

AIR FORCE MISSILE DEVELOPMENT CENTER



MISSION

Air Force Missile Development Center (AFMDC), Holloman AFB, N. Mex. This center tests air-to-air and ground-to-ground missiles, target drones, ballistic missile nose cones and reentry aids, and executes Air Force responsibilities at the White Sands Missile Range.

LINEAGE

4145 AAF Base Unit (Air Base) organized, 1 Jan 1946
Redesignated 4145 AF Base Unit, 26 Sep 1947
Redesignated 2754 Air Force Base Unit, 28 August 1948
Redesignated 2754 Experimental Wing, 5 October 1949
Redesignated 6540 Missile Test Wing, 30 June 1951
Redesignated 6580 Missile Test Wing, 1 Sep 1952
Redesignated Holloman Air Development Center, 10 Oct 1952
Redesignated Air Force Missile Development Center, 1 Sep 1957
Inactivated, 1 Aug 1970

STATIONS

Wendover Field, Utah

Alamogordo AAF (Later, Holloman AFB), NM

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

Col R. S. Garman, #1961 Acting

Col George T. Buck, #1967

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

Argent, a stylized futuramic missile or, point upwards in pale, surmounting in base a silhouetted circular gear shape, winged azure. **SIGNIFICANCE:** The futuramic emblem as described above is symbolic of the mission of the Holloman Air Development Center. (Approved, 23 Dec 1952)

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

In the vast Tularosa Basin of the American Southwest, men of science and technology at the Air Force Missile Development Center are probing the frontiers of the future and of human knowledge.

From their headquarters and laboratories at Holloman Air Force Base, New Mexico, they direct the research and development testing of guided missile weapon systems.

They support the exploration of the extreme reaches of the earth's atmosphere and beyond by means of rockets, balloons and complex instrumentation.

They conduct research related to the hazards and other problems of human flight through interplanetary space. Progressively, they enlarge the physical and intellectual dimensions of the environment of man.

The Air Force Missile Development Center was born as a result of drastic change both in modern technology and in the art of warfare. Its total history has been dominated by its contributions in the perfection of modern missile weapon systems and in the exploration of the limitless vertical frontier reaching out into interstellar space.

As early as 1943, the unique facilities and physical environment of this then isolated installation were considered for a guided missile research and development program. No effort, however, was made to interfere with the program of training bomber crews which was then in force. Instead, it was not until March 1947, that Air Force scientists and technicians journeyed to the vast Tularosa Basin of New Mexico, bringing as part of their physical and intellectual baggage a major portion of the embryonic guided missile program.

On 23 July 1947, a GAPA missile streaked skyward from the new missile center, the first of the many thousand major tests which now comprise the AFMDC record. Very rapidly the workload expanded to include a bevy of air defense missiles, an intercontinental range missile, shorter-range tactical weapons, a variety of drones, space biology, biodynamic, upper-atmosphere investigations and many other important projects.

Shortly after the Air Force became a separate branch of service, Alamogordo Army Air Field was renamed Holloman Air Force Base in honor of Colonel George V. Holloman, a pioneer in military technical research and development. On 10 October 1952, in recognition of the growing importance of the Holloman contribution, the local activity was elevated to full center status and designated Holloman Air Development Center. And, finally, after being selected as the most promising site within the United States for important future developments in guided missiles and space technology, on 1 September 1957 the Center was redesignated the Air Force Missile Development Center.

AFMDC's successes are the direct result of the important concentration of human and material resources available to the United States only at the sprawling New Mexican test, research and development center.

Among the many vital contributing factors is Holloman's famous 35,000-foot high speed captive missile test track—the longest and most carefully engineered in the world. Another is the huge high-altitude test laboratory which in its entirety can be evacuated to produce atmospheric conditions of extreme elevation. Still another is the gigantic complex of high-speed electronic computation equipment, the greatest concentration of analog and digital computing capability existing within the Department of Defense.

A different type of facility indispensable to the program of national defense is the vast AFMDC test-range complex. This includes the longest overland test range in the United States, the six-hundred-forty-four-mile missile flight-test corridor stretching across three broad western states between Holloman AFB and the impact area at Wendover AFB, Utah. It includes the mammoth four-thousand-square-mile integrated White Sands Missile Range—largest land range within the nation and most heavily instrumented in the world. It includes other ranges too—the two-hundred-fifty mile corridor coming in to Holloman from central Arizona, the massive air range surrounding and dwarfing the White Sands Missile Range, and the vertical range which towers upward without end from the floor of the desert basin.

Most vital among all of AFMDC's many important advantages, however, are its unique human resources. Gathered carefully over a dozen years and hammered into a hard-hitting team of tremendous capability are the military, civilian and industrial-contractor scientists, engineers and support assistants who today at Holloman are furthering the causes of both national defense and the future of mankind.

2754th Experimental Wing was activated overseeing research and development projects.

6540th and its base were placed under AFMTC's jurisdiction by the Air Research and Development Command on 3 July 1951, but the Wing was a self-sustaining unit with no substantive or long-term connection with AFMTC. Consequently, the 6540th and Holloman AFB were transferred to ARDC on 1 September 1952.

USAF Unit Histories

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Updated:

Sources

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

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

Air Force Missile Development Center, Holloman AFB, 1958.