

3560 PILOT TRAINING WING



MISSION

LINEAGE

3560 Pilot Training Wing

Redesignated 3560 Pilot Training Wing (Advanced, Single-Engine)

Redesignated 3560 Pilot Training Wing (Basic Single-Engine) 27 Jun 52

Redesignated 3560 Pilot Training Wing (Basic), 21 Aug 1958

Redesignated 3560 Pilot Training Wing, 5 Jan 1961

Inactivated 1 Dec 1972

STATIONS

Webb AFB, TX

ASSIGNMENTS

WEAPON SYSTEMS

COMMANDERS

Col Earnest F. Wackwitz, Jr., #1952

Col Kyle L. Riddle, #1959



Col Ernest F. Wackwitz, Jr., (USAF photo)

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

Toil and sweat are ahead, and training will be long and arduous; but when they are completed, twelve weeks hence, this first class of bombardiers from the Big Spring School will be among the finest fighters in the world." Captain Bradstreet administered the bombardier's oath to the class. The oath bound them to defend their country to their death and to protect to their death, the secret of America's bombsights. The 12-week course consisted of four three-week periods. Starting with ground school, air training, "refinement" technique, and simulated combat bombing. Upon graduation, the bombardier student was commissioned second lieutenant in the United States Army Air Force and awarded the silver "wings" of the bombardiers.

Exactly one year and 10 days after the Japanese struck Pearl Harbor, the first class of 118 young men graduated. Rep. George Mahon, chairman of the House sub-committee on military expenditures, addressed the newly commissioned Second Lieutenants during the ceremony. Rep. Mahon reminded the young bombardiers that they were on a mission of good - a mission to destroy evil. He said this was an honorable task, and it was their chance to do something

about ridding the world of a deadly infection. Air power carried the message of hope for this country. He added there was no doubt about the final issue of the war."

In 1945, the school produced student bombardiers from four nations, including the United States, France, Brazil, and China. The last graduating class from this school was composed entirely of Chinese students. Over 3000 military personnel and several hundred civilians worked at the bombardier base. At the end of World War II, Big Spring Bombardier School was deactivated and was then used as a municipal airport.

The Korean crisis once again disturbed America's peace, and in 1951, the Air Force Base's 3560th Pilot Training Wing was reactivated. As a "thank you" gesture, the city of Big Spring deeded 1,247 acres to Webb, with an additional 1200 acres leased for \$1 a year. The base was opened on October 1, 1951, and Col. Ernest F. Wackwitz Jr. was named Webb's first Base Commander. On May 19, 1952, Webb had its official open house to announce its mission as a jet single engine pilot training station.

The first class of pilot trainees arrived on March 26, 1952. Graduation date for the class of 52-D was on June 20, 1952, at which time the aviation cadets received their diplomas and silver wings, and were commissioned Second Lieutenants.

In April 1952, five on-base houses were built and three hundred rent homes in Big Spring's Monticello addition were made available before the Capehart on-base housing was built in 1958.

Once Webb AFB was activated, student jet pilots trained in the propeller driven T-28 and the T-33. During early 1956, the propeller driven aircraft was phased out of the program, leaving the pilots the T-33 jets for training. In 1960, the base received the T-37, and began training in the T-38 in 1961. In January 1963, the last T-33 was phased out of the Air Force Base program.

From August 1958 to 1967, an important part of Webb was the Air Defense Command. The 331st Fighter Interceptor Squadron arrived from New York and was moved onto the west side of the base. During their nine years at Webb, the 331st pilots flew F-86's, F-102's and F-104's.

A Rescue detachment was also prominent in Webb's history. The unit was first equipped with H-21, and later graduated to HH-43B shortly before they departed Webb in 1973.

During Webb's history over 10,000 Air Force pilots graduated and earned their silver wings.

In addition to honoring fallen pilot Lt. James Webb, Webb AFB dedicated the newly constructed academics building to the late Brig Gen. Howard J. Withycombe. Gen. Withycombe was Base Commander and had been recently named Brig. General, when he was involved in a deadly automobile accident on January 5, 1964. On August 3, 1975, the base's new dining hall was dedicated to Capt. Steven L. Bennett, a former Webb student and recipient of the Medal of Honor. Capt. Bennett was killed on June 22, 1972, when his plane crashed into the Gulf of Ton

kin. The Recreation Center was dedicated to the memory of Sergeant John H, Lees, a local Big Spring resident who lost his life during World War II. In 1963 a Chapel Memorial Window Fund was established to honor those who had lost their lives and who had served in the pilot training program at Webb as well as a tribute to the living. The beautiful stain glass window was located at the Base chapel.

By 1970, Webb pumped more than a million dollars monthly into Big Spring's economy. Over 27,000,000 gallons of JP-4 fuel was purchased from Cosden Oil & Chemical Co. Utilities (gas, water, electricity) totaled more than \$300,000 a month. Military personnel alone spent over a million dollars annually for housing. Salaries were another major contributing factor in Big Spring's economy with over \$24,000,000 earned in 1970 by 700 civilian employees and 2,245 military personnel. Webb also spent over a million dollars in the purchase of local goods and services.

Construction began on the \$2.5 million dormitories in 1975 and funding was approved for a new theater and officer's dormitory. January 1976, Senator John Tower answered rumors of Webb's immanent closure by saying "the future of Webb is up to Congress." Local residents were urged to write letters to President Ford protesting the closing of Webb. Unfortunately their efforts were futile, On March 30, 1977, the head lines in the Big Spring Herald cries, "Long battle ends, Webb dies." Webb personnel started receiving assignments to other bases and by October 1977, the base had been reduced to a caretaker force of 350 before it's final closure. An era ended when Webb presented wings to the last students to graduate from Webb Air Force Base in December 1975. The 10,422nd U.S. pilot to graduate was Capt. Dent. W. Young. A perfect marriage between community and base was now over and Big Spring residents mourned the loss of an old friend.

Brooks AFB, Texas. On 1 November 1961, ATC transferred Brooks AFB to Air Force Systems Command (AFSC). This was all part of an Air Force plan to reorganize aerospace medical research. Along with the transfer of Brooks, ATC passed to AFSC (and its newly formed Aerospace Medical Division at Brooks) control of the USAF Aerospace Medical Center, the School of Aerospace Medicine, the USAF Hospital Lackland, and the 3790th Epidemiological Laboratory. (The School of Aviation Medicine had been redesignated as the School of Aerospace Medicine on 8 May 1961.) However, the Medical Service School at Gunter remained in the command, reassigned from the medical center to Headquarters ATC on 1 October.

Training Wings Redesignated. On 5 January 1961, ATC redesignated five of its pilot training wings-the 3500th, 3560th, 3575th, 3615th, and 3640th-by dropping the parenthetical notation (basic). In addition, the 3550th Flying Training Wing (Advanced Interceptor) also underwent a name change, becoming the 3550th Pilot Training Wing.

Big Spring AFB, Texas. On 1 October 1951, ATC established the 3560th Pilot Training Wing (Advanced Single-Engine) at Big Spring, Texas. However, the command was not formally able to activate the base until 1 January 1952, because the City of Big Spring had difficulty acquiring clear title to some of the property it intended to transfer to ATC.

Parks AFB, California. On 30 June 1951, ATC added Camp Parks to its inventory of bases, intending to use it for basic military training. Effective 1 August, Headquarters USAF directed the camp be redesignated as Parks AFB. Two weeks later, on 16 August, Air Training Command established an Air Force indoctrination wing--the 3275th--at Parks; however, it was not until March 1952 that Parks began receiving recruits for basic military training. With Parks, Sampson, and Lackland AFBs now providing basic military training, Air Training Command was able to remove Sheppard from the basic military training program so that it could concentrate on training aircraft mechanics.

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At Randolph AFB on 16 March 1952, ATC established the Crew Training Air Force (CTAF). Assigned to CTAF were six bases: Luke and its 127th Pilot Training Wing, Moody and its 3550th Training Wing (Interceptor Aircrew), Nellis and its 3595th Training Wing (Combat Crew), Randolph and its 3510th Pilot Training Wing, Tyndall and its 3625th Training Wing, and Wichita and its 3520th Combat Crew Training Wing. Pincastle became a CTAF base effective 16 August. Perrin came under CTAF control on 1 September, followed by Laughlin on 1 October.

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Sources
Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.
Unit yearbook. *Webb AFB, TX. 1952.*