

# 703 STRATEGIC MISSILE WING (ICBM-TITAN)

## MISSION

## LINEAGE

703 Strategic Missile Wing (ICBM-Titan) established, 5 Sep 1958  
Activated, 25 Sep 1958  
Discontinued and inactivated, 1 Jul 1961

## STATIONS

Lowry AFB, CO, 25 Sep 1958-1 Jul 1961

## ASSIGNMENTS

1 Missile Division, 25 Sep 1958  
Fifteenth Air Force, 15 Jan 1959  
13 Air Division, 1 Jul 1959-1 Jul 1961

## WEAPON SYSTEMS

## COMMANDERS

1LT William M. McCormick, Jr., 25 Sep 1958 (acting)  
LTC John B. Howard, 11 Dec 1958  
Maj Norman W. Bashant, 20 Dec 1958  
Col John C. Fahringer, 3 Jan 1959  
Col John P. Proctor, 10 Aug 1959-1 Jul 1961

## HONORS

### Service Streamers

None

### Campaign Streamers

None

## **Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

### **Decorations**

None

### **EMBLEM**

None

### **MOTTO**

### **NICKNAME**

### **OPERATIONS**

Not operational to 10 Dec 1958 and only partially operational from then to Mar 1960. Replaced by 451st SMW (ICBM-Titan) in Jul 1961 before becoming fully operational.

The wheels began rolling to bring Titan missiles to Lowry in 1959, when bids were accepted in May to construct the underground sites on the unused Lowry bombing range. Construction began in June. The six sites, each comprising three missiles silos with their associated equipment and ancillary structures, were placed in a rough triangle approximately 170 miles around, east and south of Lowry AFB and Buckley Field. Command and support functions for the sites were physically located at Lowry.

Construction of the sites, including access roads, drilling of water wells at each of the six locations, power houses, etc., cost approximately \$70 million, and was scheduled for completion on or before 1 November 1961.

The silos themselves were technologically unique in construction. Each was 160 feet deep, 40 feet in diameter, and had walls two feet thick. All had foundations eight feet thick and all were of reinforced concrete throughout. The missile silo doors (two door halves) weighed 180 tons per silo, were poured in place, and operated hydraulically.

Initially, the 703d Strategic Missile Wing had been activated at Lowry (in 1958), becoming the first Titan Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) Wing in the USAF. Of course, it had none of the big missiles assigned, being responsible for the construction of the sites. Actual coordination for the construction was accomplished by the Lowry Site Activation Task Force (SATAF), basically an Air Force management team. The SATAF was responsible to insure that the construction of facilities, the installation and checkout of the weapon system, and the turnover of completed, operational Titan missile launching and support functions to Strategic Air Command were accomplished properly.

Before it became fully operational, the 703d was inactivated and replaced by the 451st Strategic Missile Wing on 1 July 1961 in accordance with plans to preserve unit designations of Air Force units having outstanding combat records and histories. The first missile was emplaced

in a silo in April 1961, and the 451st announced in July that it was "up and breathing" at Lowry. It took another eight months, March 1962, before the last of the 18 Titans were in place and the wing considered fully operational.

The missiles, manufactured in Colorado by the Martin-Marietta Company, remained on strategic alert at Lowry for the next two years.

In November 1964 officials announced that the missiles were going to leave Lowry, the phase-out to be completed by spring of 1965. On 14 April 1965, the last of the Titans was removed from the complex.

Lowry was left with several large, expensive holes in the ground when the development of the Minute-man ICBM signaled the death knell for the more vulnerable Titan, and SAC moved on.

Headquarters SAC activated the first Titan I ICBM wing, the 703d Strategic Missile Wing (ICBM-Titan I) at Lowry AFB, Colorado. It would have two 3x3 squadrons. The Titan I was a two-stage liquid fuel rocket. It used radio-inertial guidance, the same reentry vehicle as Atlas E/F and was installed in a silo-lift launcher. 25 SEP 1958

1st Missile Division Assigned to SAC - Through exhaustive and successful testing in 1957, the Air Force's strategic missiles developed to the point where they could start the transition from the research and development to the operational stage. As part of this transition, the 1st Missile Division, located at Cooke Air Force Base (renamed Vandenberg in October), California, was transferred from Air Research and Development Command to SAC. The transfer was effected on 1 January, and Major General David Wade assumed command of the division on the following day. Included in the transfer was the 704th Strategic Missile Wing, which had been activated as USAF's first missile wing on 1 July 1957. The 704th had a dual mission of training missile crews for other units and attaining an operational capability with the Atlas ICBM. It had one Atlas D squadron, the 576th Strategic Missile Squadron, assigned. Activated on 1 April, the 576th had a dual responsibility of maintaining an Atlas D alert force and providing training for other SAC Atlas units.

Atlas and Titan Wings Activated - The first Atlas wing was activated at Francis E. Warren Air Force Base, Wyoming, on 1 February under the designation of 4320th Strategic Missile Wing. In an inactivation and activation transaction on 23 February, the designation was changed to 706th Strategic Missile Wing (ICBM-Atlas). Later in the year, two Atlas D squadrons were activated and assigned to the 706th. On 25 September, the first Titan unit, the 703d Strategic Missile Wing (ICBM-Titan) was activated at Lowry Air Force Base, Colorado. Both missile wings were assigned to the 1st Missile Division. 1958

ICBM Units Assigned to Fifteenth Air Force - The assignment of ICBM units to numbered air forces continued on 15 January. At that time, the 703d Strategic Missile Wing (ICBM-Titan), located at Lowry Air Force Base, Colorado, and the 706th Strategic Missile Wing (ICBM-Atlas), located at Francis E. Warren Air Force Base, Wyoming, were transferred from the 1st Missile

Division to Fifteenth Air Force. Francis E. Warren was also transferred to the Fifteenth. Lowry belonged to the Air Training Command and the 703d was a tenant there. On 1 February, the 395th Missile Training Squadron was activated at Vandenberg Air Force Base, California, to provide training for crews to man the other Titan units to be activated in SAC. 1959

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Air Force Lineage and Honors

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Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.

Unit yearbook. *Lowry Technical Training Center, Colorado, Lowry AFB, 1959.*