



UNIT HISTORY  
902ND AIR FORCE UNIT  
MAXWELL AFB  
ORLANDO, FLORIDA

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P.R.C.

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INTRODUCTION

The 932d AAF Base Unit (Orlando Army Air Base) is now a team. Two and one-half months have elapsed since the activation orders were published. There is still much to be accomplished, but the fundamental policies and procedures have been pretty well established. Therefore, it would seem appropriate at this time to backtrack a few years in the history of the Orlando Army Air Base in order to show the developments which lead up to the establishment of the present organization.<sup>1</sup>

At the outbreak of the present war, the Army Air Forces took over the Municipal Airport of the City of Orlando. Land was leased and purchased around the airport and runways were constructed to handle all types of tactical aircraft, then employed by the Army Air Forces. Six five-thousand-foot (5000) runways were built. There were two North-South runways, two East-West, one Southeast-Northwest and one Southwest-Northeast. The original area occupied by the base was approximately one mile square.<sup>2</sup>

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1. This Introduction is written from the personal observations and experiences of the writer. It is more in the nature of a "behind the scenes" narrative, than a chronological assembly of recorded information.
2. See numbers 1 and 2 in aerial photograph (appendix 87).





The Base Area is just west of the city limits of Orlando. It was built on land that was covered with Southern Pines, live oaks, orange groves and a dairy cow pasture. It was bounded on the east by woods, on the South by orange groves and a fair-sized lake, on the West by suburban homes and a dairy farm and on the North by small homes along the Orange Highway, which leads from Orlando to the East Coast of Florida.<sup>3</sup>

Early occupants of the new Base included Anti-aircraft battalions, Signal Corps battalions, and reconnaissance, medium and heavy bomber groups. They used the field as a staging area before going overseas. Most of these organizations had left in early 1942. Some of the heavy bomber personnel were transferred to the Second Air Force in the Pacific Northwest as cadres for organizations to provide training for B-17 groups which later went to England and North Africa. The early Air Corps units were not operational and their stay was brief.

The first real activity of this Base came with the transfer of the 50th Pursuit Group from Key Field, Meridian, Mississippi. This group was formed from the 1st Pursuit Group, at Selfridge Field, Michigan. It later became known as the 50th Fighter Group (Special).

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3. See aerial photographs (Appendix 87) and map of Central Florida (Appendix 90).



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The purpose of setting up a fighter group on this Base was twofold. First, both the East and West Coasts of the United States were vulnerable to attack from enemy planes and this location was easily accessible to both the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts of Florida. Also, the Fighter Command School was established at the Fairgrounds in Orlando.

The purpose of assigning the Fighter Command School to this area was to provide a year-around center for the training of controllers, filter officers and other personnel to be used in directing fighters for the purpose of defense. This called for signal air-warning battalions, searchlight battalions, fighter control squadrons and fighter squadrons.

The first major function of the School, as has been previously stated, was to train Fighter Control personnel. Many of the first key personnel had commercial telephone experience in civilian life. Our own Fighter Control experience was meager. Therefore, it was necessary to call in our British Allies for assistance.

At the time that the School was first opened, the word "Radar" was something to be spoken behind closed doors. It was the main weapon that kept the United Nations alive during the early years of the war and it has steadily increased in importance as both a defensive and offensive weapon.

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Radar had its origin in this country. Several California scientists explored the use of radio waves as a means of effecting "blind" landings for aircraft on fog-bound fields and also for the detection of physical obstacles to airborne transportation. The British perfected it and put it to use as a means of immediately locating and identifying, from the ground any aircraft entering a fixed aerial sector. The course and speed of the aircraft could be accurately determined and location was plotted on an operations board. Control Officers were able to alert fighter planes and send them up to intercept unfriendly aircraft. This eliminated the costly air patrol and was the true birth of Fighter Control from ground installations.

The British personnel who helped set up the Fighter Control Course were the first of our Allies to visit this installation. Since that time, and up to the present date, the Air Force installations at Orlando have played host to groups and individuals representing practically every one of the United Nations.

The Base was not large enough to hold all of these activities. The school was set up in the buildings of Exposition Park in downtown

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Orlando. The display buildings were augmented by the use of hutments. In order to provide housing for the units at the Base, which were both tactical and school, it was necessary to acquire additional space.

Construction in the area on the east side of the Base, known as Signal Hill, was completed in the summer of 1942. Three additional areas were also added. Tent City No. 1, four blocks south of the housing area on the Base, was used for signal air-warning troops; and Tent City No. 2, northeast of the Base on the other side of Cheney Highway, was used to house fighter control personnel. Additional land was added on the west side to provide more space for the Station Hospital.<sup>4</sup>

The summer of 1942 saw the start of the real tactical training program in the Orlando area. The 50th Fighter Group (Special) had two squadrons equipped with P-40's and a concentrated program of training began. Fighter pilots and ground crews, Signal Corps radar and search-light personnel, fighter control officers and men all became familiar with their duties. Trained personnel left to accompany new units overseas and were replaced by new personnel.

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4. See aerial photograph (Appendix 87).





Fighting men must shoot accurately as well as fly and march with precision. Therefore, training ranges had to be provided. A rifle range was set up about three miles Southeast of the Base. Firing-in butts were built on the field to assure accuracy of the fighter planes' guns. A bombing and ground gunnery range was built in the Ocala National forest--approximately 60 miles North of Orlando, and a water bombing area was established off the Gulf Coast of Florida--West and Northwest of Orlando.

The Orlando area became a beehive of activity. Fighter pilots chased each other through the Florida skies at the direction of controllers and their students. The dark of night was disturbed by the roar of fighter planes and searchlight crews searching and tracking targets. Signal Corps men donned field dress, strung wire, set up communications and radar stations all over central Florida. The Orlando Army Air Base was born.

The threat of possible hostile invasion was still present, so the Base went into hiding. Runways, white buildings with green roof-tops--even the land itself--became objects for the attention of the Engineers. Paint, shrubbery and dummy buildings were used to hide the creations of man from the eyes of possible enemy planes. Skillful application of





paint spray-guns made young orange groves appear on runways and taxi strips. Scrap lumber appeared on the field in the form of dwarfed barns and farmhouses. Planes were dispersed and slit trenches and bomb shelters were incorporated into the camouflage scheme for protection. Air raid sirens were installed and, at frequent intervals, sent personnel scrambling to dispersal areas and brought forth Negro Engineer Troops in armed half-tracks. These were all practice, but they gave valuable training to personnel who were soon to go overseas to actual combat areas.<sup>5</sup>

As has previously been stated, the 50th Group had three squadrons, two of which were equipped with P-40's. However, these were single-seat fighters. The enemy flies at night. So, the third squadron, which was greatly overstrength, was moved to Signal Hill. The personnel were divided into the 348th and 349th Night Fighter Squadrons.

These new squadrons received an allotment of A-20, Douglas Light Bombers. The English called them the "Havoc." However, these planes were not for bombing. The nose, where the bombardier sat, was closed up and airborne radar equipment was installed. Thus modified, they became

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5. A comparison of aerial photos (appendix 87 and 89) will give a good idea of the camouflage of the field itself. There is also a photograph (Appendix 88) which shows the buildings on the Base, prior to the camouflage painting.



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known as F-70's. Teams of pilots and radio observers were formed for shipment overseas.

This was the start of the Night Fighter training for the AAF. Many such teams were needed. Therefore, facilities had to be increased once more. This next move called for a new landing field. The new field was built Southeast of Kissimmee, which is 20 miles South of Orlando. The 349th was moved there and the field used for RTU training of the crews that were checked out and indoctrinated by the 348th at Orlando.<sup>6</sup>

The acquisition of Kissimmee Army Air Field, to the Orlando Area command, was the forerunner of many such satellites. The flying area for the School ran about 15 miles East of Orlando, North about 120 miles to Gainesville, West to a line approximately 25 miles out in the Gulf of Mexico and South to Tampa. Soon this area was dotted with flying fields and radar sites. The early type radar stations were limited in performance and range. Therefore, what they lacked in quality had to be made up in quantity. The number of these reporting radar sites was too great to be handled by one control center. This brought about the establishment of the Control Area at Leesburg, 34 miles E-SE of Orlando. Day and Night Fighters could then be controlled over the entire School Area.

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6. See location of Kissimmee AAF on map (appendix 90).

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Toward the end of 1942, living and flying accommodations were becoming exceedingly crowded. The Base could no longer handle all the planes or personnel, and the Fairgrounds area was practically bursting at the seams. Streets, between the Base and town, were giving way to the constant pounding they received from military vehicles carrying personnel and equipment between the two areas. It was necessary to branch out.

Young fighter pilots, fresh from training, and combat pilots from the Pacific were beginning to swell the ranks of the flying personnel. In December, the cadre of the 355th Fighter Group was assembled from key personnel of the 50th and some of the other organizations in the area. This group left early in 1943 for Baltimore and Philadelphia. There they went through their staging operations and then to England to fly P-47's as escort for the 8th Air Force "Heavies." It is fitting to note, at this time, that when the smoke of battle had died down in Europe, the 355th stood in third place in the AIC for the total number of confirmed victories. They had a total of over 800 enemy aircraft to their credit.

At the close of 1943, the program for this area was greatly expanded. The AAF School of Applied Tactics was planned. In addition, a test program was set up for the AAF Board. This all necessitated purchase and lease of additional property.<sup>7</sup>

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7. See Appendix 41 through 47 for present and past statistics on AAFCAF Courses.



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An area of approximately 3½ square miles was acquired North of the Base and just across the Cheney Highway. Buildings were of cinder and concrete blocks set in orange groves and pine trees. Most of them were one-story, but there were also a number of special building such as auditoriums and hangar-type buildings for large classes.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to the School, this New Area provided for warehouses, cold storage facilities, and ammunition dumps. These facilities were located in the Southwest portion of the New Area. In the Northeast part of the New Area, a 600-bed Regional Hospital was constructed.

New air fields were constructed all over Central Florida to handle a vastly enlarged training and testing program. Plans were underway for a demonstration air force. The key positions were to be held by personnel who had actual combat experience. They were to prepare model installations and organizations which, after careful testing, would be used as guides for similar Air Force organizations throughout the world.<sup>9</sup>

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- 8. See aerial photos of entire area and also of the New Area (Appendix 88 and 89).
- 9. The map (Appendix 90) shows all of the principal installations acquired.

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The increase in planes necessitated enlargement of the maintenance and supply facilities of the 85th Sub-Depot at the Orlando Air Base. These facilities were used to care for the requirements of the entire area. The 355th Fighter Group left early in 1943. The Night Fighter Squadrons (the 348th and 349th) were placed under the new 81st Night Fighter Division and the fighter squadron designation, which had been used to start the Night Fighters, was returned to the 50th to give them a total of three operational squadrons.

Signal Corps personnel were cut to a bare operational minimum and the balance were either sent overseas or absorbed by Air Corps units. The first contingent of WAAC personnel arrived to learn the duties of Fighter Control personnel. However, they were not the first feminine students. In the summer and fall of 1942, Canadian Womens' Auxiliary personnel were trained at the Fair Grounds.

The types of planes were increased by the addition of heavy, medium, light, and dive bombers, as well as troop carriers. Most of these planes were based at satellite fields. The 50th Group Headquarters and one squadron (the 81st) were moved to Signal Hill and remained on the Base for the first part of 1943. The Base was too crowded for the other squadrons because the 9th Bomb Group (H) had been formed. Key positions were held by personnel

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who had returned from the 19th Group in the Southwest Pacific. This brought B-17's to the Base, in addition to the fighters and night fighters.

The other two squadrons of the 50th were moved to outlying fields. This was primarily for a tactical dispersal, rather than space saving. The advent of 1943 brought Group Cadre Training and the real start of the AAF School of Applied Tactics. The idea behind this movement was to bring the key officer and enlisted personnel, of the many new fighter and bomber groups, together and give them a thirty-day concentrated training course. These cadre courses started, usually, every two weeks. The cadres of two fighter groups, for example, were given two weeks of classroom instructions and lectures. After this training, they were absorbed into the 50th Fighter Group organization for two additional weeks. Here they flew and worked on tactical missions which were set up to simulate actual combat conditions.

This was the reason that the squadrons of the 50th were dispersed. The 10th Squadron went to Zephyrhills, Florida, about 60 miles Southwest of Orlando. The 313th went thirty-four miles Northwest to Leesburg. Both of these installations were arranged to simulate combat conditions. As has been stated, the 61st and Headquarters remained at Orlando. The missions flown included escort, reconnaissance, ground support and strafing.

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As soon as the cadres finished this portion of their course, they joined the rest of their groups for staging and overseas assignments.

The Night Fighters started forming squadron cadres and shipping them overseas. In January 1944, the remaining personnel were transferred to California to do all of their training on the West Coast. Searchlight and controller missions were taken over by the 50th Group.

Newer and faster fighter planes began to roll off the assembly lines in the latter part of 1942. Acceptance tests were run on these planes at Wright Field, Dayton, Ohio. They were then tested at the AAF Proving Ground at Eglin Field, Florida. As a further check, the AAF Board had them tested for combat suitability. The 50th Group was chosen for this latter series of tests because it was the most stable and experienced of the fighter groups remaining in this country.

The pilots and ground personnel started tactical tests and trials of the Republic P-47, which was developed from the old P-43. These tests were performed for the AAF Board under the direction of the Fighter Development and Test Section. This Section was located on the Main Base and was organized with the assistance of RAF personnel who had done similar work for the British.

The addition of the test work was too much to be handled by the 50th Group along with the cadre training. Therefore, a new squadron was

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formed to handle test work exclusively. This was known as the 445th Fighter Squadron (TE). It was given a twin-engine designation both for the purpose of handling of P-38's and to provide additional personnel and grade allowances for the test squadron.

It might be well, at this point, to explain the rather brief mention of the 9th Bomb Group (H) and other bomber activities. The writer of this history was connected principally with fighter units and this introduction is written from his personal observations and experiences. It is not meant to be a detailed account of the Command history. Rather, it is an attempt to present the reader with a general background of the growth of this Base in order that the present-day problems and policies can be better understood.

The bomber cadre training policy closely followed that of the fighters. The classroom and practical training were similar. Their stay at this Base was, for the most part, rather brief. The group was formed in November 1942. The 1st Bomb Squadron (H) went to Brooksville Army Air Field at that time. This field is about 75 miles West of Orlando. The 5th Squadron went to Pinecastle (formerly known as Orlando #2) in April 1943, and the 99th Squadron went to Montbrook Army Air Field,

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about ninety-five miles North-west of Orlando, in February 1943. The 430th, which was the heavy bomber test squadron, remained at this base until January 1944.

The test programs conducted by the 430th Bomb Squadron (H) and the 445th Fighter Squadron (F), combined with the few remaining P-70's of the Night Fighters, really gave the Base a cosmopolitan air. The bomb squadron used the latest type B-17's and B-24's. The fighters presented several different series of P-38's, P-39's, P-40's, P-47's and P-51's during the period of March to November 1943. To add to this variety, the 445th acquired several auto-Cyros, BT-13's and a dozen A-24's in October. Of course, there was a covey of L-3 and L-4 liaison planes to provide transportation to the satellite fields.

The AsF Board was moved into the New area in 1943. (This is what is now the Headquarters area, but in normal conversation it is still referred to as the "New Area.") A display building was set up in the Warehouse Area to show the contents of Equipment Kits, covered by various Technical Orders, to students attending the School.

The Supply and Maintenance Section which was made up of all types of supply services, as well as the 25th Sub-depot, was really taxed to maintain and supply all of the types of planes, vehicles and organizations

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within the command. The 91st Service Group was organized and then very effectively hidden in the woods about seven miles North of Leesburg in a spot called Orange Home. This Group serviced planes and equipment for the installations in the Northern part of the School area.

A mobile Quartermaster Depot was housed at Minorville and an Ordnance Depot was set up at Cetha, West of Orlando. These two mobile depots serviced the outlying fields. The 14th Service Depot, at Pinecastle, provided engineering and maintenance for the fields through the 91st Service Group at Leesburg. All of these facilities were on a "field" basis and rounded out the simulated combat conditions for the School.

The School moved to the New Area, or Headquarters Area, in the Spring of 1943. The Ninth Bomb Group (H) operated under the Bombardment Department, the 50th Fighter Group (CI) operated under the Air Defence Department, through the Orlando Fighter Wing, and the 91st Service Group operated under the Air Service Department.

The Air Support Department had two installations. A Troop Carrier Squadron was located at Dunsellon. This Squadron did experimental work on air evacuation of wounded in the latter part of 1943 and early 1944. The Alachua Army Air Field, at Gainesville, was the temporary home of

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the 415th Bomb Group (D), which was composed of the 465th Bomb Squadron (L) and the 667th Bomb Squadron (D).

The Base name was changed, in 1943, from Orlando Air Base to AAWSAF Air Base. In June, the 50th Group and the 81st Squadron were moved off the Base. The 50th Headquarters went to Alachua Army Air Field at Gainesville and the 81st Squadron was moved to Cross City Army Air Field, about one hundred twenty-five miles Northwest of Orlando. This left the Base with the 445th Fighter Squadron, the 430th Bomb Squadron and the 348th Night Fighter Squadron as occupants.

In October 1943, about a dozen A-24's were transferred from the 415th Group to the 445th Fighter Squadron. These planes were further assigned to D-Flight, which later became known, in November, as the Tow-target Detachment of the 445th. The Night Fighters moved to California and the Tow-target Detachment, made up of personnel drawn from the squadrons of the 50th Group, took over the target assignments for the Controllers Course of the School and Night Searchlight Assignments for the Anti-aircraft Course. The A-24's were first augmented with P-70's and these were later replaced with AT-11's, with special airborne radar equipment.

In November, the 313th Fighter Squadron was moved from Leesburg to the Keystone Army Air Field, one hundred miles North of Orlando in Northern

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Florida. The 445th was moved to the Leesburg Army Air Field. The Tow-target Detachment was left at this Base, however, with the 430th Bomb Squadron.

This was at the time that AAFSAT became strictly a school function. The AAF Tactical Center was formed with a Tactical Air Division. The advanced echelon of the TAD was at Gainesville with the 50th Fighter Group Headquarters and the 3rd Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron (P-39's) and the 415th Bomb Group (D). The rear echelon of TAD was at the Headquarters Area in Orlando and operated the 445th at Leesburg and the 10th at Zephyrhills, through the Orlando Fighter wing, which was also training Controllers and Filter Officers. The 313th and 81st operated under the advanced echelon of TAD through the 50th Group. The object of this entire arrangement was to provide demonstration units for the School of Applied Tactics.

This plan was scrapped in February 1944. The organization had become too large and unwieldy for its purpose. Outlying units were drawn in closer to the Orlando center. The Air Forces had achieved their maximum goal of groups for overseas shipment. Therefore, the cadre training program was dropped for the fighters, heavy bombers and service groups.

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The 50th Group, with the 10th, 313th and 81st Squadrons, returned to the Base at Orlando which was then known as the APTAC Air Base. At the same time, the 445th returned from Leesburg and the Tow-target detachment once more became E-Flight under direct control of the Squadron. The 50th began staging for overseas duty and filled up the 10th, 313th and 81st with key enlisted personnel from the 445th. Their planes (P-47D's) were turned over to the 445th for disposal and they left for New York in March.

From New York, the 50th went overseas to England (the last complete group to leave the States) and became a part of the 9th Tactical Air Force. They were the first fighter group over the Normandy Beach Head on D-Day and continued close support of our ground troops until the fall of Germany. Many of their personnel have returned to this country and the group, as a unit, is to be redeployed to the Pacific, after a short stay in this country. They are now a fighter-bomber group and have received two Unit Citations.

In March 1944, there were three principal organizations: The AAF Tactical Center; The AAF School of Applied Tactics; and The AAF Board. Two fighter units (Squadrons) were based at Signal Hill, and D-Flight,

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of the 445th, was combined with the APTAC Flight Section and based on the West side of the Base. The Transient Aircraft Section was also on the West side of the Base, South of Base Operations.

The old 445th was one of the fighter units and the other, a single engine (P-47) squadron, was made up of personnel from the old 3rd Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron (P-39's) which had been based at Gainesville. Both fighter squadrons flew scramble missions for Controllers and the 1158th (445th) continued tests for the AAF Board. The P-63 (Bell "Kingcobra") was tested here in the Spring of 1944. This plane was never used operationally by the United States Army Air Forces, but it was used by the Russians who obtained the planes under Lend-Lease.

In February, many of the personnel of the 9th Bomb Group (H) and the 415th Bomb Group (D) were used as a nucleus for the two remaining satellite fields - Pinecastle and Kissimmee.

All tactical units were placed under the Tactical Wing (previously known as the Orlando Fighter Wing). This was a composite wing under AAF Tactical Center. It had four principal functions. First - it performed tactical tests and trials on all types of equipment and organizations for the AAF Board and the Army Air Forces. Second - it was to train

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Very Heavy (E-29) Group Cadres. Third - it was to train Controllers and Filter Officers. Fourth - it was to run missions and put on special ground and aerial demonstrations for the School of Applied Tactics.

In order to carry out these missions, the Tactical Wing had ten squadrons. The Headquarters Squadron and the Control Squadron were located at the Headquarters Area of the Base. The Control Squadron furnished the personnel and equipment to maintain all the facilities required to train the Controllers and Filter Officers and to control missions in connection with the Anti-aircraft program.

The two fighter squadrons, previously mentioned, were located at Signal Hill on the Base. A Warning Squadron was based at Ocoee, fifteen miles West of Orlando, to maintain the five remaining ground radar sites.

During the process of organizations, the Tactical Center had acquired a "Wavy." This was an Air-Sea-Rescue Squadron located at Cedar Keys, about one hundred five miles Northwest of Orlando, on the Gulf Coast. This Squadron was used for rescue and training purposes and also for maintenance of water-bombing targets such as air-controlled target boats. This was another part of the wing.

The Kissimmee Army Air Field, which had been abandoned by the Night Fighters, had one medium bomb squadron and one light bomb squadron.

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Pinecastle, which has a 10,000 foot North-South runway, housed two heavy bomb squadrons. One squadron was equipped with B-17's. The other, which was to train the B-29 cadres, was equipped with B-24's.

In March, of 1944, all organizations became "School Squadrons." In May, they were all changed to "Base Units." In June, the principal organizations retained their "Base Unit" designations and their subordinate units became lettered "Sections." The "Section" designations, of the subordinate units, were changed to "Squadron" designations in July.

The "Base Unit," as it is used in the present organization of the 902d AAF Base Unit, really came into being in September and October 1944. The medium bomb squadron was moved from Kissimmee to Pinecastle, where it became a heavy bomb squadron using both B-17's and B-24's on special radar projects. The light bomb squadron, equipped with A-20's and A-26's remained at Kissimmee.

The plan was to set up a test organization of a "Base Unit" on the "Three Directorate System." Kissimmee and Pinecastle were made satellite fields for AAFTAC under direct control of the Tactical Wing. Kissimmee was used as the "guinea pig" in this project because it was a smaller field and could accommodate fighters. On 6 September 1944, the 904th



AAF Base Unit, Fighter, was established at Kissimmee. Squadron E, Fighter (SE), of the Tactical Wing moved from this Base to Kissimmee and Squadron F, Fighter (TF), moved there on 2 October.

Squadron L, Bomb (L), Squadron E, Fighter (SE) and Squadron F, Fighter (TF), furnished practically all of the personnel of this experimental "Base Unit." A Base Headquarters was set up on the "Three Directorate System" using the old "Fighter Group T/O" as a manning table guide for personnel and equipment. The three tactical squadrons were then stripped down, just above their "Air Echelon T/O and T/L," and the balance of the personnel and equipment was transferred to Base Headquarters.

A Headquarters and Facilities Squadron (Squadron K) was formed for the Base personnel. The theory behind this organization was to have all 2nd and 3rd echelon maintenance done by the Base Unit Facilities Squadron. A unit personnel section was formed to take care of record work which had formerly been done in the squadrons. The purpose of this whole plan was to make all tactical squadrons completely mobile. If the plan were properly carried out, the air echelon of any fighter squadron could be moved onto any base, having a "Fighter Base Unit," and become operational immediately.



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The Kizirnee trial was not wholly successful. A brief picture of one branch will show some of the flaws. The Intelligence Branch can serve as a good example. Under the old Fighter Tables of Organization, certain duties were assigned to each Squadron Intelligence Section and personnel, of special qualifications, were assigned to carry on these duties. The "air echelon" called for a Captain (1300) as Squadron Intelligence Officer and Staff Sergeant (831) as Chief Intelligence NCO. The ground echelon had a First Lieutenant (1311) Assistant Squadron Intelligence Officer and a Sergeant (345) Draftsman and a Corporal (405) Clerk-Typist. This provided ample personnel, when properly trained, to carry out the duties assigned to the Squadron Intelligence Section.

Under the trial organization, as has been stated, the "ground echelon" was to be incorporated into the Base Unit Intelligence Branch. A Sergeant (405) was added to the Squadron "air echelon." However, the Base Unit Intelligence Branch was not sufficiently staffed with personnel to handle the duties performed normally by the Squadron "Ground Echelons." Therefore, those duties were turned back to the squadrons but no personnel were added.

These comments and illustrations are not offered in the form of censure of policies, but rather as constructive criticism which may serve

[REDACTED]

to improve efficiency and avoid future mistakes. Each task must be carefully analyzed as to time, personnel and equipment required to complete the mission with the greatest efficiency. Allowance must always be made to have properly trained assistants available to take over in case of leaves, furloughs, passes or sickness. No section should ever be so stripped of personnel that the absence of one person can render it partially or totally inoperative.

After the two fighter squadrons left Orlando, Squadron H, the AFTAC Flight Section remained. Base Operations took care of the Transient Aircraft Section and, in February of 1945, a Foreign Operations Section was added to service planes and personnel of the Gypsy Task Force of the Second Air Force. Demonstrations were still controlled for AAFSAT from this Base. A more complete description of these demonstrations will be taken up in a later monthly history.

On 15 March 1945, the Tactical Wing was dissolved. The 903rd AAF Base Unit (Pinecastle Army Air Field) and the 904th AAF Base Unit (Kissimmee Army Air Field) became separate bases under the AAF Tactical Center. However, this Base still had to provide certain maintenance and service facilities to them because they were not completely self-sufficient.

[REDACTED]

This brings to a close the introductory portion of this History. No mention has been made of any headquarters organization actually preceding the 902nd AAF Base Unit (Orlando Army Air Base). This is because, prior to 15 March 1945, no such organization really existed. For the first time, all of the varied military activities in the Orlando Area were brought together under one unit for administration, supplies and facilities. Duplicating functions have been combined or eliminated and the whole structure has been streamlined.

Once again the reader is reminded that this introduction is not a complete history of the Orlando Army Air Base to the present date. It represents the personal recollections of the writer and is included to give a general background of activities in the past at this Base.

[REDACTED]



During May the Training Branch received \$900.00 from the Central Post Council. Initial purchase was two sections of bleachers for the baseball field.

Coordination of requirements, requests, distribution, allocation and use of Training Aide devices is under authority of the Director of Operations and Training.

All pilots assigned to O&B are required to take the Instrument Pilot Training Course, or as much as is necessary to obtain an Instrument Pilot's Certificate. Aircraft of Squadron II (Flight Operations), 902d AAF Base Unit, are utilized for this training. Pilots assigned or attached to O&B are examined by a Board appointed by the Base Commander.

One of the outstanding features of the Chemical Warfare Program is the 3-12 Demonstration, which is a two-hour presentation of Chemical Warfare weapons and agents, and defenses against chemical attack. An exhibit of Chemical Warfare offensive and defensive material is available in Building T-1069, in charge of the AAF School.

The Base Chemical Officer supervises the Chemical Warfare Program of the various Base Units and, by means of frequent inspections,





determines the Unit Gas personnel's ability to defend themselves against attack and their proficiency in waging offensive warfare.

All Ranges assigned to CAAB are controlled and supervised by the Range Section Chief, who directs preparation for target practice and/or projects. Repair and maintenance of range facilities, targets and target equipment are his responsibility.

Early in May, preliminary survey was completed in preparation for construction of a bull's-eye and marker circles on the north target, Ocala Bombing Range.<sup>16</sup> Tanks to be utilized as targets for the 3-13 (TAF) Demonstration were transferred to the Orlando Range and elevated on mounds in order to be more easily seen by spectators.<sup>17</sup> They replace the cloth dummies formerly used, and are far more effective.

Chemical and Ordnance Demonstrations conducted for the AAF School are planned and supervised by the Chief, Demonstration Section, who maintains close liaison with the AAF Center Demonstration Section in planning, supervising and writing directives for all demonstrations.

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16. This range is located about 65 miles North of Orlando. See map, Appendix 90.

17. This range is located S-SE of Orlando and is referred to as the Pinecastle Range on map, Appendix 90.



[REDACTED]

On 11 May, a highly successful small-arms familiarization demonstration was conducted for aero-medical students of AMF&AT.

Demonstrations 3-10, 3-12, and the first phase of the 3-13 were conducted Saturday, 19 May, from 1400-1800, for the benefit of United Nations Air Attaches. The exhibitions were excellent, marred only by failure of the personal address system.

The 3-13 Demonstration was held 1 June for the AAF Board Conference. Because of a very low ceiling and the planes' subsequent inability to take off, it was necessary to cancel the first half--defensive phase-- of the Demonstration. The ground activity was carried out, but suffered from the lack of sufficient aircraft. The Ordnance Demonstration was entirely successful.

A Tactical Air Force Demonstration was staged 21 June for Senior Officers, ANSCOL, and visitors. One flaw in the exhibition was failure of an A-26 to spray ER in the chemical offensive, because of line trouble at Kissimmee.

Under the threat of an approaching hurricane, representatives of the various squadrons met 22 June with the Director of Personnel and Administration to confer relative to the new Base Regulation on Hurricane