

3080 AVIATION DEPOT GROUP

MISSION

LINEAGE

3080 Aviation Depot Squadron
Redesignated 3080 Aviation Depot Group
Inactivated July 1, 1962

STATIONS

Caribous AFS, Limestone AFB, ME

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

The mission of the 3080th Aviation Depot Squadron/Group was both unique and varied during the ten years it operated. Besides being the first Operational Storage Site for the maintenance, storage, and distribution of atomic and thermonuclear (hydrogen) bombs to the Strategic Air Command, the 3080th also maintained a war reserve of nuclear weapons to be shipped to SAC contingency bases

for secondary (follow-on) strike missions. The Air Force assumed that many first strike SAC bases would be destroyed during the Soviet Union's first strike.

The site also served as the phasing point for receipt, temporary storage, and distribution of tactical and strategic nuclear and thermonuclear weapons to USAF Operational Storage Sites in Europe. These included a variety of nuclear weapons delivered by both USAF and US Navy delivery systems. A large portion of the unit's mission was as a depot level maintenance facility as its name implies. This included providing depot level maintenance and retrofit of nuclear weapons that could not be accomplished by European and US Navy weapons facilities.

Though not yet complete, the weapons storage facility was partially occupied and activated on 1 November 1951. The area was then known as the Caribou Air Force Station, or East Loring. On 15 December 1951, the 3080th Aviation Depot Group was activated under the Air Materiel Command and assumed control of the area (Stevens and Tyson 1980:chronology). Construction of the facility was completed on 10 April 1952. The installation (Site "Easy" was its code name prior construction) was originally known as "North River Depot". The area was a complete mini-base whose mission would be to protect the nuclear weapons deployed by the United States. In addition, site "Easy" would be the largest of 5 original operational storage sites, and the first operational nuclear storage site in the Air Force.

The Administration Area was the headquarters of the 3080th Aviation Depot Group. It was situated outside the maximum-security area, and accommodated the administrative, dormitory, dining, and recreational functions required for the operation of the storage area. Buildings included a headquarters office building, a dining hall, a gym and library building, numerous barracks, and a fire station. The barracks and dining hall were grouped together around a quadrangle and were connected underground, a distinct advantage in the harsh winter weather and in the event of nuclear fallout. The buildings were occupied by personnel of the 3080th from 1951 through 1962. The Service Area, situated southeast of the Administrative Area and outside of the maximum-security area, was the center of station maintenance, repair, and service.

Though not complete, the weapons storage facility was partially occupied and activated on November 1, 1951. This early activation was probably the result of the increased conflict in Korea. On December 15, 1951, the 3080th Aviation Depot Group was activated as a unit of the Air Materiel Command, and assumed control of the maximum storage area. 3080th personnel occupied the barracks, offices, and workstations, and the area became temporarily known as the 3080th Area. Construction of the weapons storage facility was completed on April 10, 1952. By the end of summer 1952, the 3080th was ready for full operations.

The 3080th Aviation Depot Squadron was re-designated HQ 3080th Aviation Depot Group, on May 1, 1954, by General Order 20, HQ Air Materiel Command, dated April 2, 1954. General Order 20 also activated the 3080th Operations Squadron, 3080th Security Squadron and 3080th Support Squadron effective May 1, 1954, and assigned them to the 3080th Aviation Depot Group. On March 1, 1957, the 3080th Security Squadron was re-designated 3080th Air Police Squadron and the 3080th Operations Squadron was re-designated 3093rd Aviation Depot Squadron by General Order

7, HQ Air Material Command, dated February 11, 1957. Both squadrons remained assigned to the 3080th Aviation Depot Group. The older fission and early Thermonuclear (hydrogen) bombs only lasted a few years. Most of these were gone when the B-52 arrived and the B-36 was retired from service.

Throughout the history of the 3080th Aviation Depot Group, the development of nuclear weapons continued and evolved. Along with these developments included mission changes for the group as they went through the transition period in history from the early atomic weapons right on up to the wooden bomb concept. Newer tactical delivery systems in both aircraft and missiles were developed and deployed in the European Theater. Although the wooden bomb type of nuclear weapons were coming into the inventory, this occurred just prior to the deactivation of the 3080th Aviation Depot Group.

In April of 1959, the weapons storage and maintenance program at Loring AFB was reviewed. As the wooden bomb concept began to become a reality, the Air Force began to review the necessity of maintaining separate depot level maintenance facilities near SAC bases. Headquarters USAF Air Staff decided to close Caribou Air Force Station in 1961. Air Staff members reviewed the overall Air Force special weapons storage and maintenance program controlled by the Air Force Logistics Command (formerly the Air Material Command).

They concluded that advances in technology made it feasible to reduce the number of people and facilities AFLC used to accomplish the special weapons mission and directed AFLC to implement a reduction and consolidation program. In January 1962, AFLC officials notified the 3080th of its demise, effective on July 1, 1962. During the six months from date of notification to actual closure, AFLC worked closely with SAC and the 42nd Bomb Wing in accomplishing a smooth transition from a depot maintenance facility to an operational SAC weapons storage area. At the same time, the Atomic Energy Commission transferred ownership and control of the special weapons to SAC.

With the transfer complete in late June, the 42nd Bomb Wing assumed responsibility for every aspect of its combat capability including the personnel of the 23rd Munitions Maintenance Squadron. These individuals possessed the technical knowledge and handling skills necessary to maintain and load the armament of the 42nd Bomb Wing. The men of the 3080th Aviation Depot Group and others like them assigned to similar sites are unsung heroes of the Cold War. What they did, and had to endure, while keeping their activities a secret from everyone, including their own family, is a testament to the pride and dedication to their mission, and to their country. They truly were the nation's "Silent Peacekeepers

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Sources
Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.