

509 CIVIL ENGINEER SQUADRON



MISSION

The 509 Civil Engineer Squadron maintains and operates a 5,566-acre base complex. CE provides engineering, alterations and new construction, fire protection, disaster response and explosive ordnance disposal services.

The unit maintains 3.98 million square feet of real property worth \$1.8 billion, 43.83 miles of roads, 815K square yards of parking lots & driveways, and 1.756 million square yards of airfield pavement. Additionally, protects and conserves natural resources, produces 176 million gallons of drinking water and treats 189 million gallons of wastewater, supports 890 family housing units, 5 unaccompanied dormitories - 627 rooms and manages contracts in support of B-2, A-10, T-38, MQ-9, and UH-60 aircraft. Members of this squadron deploy worldwide in support of contingency operations and nuclear deterrence missions.

LINEAGE

Squadron C, 509th Airdrome Group designated, 3 Nov 1947

Organized, 17 Nov 1947

Discontinued, 1 Aug 1948

509 Installations Squadron, Bombardment, Medium constituted, 2 Jul 1948

Activated, 1 Aug 1948

Redesignated 509 installations Squadron, 16 Mar 1950

Inactivated, 8 Aug 1952

Redesignated 509 Civil Engineering Squadron and activated, 9 Nov 1967

Organized, 2 Jan 1968

Squadron C, 509th Airdrome Group and Redesignated 509 Civil Engineering Squadron consolidated, 3 Oct 1984. Consolidated unit designated 509 Civil Engineering Squadron

Inactivated, 30 Sep 1990

Activated, 1 Jul 1993

Redesignated 509 Civil Engineer Squadron, 1 Mar 1994

STATIONS

Roswell AAF (later, Walker AFB), NM, 17 Nov 1947 -8 Aug 1952

Pease AFB, NH, 2 Jan 1968-30 Sep 1990

Whiteman AFB, MO, 1 Jul 1993

ASSIGNMENTS

509 Mission Support Group

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Air Force Outstanding Unit Award

1 Jul 1973-30 Jun 1974

1 Jul 1977-30 Jun 1979

1 Jul 1981-30 Jun 1982

1 Jul 1982-30 Jun 1984

EMBLEM

Approved, 14 Jun 1994

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

It doesn't take much prodding for members of Whiteman AFB's base planning team to admit that, just a few years ago, the installation was seriously in need of a major makeover. Whiteman, it seems, was still wearing a Cold War era look, long after that style had gone out of fashion. It took 15 years and almost a billion dollars, but the makeover is almost complete. Instead of settling for off-the-rack designers created a customized look that not only brought the base up to date but made it a fashion leader. Like most Air Force bases, Whiteman was built during World War II. Wooden barracks and hangars that were only supposed to last about 10 years got a new lease on life as that war ended and the United States settled into a cold war with the Soviet Union. Those old wooden shacks were meant to be temporary, and they were still here after 50 years said Fred Peters, chief of facility

managers, 509th Civil Engineer Squadron. Whiteman, a Strategic Air Command base, got money for a new look in 1961 when it transitioned from a B-47 bomber mission to a nuclear missile mission. Millions of dollars poured into the western Missouri base, but the bulk of it went to build and maintain the Minute-man missile launch facilities that would dot the midwestern countryside. The missile sites were maintained in perfect condition said Sara Kelchner, Whiteman real estate officer. But on base nothing changed, everything was old.

Whiteman was responsible for 150 Minuteman missile silos buried in 14 counties throughout Missouri. Most of the missile crews, security police, missile maintenance, logistics and other support functions worked in a missile field that covered more than 10,000 square miles throughout the state. When you talk about visual-audio stimulus, well, when you came on base there was none said Tony Muelmeister, interior designer and base architect. It was almost like a deserted base. You would drive on and you really didn't see anybody. With mission focus aimed squarely outside the base, the core of the installation continued to age and deteriorate. Renovations kept buildings functional, but paint and siding were just extra layers of makeup on facilities long past their prime. When I got here in 1988 the thing they had most in the self-help store was ceiling tile said Eldon Hix, deputy base civil engineer. That was the roofing management program. Every time it rained; they gave everybody ceiling tiles. That's what they had money for.

Whiteman was in danger of becoming irrelevant. Poor facilities, an upcoming round of base closure studies and a thaw in the Cold War threatened the basis viability. In 1987, Missouri Rep. Ike Skelton pushed for, and won, a new mission for the base. In addition to its missiles, Whiteman would be the exclusive home to the newest aircraft in the Air Force inventory the B-2 bomber. Let's face it, with the age of the facilities we had and the condition of the infrastructure, Whiteman probably would have been a BRAC closure base had it not been for the B-2 mission said Ed Lenz, deputy chief of operations, 509th CES. So, as a civilian living in the area and working here, it certainly didn't hurt my feelings to see the new mission.

Whiteman began preparations for a dual mission, but just three years later, the United States and the Soviet Union signed the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty and both nations began significantly reducing the number of ICBMs in their inventories. For Whiteman, that meant the end of its missile mission. With attention now focused inward on the B-2 mission, base officials were forced to take a hard look at what they had. In addition to becoming old, the base had taken on a cold, industrial look. It had concrete alert facilities from the early Cold War days, a hodgepodge of building designs, power lines everywhere and a spider web of aboveground steam lines that stretched around the base and over roadways. The steam pipes were everywhere. That really was our landscaping at the time said Muelmeister.

The newest and most unique aircraft in the Air Force was due to arrive in 1993. Planners knew it would draw lots of attention and visitors to the base. They also knew it would bring military construction dollars. Instead of dressing up old facilities, they decided to start fresh. Almost every building and facility on base would be torn down and replaced over the next 10 years. You can't get everything at once, and you can't afford everything at once said Hix. But he added, it's always easier to get money than to execute it. So basically, we had to build a team that could actually execute money and execute it smartly and in a timely fashion. Whiteman's Military Construction budget averaged \$3-4 million before the B-2 announcement in 1987. The year after, it skyrocketed to about \$40 million and averaged \$40-60 million for about 10 years.

With funding secured, planners began developing a master plan to turn Whiteman into a premier

base with a premier mission. But coming up with a look everyone could agree on was easier said than done. In addition to base- planning committee members, input was provided by the air staff, the Army Corps of Engineers, SAC and Air Combat Command after it succeeded SAC in 1992. It was kind of tough initially because everybody had an opinion said Hix. a good example was coming up with curbs. We didn't have any curbs on the base at all, but there are a lot of curb shapes you can go with. For something that seems relatively mundane now, we probably spent 20 hours debating the right angle of attack for the snowplow.

By 1989 the master plan was completed. Whiteman would have a campus look with buildings that were modern, stylish and functional, but at the same time easy to maintain. I bought into what they were planning because I had spent enough time fixing things that needed to be fixed a long time ago said Peters. il could see where this thing was going. We could all see where this thing was going. That year, the makeover of Whiteman began. Construction started on the north end of the base and moved south in block-by-block increments, focusing first on the mission, then on the infrastructure. Most of the flightline area was redone and all but one hangar was torn down and replaced by new ones built to house and support the fleet of 21 bat-wing bombers. Fortunately, Whiteman still had a viable runway, although it required \$12 million in repairs.

On the main base, shabby chic was out and coordinated earth tones were in. we certainly didn't want apples, oranges, lemons and limes stuck everywhere said Muelmeister. Buildings were constructed with brown and reddish- brown brick and metal roofs and trim. whoever made the decision about the brick and metal made it in the interest of maintenance said Peters. il think they made a good decision and that's coming from a maintenance guy. Planners also cleaned up the overall look of the base by straightening roads to create long thoroughfares, planting trees and adding subtle landscaping.

Once we started having some success and meeting and exceeding the customer's expectations, everyone started giving us more and more local jurisdiction said Hix. that allowed us to get more creative and execute even better. Since 1988, more than \$700 million has gone into Whiteman's makeover and about 99 percent of the facilities on base are new. The largest project remaining is a \$100-million program to replace old base housing. Construction began in 2002 and should be completed by 2007. the frosting on the cake is to get that finished said Hix. Now that Whiteman is sporting a brand new look, it gets plenty of attention. But planners may have done their job too well. that's our main detractor in getting more money, said Hix. they say we've got nothing here that's broke. But they keep asking anyway because they know firsthand what will happen if facilities aren't kept up. if we do our job in expressing that to the command and maintaining our credibility, we won't let this infrastructure and these facilities deteriorate to the point where you have to spend millions said Lenz. Fashions are fickle, but the Whiteman team is confident they have a look that will stay in vogue for a long time. MSgt Michael A. Ward , Chief of Public Affairs for HQ AFCESA, Tyndall AFB, FL. 2003

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Sources

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