

History of LRAFB Talking Points

FOR SERVICE MEMBER SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

Origins

- In 1951, the Air Force wanted to build a base in central US. Local citizens wanted that base in Little Rock, but congress said there wasn't any money for it. Local leaders convinced congress they would buy land and donate it for the base.

- By the end of Sept 1952, the Pulaski County Citizens Council, (Currently LRAFB Community Council), had collected almost one million dollars, allowing the Air Base Committee to begin buying property from more than 150 private landowners near Jacksonville.

- That same month, the USAF announced it would build a \$31 million jet bomber base on the site. Fundraising and land purchase took nearly 18 months, with construction beginning Nov. 6, 1953.

- First Units:

- Base assigned to Strategic Air Command, and by Aug. 1954 SAC had identified the 70th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing, flying RB-47 Stratojet reconnaissance aircraft and KC-97 aerial refueling aircraft, as the first organization assigned to the base. SAC also assigned the new 384th Bombardment Wing (BW) to the new base, flying B-47 Stratojet bombers.

- First Airmen arrived in 1954 to no base housing, and had to live in the community.

- In January 1955, 70th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing officially activated at the not-yet-completed base, followed by the 384th Bombardment Wing in August.

- First base commander Col Joseph A. Thomas arrived February 1955 only to tragically die in the crash of the base's only aircraft, a C-45, after seeing base's basic infrastructure finished.

- Base opened to air traffic Sept. 10, 1955, and was dedicated at open house celebration Oct. 9, 1955.

- First Mission

- During these early years, the 70th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing (SRW) performed operational reconnaissance missions flying b-47 Stratojets over the Soviet border, then added training to their mission, before leaving LRAFB in 1962.

- People

- By mid-1957, there were more than 5,500 military personnel and 300 civilian employees assigned to Little Rock AFB, with housing built by May 1959.

- Second Mission

- In January 1961, construction began on eighteen underground silos to house Titan II Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs). During construction, the 308th Strategic Missile Wing (SMW) activated, organized, and began preparing for its strategic deterrence role at Little Rock AFB.

- On Jan. 1, 1964, the 308 SMW completed its first full operational day with missiles on alert in each of the 18 silos. Qualified crews staffed and supported the missiles 24-hours a day, for the next 23 years.

- New Units

- In 1962 the Arkansas Air National Guard first appeared at LRAFB. The 154th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron (TRS) began moving operations out to the base, bringing with it a venerable tradition as a combat unit.

- On Sept. 1, 1964, the 384th Bombardment Wing inactivated ending the era of the Stratojet at LRAFB. The same day that the 384 BW inactivated, the 43d Bombardment Wing (BW) relocated to Little Rock bringing with them a new jet bomber, the supersonic B-58 Hustler.

- On Jan. 31, 1970, the 43d Bombardment Wing retired its last B-58 and officially inactivated.

- Next Host Unit

- In March 1970 the 64th Tactical Airlift Wing headquarters arrived and became the base's host unit. With them came the 4442d Combat Crew Training Wing. Both Wings flew C-130 Hercules, a small, agile transport plane. With the arrival of the new Wings, the base was transferred to Tactical Air Command.

- The 314th Tactical Airlift Wing took over the 64 TAW equipment, personnel and mission when the 64th inactivated in May 1971 and the 314th arrived from Ching Chuan Kang Air Base in China.

- Soon afterward, the 4442d Combat Crew Training Wing inactivated, and the 314 TAW absorbed its training role. On Dec. 31, 1974, Both the TAW and LRAFB transferred from TAC to Military Airlift Command.

- Training and other missions

- Throughout next 13 years, the 314th TAW flew and trained C-130 air and maintenance crews, and the 308th Strategic Missile Wing stood alert with its Titan II ICBMs.

- In 1976, the Arkansas Air National Guard smen of the 189th Air Refueling Group transitioned to a refueling mission, began an around-the-clock ALPHA alert for SAC, and provided refueling assets to a wide variety of tanker task forces.

- In 1986, the unit assumed its current mission, tactical airlift training in the C-130, implementing the Total Force concept, as the base's active Air Force and Air National Guard wings began working together on a common mission: the training and employment of the world's best C-130 airlifters.

- In October 1995, the 189th Airlift Wing activated as the first Air National Guard unit in the country to be located on an active duty Air Force base flying the same type aircraft as its active duty counterpart, and performing the same day-to-day mission.

- Missile Wing Inactivates

- On Aug. 18, 1987, the 308th Strategic Missile Wing inactivates after 23 years of 24-hour duty; the last unit to perform operational duty with Titan II missiles.

- Major Command Shakeups

- On June 1, 1992, the Air Force reassigned the base and 314th Airlift Wing to the new Air Mobility Command (AMC), the successor to MAC. Only 16 months later, the Air Force again reassigned the Wing, this time to Air Combat Command, a new command created to combine functions from SAC and TAC. On April 1, 1997, the base's commands were again shaken up as the 314 AW was reassigned to Air Education and Training Command (AETC). At the same time, the 463d Airlift Group (AG) activated at the base as a tenant under AMC. The purpose of these changes was to move the C-130 schoolhouse under AETC while retaining AMC's operational control over C-130 airlift.

- 1990s and early 2000s

- Little Rock provided assets to Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM, and Operations NORTHERN WATCH and SOUTHERN WATCH which enforced the subsequent no-fly-zones over Iraq. Other humanitarian and peacekeeping missions included PROVIDE COMFORT in Iraq, PROVIDE RELIEF and RESTORE HOPE in Somalia, UPHOLD DEMOCRACY in Haiti, and Operation JOINT ENDEAVOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

- In early 2000s, Team Little Rock provided C-130 combat airlift to theater commanders across the globe in support of major combat and humanitarian missions, and providing C-130 training to crews from around the world, as well as providing substantial support to hurricane rescue efforts and the Global War on Terror.

- Latest Aircraft

- On March 19, 2004, the first active-duty C-130J was delivered to the base.

- 19th AW becomes host wing

- In October 2008, the 19th Airlift Wing (AW) activated at Little Rock, and took over the duties, personnel, and aircraft of the inactivating 463rd Airlift Group. Reflecting an increase in AMC assets on the base, the 314 AW also relinquished its host wing duties to the 19 AW, and Air Mobility Command.

- Some Disasters, Awards and other events

- Little Rock units won back-to-back glory in AMC RODEO competitions in 2009 and 2011. Aircraft from the base flew 238 missions in Operation UNIFIED RESPONSE, after an earthquake demolished Haiti in January 2010.

- The base faced its own disaster on 25 April 2011, when an EF-2 tornado carved a five-mile path from North Pulaski High School, straight through the base housing area, and across the flightline. The storm damaged or destroyed more than 120 homes, five C-130s, and 50 other base facilities but only injured four people. Community support was immense and fairly immediate.

- Currently

- The 19th AW is the host unit for LRAFB, ensuring the Combat Airlift mission is carried out world-wide. The 19th AW is part of Air Mobility Command and provides the Department of Defense the largest C-130 fleet in the world, and is capable of operating from rough, dirt strips and fulfills a wide range of operational missions in peace and war situations.

- LRAFB currently has three major partner units: the 314th Airlift Wing, Air Education and Training Command, the 913th Airlift Group and the 189th Airlift Wing of the Arkansas Air National Guard. Each unit plays a vital role in the overall success of the combat airlift mission.