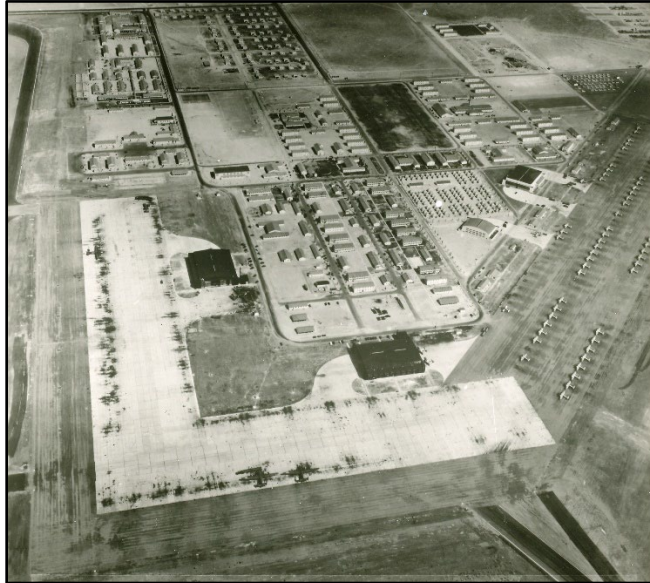


A History of Kirtland Air Force Base and the 377th Air Base Wing



Kirtland Air Force Base, New Mexico

**Prepared by the 377th Air Base Wing History Office
April 2022**

**Approved for public release by the 377th Air Base Wing
Public Affairs Office**

On the Cover: Top photo—Kirtland Field, ca. 1943. Bottom photo—377th Air Base Wing headquarters, August 2020.

377th Air Base Wing Emblem



The current emblem of the 377th Air Base Wing was approved on 7 February 2019.

Description: Celeste, in dexter base a sphere Argent, gridlined Azure, bearing a tiger's head affrontée Proper, emitting from the sphere a contrail bend sinisterwise arching fesswise and terminating into a flight symbol of the third, fimbriated of the second, superimposed on the contrail a bend per bend Gules and of the third, surmounted by another of the second; all within a diminished border Or.

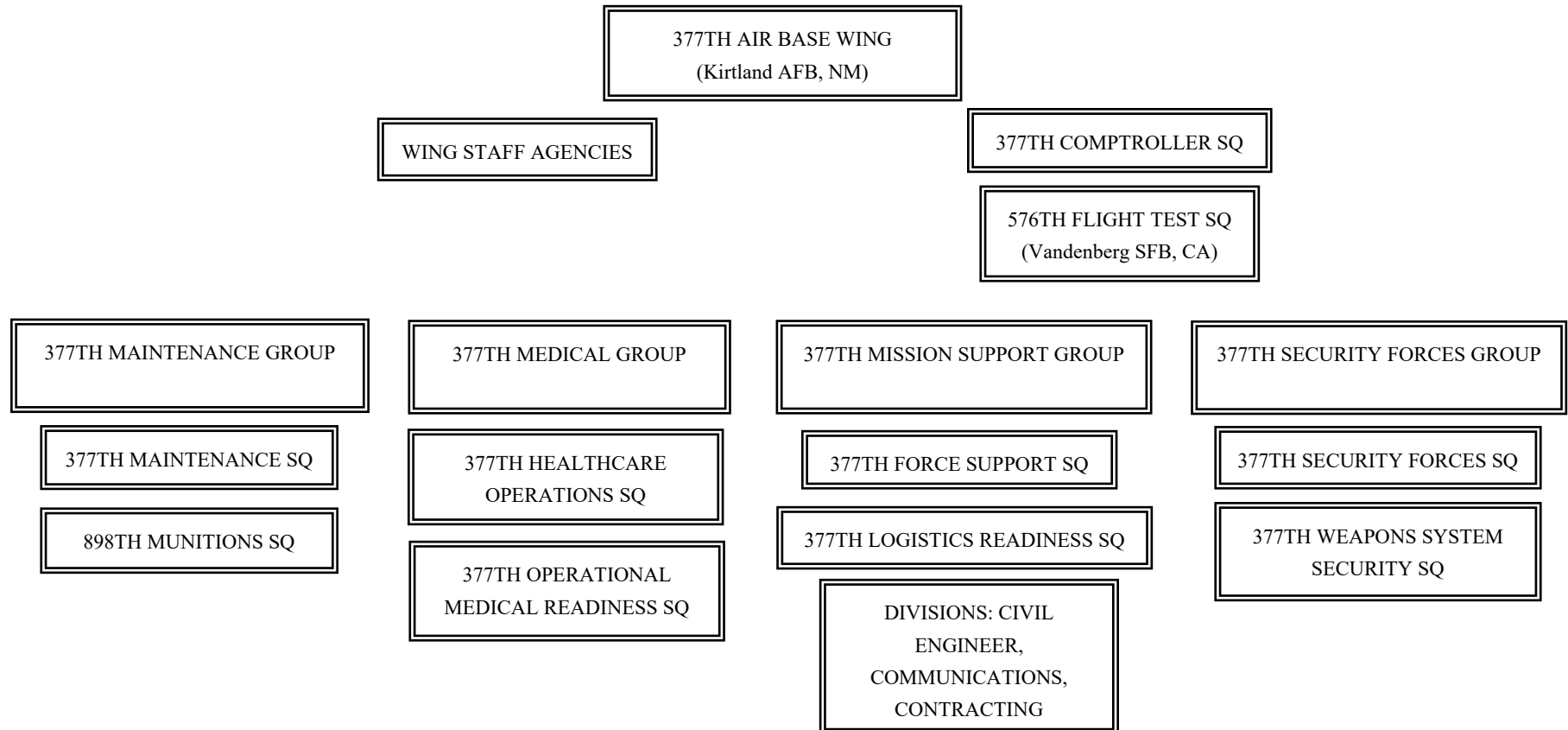
Attached below the shield, a White scroll edged with a narrow Yellow border and inscribed "SERVING FREEDOM'S FINEST" in Blue letters.

Significance: Ultramarine blue and Air Force yellow are the Air Force colors. Blue alludes to the sky, the primary theater of Air Force operations. Yellow refers to the sun and the excellence required of Air Force personnel. The tricolor bend suggests the colors of the flag of the United States and reflects the patriotism of the Wing's personnel. The flight symbol and globe denote the worldwide capabilities of the unit in support of combat engagements. The tiger's face symbolizes the Wing's aggressive spirit and reflects its heritage as one of the first units to perform in Vietnam.

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377th Air Base Wing Organization



Select Chronology

<i>Kirtland Air Force Base</i>	
1928	Frank G. Speakman and William L. Franklin, two Santa Fe Railroad employees, acquired a lease of 140 acres on Albuquerque's East Mesa in the spring to build what becomes known as the first Albuquerque Airport, although it remains privately run during its tenure. It later becomes known as Oxnard Field.
1937-39	Albuquerque City Commissioner Clyde Tingley, along with city business interests and aviation promoters, acquired 888 acres of land four miles west of Oxnard Field for an official municipal airport. With the help of funds and workers from the Works Progress Administration, the \$700,000 facility is completed in mid-1939. First called the "Eagles Nest," it eventually assumed the moniker "Sunport," which continues to this day.
1939-40	The US Army leased 2,000 acres adjacent to the municipal airport from the City of Albuquerque to serve as an air station to service transient military aircraft, including planes being ferried to Great Britain under the "Cash and Carry" policy as World War II raged in Europe.
15 October 1940	Albert D. Smith, a former Army Air Corps pilot and current Transcontinental and Western Airlines Albuquerque manager, returned to active duty as Air Corps liaison for construction of the new airfield and its facilities.
7 January 1941	Construction began on the first buildings for the military airfield, to house and support over 2,000 officer and enlisted personnel of the 19th Bombardment Group (Heavy) (BG).
5 March 1941	Lt Col Newman H. Laughinghouse assumed temporary command of the installation.
18 March 1941	Lt Col Frank D. Hackett assumed command of the airfield as the first full-time base commander.
5 April 1941	Albuquerque Army Air Base (AAB) formally activated and was assigned to Headquarters Army Air Forces, West Coast Air Corps Training Center.
10 April 1941	The 19 BG began B-17 flight operations. The unit remained until 17 October, after which it departed for duty in the Pacific.
1 October 1941	Bombardier training reassigned from Barksdale Field, Louisiana to Albuquerque AAB.
24 December 1941	The Albuquerque AAB Bombardier School began instruction following the arrival of the first cadets on 18 December.
25 February 1942	Albuquerque Army Air Base re-designated as Kirtland Field in honor of Colonel Roy C. Kirtland, pioneer Army aviator.
12 May 1942	Frank Speakman and James Oxnard transferred Oxnard Field to the US Army, for a payment of \$95,000.
July 1942	The US Army converted the Oxnard Field property into the Albuquerque Air Depot Training Station.
8 July 1942	Glider pilot training began at Kirtland Field and continued through February 1943.
1 August 1943	B-24 Pilot Transition School established at Kirtland.
October 1943	Albuquerque Air Depot Training Station inactivated.
April 1944	The Army activated the Albuquerque Army Air Forces Convalescent Center.

1 February 1945	B-29 crew training began at Kirtland.
September 1945	The “Z Division” under Dr. Robert Oppenheimer and the Manhattan Engineer District migrated to the Oxnard Field site.
13 January 1948	Kirtland Field re-designated Kirtland Air Force Base
1 December 1949	Air Force Special Weapons Command activated at Kirtland.
22 February 1952	Manzano Base activated.
1 April 1952	Air Force Special Weapons Command re-designated Air Force Special Weapons Center and assigned to the Air Research and Development Command.
1 April 1961	Air Research and Development Command re-designated as Air Force Systems Command.
1 May 1963	Air Force Weapons Laboratory activated at Kirtland.
1 August 1970	Air Force Special Weapons Center assumed the test and evaluation mission of the inactivated Missile Development Center at Holloman Air Force Base, New Mexico.
1 July 1971	Kirtland, Sandia, and Manzano bases merged to encompass an area over 50,000 acres.
21 August 1972	Air Force Systems Command’s Air Force Contract Management Division relocated from Los Angeles, California, to Kirtland Air Force Base.
1 January 1974	The Air Force Operational Test and Evaluation Center established at Kirtland.
1 April 1976	The Air Force Contract Management Division assumed installation host responsibility for Kirtland as the Air Force Special Weapons Center inactivates. The 1550th Aircrew Training and Test Wing formally relocated from Hill Air Force Base, Utah on the same day.
1 July 1977	Kirtland Air Force Base reassigned to Military Airlift Command. The 1606th Air Base Wing activated to serve as the installation host.
1 October 1982	Air Force Space Technology Center activated at Kirtland.
30 June 1990	Air Force Contract Management Division inactivated.
13 December 1990	Air Force Space Technology Center combined with other Air Force laboratories to form Phillips Laboratory.
1 October 1991	1606th Air Base Wing and 1550th Combat Crew Training Wing consolidated to form the 542d Crew Training Wing. The 542d CTW served as Kirtland AFB’s installation host, while also conducting special operations and personnel recovery aircrew training.
1 January 1993	Kirtland AFB transferred to Air Force Materiel Command and the 377th Air Base Wing activated as the Kirtland host wing.
1 July 1993	Air Force Inspection Agency and Air Force Safety Agency moved to Kirtland with the closure of Norton Air Force Base, California.
1 April 1994	542d Crew Training Wing re-designated as the 58th Special Operations Wing.
1 January 1996	Air Force Safety Center activated at Kirtland, consolidating Air Force Safety Agency and Washington D.C. safety management functions.
1 October 1997	Air Force laboratories, including Phillips Laboratory, consolidated as Air Force Research Laboratories, with the Space Vehicles and Directed Energy Directorates at Kirtland.
1 October 1998	377th Air Base Wing assigned to the Air Armament Center.
3 May 2004	377th Air Base Wing reassigned as a direct reporting unit to Headquarters Air Force Materiel Command.
31 March 2006	Nuclear Weapons Center activated at Kirtland as parent unit of the 498th Armament Systems Wing and 377th Air Base Wing. The latter remained the Kirtland installation host.

29 February 2008	Nuclear Weapons Center re-designated Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center.
1 October 2015	377th Air Base Wing re-assigned to 20th Air Force, while Kirtland Air Force Base comes under the authority of Air Force Global Strike Command.
1 October 2021	The 576th Flight Test Squadron at Vandenberg Space Force Base reassigned to the 377 ABW as a geographically separated, direct reporting unit.

377th Air Base Wing History

Headquartered at Kirtland Air Force Base (AFB) in Albuquerque, New Mexico, the 377th Air Base Wing (ABW) provides support for the nation's nuclear enterprise, and installation and medical support to over 100 mission partners and tenant units both on and off base. The 377 ABW currently employs approximately 1,250 active duty and civilian personnel. The base has long been one of the most important contributors to the city's economic landscape since it was established during World War II. The 377 ABW and organizations of "Team Kirtland" constitute 13% of Albuquerque's workforce, with an economic impact of over \$7 billion to the local area.

377th Combat Support Group/Air Base Wing



Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Republic of Vietnam.



377th Combat Support Group emblem.

The 377 ABW first activated as the 377th Combat Support Group at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Republic of Vietnam, on April 8, 1966, under the command of Col. George Budway. Its overall mission was to provide the base with installation and flying operations support for the U.S. Air Force-occupied areas, base defense, and air liaison consultation with members of the South Vietnamese Air Force. It was briefly responsible for these same mission requirements at Binh Thuy Air Base, South Vietnam, from May 12 to July 1, 1970. In 1972, it operated the Southeast Asia Central Pilots Instructor School and a Combat Crew Training School. The group was elevated to Air Base Wing status that same year on Jan 17. Its flying operations support at Tan Son Nhut included direct air strikes, psychological warfare, air liaison and forward air

control, airlift and airdrop, and airborne radio-direction finding missions. Toward the end of its active service in Vietnam, it provided turnaround service for F-4s and A-7s from other units. Most of its assets were transferred to the South Vietnamese Air Force before inactivating on March 28, 1973.



Airmen at Tan Son Nhut Air Base line up to receive their pay.



Col Grover K. Coe turns over the 377 CSG flag to incoming commander Col Farley E. Peebles, October 1967.



Tan Son Nhut aeromedical evacuations.



377th Air Police Squadron patrol jeep, 1966.

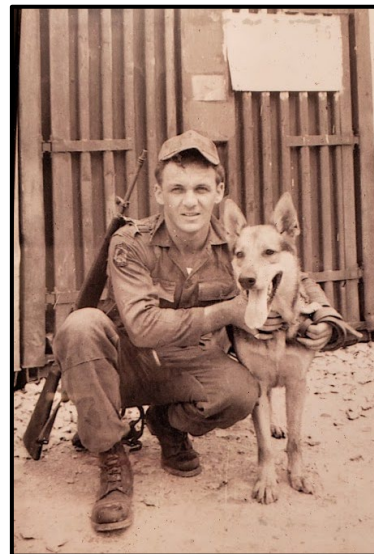
The 377 CSG is most noted for its combat-tested Security Forces of the 377th Air Police Squadron, later the 377th Security Police Squadron. While attacks by Viet Cong forces were always a threat, Tan Son Nhut suffered two notable incursions during its tenure that the Defenders were forced to repel. One took place on Dec. 4, 1966, when the base perimeter was breached by approximately 180 Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army soldiers attacking the flightline. The infiltration was ultimately repelled thanks to the efforts of several Military Working Dog and Defender teams. This included Airman Second Class George M. Bevich, Jr.,

who perished in the early hours of the attack and became the first Air Force military dog handler to die in combat in Vietnam; Bevich was posthumously awarded the Silver Star.

A little over two years later, on Jan. 31, 1968, the 377th Security Police teams suffered through the most notable event of the war, when Tan Son Nhut came under direct attack by a combined force of over 1,500 Viet Cong and NVA troops as part of the Tet Offensive. Five Airmen in Bunker 051, the closest defense point to where the enemy breached the west perimeter, immediately engaged and notified defense forces of the attack. Although the bunker was overtaken by the enemy in the initial thrust, the stubborn defense of the area by the Security Policemen, despite intense mortar and small arms fire combined with several direct rocket hits, allowed the base's security alert and quick reaction forces to set up blocking and engagement actions, and ultimately repel the attack. Four of the five Airmen in Bunker 051 lost their lives, including Sgt. Louis H. Fischer, who continued fighting through mortal wounds and relayed enemy positions after running out of ammunition. The fifth, Sgt. Alonzo J. Coggins, miraculously survived when the enemy chose to release him from the bunker after they had taken it over. All five of the Defenders in Bunker 051 received the Silver Star for their actions.



Sgt Louis H. Fischer



A2C George M. Bevich, Jr., and his Military Working Dog, Rex. Photo courtesy of the Bevich family.

377th Combat Support Wing

Following its service in Vietnam, the 377 ABW remained inactive for a little over 12 years, when it was re-activated as the 377th Combat Support Wing at Ramstein Air Base, Germany, in order to support the base's new tactical combat fleet of F-16 Fighting Falcons. The 377 CSW

assumed host installation responsibilities for the entire Kaiserslautern Military Community, taking over for the 86th Tactical Fighter Wing. In addition to the personnel at Ramstein, the 377 CSW also supported numerous geographically separated units throughout Europe. The 377 CSW operated in this capacity through the end of the Cold War, inactivating once again on May 1, 1991.



Air traffic control tower and flightline at Ramstein Air Base, Germany.

377th Air Base Wing



Brig. Gen. James L. Higham, commander of the 377th Air Base Wing, speaks during the Wing's activation ceremony in January 1993. Seated is Gen. Ronald W. Yates, commander of Air Force Materiel Command.

The 377th emerged once again thanks to the large Base Realignment and Closure actions that took place throughout the Air Force during the early 1990s. Kirtland AFB was included in this process, initially combining the former 1606th Air Base Wing and 1550th Combat Crew Training Wing into a “Super Wing” called the 542d Crew Training Wing. The 542 CTW handled both host installation duties for Kirtland AFB, and initial qualification training for special operations aircrews and pararescue jumpers. This construct quickly proved unwieldy, so on Jan. 1, 1993, the installation support functions were split off from the 542 CTW, and the 377 ABW activated to assume those responsibilities. The 542 CTW was redesignated as the 58th Special Operations Wing on April 1, 1994.

Kirtland Air Force Base History

Origins



Postcard for Kirtland Field, World War II.

Kirtland’s lineage is deeply intertwined with the history of aviation in Albuquerque. In early 1928, Frank G. Speakman and William L. Franklin, two employees of the Santa Fe Railroad, acquired a lease of 140 acres southeast of downtown Albuquerque, to build an airport on a large flat expanse known as the East Mesa. Although the airfield was privately run, in an effort to boost local aviation development, City Commissioner Clyde L. Tingley loaned them city equipment to perform construction and runway grading, and Albuquerque’s first airport saw initial flights begin to land there in May 1928. In August of that year, New York air promoter James G. Oxnard arrived in Albuquerque. Impressed with the facility and the city’s potential to become a significant southwestern air hub, he bought out Franklin’s interest in the airport. The facility soon expanded

to 480 acres and came to be called Oxnard Field.



Oxnard Field, ca. late 1930s

As aviation activity expanded in the area and the economic distress of the Great Depression persisted through the 1930s, Tingley—who served as Governor of New Mexico from 1935-1938—and the Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce lobbied heavily for federal investment in public works projects and federal facilities. The City Council was particularly keen on constructing a dedicated municipal airport and a military installation in a single, consolidated airfield complex that would also accommodate federal airmail routes, and applied for a grant from the Works Progress Administration to construct the airport. Construction began on an 888-acre site located approximately five miles to the west of Oxnard Field in February 1937, and completed in March 1939.

Concurrently with the opening of the airport, Army Air Corps General Henry “Hap” Arnold visited the city. He suggested that the presence of an Air National Guard unit and an aviation cadet training program would be the easiest route towards procuring the air base. Arnold happened to be close friends with Major (later Brigadier General) Albert D. Smith, a former Air Corps pilot who had accomplished the first military transcontinental flight in December 1918. Smith was working in Albuquerque at the time as the local manager for Transcontinental and Western Air, and had participated in a citizen’s committee dedicated to bringing a new air base to the city. Smith and local leaders within the business community acted quickly, resulting in a lease for 2,000 acres, located adjacent to the municipal airport complex, to the War Department for use as an airway depot station for maintenance and refueling purposes.

Tensions in Europe during the mid-late 1930s and the opening of World War II in September 1939 accelerated preparations by President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the War Department for the expected entry of the United States into the conflict. This necessitated a rapid

expansion of military air assets and facilities dedicated to training pilots and aircrews for combat. The airway depot at Albuquerque was placed on a list of proposed sites, and in October 1940, Albert Smith rejoined the Air Corps as a liaison officer to oversee the preparations for transitioning the base to an active duty installation. Construction of training and support facilities began on January 7, 1941, and Major Newton Laughinghouse took over as the temporary commander for the base starting on March 5. Lt Colonel (later Colonel) Frank D. Hackett arrived on March 18 to assume control as the first permanent commander of what became Albuquerque Army Air Base (AAB) on April 5, 1941, under the Air Corps Western Training Center, later Western Flying Training Command.



Maj Albert D. Smith, liaison officer who oversaw the initial development of Albuquerque Army Air Base, later Kirtland Field.



Col Frank D. Hackett, Albuquerque AAB's first permanent commander.

The 19th Bombardment Group (BG) arrived from March Field, California on June 7, 1941 to begin training for their eventual deployment to the Pacific Theater. Support for the 19 BG during their time at Albuquerque AAB built the foundation for the base infrastructure, installation support, and administration that formed the heart of its advanced flying, bombardier training, and multi-engine schoolhouses for B-17 and B-24 aircrews during World War II. Training activity soon came to encompass the airfield and several bombing ranges west and southwest of Albuquerque, including an area of 2,450 square miles between the village of Los Lunas and the Rio Puerco.

On February 25, 1942, Albuquerque AAB was re-named Kirtland Field, in honor of Colonel Roy C. Kirtland, at the recommendation of General Arnold. A pioneer in early military aviation, Kirtland was one of first pilots trained by Wilbur and Orville Wright, piloted the first

aircraft from which a machine gun had been fired in 1912, and had been an early mentor for General Arnold. During his career, Kirtland served as a flight instructor, organized aviation mechanic regiments, commanded the Third Regiment in France during World War I, acted as an inspector of aviation activities and Air Service rest camps, and commanded aviation depots. He capped off his career as the commander of Langley Field, Virginia and the Commandant of the Air Corps Tactical School before retiring in 1938. He returned to active duty three years later and was serving at Moffett Field, California when he died of a heart attack on May 2, 1941.



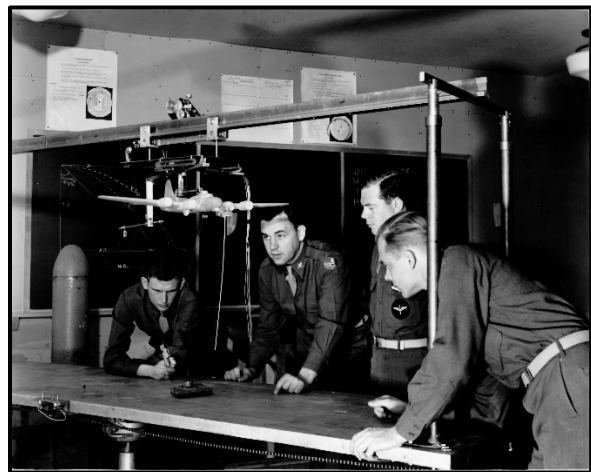
Colonel Roy C. Kirtland.



Kirtland Field during World War II.



Bombardment instruction at Kirtland Field.



Kirtland Field's bombardier training was its most significant function during the war, and the training squadrons ultimately produced over 5,700 graduates by 1945. In February of that year,

B-29 training began at Kirtland as well. Among its more notable instructors was Lt. Jimmy Stewart, who put his Hollywood acting career on hold to serve in the Air Corps, and was assigned to Kirtland in late 1942. The base also housed smaller training programs at various times dedicated to aviation mechanics, glider pilot ground training, and air navigation, all supported by approximately 2,500 military and civilian personnel.

Kirtland Field wasn't the only military activity going on in the immediate area. In February 1942, the Army condemned 1100 acres east of Kirtland that included Oxnard Field. Following the transfer of Oxnard Field to the Army on 12 May, the Army converted the property into the Albuquerque Air Depot Training Station, as aircraft repair and maintenance school. The station operated through October 1943. A few months later, it became the Army Air Forces Convalescent Center, whose medical facilities were located just north of Kirtland, on the campus of the former Sandia School for Girls. During this period, it became known colloquially as "Sandia Base" due to this association. After the war ended, the base was converted into an aircraft disposal station for the War Assets Administration. The installation was formally named "Sandia Base" sometime between July and October 1945.

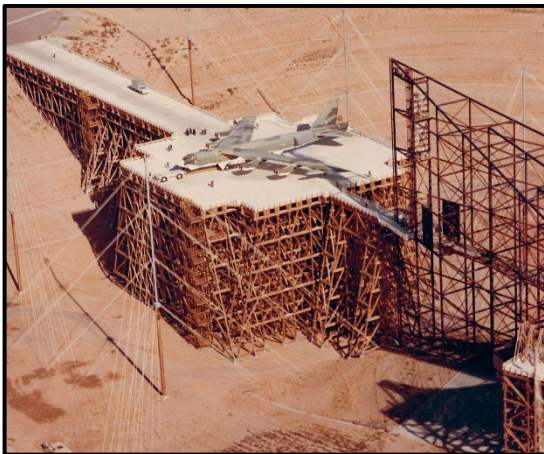
Kirtland Field also played a significant role in supporting the research and development of atomic weapons by the Manhattan Project. Centered in Los Alamos, New Mexico, nuclear researchers led by Dr. Robert J. Oppenheimer, Project scientists and engineers employed airfield and aircraft maintenance facilities at Kirtland and the Oxnard complex to support ordnance and test loading on to special "Silverplate" aircraft assigned to the 509th Composite Group from Wendover Army Air Base, Utah. Concurrently, an atomic weapons research and development facility known as "Z Division" was formed at Sandia Base, under the Atomic Energy Commission, to support these activities for future use. Following the release of atomic bombs on Japan and the conclusion of World War II, these activities were reorganized at administrative, storage, and laboratory facilities at Sandia, which underwent rapid expansion through the rest of the 1940s following its activation. This period also saw the establishment of the Sandia Corporation (later, Sandia Laboratories), Kirtland's longest-serving mission partner.

Cold War Era

The Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union through the next four decades played a profound role in the development of Albuquerque's military landscape. The creation of the US Air Force as a separate branch of service in 1947 led to the redesignation of Kirtland Field as Kirtland Air Force Base on January 1, 1948, while Sandia Base was eventually placed under the authority of the Armed Forces Special Weapons Project, a cooperative program between the Army, Navy, and Air Force. Kirtland became the home of Air Force Special Weapons

Command in December 1949 to provide operational synchronicity with the Special Weapons Project for nuclear weapons development. This included the construction of an operational area in the Manzano Mountains, east of Sandia Base. The command was renamed the Air Force Special Weapons Center on April 1, 1952 and assigned to Air Research and Development Command (later, Air Force Systems Command). That same year, on February 22, the Manzano site was formally activated as Manzano Base, with Sandia providing installation support. Later in the decade, the 150th Fighter Group of the New Mexico Air National Guard was activated at Kirtland AFB on 1 July 1957.

During the 1950s and into the early 1960s, the Sandia Corporation participated in several nuclear weapons tests in the Pacific Ocean and Nevada Test Site near Las Vegas, Nevada, culminating in Operation DOMINIC from April-November 1962. Kirtland AFB supported these tests through several different test and support organizations, such as the 4950th Test Group (Nuclear), which included the support of nuclear-capable jet interceptor and bomber squadrons, as well as weather units. The Cuban Missile Crisis and the subsequent enactment of the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty led to the creation of the Air Force Weapons Laboratory at Kirtland AFB on May 1, 1963, for the purpose of simulating nuclear detonation effects such as transient radiation, x-rays, and electromagnetic pulse actions. Tests of electromagnetic effects were later conducted at one of Kirtland's most iconic landmarks, the Trestle, completed in 1979. Meanwhile, the Armed Forces Special Weapons Project was reorganized as the Defense Atomic Support Agency in 1959 and designated Headquarters, Sandia Base as the installation host, while the Air Force Special Weapons Center became a test support base for missile development.



The Research Trestle, ca. 1980s.



Air Force Weapons Lab opens, May 1, 1963.

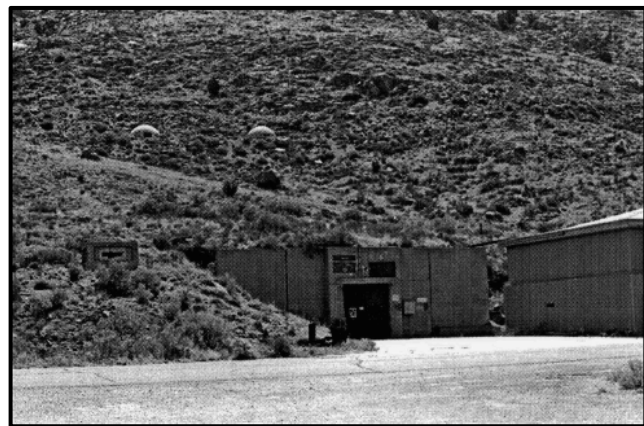
The 1970s proved to be another period of momentous change. Following assessments for base consolidation begun in 1968 and an executive order from President Richard Nixon in 1970,

Sandia, Manzano, and Kirtland were combined into a single entity, Kirtland Air Force Base on July 1, 1971. The arrival of the Air Force Contract Management Division to Kirtland in 1972 portended their assumption of control of the base as the installation host in 1976, the same year that the Air Force Special Weapons Center inactivated following a decline in strategic nuclear test readiness requirements. The Air Force Test and Evaluation Center, now the Air Force Operational Test and Evaluation Center, activated in 1974 to oversee testing of new Air Force weapons systems.

Further changes took place through the decade as the US military drew down in the wake of the end of its involvement in the Vietnam War. The 4900th Air Base Wing, which had operated on Kirtland since 1955, inactivated and host installation duties were assumed by the 1606th Air Base Wing under Military Airlift Command, including security responsibilities for the Manzano Weapons Storage Complex. The year prior, the 1550th Aircrew Training and Test (later, Combat Crew Training) Wing arrived from Hill AFB, Utah, for the purpose of training special operations and personnel recovery aircrews, as well as pararescue jumper qualification. The AFWL's Starfire Optical Range was constructed in 1971 to support directed energy research and testing, a function it continues to serve to this day.



Starfire Optical Range.



Plant 1 of the Manzano Weapons Storage Complex.

The end of the Cold War, following the fall of the Berlin Wall and collapse of the Warsaw Pact in 1989-1990, resulted in further base realignments and consolidations. The Air Force Weapons Laboratory and Space Technology Center combined in December 1990 to become Phillips Laboratories, then merged into the Air Force Research Laboratories organization in October 1997 to operate the Space Vehicles and Directed Energy Directorates. As mentioned previously, the 1606 ABW and 1550 CCTW combined on October 1, 1991 to form the 542d Crew Training Wing (CTW), a “super-wing” that consolidated installation and nuclear surety support, special operations and personnel recovery aircrew qualification, and pararescue/combat rescue

officer training under a single organization.

Oversight of the base passed from Military Airlift Command to Air Force Materiel Command during the same period, before the 377 ABW activated to serve as installation host. The 542 CTW continued its training mission until it was re-designated as the 58th Special Operations Wing on April 1, 1994. Both aircrew and pararescue training continue at Kirtland AFB, under the 58 SOW and 351st Special Warfare Training Squadron, respectively. Kirtland also experienced a brief period of tension in 1995 when it was identified for closure under that year's Base Realignment and Closure committee, but efforts by a coalition of Albuquerque business and political leaders, the New Mexico state delegation, and Kirtland AFB organizational leaders, managed to stave off the deactivation.



Pararescue field training at Kirtland AFB, 2018.



A CV-22 for the 58th Special Operations Wing conducts a training flight.

Kirtland in the 21st Century

As the new millennium dawned, Kirtland AFB stood poised to remain a vital piece of the Albuquerque landscape and the nation's cutting-edge defense research and development industry. Upon activation, the Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center briefly became the parent organization for Kirtland AFB from March 31, 2006 to October 1, 2015, after which Kirtland AFB came under the authority of 20th Air Force and Air Force Global Strike Command. While assigned to the AFNWC, the 377 ABW continued its host responsibilities for Kirtland AFB. The New Mexico Air National Guard's 150th Fighter Group compiled a distinguished record of service through the decades, growing into a Fighter Wing before changing missions and undergoing a Total Force Integration with the 58 SOW, becoming the 150th Special Operations Wing on December 1, 2013.



North side of Kirtland AFB, with Wyoming Avenue on the right, 2002.

The dawn of the Global War on Terror following the attacks of September 11, 2001 ushered in a new era of increased security and operations tempo to Kirtland AFB. Military and civilian members who worked and trained at Kirtland AFB have served on countless deployments, in some cases giving their lives in service to the country.



**SSgt Christopher Frost, 377th
Air Base Wing Public Affairs, 4
May 1983-3 Mar 2008**



**SSgt Travis Griffin, 377th
Security Forces Squadron, 21 Jan
1980-3 Apr 2008**

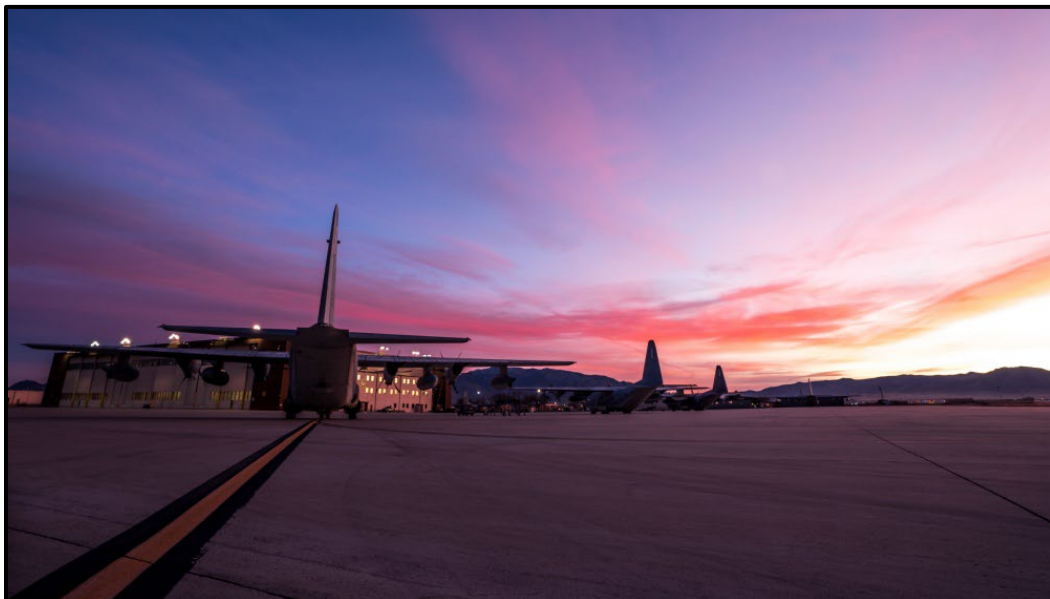


**Maj Steven Plumhoff, 58th
Special Operations Wing, 11 Mar
1970-23 Nov 2003**



L-R: SrA Jason Cunningham (27 Mar 1975-4 Mar 2002) and SSgt Anissa Shero (5 Oct 1970-13 Jun 2002). SrA Cunningham, a native of Carlsbad, New Mexico, completed pararesecue training at Kirtland AFB, and was posthumously awarded the Air Force Cross for providing life-saving medical treatment during the Battle of Takur Ghar, Afghanistan. SSgt Shero trained as an MC-130H loadmaster with the 58 SOW at Kirtland, and is the first female Airman to lose her life in combat operations during the Global War on Terror.

Kirtland Air Force Base Today



Sunrise on Kirtland Air Force Base, 2019.

Since 1993, the 377 ABW has continued its distinguished record of service, compiling four Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards in that time. During this period, Kirtland Air Force Base has

continually adapted to a fluid geopolitical landscape – from the base realignment and closures of the post-Cold War years, through the Global War on Terror of the 2000s-2010s. It supports training for the “quiet professionals” who perform special operations and personnel recovery at the tip of the spear, and critical defense organizations such as the Air Force Safety Center, Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center, the Air Force Operational Test and Evaluation Center, and the Defense Nuclear Weapons School.



The 377th Air Base Wing continues to provide dedicated nuclear enterprise readiness and installation support to Kirtland AFB and the members of Team Kirtland.



Air Force Safety Center and Air Force Inspection Agency.



Air Force Operational Test and Evaluation Center.



Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center.



Defense Nuclear Weapons School.

The 377 ABW works to adapt its operations within an uncertain global landscape where threats within the military “gray zones” of space, informational, and cyberwarfare, and the growing specter of further nuclear proliferation, have begun to emerge as primary national defense concerns. Locally, it has focused on issues such as environmental stewardship, energy sustainability, and infrastructure needs for a growing base and its tenants, along with the recent challenge of executing the mission under the recent cloud of a viral pandemic that began in March 2020. In October 2021, the 576th Flight Test Squadron at Vandenberg Space Force Base, California was reassigned to the 377 ABW, bringing the nation’s intercontinental ballistic missile testing program under the wing’s authority. Through innovation and engagement of the energies and dedication of its Airmen, the 377 ABW and Kirtland AFB will continue to serve as a beacon for dynamic military operations in the 21st century.

377th Air Base Wing Honors

Service Streamers:

Global War on Terrorism (GWOT-S)

Vietnam Campaign Streamers:

Vietnam Air	Vietnam Winter/Spring 1970
Vietnam Air Offensive	Sanctuary Counteroffensive
Vietnam Air Offensive, Phase II	Southwest Monsoon
Vietnam Air Offensive, Phase III	Commando Hunt V
Vietnam Air Offensive, Phase IV	Commando Hunt VI
TET 69/Counteroffensive	Commando Hunt VII
Vietnam Summer/Fall, 1969	Vietnam Ceasefire

Air Force Outstanding Unit Award:

8 Apr 1966 - 31 May 1967 (with Combat "V")
31 Jan - 31 Mar 1968 (with Combat "V")
1 Apr 1969 - 31 Mar 1971 (with Combat "V")
17 Jan 1972 - 28 Mar 1973 (with Combat "V")
14 Jun 1985 - 13 Jun 1987
1 May 1989 - 30 Apr 1991
1 Apr 2004 - 31 Mar 2006
1 Jul 2011 - 30 Jun 2013
1 Jan - 31 Dec 2016
1 Jan 2018 - 31 Dec 2019

Other Awards:

Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm: [8] Apr 1966-28 Jan 1973

Commanders

Albuquerque Army Air Base/Kirtland Field/ Kirtland Air Force Base:

Capt Albert D. Smith	15 Oct 1940
Maj Newton R. Laughinghouse	5 Mar 1941
Col Frank D. Hackett	18 Mar 1941
Col William B. Offutt	28 Sep 1943
Col Lewis W. Proper	20 Oct 1944
Col Frank A. Kurtz	1 Mar 1945
Col Alva L. Harvey	23 Oct 1945
Lt Col Delbert H. Hahn	15 Jan 1946
Lt Col McLyle G. Zumwalt	9 Dec 1946
Col Perry M. Hoisington II	20 Jan 1947
Col Howard G. Bunker	28 Apr 1947
Lt Col McLyle G. Zumwalt	11 Sep 1947
Col Harold A. Gunn	25 Jun 1948
Col Perry B. Griffith	27 Jul 1950
Col Harry G. Hamby Jr.	15 Aug 1952
Col Marion R. McCracken	1 Jun 1957
Col Carmel M. Shook	2 Jun 1961
Col Bernice S. Barr	1 Sep 1961
Col William H. Gauss	13 Jan 1966
Col John J. Dishuck	15 July 1966
Col Norman T. Kincade	12 Aug 1967
Col James T. Corn	1 Jan 1970
Col Charles G. Mathison	15 Oct 1970
Col James B. Myers	6 Oct 1972
Col Raymond H. Gilbert Jr.	1 Jun 1975
Col James B. Myers	1 Apr 1976
Col Archer L. Durham	1 Jul 1977
Col Jack W. Sheppard	21 Feb 1979
Col James N. Hockney	22 Jun 1981
Col Gary H. Mears	7 Jun 1982
Col David W. Scott	1 Jul 1983
Col Charles G. Thomas	3 Jun 1988
Col Thomas W. Sullivan	22 Jul 1988
Col Edward S. Brannum	14 Jun 1990
Col Gary C. Vycital	7 Jun 1991

377th Combat Support Group:

Col George Budway	8 Apr 1966
Col Grover K. Coe	8 Oct 1966
Col Farley E. Peebles	4 Oct 1967
Col Benjamin B. Shields	26 Jul 1968
Col Frank E. Marek	ca. Sep 1969
Col Harold E. Hobbs	31 Jul 1970
Col Charles D. Gunn Jr.	10 Jul 1971-16 Jan 1972

377th Air Base Wing:

Col Charles D. Gunn Jr.	17 Jan 1972
Col David A. Odell	27 Jun 1972-28 Mar 1973

377th Combat Support Wing:

Col Leslie A. Hobgood	14 Jun 1985
Col Eugene A. Lupia	28 Jul 1986
Col William D. Eckert	15 Jun 1988
Col Adelbert W. Carpenter	12 Jan 1990-1 May 1991

377th Air Base Wing:

BGen James L. Higham	1 Jan 1993
Col Felix Sanchez	6 Nov 1993
BGen Charles H. Perez	14 Feb 1994
Col Elizabeth A. Harrell	14 Jun 1995
Col Gary D. Dills	18 Nov 1996
Col Polly A. Peyer	2 Jun 1999
Col Jan D. Eakle	20 Sep 2000
Col Kathleen D. Close	25 Jan 2002
Col Henry L. Andrews Jr.	10 Jul 2003
Col Terrance Feehan	7 Jul 2005
Col Robert E. Suminsby Jr.	24 Jul 2006
Col Michael S. Duvall	22 Jul 2008
Col Robert L. Maness	16 Apr 2010
Col David J. Hornyak	30 Aug 2011
Col John C. Kubinec	19 Dec 2011
Col Tom D. Miller	11 Jul 2013
Col Eric H. Froehlich	21 May 2015
Col Richard W. Gibbs	16 Jun 2017
Col David S. Miller	21 Jun 2019
Col Jason F. Vattioni	22 Jun 2021

Bibliography

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Charles D. Beibel, *Making the Most of It: Public Works in Albuquerque During the Great Depression, 1929-1942*, Albuquerque, NM: The Albuquerque Museum, 1986.

Robert F. Futrell, "Development of AAF Base Facilities in the United States, 1939-1945," USAF Historical Office, 1951.

"Kirtland Air Force Base History" archive files, 377th Air Base Wing History Office.

Kirtland Air Force Base Newspaper Collections, 377th Air Base Wing History Office.

Periodic Histories of the 1606th Air Base Wing, 542d Crew Training Wing, 377th Air Base Wing, and Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center.



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History Office
377th Air Base Wing
Kirtland Air Force Base
New Mexico
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Current as of April 2022