

## TINKER AFB HISTORY

In October 1940, as German troops rolled through Europe and Japan expanded its empire, a dozen Oklahoma City businessmen formed the Oklahoma Industries Foundation to attract a bomber base, an aircraft plant or an air repair depot to the area. Their efforts proved successful when the War Department announced, on April 8, 1941, Oklahoma City as the site of a new air materiel depot that would cover more than 1,500 acres and employ 3,500 people. Construction on the new Midwest Air Depot began on July 18, 1941. Since the airfield was not ready for occupancy until March 1, 1942, official depot operations began in a downtown office building on January 15, 1942. Just eight days later, Oklahoma citizens learned that the Army Air Forces had decided to build a huge Douglas Aircraft Assembly Plant next to the depot.

Maj. Gen. Clarence L. Tinker, an Oklahoma native and part Osage Indian, lost his life while leading a group of LB-30 bombers on a mission against the Japanese in the region of Wake Island on June 7, 1942. Accordingly, Gen. H.H. "Hap" Arnold ordered the installation named Tinker Field on Oct. 14, 1942. During World War II, more than 18,000 military and civilian employees repaired and modified B-17, B-24 and B-29 bombers as well as C-47 and C-54 cargo planes. They also overhauled thousands of aircraft engines and shipped supplies around the world. Meanwhile, the Douglas Plant, employing close to 24,000 people, produced more than 5,300 C-47 Skytrain aircraft and parts to build 400 C-54 Skymaster cargo planes and 900 A-26 Invader attack bombers.

At the end of the war, the Oklahoma City Air Depot acquired the adjacent Douglas Plant complex and moved new workloads into the facilities after the War Department declared Tinker Field a permanent air base. Renamed the Oklahoma City Air Materiel Area (OCAMA) on July 2, 1946, the depot continued work on bombers, engines and aircraft parts and played an important role in supporting the Berlin Airlift. Following the creation of the Department of the Air Force in 1947, the installation officially became Tinker Air Force Base on January 13, 1948.

In the 1950s, Tinker AFB modified and repaired the B-29 Superfortress, the B-47 Stratojet, and the C-97 Stratofreighter. In 1953, OCAMA's engine line became 100-percent jet propulsion. Throughout the decade, the depot performed maintenance on such powerplants as the J47, J57 and J75. In the mid-50s, Tinker assumed management responsibility for the KC-135 Stratotanker and the B-52 Stratofortress, and in 1959, completed maintenance of its first B-52 and KC-135 aircraft. With the increased importance of OCAMA in the national defense network, the base soon grew and expanded its western boundary from Air Depot Boulevard to Sooner Road. The area later housed a new chapel, hospital, dormitories, enlisted and officer clubs, and modern military family housing.

In the 1960s, Tinker accelerated production due to the Cuban Missile Crisis and the continued Cold War. Soon, OCAMA shifted its focus to support the Vietnam War and Tinker AFB became an inland aerial port for Southeast Asia activities. In January 1968, Tinker employment reached an all-time high of 24,778 civilians and 4,404 military

members assigned to OCAMA and its associate organizations.

Tinker AFB gained new work in the 1970s as skilled employees repaired F-4 and F-105 fighter jets as well as the A-7 attack aircraft and the new TF41 engine. OCAMA became the Oklahoma City Air Logistics Center (OC-ALC) on April 1, 1974. The next year, the OC-ALC assumed management responsibility for the E-3 Sentry aircraft and the 552<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Warning and Control Wing activated its units at Tinker AFB on July 1, 1976.

In the 1980s, the OC-ALC added management responsibilities for the B-1 Lancer and B-2 Spirit bombers and completed maintenance work on its first B-1 in 1988. More depot work on the F101, F107, F108 and F110 engines started in the mid-1980s along with management responsibilities for a host of engines. Despite a near disastrous fire in Bldg. 3001 in November 1984, ALC workers continued their support of warfighters throughout the world.

Even as Tinker people prepared to celebrate the golden anniversary of the airfield, they supported the war efforts of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm in 1991. A year later, the Navy's Strategic Communications Wing ONE completed its move to Tinker, the first time a Navy wing had relocated to an Air Force base. In 1993 and 1995, Tinker and Oklahoma City survived rounds of base closures, becoming one of three remaining ALCs. After terrorists bombed the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in downtown Oklahoma City, Tinker people provided humanitarian support and relief efforts. Base workers responded in a similar fashion after a May 3, 1999, tornado destroyed homes and businesses throughout central Oklahoma and damaged the northwest section of the base. The decade ended with the 1999 announcement that Tinker and the OC-ALC had won the largest-ever public-private competition for an engine workload. It would be transferred from the closing ALC at Kelly AFB, Texas.

With the dawn of a new century, Tinker AFB celebrated its role as the premier U.S. Air Force propulsion facility with the official transition of the new Fighter Propulsion Division from Kelly AFB on Sept. 1, 2000. Then on Sept. 11, 2001, after foreign terrorists hijacked civilian airliners and crashed them into the World Trade Center in New York City, the Pentagon in Washington D.C. and a field in Pennsylvania, Tinker workers responded by providing support to U.S. troops at home and abroad in Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. As in all previous wars and conflicts, the spirit of Oklahoma and America's military resolve could be vividly seen at Tinker AFB.

## **CHRONOLOGY OF TINKER AIR FORCE BASE**

### **March 8, 1941**

Army Air Corps site selection committee arrived in Oklahoma City to inspect possible locations for a repair depot.

**July 18, 1941**

The massive construction project on the new Midwest Air Depot began south of Southeast 29th Street.

**March 1, 1942**

The depot received a new name, the Oklahoma City Air Depot, and the installation was officially activated.

**December 13, 1943**

Tinker employees overhauled the first B-29 Superfortress and installed extra fuel tanks on 104 aircraft for "flying the hump" from India to Burma to China.

**August 17, 1945**

The Douglas Aircraft Plant ceased production after producing 5,345 C-47 cargo planes and several months later, Tinker assumed command and jurisdiction of Bldg. 3001 and other Douglas buildings.

**April 22, 1947**

The Tinker Management Association came into existence and several months later the Tinker Employees Credit Union became incorporated.

**October 12, 1948**

A group of Tinker employees, led by Tinker Commander Maj. Gen. Fred Borum, departed for Burtonwood, England, to provide maintenance organizational support for the Berlin Airlift.

**December 31, 1952**

OCAMA began work on the last R3350 engine at Tinker, the 38,635<sup>th</sup> such engine overhauled.

**November 4, 1955**

The base dedicated the newly extended north and south runway and six days later the first B-52 landed at Tinker.

**February 28, 1958**

The first major building project in the new Area E, west of Air Depot, began with a construction contract for a base hospital.

**October 22, 1962**

In response to the Cuban Missile Crisis, OCAMA accelerated B-52, KC-135 and engine maintenance and modification schedules.

**April 1, 1966**

Employees moved into a 121,000-square-foot addition to Bldg. 3001, OCAMA headquarters.

**January 21 and 24, 1970**

The base opened a new noncommissioned officers' club and a new officers' club in Area E at a combined cost of \$924,000.

**April 1, 1974**

After 28 years, OCAMA became the Oklahoma City Air Logistics Center.

**March 23, 1977**

The first Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) E-3A aircraft arrived at Tinker.

**April 27, 1981**

The space shuttle "Columbia" landed at Tinker on the back of a Boeing 747. Over 200,000 sightseers greeted the spacecraft.

**November 12, 1984**

A major fire began on the roof of the north end of Bldg. 3001 that resulted in damages of more than \$100 million.

**March 23, 1988**

The base officially welcomed the first B-1B "Lancer" aircraft to Tinker.

**August 1990**

With the beginning of Operation Desert Shield, Tinker associate units deployed and the base's aerial port began moving cargo and passengers to the area of responsibility.

**November 7, 1991**

Local dignitaries celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Tinker's construction with the unveiling of a state historical marker on base.

**May 29, 1992**

The Naval Strategic Communications Wing ONE relocated to Tinker, a first in the annals of the Navy and Air Force.

**September 30, 1994**

Under the two-level maintenance concept, the OC-ALC became the largest intermediate jet maintenance center in the world.

**April 19, 1995**

Tinker units aided in the rescue efforts at the bombed Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City.

**June 1995**

The Base Realignment and Closure Commission voted to keep Tinker AFB and the OC-ALC open, but to close ALCs in California and Texas.

**September 14, 1996**

During a special ceremony at Tinker, the U.S. Air Force named the 11<sup>th</sup> B-2 the "Spirit of Oklahoma."

**March 30, 1998**

Tinker hosted and honored nearly 100 former "Rosie the Riveters" who had worked at Tinker Field and the Douglas Plant during World War II.

**February 12, 1999**

OC-ALC and Lockheed Martin won the Kelly AFB, Texas, engine workload competition, ensuring the continued growth and importance of the OC-ALC.

**May 3, 1999**

A historic tornado wiped out parts of nearby Moore, Del City and Midwest City and destroyed the northwest portion of Tinker. Tinker personnel assisted in the community recovery efforts.

**September 11, 2001**

The OC-ALC and tenant units responded immediately to the attacks of the World Trade Center Towers and the Pentagon by supporting efforts to defend the homeland against future terrorism.

**2002 and Beyond**

Base units continue to aid in the eradication of terrorism, supporting Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom and others around the world.