



COLLINS

MILITARY

**MILITARY**

*Mississippi's military, as established in Article 9 of the Mississippi Constitution of 1890, serves under command of the Governor as Commander-in-Chief who, in turn, appoints the Adjutant General to serve as executive director of the Mississippi Military Department.*

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*Camp Shelby, Hattiesburg*

## MISSISSIPPI MILITARY DEPARTMENT

The Mississippi Military Department is part of the Mississippi executive branch, and is a State agency. The Adjutant General of Mississippi (TAG) serves as the executive director and is only subordinate to the Commander-in-Chief, the Governor of Mississippi, in matters relating to the department and the state militia forces. As such, the Adjutant General is a political appointee and serves at the will and pleasure of the Governor, and his term of office expires with the term of the Governor.

The Mississippi Code of 1972, Title 33, Chapter 3, titled "Military Affairs," details the duties and responsibilities of the Adjutant General of Mississippi, as well as the Assistant Adjutant Generals, Army and Air.

The Adjutant General of Mississippi, via the Mississippi Military Department, is expressly authorized to "issue such orders, rules and regulations as may be necessary

in order that the organization, training and discipline of the components of the militia of this state will at all times conform to the applicable requirements of the United States government relating thereto. Orders, rules and regulations issued hereunder shall have full force and effect as part of the military code of this state."

Mississippi's militia forces formally break down into three broad classes: The Mississippi National Guard (MSNG), the Mississippi State Guard (MSG), and the unorganized militia. The Mississippi National Guard and the Mississippi State Guard are considered organized militia. The Mississippi National Guard is the most recognizable military force within our state borders.

The Mississippi National Guard, consisting of the Army and Air National Guard, is primarily a federally-funded and equipped



militia force serving a dual-mission: service to the state in times of emergency as declared by the Governor; service to the nation in times of national crisis or war, typically as declared by Presidential executive order (Hurricane Katrina, Korea), Congressional Declaration of War (World War II), or Congressional Authorization of the Use of Military Force (Vietnam, Afghanistan). The Army and Air National Guard are both components of the United States Military Reserve system.

The Mississippi State Guard is most closely aligned with the traditional concept of state militia: members are volunteers, self-equipped (armed only under special circumstances, as defined in law), can only operate within the borders of the state, and are unpaid unless activated to assist or backfill the Mississippi National Guard.

The Guard has a long history of service in "homeland defense." The Mississippi Emergency Service Medal has been authorized for more than 49 different operations, including: 14 hurricanes; seven floods; five tornados; and numerous civil disturbances ranging from the textile strike in 1934 to civil strife in the 1960s.

In 1927, Mississippi Guardsmen patrolled 70 miles along the flooded Mississippi River Delta, rescuing, evacuating and providing encampments for more than 30,000 refugees.

From September 30 to October 9, 1962, President John F. Kennedy federalized the entire Mississippi National Guard in connection with the integration of the University of Mississippi.

In October 1962, a major portion of the Mississippi Guard also responded to a major chlorine spill at Natchez.

The state and federal missions collided for the first time 42 years later: Operation Iraqi Freedom and Hurricane Katrina. With more than 3,000 Soldiers and Airmen overseas, the Mississippi National Guard led a historic response in 2005 to the worst natural disaster to hit the United States.

As threats to and within our state change, so does the Guard. The Mississippi National Guard's 47th Civil Support Team was certified

in October 2006. This full-time unit's sole mission is to respond to weapons of mass destruction threats within the state. They are fully equipped, fully funded, and serve under the control of the governor.

Emergency service at home is, by no means, an easy mission. By nature, it invokes emotional involvement, it requires separation from loved ones, and it demands the same professionalism and courage required by the federal mission.

The Mississippi National Guard has served in the Creek War, War of 1812, Mexican War, Civil War, World Wars One and Two, Korea, Operation Desert Storm, Haiti, Bosnia-Kosovo, Somalia, Operation Noble Eagle, Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation New Dawn.

The Mississippi Dragoons, under Maj. Thomas Hinds, demonstrated the fighting spirit and resolve of the Mississippi Militia during the War of 1812.

The 1st Mississippi Regiment of Infantry, the "Mississippi Rifles" under the command of a young colonel named Jefferson Davis, turned the tide at the Battle of Buena Vista during the Mexican War. Colonel Davis's command "STAND FAST MISSISSIPPIANS" remains the motto of the Mississippi Army National Guard's oldest unit, and the Army's sixth oldest active regiment, the 1st Battalion, 155th Infantry.

In less than 30 minutes at the Battle of Shiloh during the Civil War, the 6th Mississippi Infantry lost 300 of 425 men, the fourth highest loss suffered by a southern regiment in a single battle.

In July 1917, the entire Mississippi National Guard was called into service for World War I. Included in the call-up were two regiments of infantry, one regiment of field artillery, nine troops of cavalry, and one company of engineers. The first African-American registrants were also drafted for training.

Mississippi's oldest Air National Guard unit, the 186th Air Refueling Wing in Meridian, was activated at Key Field on September 27, 1939, as the 153rd Observation Squadron. Less than 13 months later, it was ordered into active service.

The Guard was activated again for war on

November 25, 1940, and served with honor on battlefields throughout Europe and the Pacific. The 31st Infantry (Dixie) Division was again called on to serve in the Korean Conflict. Almost 95 percent of the Mississippi National Guard units were mobilized.

In July 1953, the Mississippi Air National Guard's 172nd Airlift Wing was formed at Hawkins Field in Jackson. It is recognized as the first Air National Guard unit in the nation to use night photo reconnaissance, the first ANG unit to have an aeromedical evacuation mission, and the first Mississippi National Guard unit to enlist females.

During Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm, Mississippi was the largest National Guard contributor to the war effort. Over 6,500 Mississippi National Guard members, representing 70 units and 57 communities, served on active duty during the Persian Gulf Crisis, with more than 1,300 deployed to Saudi Arabia.

In support of Operations Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan), Iraqi Freedom, and New Dawn, the Mississippi National Guard has mobilized over 10,000 service members, with every deployable unit participating.

From protecting the skies over Washington D.C. with the 1st Battalion, 204th Air Defense Artillery; to patrolling the streets and conducting historic elections with the 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team in Iraq; to hunting the Taliban in Afghanistan with the 2nd Battalion, 20th Special Forces Group; to conducting theater-level logistics for all of Southwest Asia with the 184th Sustainment Command; and to conducting combat aeromedical evacuation missions with the 172nd Airlift Wing, the Mississippi National Guard continues her faithful service the citizens of Mississippi and the United States of America.

## **MS ARMY RESERVE NATIONAL GUARD**

### **Command: JFH, MSNG (-) & Overhead (6)**

JFH, MSNG (-) & Overhead  
47th Civil Support Team  
102nd MPAD  
Recruiting & Retention  
41st Army Band  
154th Regiment RTI

### **Command: 66th Troop Command (12)**

66th Troop Command  
1-111th Aviation Battalion  
1-151st Aviation Battalion  
1-185th Aviation Battalion  
1-204th ADA (Avenger)  
168th Engineer Brigade  
185th Theater Aviation Brigade  
2/20th Special Forces Group  
210th Finance Battalion  
232nd AOD  
Co C (-), 1-114th Aviation Battalion  
Special Operations Detachment (SOD) South

### **Command: 184th Expeditionary Sustainment Command (1)**

184th Expeditionary Sustainment Command

### **Command: 155th Heavy Brigade Combat Team (8)**

155th Heavy Brigade Combat Team  
106th Brigade Support Battalion  
1-155 Combined Arms Battalion  
1-198th Armor Reconnaissance Battalion  
155th Brigade Special Troops Battalion  
155th Brigade HQ & Headquarters Co.  
2-198th Combined Arms Battalion  
2-114th Field Artillery

## **AIR NATIONAL GUARD**

172d Airlift Wing  
186th Air Refueling Wing

## **SPECIAL FORCES**

### **DET 1-2/20th Special Forces Group (Airborne)**

The soldiers who make up the 2nd Battalion, 20th Special Forces Group (Airborne) of the Army National Guard are unique professionals with an unconventional method for waging war and an innovative approach to serving their state and country.

Known as the "quiet professionals," these Special Forces soldiers radiate an aura of

competence and reserve. After being tested in every type of hazardous environment and through dangerous, unconventional, direct action and counter-terrorist missions around the world, the quiet men of the Special Forces have no need to broadcast their deeds, their record speaks for itself.

### **MISSISSIPPI STATE GUARD**

The mission of the Mississippi State Guard is to establish and maintain an all-volunteer formal military organization as the state's reserve to the Mississippi National Guard (MSNG). The State Guard is to assist the Mississippi National Guard with in-state missions, as directed by the Governor and the Adjutant General of Mississippi. The State Guard is tasked with assuming the mission of the Mississippi National Guard should they be fully mobilized outside the state. The State Guard is similarly tasked with securing armories, providing assistance to

Guard families, and assuming other duties until the full mobilization ceases. State Guard personnel may, at the request of the Adjutant General of Mississippi, be trained in the protection of life and property of the citizens of Mississippi due to natural disasters.

The U.S. Constitution, U.S. Code, Title 32, Section 109, authorized the states to organize a State Defense Force (SDF) as provided by its laws. The Mississippi Code of 1972, Chapter 5, paragraph 33-5-1 thru 33-5-53 authorizes the establishment of the Mississippi State Guard.

The State Defense Force concept came into prominence when the National Guard was called up to serve in World War II.

The State Guard was most recently called to duty to assist with relief efforts associated with Operation Secure Magnolia – Hurricane Katrina (2005) & Operation Secure Magnolia – Hurricane Gustav (2008).



*Changing of the Guard, 184th Expeditionary Sustainment Command*

## **Adjutant General MAJOR GEN. AUGUSTUS L. COLLINS**

Major General Augustus L. "Leon" Collins is the Adjutant General of Mississippi and serves as the Commanding General of both the Mississippi Army and Air National Guard. He is responsible for providing the State of Mississippi and the United States of America with a ready force of more than 12,275 Citizen Soldiers and Airmen, equipped and trained to respond to any contingency, natural or man-made. General Collins directs the Mississippi Military Department and oversees the development and coordination of all policies, plans, and programs of the Mississippi National Guard in concert with the Governor and legislature of the State.

General Collins began his career when he enlisted in the Mississippi Army National Guard's Company B, 1st Battalion, 198th Armor Regiment in March 1977. He was commissioned in July 1980 upon completion of Officer Candidate School. He has served in various command and staff positions in units at every level to include Company, Battalion, Regiment, Brigade, and the Adjutant General's primary staff in both a traditional and Active Guard Reserve status.

General Collins served on active duty in Operation Desert Shield/Storm, as well as commanding the 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team during combat operations in Operation Iraqi Freedom from 2004-2006. Collins was promoted to Brigadier General on May 10, 2005 while in Iraq, making him the first African American to attain the rank of general officer in the history of the Mississippi National Guard.

Following his deployment to Iraq, Collins was assigned as Director of Mobilization, United States Army Forces Command, Fort McPherson, GA. He held the post from February 2006 until he retired in October 2007.

Upon his retirement from the military, he was appointed by Governor Haley Barbour to serve as one of the three Commissioners for the Mississippi Worker's Compensation Commission. He held the post until July 2010 when he accepted a position with MINACT Incorporated where he served as the Executive

Vice President for Strategic Planning.

When Governor Phil Bryant took office in January 2012, he appointed Collins the Adjutant General of Mississippi. He was promoted to the rank of Major General on March 14, 2012.

Collins is a 2007 inductee into the University of Mississippi Alumni Hall of Fame. He was the 2006 Mississippi Trailblazer of the Year. He is a 2006 inductee into the Mississippi Military Academy Officer Candidate School Hall of Fame. He has twice been awarded the National Guard Bureau's Minuteman Award. He was awarded the Distinguished Citizen Award by Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc. in 2009. He was also the 2012 recipient of the Sam Haskell Spirit of America Award presented by the Mississippi Trailblazers.

His many military awards and decorations: the Legion of Merit, the Meritorious Service Medal, the Army Commendation Medal, the Army Achievement Medal, the Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal, the Iraqi Campaign Medal, the Mississippi Magnolia Cross, the Order of Saint George Medallion for excellence in Armor and the Combat Action Badge.

Collins currently serves on the Board of Directors of Friends of Mississippi Veterans and the Board of Directors for MINACT Inc. He previously served on the Mississippi Commission on Judicial Performance and the Governor's Commission for Physical Fitness and Sports. He is a member of the Beta Gamma Boule of Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity and was inducted into the National Collegiate Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi.

Collins is a member of New Hope Baptist Church in Jackson, where he serves on the Deacon Board.

Collins received an Associate of Arts degree from Northeast Mississippi Junior College, a Bachelor of Business Administration degree from the University of Mississippi, a Master of Business Administration degree from Jackson State University, a Master of Strategic Studies from the United States Army War College and has completed the General and Flag Officer Homeland Security Program at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government.

Collins is married to the former Debra Fitzgerald. They have two sons, William and Benjamin.

**ASSISTANT ADJUTANT GENERAL  
Brigadier Gen. Mitchell L. Brown**

Brigadier General Mitchell L. Brown was appointed Assistant Adjutant General – Army, in January 2012. As the Assistant Adjutant General, he guides the formulation, development and implementation of all programs and policies affecting the Mississippi Army National Guard and its nearly 10,000 citizen soldiers.

As an Enlisted Soldier, he served in Europe with the 1st Battalion, 68th Armor, in Vietnam with Company P, 75th Infantry (Ranger), and with the 2nd Battalion, 20th Special Forces Group, Mississippi Army National Guard. General Brown was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant, Infantry, on April 12, 1977, through the Infantry Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, Georgia. He has served in command and staff positions at every level, including Commander, 2nd Battalion, 20th Special Forces Group, Chief of Staff, State Area Command, Mississippi Army National Guard, and most recently as Director, Joint Staff, Joint Force Headquarters, Mississippi National Guard.

**ASSISTANT ADJUTANT GENERAL  
AIR NATIONAL GUARD  
Major General Catherine S. Lutz**

Major General Catherine S. Lutz is the Assistant Adjutant General for Air, Mississippi Air National Guard, also serving as commander, Mississippi Air National Guard. General Lutz is responsible to the Adjutant General for directing Air National Guard operations and establishing policy to ensure mission readiness of two airlift wings, combat readiness training center, air support operations squadron, air control squadron and civil engineer squadron.

General Lutz was commissioned in the Mississippi Air National Guard in 1982 as a Flight Nurse; and in 1987 she was re-commissioned as a Medical Service Corps

Officer. As a member of the Air National Guard, General Lutz commanded three units: an Air Expeditionary medical unit in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, an aeromedical evacuation squadron and a medical squadron. In 2004, she transferred to the Air Force Reserve Individual Mobilization Augmentee program after serving over 21 years in the Mississippi Air National Guard. During her Air Force Reserve tour she served as the Health Services Administrator to the 81st Medical Group at Keesler Air Force Base. In October 2005 she returned to the Air National Guard as Special Assistant to the Mississippi Adjutant General. In March 2006, she was assigned as the Air National Guard Assistant to the 59th Medical Wing at Lackland Air Force Base. On December 1, 2008, she served as the Air National Guard Assistant to the Chief Nurse of the Air Force at Bolling Air Force Base, Washington, District of Columbia. General Lutz was appointed to her current position in December 2011.

**STATE COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR  
Sergeant Major George M. Miller**

Command Sergeant Major George M. Miller was appointed as the 6th State Command Sergeant Major for the Mississippi Army National Guard (MSARNG) on December 3, 2010. As the State Command Sergeant Major, Miller serves as the Senior Enlist Advisor to the Assistant Adjutant General, Army, and to the Adjutant General of Mississippi regarding all enlisted-related matters, particularly in areas affecting soldier training and quality of life. He also travels with the Adjutant General visiting Mississippi Guardsmen deployed around the world, including Afghanistan and Iraq.

Command Sergeant Major George M. Miller began his military career on November 7, 1976 where he enlisted in the Mississippi Army National Guard, 123rd Medical Company, in Tupelo, Mississippi. He attended Basic Training at Fort Knox, Kentucky and Advance Individual Training at Fort Rucker, Alabama. During his military career he served with the 123rd Medical Company, 323rd Aviation Company, 1-185th Aviation Battalion



(Air Assault), 185th Theater Aviation Brigade, and 66th Troop Command.

Command Sergeant Major Miller served as the Command Sergeant Major for the 1-185th Aviation Battalion (Air Assault), 185th Theater Aviation Brigade, and 66th Troop Command. He deployed in 2007-2008 with the 1-185th Aviation Battalion (Air Assault) to Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo as the Multi-National Task Force East Aviation Command Sergeant Major.

Command Sergeant Major Miller attended Saltillo High School and continued his education at Itawamba Community College. He completed his civilian education at the King School of Aeronautics in Nashville, Tennessee. Command Sergeant Major Miller is a 1997 graduate of the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy. Command Sergeant Major Miller was employed at the Army Aviation Support Facility for the past 28 years as an Aircraft Technical Inspector.

#### **COMMAND CHIEF Master Sergeant Ricky L. Myers**

Chief Master Sergeant Ricky L. Myers is the 10th Command Chief Master Sergeant for the Mississippi Air National Guard assigned to the Joint Force Headquarters, Mississippi Air National Guard, Jackson. Chief Myers is responsible for reviewing promotion, retention, and assignment policy affecting over 2,300 enlisted personnel; conducting counseling and interviewing sessions through a visitation program to 29 units; and identifying issues and recommending action directly to commanders. He is a liaison between the enlisted personnel, the Adjutant General and the Assistant Adjutant General for Air/Commander, Mississippi Air National Guard.

Myers began his military career by enlisting in the Mississippi Air National Guard on July 6, 1971, and has served in variety of positions throughout his career. After completing Basic Military Training at Lackland Air Force Base in Texas, he attended the Personnel Specialist Course at Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi. He accepted an Air Technician position as a Personnel Specialist

with the 186th Tactical Reconnaissance Group in November 1971. From June 1973 to October 1987, he served in numerous positions for the 186th, including: Career Control Technician, NCOIC of the Quality Force Section, Base Career Advisor, NCOIC of Personnel Utilization, and NCOIC of Customer Assistance. From April 1989 to January 2005, he served as the Military Personnel Flight Superintendent, 186th Air Refueling Wing. In January 2005, he was selected to serve as the Personnel Manager, Joint Force Headquarters, Mississippi Air National Guard.

Chief Myers resumed responsibility as the State Command Chief Master Sergeant for the Mississippi Air National Guard on May 1, 2010.

#### **COMMAND CHIEF Chief Warrant Officer 5 Howard E. "Gene" Touchstone, Jr.**

Chief Warrant Officer 5 Howard E. "Gene" Touchstone, Jr., was appointed as the 5th Command Chief Warrant Officer (CCWO) of the Mississippi Army National Guard on March 1, 2009. He serves as the Adjutant General's personal adviser on all Warrant Officer-related matters, particularly in areas affecting professional career management; recruiting, training, assignments and mentoring. His primary mission is to coordinate with the state military personnel office, the recruiting and retention office and subordinate commanders to implement a comprehensive Warrant Officer Recruiting Program. In addition, he establishes and maintains Warrant Officer mentorship and counselor programs within the state.

CW5 Touchstone is a 1970 graduate of Richton High School. He began his military career when he enlisted in the Mississippi Army National Guard on March 3, 1971. He completed basic training and Light Wheel Vehicle Driver (64C) advanced individual training at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. On October 8, 1975, he transferred to the Texas Army National Guard as an Administrative Specialist in Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 141st Infantry Battalion, Corpus Christi, Texas. He was discharged from the Texas Army National Guard on March 2, 1977.

## MILITARY INSTALLATIONS

### **CAMP MCCAIN TRAINING CENTER, Grenada**

Camp McCain is a Mississippi National Guard training site covering 13,000 acres. Training at the facility includes tank maneuvers, artillery training and general training for National Guard troops.

In 1942, the United States Army opened the major training facility on a 42,000-acre site in Grenada County. The facility was named Camp McCain in honor of a famous family of military men from neighboring Carroll County, including Carroll county native Major General Henry P. McCain. Troops for the Army's 87th and 94th divisions trained at Camp McCain before being sent into combat in Europe. At the peak of its expansion, Camp McCain served as many as 50,000 troops.

The US Forest Service permitted 5,874 acres to the Army in December 1942 to be utilized as the Oxford Bombing Range to provide the Army Air Forces with a site for testing bomb dropping mechanisms. In August 1943, the USFS permitted 30,617 acres (including the bombing range area) to the Army for use as a maneuver area for bivouac and maneuver purposes. The maneuver area remained active until 1947. Currently, most of the site is forest land within the Holly Springs National Forest.

Camp McCain also served as a prisoner of war camp for captured German soldiers, housing 7,700. The Camp closed on October 15, 1944, and all but 3,000 acres of the site was sold. The camp was deactivated after the war and most of the buildings were dismantled and some sold to municipalities and colleges.

Camp McCain today functions as an important Army National Guard training site, but with only one-tenth of its original area and capacity. In 1947, the Mississippi National Guard prevailed upon the U.S. Government to retain part of the camp for small arms training. The rifle ranges and 3000 acres were retained under state control, and the rest sold.

The Camp McCain Logistics division provides housing, subsistence, general supply,

fuel and ammunition. Camp McCain has facilities for over 1200 troops, including over 120 maid service beds, five dining facilities, classrooms, and administrative/supply areas. The Ration Breakdown Activity provides A-rations, operational rations, and ice. Camp McCain provides janitorial, kitchen and general supply for customer units. The Retail Fuel Point supplies JP-8. The Ammo Transfer Activity supports any and all ammunition that can be fired on Camp McCain.

The House of Representatives passed a defense appropriations bill in November 2001 which included \$6 million for the Mississippi Army National Guard for improvements to Camp McCain. The Fiscal Year 2002 Defense Appropriations Act contains \$3.8 million for the National Guard to upgrade Camp McCain Road and Greensboro Road. Another \$2.2 million will be provided for construction projects on the base. The work will include construction of a weapons cleaning facility, vehicle maintenance building, infantry live-fire range improvements, and work on roads leading to training areas.

Camp McCain has worked for 10 years on natural resource management. One of the main concerns at the facility was erosion control on tank and artillery training sites and roadside erosion. Scientists recommended and implemented erosion control practices, such as seeding and fertilization, on roadsides and training sites. Both techniques worked to increase plant cover, enhance wildlife foods and provide wildlife habitat. Through the diligent work of scientists and military personnel, 26 protected state and federally listed plants and animals, game species and more than 100 species of nongame birds now have a more suitable habitat.

### **CAMP SHELBY JOINT FORCES TRAINING CENTER, Hattiesburg**

The largest state-owned training site in the nation, Camp Shelby's wartime mission is to serve as a major, independent mobilization station of the United States Army Forces Command.

Established in 1917 and covering 136,000 acres, the Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center is the annual training location for

National Guard and Reserve units located in Mississippi, Alabama, and Tennessee. However, units from across the country also use its assets to support a variety of missions, hosting as many as 100,000 personnel each year.

The Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center was established during World War I and has served almost continuously since then as a training site.

The post was named in honor of Isaac Shelby, Indian fighter, Revolutionary War hero and 1st Governor of Kentucky, by the first troops to train here, the 38th Division.

The famous Japanese-American 442nd Regimental Combat Team and the 100th Battalion trained here in preparation for World War II. Women's Army Corps (WAC) units also trained at Camp Shelby. The post contained a large convalescent hospital and had a prisoner of war camp which housed soldiers of the famous German Afrika Corps.

During the Korean War, Camp Shelby was established as an emergency railhead facility. In the summer of 1954, non-divisional National Guard units trained at Camp Shelby. In 1956, it was designated a permanent training site by Continental Army. Over 5,000 troops were processed through Camp Shelby during Desert Storm operations.

#### **COLUMBUS AIR FORCE BASE, Columbus**

Established in 1941 as the Air Corps Advanced Flying School, Columbus AFB is now home to the 14th Flying Training Wing (14 FTW) assigned to the Air Education and Training Command Nineteenth Air Force. The 14 FTW's mission is to provide specialized undergraduate pilot training for U.S. Air Force and allied officers.

The commander of the 14 FTW is Col. Barre Seguin. The Command Chief Master Sergeant is Chief Master Sergeant Zefrem Smith.

The base closed after the WWII and remained inactive until 1951, when it was reopened as a contract flying school to train pilots during the Korean War.

About half the pilots in the Air Force today went through basic and primary flight training at Columbus AFB. Columbus AFB is home to the busiest military air traffic control

facility in the world.

Six months before the Pearl Harbor attack, the War Department announced a pilot training base would be established in Columbus. On August 12, 1941, Columbus officials leased the tract of land to the United States for \$1 per year. Columbus was initially assigned to the AAF Southeast Training Center with the Army Air Force Pilot School (Advanced Twin-Engine) activated (phase 3 pilot training). The school's mission was to train cadets to fly transports and bombers.

During World War II, the training load gradually increased until Columbus was graduating 195 pilots per month. A total of 7,766 students came to Columbus for pilot training during the war.

#### **KEESLER AIR FORCE BASE, Biloxi**

Keesler Air Force Base is a United States Air Force base located in Biloxi. Established in 1941 as Keesler Army Airfield, the base is named in honor of aviator 2nd Lt. Samuel Reeves Keesler, Jr., a Mississippi native killed in France during World War I.

The base is home of Headquarters, Second Air Force (2 AF) and the 81st Training Wing (81 TW) of the Air Education and Training Command (AETC).

On average, Keesler has 4,700 students on base at a time. Much of the training they receive is in the field of electronics, such as wideband maintenance, ground radio, information technology, avionics, cryptography.

The 81st Training Wing also trains personnel in the field of meteorology, to include observing, weather analysis and forecasting, radar operations, air traffic control, Aviation Resource Management (ARMS), and tropical cyclone forecasting.

The 81st Medical Group is also located at the base and operates the second largest medical center in the Air Force.

Keesler AFB is one of the largest technical training wings in AETC, with four training squadrons located in the training building complex known as "the triangle," the 334th, 335th, 336th, and the 338th.

The Tuskegee Airmen were trained at Keesler. In fact, more than 7,000 African-American soldiers were stationed at Keesler

Field by the autumn of 1943. These soldiers included pre-aviation cadets, radio operators, aviation technicians, bombardiers, and aviation mechanics.

In early 1956, Keesler entered the missile age by opening a ground support training program for the Atlas missile. In 1958, all control tower operator, radio maintenance, and general radio operator courses came under Keesler's already broad technical training roof.

During the early 1960s, Keesler lost many of its airborne training courses, but Keesler still remained the largest training base throughout the 1970s.

On August 29, 2005, Keesler sustained a direct hit from Hurricane Katrina, which made its third Gulf Coast landfall as a Category 5 storm approximately 30 miles (48 km) west. Although non-essential personnel and Hurricane Hunter planes had been evacuated in advance, "drastic damage" was sustained by the base's industrial and housing areas. Due to storm surge, about half the base was under water. By August 31, however, relief flights were landing at the base.

#### **MERIDIAN NAVAL AIR STATION, Meridian**

Naval Air Station Meridian is one of the Navy's two jet strike pilot training bases.

Commissioned in 1961, the Naval Auxiliary Air Station's operations area was named McCain Field in honor of the late Admiral John S. McCain, Sr. of Teoc.

Training Squadron SEVEN (VT-7) arrived at NAAS Meridian July 12, 1961, then split to form its sister squadron, Training Squadron NINE (VT-9) on December 15.

In September 1965, hundreds of planes from Florida bases arrived to escape the wrath of Hurricane Betsy. The Naval Auxiliary Air Station continued to grow, and by July 1968, the station became a full Naval Air Station.

In 1968, and again in 1969, 300 aircraft from Naval Air Station Pensacola, Florida arrived to escape the fury and destruction of Hurricane Gladys and Hurricane Camille, respectively.

In April 1973, President Richard M. Nixon, accompanied by Senator John C. Stennis and many other high-ranking military and civilian officials, attended the dedication of the new Naval Technical Training Center (NTTC). Known locally as the Stennis Center, it was officially commissioned April 17, 1974.

NAS Meridian was selected and upgraded to a Major Shore Command on October 1, 1982. In March 1984, NAS Meridian was one of 15 installations chosen for the Department of Defense Model Installation Program.

The Air Operations Department employs 230 military and civilian personnel to operate NAS Meridian/McCain Field and Naval Outlying Landing Field (NOLF) Joe Williams. Their primary mission is to support Commander, Training Air Wing ONE, the wing's subordinate training squadrons and its associated T-45 Goshawk aircraft in the conduct of undergraduate strike pilot training.