weapon system. The olive branch alludes to the preservation of the peace. (Approved, 7 February 1964)

#### **MOTTO**

SENTINELS OF PEACE

#### **NICKNAME**

#### **OPERATIONS**

351 Bombardment Group activated on 1 Oct 1942 but was not manned until Nov 1942 after transferring to Geiger Field, WA. Trained for duty overseas with B-17s. Moved to England, Apr-May 1943. Served in combat with the Eighth Air Force from 13 May 1943 to 20 Apr 1945. Operated primarily against strategic objectives in Germany, striking such targets as ball-bearing plants at Schweinfurt, communications at Mayen, marshalling yards at Koblenz, a locomotive and tank factory at Mannheim, and oil refineries at Hamburg. Also struck harbor facilities, submarine installations, airfields, V weapon sites, and power plants in Germany, France, Belgium, Holland, and Norway.

Received a Distinguished Unit Citation (DUC) for performance of 9 Oct 1943 when an aircraft factory in Anklam, Germany, was accurately bombed in spite of heavy flak and pressing enemy interceptors. Received another DOC for its part in the successful attack of 11 Jan 1944 on

aircraft factories in central Germany. Participated in the intensive air campaign against German aircraft factories during the "Big Week," 20-25 Feb 1944.

In addition to its strategic missions, the group often operated in support of ground forces. Bombed in support of the Normandy invasion in Jun 1944 and the St Lo breakthrough in Jul. Hit enemy positions to cover the attack on Holland in Sep 1944, Struck front-line positions, communications, and airfields to help stop the German counteroffensive in the Battle of the Bulge, Dec 1944-Jan 1945. Conducted missions in support of the airborne assault across the Rhine in Mar 1945. Flew last combat mission on 20 Apr 1945, In early May, returned prisoners of war to airfields in France, Returned to the US May-Jun 1945.

First aircraft left 21 May 1945. Ground echelon sailed for US on 25 Jun 1945 aboard Queen Elizabeth. Docked 30 Jun 1945. Personnel given 30 days R & R. Reassembled at Sioux Falls AAFd, SD. Jul. 1945. Group inactivated, 28 Aug 1945.

First Mission: 14 May 1943

Last Mission: 20 Apr 1945

Total Missions: 311

Total Credit Sorties: 8,600

Total Bomb Tonnage: 20,357 (43 tons leaflets)

Aircraft missing in action: 124

Enemy aircraft claims: 303-49-177

Served in the reserves at Scott Field, IL, 9 Apr 1947-27 Jun 1949.

In 1961, the Strategic Air Command informed Whiteman's host unit, the 340th Bombardment Wing, that the wing's B-47s and KC-97s would be phased out by 1963. Although SAC didn't have a specific mission to replace the bombers and tankers at Whiteman, it did have an idea. In April 1961, test borings were made in the areas surrounding Whiteman to determine if the geological make-up would support a land-based ICBM system. It would and in June 1961, the Department of Defense announced plans to base Wing IV of the Minuteman I ICBM system at Whiteman. The announcement set off a massive land buying frenzy by the Air Force. Ground-breaking ceremonies with a host of dignitaries in attendance were held in April 1962 at the site now called Oscar-01.

Over the next year, construction of the sites occurred at a breakneck pace. By early 1963, SAC decided to activate a unit to initially oversee construction and then take over as the operating unit. Much discussion followed before SAC settled on the 351 Strategic Missile Wing (SMW), a direct descendant of the historic World War II unit, the 351 Bombardment Group. On 1 Feb 1963, the 351 was activated. Obviously, the wing needed operational squadrons and this was rectified in May, June, and July 1963, respectively, when the 508th, 509th, and 510th Strategic Missile Squadrons were activated.

In September 1963, the 340th moved to Texas leaving the 351 as the host unit. Construction

continued and on 29 June 1964, the 351 went on full operational alert. Amazingly, the construction and equipping of the 150 missile sites and 15 launch control centers had taken only 2 years, 2 months, and 2 weeks. Throughout the years, Whiteman's missile system continually received modifications to improve performance. In fact, less than a year after the wing went on full alert, its missiles underwent one such modification. From May 1965 to October 1967, the 351 switched from the Minuteman I to the Minuteman II. Another modernization program in the late 1970s and early 1980s further improved the system and increased the survivability of the missiles. In the mid 1980s, the Minuteman Integrated Life Extension (Rivet MILE) program began to improve the safety, maintainability, and reliability of the missile facilities.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, change began occurring for the 351. In 1988, Congressman Ike Skelton announced that the B-2 Advanced Technology Bomber would be based at Whiteman. In preparation for a second wing at the base, the Air Force activated the 100th Air Division in July 1990 to oversee all support functions on Whiteman. Thus, the 351 was no longer host unit on the base. This arrangement did not last long as the Air Force, preparing to absorb cutbacks, eliminated its air divisions. In July 1991, the 100th was inactivated and the 351 assumed once again its host unit role. The changes did not end there.

On July 31, 1991, President Bush and Premier Gorbachev signed the historic Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) which called for, among other things, the dismantling and destruction of the Minuteman II ICBMs. In September 1991, the Soviet Union collapsed thereby signaling the end of the Cold War. In a show of good faith, President George Bush ordered a standdown of the all Minuteman II missiles from alert - well before the requirements of START called for action. Less than 24 hours later, the 351 reported to SAC that its missiles were off alert.

The end of the Cold War also spelled the end of the 351. The now-called 351 Missile Wing immediately began deactivating its Minuteman II system. Over the next several years, the members of the 351 carried out the process with the same vigor they had defended America. Wing began dismantling missiles in Oct 1992. On January 8, 1993, India-01 was the wing's first launch control center to shut down operations. On May 7, 1993, the missileers removed the last reentry vehicle from the field. The historic site was Golf-02. Later in the year, on December 8, the wing imploded its first silo, India-02. Then, on May 18, 1995, the last Minuteman II missile, located at Juliet-03, was removed from its site. The job of the 351 Strategic Missile Wing was almost over.

On a warm summer day on June 9, 1995, base personnel, along with a number of former 351'ers, gathered at Whiteman to conduct the missile wing's final act, that of inactivation.

The activation didn't become official until July 31, 1995; with wing personnel rapidly leaving the base, there would be few attending the ceremony. As such, an early ceremony would allow wing personnel to say good-bye to the 351. Afterward most of the missiliers moved on to other jobs, other careers, and other bases. By the time of the actual July 31, 1995 inactivation, only a handful of wing members were still on base.

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USAF Unit Histories  
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Sources

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The Institute of Heraldry. U.S. Army. Fort Belvoir, VA.

Unit yearbook. *351 Strategic Missile Wing, Whiteman AFB, MO. 1964-1989, 25 Years of Deterrence.*