

# **3610 NAVIGATOR TRAINING WING**

## **MISSION**

## **LINEAGE**

3610 Navigator Training Wing  
Discontinued, 1 Jul 1962

## **STATIONS**

Harlingen AFB, TX

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

## **WEAPON SYSTEMS**

## **COMMANDERS**

Col James FL Olive, Jr., @1956  
Brig Gen Norman L. Callish, @1959

## **HONORS**

### **Service Streamers**

### **Campaign Streamers**

### **Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

### **Decorations**

## **EMBLEM**

## **MOTTO**

## **OPERATIONS**

The primary mission of Harlingen Air Force Base is the training of qualified junior officers and aviation cadets in the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate an aircraft, and in the

responsibilities required of an officer in the United States Air Force.

After completion of training at this base, cadets are commissioned second lieutenants. Officers and cadets graduating from the program receive their silver wings as navigators and are then assigned to various Air Force commands throughout the world. Initially activated in the spring of 1941, seven months before Pearl Harbor, Harlingen Army Air Field opened its gates as an aerial gunnery school, training gunners for B-24 aircraft. In less than a year, Harlingen had tripled its original student load, and by 1 July 1944, had graduated 33,058 qualified gunners.

One year later, the mission of the base was changed to that of training gunnery students for the more modern B-29 aircraft.

Then, on October 16, 1945, Harlingen's gates were closed by General Order Number 63. It wasn't until seven years later, on 1 April 1952, that HAFB was reactivated as an Advanced Observer Training School for the United States Air Force.

From 1945 until reactivation in 1952, the city of Harlingen had administrative control over facilities at the airfield. More than 200 families were living on the base, six manufacturing firms were in operation, and Trans-Texas Airways, Airnews, Inc., and several crop-dusting companies were flying from the runways

Designated as an Advanced Observer School, the mission was soon changed to that of Primary Observer Training, Basic (BOC), and 1952 construction plans altered to suit the new program.

The first class of aviation cadets arrived 27 June, 1952 to begin the 28-week course. On 27 May 1953, the mission of the base was redesignated Primary Observer Training (POC), and one month later, a total of 493 cadets and three student officers had completed the program, and were entered into the course of Basic Observer, Navigator (BON), started on 8 July.

In April 1954, the course Primary-Basic Observer, Cadet (PBOC), was established at Harlingen. Its purpose was to qualify Aircraft Observer Pre-Flight graduates and non-rated officers as Aircraft Observers, with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate an aircraft utilizing all navigational aids.

In March 1955, the Basic Observer Navigator (BON), course was phased out. A year later, in the fall of 1956, the course originally known as Primary-Basic Observer, Cadet (PBOC), was redesignated Primary-Basic, Navigator (PNB). The 3610th Aircraft Observer Training Wing became the 3610th Navigator Training Wing-present tenant of HAFB, and primary source of Air Force navigators.

Between April 1952 and April 1959, Harlingen Air Force Base graduated 9,092 navigators. Of these, 6,478 were aviation cadets, who in addition to receiving their navigator wings were commissioned as second lieutenants in the United States Air Force. The remaining 2,614 were student officers. During this same period of time, over 300,000 hours were flown by Harlingen

Air Force Base personnel with an aircraft accident rate of 1.9 accidents for every 100,000 hours flying time, as compared to an overall Air Force accident rate of 12.0 accidents for every 100,000 hours of flying time.

The navigational training course at Harlingen enables graduates to navigate aircraft anywhere in the world. In the program of instruction, the student learns to plan navigational phases of a mission, using technical equipment, drift-meters, compasses, sextant, radio and radar equipment, maps, and various flight publications. He learns to employ basic navigation aided by map reading, celestial observations, and electronic devices. He learns to furnish flight data for pilot and crew members, and to perform in-flight maintenance of navigational electronic equipment.

Air Training Command discontinued its 3610<sup>th</sup> Navigator Training Wing and subordinate units at Harlingen AFB, Texas, on 1 July 1962. At the same time, the command placed Harlingen on inactive status.

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On 1 April 1952, ATC activated Harlingen AFB, Texas. At the same time, the command established the 3610th Observer Training Wing at Harlingen.

USAF 3610th Observer Training Wing  
Class 54-11 "Dr Ahead"  
1954 Yearbook - Harlingen Air Force Base, Texas

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#### Sources

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