

3520 FLYING TRAINING WING

MISSION

LINEAGE

3520 Combat Crew Training Wing

Activated Jun 1951

3520 Flying Training Wing, (*Medium Bombardment*), 1 Apr 1952

STATIONS

Wichita (later McConnell) AFB, KS

ASSIGNMENTS

WEAPON SYSTEMS

B-47

COMMANDERS

Col Henry Spicer, 5 Jun 1951

Col Louis E. Coira, 1 Nov 1953

Col Lawrence C. Coddington, 16 Jul 1954

Brig General Kenneth O. Sanborn, 7 Apr 1958 1 Jul 1958

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

During 1952 ATC redesignated a number of its wings, as it reorganized its flying program under the Flying Training and Crew Training Air Forces.

3520 CCTW to 3520 FTW (Med Bomb) 11 Jun 52

Major Units Assigned To McConnell

3520th Combat Crew Training Wing, Air Training Command 5 Jun 51 - 15 Jun 58

The story of the 3520th Flying Training Wing (Medium Bombardment). Wichita Air Force Base, Wichita, Kansas, had its beginning shortly after July 1950, when our nation was drawn into the Korean conflict and had begun a concerted effort to establish a defensive air arm of the United States Air Force. In these early months of Korean fighting. Colonel Paul Tibbets, famed air officer who made the first A Bomb drop on Japan, was sent to Wichita as commanding officer of project WIBAC (Wichita Boeing Airplane Company). His mission was testing the B-47 Stratojet. Colonel Tibbets had not been in Wichita long when a board of officers in Washington, planning the use of the B-47, sent for him to get his opinion on the advisability of locating an air base at Wichita for training combat-ready crews to fly the giant six-engine 92-ton Stratojets. Colonel Tibbets favored the plan and the board of officers reached a decision. Construction of an air base at Wichita was given the green light.

Selecting the actual site on which to build the world's first B-47 Stratojet bomber base was the next step. Wichita Municipal Airport was chosen as an ideal location because of its proximity to the aircraft factory producing the B-47. The Air Force met in conference with the Wichita Board of Park Commissioners and a fair price for the municipal airport property was agreed upon. Condemnation proceedings followed and the Air Force took possession of the property on June 1, 1951. Four days later, on June 5, the new Air Training Command base was activated as a member of Flying Training Air Force and was designated the 3520th Combat Crew Training Wing. The new base was commonly known as Wichita Air Force Base and it contained some 2,500 acres of land in addition to an administration building and flying facility improvements. Command of the installation was given to Brig. Gen. (then Colonel) H. R. Spicer.

Following acquisition of the Wichita Municipal Airport property the Air Force was faced with several problems. They could not immediately occupy either the administration building or the land. The administration building was being utilized by several commercial airlines.

Arrangements had been made prior to the condemnation proceedings to let the airlines use the building until a new municipal airport could be built. As for moving on the land, this was an immediate impossibility until construction of living quarters was completed. The only solution was to lease land and buildings with which to set up temporary base operating facilities. During this early period temporary base installations were literally "scattered to the four winds." The Air Force leased the J & L Building (Johnson and Larimer) in downtown Wichita and proceeded to establish temporary Wing Headquarters and student classrooms in the building. Land was

leased north of Wichita Boeing Airplane Company. On this land some 174 tents were put up to house Air Force personnel until dormitories were constructed on the base. A small fire tower was also erected. In a short time the tent area became known as "Tent City." Storage space was leased in the Forum Building in Wichita and a training aids section was set up in a leased building on the west edge of the city near the Arkansas River.

Weather initiated the new base with one of the wettest periods in Kansas history. Forty-six and seventy-two hundredths inches of rain had fallen as of September 30, 1951. The average precipitation for the area is 30.11 inches. This extremely inclement weather made living in "Tent City" most unpleasant. Mud, rain, and wind plagued Air Force personnel during the summer months. Then as the winter season moved in, cold weather and snow added to an already unpleasant condition. Base personnel, however, did a commendable job in going ahead with the training mission. By late November 1951, "Tent City" days came to an end and Air Force personnel moved into modern new dormitories on the base.

On April 1, 1952, the 3520th Combat Crew Training Wing ceased to be a part of Flying Training Air Force and became a member of the then newly established Crew Training Air Force under Air Training Command. The new base was redesignated as the 3520th Flying Training Wing (Medium Bombardment) and it became known as Wichita Municipal Airport rather than Wichita Air Force Base. The new base was made with the commercial airlines at Wichita Municipal Airport and old Wing Headquarters was moved out of the J & L Building into the administration building on the new base.

Classrooms were also moved to the newly constructed buildings on the base. Little by little base installations became consolidated. Moving from the J & L Building to the administration building, now known as the Terminal Building, was a big undertaking. A great number of Air Force vehicles and considerable work were required in making the move. Again Air Force personnel excelled in successfully completing a big moving job.

After overcoming these elementary obstacles, Wichita Municipal Airport literally mushroomed into existence. Seemingly overnight the small municipal airport on the Kansas prairie was transferred into an ultra-modern Air Force base. A continuing program of building progress began to show results. Visible on the 2,500 acre base today is a 500,000 gallon water tower, 28 modern dormitories, 10 miles of paved streets, a huge parking apron almost a mile long, a \$100,000 uniquely-designed chapel, a \$94,000 new service club and a mammoth warehouse having 160,000 feet of floor space. Wichita Municipal Airport (redesignated Wichita Air Force Base 15 May 1953) soon earned the reputation of being one of the most modern Air Force bases in the United States.

Wichita Air Force Base's training mission has progressed with the same swiftness as its building program. The 3520th Flying Training Wing (Medium Bombardment) is making an Air Force unit as precise and as smooth operating as the B-47 itself — the Stratojet combat crew. Students spend approximately 16 weeks in the advanced flying school in Wichita before returning to their own organizations.

Final assembly of the three-man Stratojet combat crew takes place over a six-week period climaxing much specialized training and experience. Before beginning the crew training phase the pilot and co-pilot must have completed ten weeks of transitional work in T-33 and B-47 ground and flight school. The third crew member, the observer, must have gone through a three-week course to become familiar with the Stratojet and the duties of his crewmates. Even before entering the Wichita program the B-47 crew trainees are far from being raw recruits.

To qualify for Stratojet training the prospective aircraft commander and his co-pilot must have logged many hours in four engine bombers. Often they are veterans of combat in World War II or Korea. The observer comes to Wichita armed with high altitude navigation and bombing ratings received after intensive training in Boeing-built TB-50's at Mather Air Force Base in California. The TB-50's are fitted with the intricate system for navigation and bombing which is found in the B-47.

General Spicer sums up the purpose of the crew training phase of the program by describing it as "the very heart of the school's mission in life. Training men as individuals is important," the General emphasized, "but training them to work as crews is vital." Wichita Air Force Base is one of the key installations of the Crew Training Air Force and the importance of its training mission is easily recognized when one considers the fact that the B-47 Stratojet is one of several planes currently capable of carrying the atomic bomb.

In charge of training at Wichita Air Force Base is Col. Louis E. Coira, commanding officer of the 3520th Flying Training Group. Colonel Coira is aided by Lt. Col. John R. McDonald, who handles flight training, and Maj. G. L. Brownlee, who directs academic work. "The program is designed," Major Brownlee said, "so that the ground school stays a few steps ahead of flight training. The schedule is flexible enough to allow for adjustments caused by bad flying weather and other delays."

work for the pilot and co-pilot phases of the training include jet flying, physiological indoctrination, T-33 systems, B-47 systems, B-47 performance, instrument flying and synthetic flying. Synthetic flying includes work in the C-11A jet fighter flight trainer and in the new B-47B Flight Simulator. The B-47 trainer has a fully equipped Stratojet cockpit and simulates normal and emergency engine, flight and communications operation, as well as assisted take off (ATO) and procedures for refueling in air.

Flight training for the pilot and co-pilot includes 36 hours with the T-33 jet trainer and 25 hours in B-47 transition flying. "This training is designed to take a highly skilled bomber man out of conventional planes and make him a jet man," Colonel McDonald said.

"The observer's first three weeks at Wichita generally covers the same course that the pilot and co-pilot take except to a lesser degree," Major Brownlee said, "and he doesn't take any work that concerns actual flying of the plane."

At the beginning of the crew training phase, the pilot, co-pilot and observer are brought together for the first time. They had been earmarked previously for this particular crew by the Strategic Air Command which coordinates the program to the B-47 production rate so that a finished crew and a finished plane will be ready for assignment at the same time. "This eliminates the chance of a trained crew growing cold by being unable to practice on a combat-fitted plane," Colonel Coira said. "It also prevents a finished B-47 remaining unused for want of a crew."

In the final phase, the crew, as a unit, is trained in bombing, gunnery, navigation, cruise control and instrument work. Importance of the instrument training is illustrated by the fact that the pilot has 150 instruments to watch while the other crew men each have 125 indicators to be observed.

When the course is completed the crew picks up a new Stratojet and is assigned to a combat unit with the Strategic Air Command.

In 1951, the Air Force decided to take up permanent residence in Wichita and established Wichita Air Force Base. The airport administration building served as the new headquarters while still handling civilian air traffic. This time, the Air Training Command's 3520th Combat Crew Training Wing (CCTW), under the command of Colonel H.R. Spicer, began training Boeing B-47 Stratojet bomber aircrews. For the first six months after the activation, a "tent city" housed assigned personnel. This "city" consisted of 174 tents, a fire tower and a few leased buildings in Wichita. One major piece of construction was the base chapel dedicated in August of 1952. Refurbished several times over the years the building is still in use today. From 1954 to 1956, a \$22 million construction program turned the old airport into one of the Air Force's major bases. These improvements included 495 Capehart-style housing units, ten miles of paved streets and two hangars. Other improvements included clubs, theater, commissary, bank, hospital and Base Exchange. In 1958, the 4347 CCTW, under SAC, replaced the 3520th.

USAF Unit Histories
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Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.
Unit yearbook. *3520th Flying Training Wing (MB), Wichita Air Force Base, KS. 1953.*