

44 MISSILE WING



MISSION

LINEAGE

44 Bombardment Wing, Medium established, 20 Dec 1950

Activated, 2 Jan 1951

Discontinued, 15 Jun 1960

Redesignated 44 Strategic Missile Wing (ICBM-Minuteman), 24 Nov 1961

Organized, 1 Jan 1962

Redesignated 44 Missile Wing

Inactivated, 4 Jul 1994

STATIONS

March AFB, CA, 2 Jan 1951

Lake Charles (later, Chennault) AFB, LA, 1 Aug 1951-15 Jun 1960

Ellsworth AFB, SD, 1 Jan 1962

ASSIGNMENTS

Fifteenth Air Force, 2 Jan 1951

12 Air Division, 10 Feb 1951

21 Air Division, 4 Aug 1951

806 Air Division, 16 Jun 1952-15 Jun 1960

Department of the Air Force, 15 Jun 1960-23 Nov 1961

Strategic Air Command, 24 Nov 1961

821 Air (later, 821 Strategic Aerospace) Division, 1 Jan 1962

4 Strategic Missile (later, 4 Air) Division, 30 Jun 1971

ATTACHMENTS

5 Air Division, 19 Jan-22 Feb 1953 and 19 Apr-17 Jun 1954

WEAPON SYSTEMS

TB-29, 1951

B-29, 1951-1953

B-47, 1953-1960

KC-97, 1953-1957, 1957-1960

Titan I, 1962-1965

Minuteman I, 1963-1973

Minuteman II, 1972

COMMANDERS

Col Howell M. Estes, Jr., 2 Jan 1951

Col Carlos J. Cochrane, 7 Mar 1951

Col Herbert O. Wangeman, 1 Apr 1953

Col Frank W. Ellis, 2 May 1953

Col Joel A. Carroll, Jr., 14 May 1953

Col Frank W. Ellis, 3 Aug 1953

Col Jacob J. Brogget, 1 Feb 1956

Col Robert M. Tuttle, 27 Jul 1957

Col Louis W. Rohr, 25 Jul 1958-15 Jun 1960

None (not manned), 16 Jun 1960-31 Dec 1961

Col Virgil M. Cloyd, Jr., 1 Jan 1962

Col Wilson E. Burrill, 15 Jul 1965

Col Ernest B. Wilson, 1 Feb 1967

Col Charles J. Adams, 15 Aug 1969

Col Ralph H. Dowell, Jr., 31 Jan 1970

Col Thaddeus P. J. Gicewicz, 12 Feb 1971

Col Miles C. Wiley, Jr., 2 Jul 1971

Col George F. Bennett, 9 Jun 1972

Brig Gen Kermil C. Kaerichei, 27 Jun 1973

Col Wflliam H. Bush, 24 Oct 1973

Col Judson C. Faurer, 20 Jun 1975

Col Ralph E. Spraker, 9 Jun 1977

Col Roscoe Moulthrop, 18 Feb 1993

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

1 Jul 1969-30 Jun 1970

9 Jun-10 Jul 1972

1 Jul 1974-30 Jun 1976

EMBLEM



44 Bombardment Wing, Medium emblems



44 Strategic Missile Wing emblems

Azure, a missile palewise nose to base or. the warhead encircled by three electronic orbits argent, between eight mullets palewise, four in dexter flank and four in sinister flank of the last, all within a diminished bordure of the second. **SIGNIFICANCE:** Against a background of blue with stars to represent the sky and space, a reentry vehicle, its nose encircled by a nuclear symbol, represents the mission and the nuclear energy and power of the wing. The emblem indicates determination and professional excellence which are the unit's goals. The stars, placed in two groups of four, indicate the unit's numerical designation. (Approved, 18 Jul 1962)

MOTTO

AGGRESSOR BEWARE

OPERATIONS

Activated in training status when Korean war was 6 months old. Depended on 22d Bombardment Wing for initial cadre and help in becoming organized. Commenced operational training in Mar 1951. From 1 Oct 1951 to 29 Aug 1952, served as operational training unit for B-29 aircrews and maintenance personnel for Far East Air Forces. From 10 Oct 1951 to 15 May 1952, trained all elements of the 68th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing.

Became a first-line strategic bombardment wing in Aug 1952 and gained an air refueling mission in 1953.

Deployed at Sidi Slimane AB, French Morocco, 19 Jan-22 Feb 1953 and 19 Apr-17 Jun 1954.

Twenty-six bombers flew from Lake Charles Air Force Base. Louisiana, to Sidi Slimane Air Base. The Wing commander. Colonel C. J. Cochrane. brought 1,268 support personnel from the home base to help maintain the airplanes and assist with base support functions for the thirty-day tour. The new 5th Air Division commander, Maj. General David W. Hutchison, greeted the 44 Bomb Wing on arrival. 1953

Construction on the Titan I complexes started in December of 1960. Peter Kiewit and Sons from Omaha, Nebraska was the contractor. The winter of 1960-61 was not bad, but it was very dry. This dry spell continued right through the fall and into the winter. Construction on the Titans had gone well because by September 1961 all the structures had been built and buried. There was lots of work to be done below ground though. The interior of the complex needed to be refurbished with water pipes, electrical conduits and wiring, all the command and control cables, hydraulic piping, control systems, and the list goes on.

The security was very strict during this time. A private security firm, Wakenhut, from Florida was in charge of security. There were 8 guards per shift; one at the gate, one patrolling the topside area in a jeep, one at the control center tunnel junction, one at each of the three launchers, and one at the antenna silo.

The construction of the Minuteman I had begun in summer of 1961. The contractor for the Minuteman project was also Peter Kiewit and Sons. The labor force consisted of many area residents and some transient workers. The average pay for a laborer during the construction was about \$2.15 and hour. Foremen, iron workers and electricians got paid a little more. It was estimated that during the peak of construction, the summer of 1962, in the 67th squadron, there were over 600 men working.

The Army Corp of Engineers oversaw the project for the government. They were very strict on the pouring of the concrete. They watched to ensure the concrete was the proper consistency if it wasn't they would reject it. Another thing they watched was once a pour started it didn't stop

until the forms were completely filled. Some of the pours lasted as long as 36 hours. The reason for this was so there was no “dry Joints” as they poured a section of the launcher. There were seven pours usually on a site. Some of the bigger pours were; “the can” which was the bottom of the launch tube, “the donut” which was the Lower Equipment Rooms, and the topside area.

In 1962, the unit was reactivated at Ellsworth AFB, SD, and redesignated the 44th Strategic Missile Wing as part of the 821st Strategic Aerospace Division. The wing received its first operational Titan I missile on 22 June 1962. The 850th Strategic Missile Squadron controlled maintenance and operations of the missiles. The Titan I missile sites were located near Wicksville, Hermosa, and Sturgis SD.

During 1962, three new strategic missile squadrons-the 66th,67th, and 68th, were activated to support the new Minuteman I system. A 44th Missile Maintenance Squadron was established at the same time. Each strategic missile squadron supported five flights of Minuteman missiles with 50 missiles per squadron.

Each worker was issued a badge, if they didn't have it when they came to the gate they weren't allowed on site. Once on site below ground they had to sign in and give up their smoking and flame producing materials. When the shifts were over, they were given back their personal belongings and signed out.

By February 1962 most of the equipment had been installed and was being tested for operability. There were many tests performed on the hydraulic missile platform used to raise and lower the missile in and out of the launcher. With work nearing completion the Air force started to implement its own security, with Security Police.

By the winter of 1962-63 construction was near completion. There was still the finish work to be done inside the launcher. Finally in April 1963 the first Minuteman was installed at B05 and by October of that year the last flight of Minuteman I were accepted by the 44 SMW.

A total of 150 launch facilities were constructed to house the missiles. The first Minuteman missile was positioned near Wall, SD in April 1963. All Minuteman I missiles were in place by the end of 1963.

October 1962 As a result of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the 44th was placed in an advanced state of readiness. The incident gave the wing an opportunity to test its newly developed war support program with specific responsibilities in sustaining the 44th's war fighting mission.

1 November 1963 All three 44 SMW Minuteman squadrons are upgraded to “combat ready status”.

May 1964 To document the development of the Minuteman system, ABC-TV films a story on the Minuteman complex at Ellsworth AFB, featuring a missile combat crew.

November 1964 Continuing with the documentation, LIFE magazine features a ten page article on the Minuteman complex at Ellsworth AFB, featuring a missile combat crew.

1 January 1965 The Missile Procedures Trainer Branch is established. Designed for training missile operations crews and increasing their combat proficiency, the branch consisted of instructors and missile procedures trainers. The missile procedures trainer (MPT) is an electronically simulated replica of the Launch Control Center (LCC) with a price tag of \$200,000.

1 March 1965 "OPERATION LONG LIFE", The actual launch of a Minuteman missile, takes place from launch facility (LF) N-02. Special precautions are taken to ensure maximum safety and protection of surrounding private property. To ensure good media and public relations for the vital test launch, over 60 media representatives are invited to attend the launch. The flight was limited to seven seconds, about two miles, and was considered a success.

10 November 1965 Personnel from the Hayes International Corporation begin installation of the MPT which is dedicated on 23 November and entered officially into the USAF inventory.

22 September 1966 Construction of the on-base training launch facility (TLF) begins.

1968 Construction of the on base training launch facility is complete.

On 1 January 1970, the 44 SMW assumed airborne launch responsibility for Minot Air Force Base, ND, and Malmstrom AFB, MT. Four months later, the ALCS joined the Post Attack Command and Control System forming the 4th Airborne Command and Control Squadron, which was assigned to the 28th Bombardment Wing at Ellsworth AFB, SD.

18 January 1971 Several missile combat crews begin a Minuteman Modernized Transition Course to help instruct new crews entering the wing during the modernization of the Minuteman weapon system.

On 30 June 1971, the 44 SMW was named host unit at Ellsworth AFB when the 821st Strategic Aerospace Division was inactivated. The wing was reassigned under the 4th Air Division headquartered at F.E. Warren AFB, WY. The wing was later assigned as part of the 57th Air Division headquartered at Minot AFB, ND.

1 July 1971 The 44 SMW assumes the additional mission responsibility as the base host unit.

In October 1971, the transition from Minuteman I to Minuteman II began. The transition, known as "Force Modernization", was complete in March 1973.

24 October 1973 As a result of anticipated Soviet interference in the Arab-Israeli War, the 44 SMW is placed on increase alert status.

January 1974 The software Status Authentication System (SSAS) is developed to enhance the

computer interface between the LCCs and LFs. Adding another dimension of weapon system reliability and safety, the system cryptographically authenticates critical status.

28 January 1974 The first Simulated Electronic Launch/Minuteman (SELM) evaluates the reliability of the 44th's Minuteman Force. During the ground test, electronic signals were sent to the missile from the LCC while the Airborne Launch Control Center sent signals to the missiles during the test's airborne portion.

1 October 1974 Facility maintenance teams (FMT) are established.

17 July 1975 U.S. marshals begin escorting off-base convoys since the military has no civil jurisdiction after the convoys departed base.

1 October 1975 The wing implements the tri-deputate system of command to include operations, maintenance and resource management. The 44th Missile Maintenance Squadron is inactivated and its personnel reassigned to the 44th Field Missile Maintenance Squadron (FMMS) and the 44th Organizational Missile Maintenance Squadron (OMMS). Maintenance Control Division, Quality Control Division and Training Control Division are assigned to the Deputy Commander for Maintenance. The Deputy Commander for Operations commands the 66th, 67th, and 68th missile squadrons. The Deputy Commander for Resources commands Supply, Transportation, Accounting and Finance, and Contracting.

1 November 1977 The 44th Security Police Group (SPG) is reorganized into two squadrons, the 44th Missile Security Squadron (MSS) and the 45th Missile Security Squadron.

June 1989 The 44th sets its best alert rate in sixteen years - 99.7 percent - on one of the most maintenance-intensive weapon systems in SAC.

1990 The phase-out of the Minuteman II weapon system is recommended in President Bush's fiscal year 1992 budget proposal. As a result of the budget's proposal, Colonel Ronald Huff establishes the Deactivation Working Group (DWG) and the Drawdown Steering Committee (DSC).

The "PRIDE" Hangar was home to the 44 MW for many years. During February 1991, the Secretary of Defense announced that the Air Force would begin retirement of older weapon systems in response to a changing world environment and declining defense budget. The deactivation of the Minuteman II missile system was announced on 15 April 1991. The schedule for Ellsworth included a one squadron per year draw-down beginning with the 67 SMS, followed by the 66 SMS, and finally the 68 SMS.

Under a Strategic Air Command (SAC) wide reorganization plan, the unit was redesignated the 44th Missile Wing and assigned to the 20th Air Force. On 28 September 1991, in response to President Bush's directive to stand down the Minuteman II, personnel of the 44 MW worked around the clock to dissipate launch codes and pin safety control switches at 15 launch control

facilities. Removal of the first Minuteman II missile assigned to the 44 MW occurred at G-02, near Red Owl, South Dakota, on 3 December 1991.

On 1 June 1992, the 44 MW was relieved of its emergency war order mission and its primary focus was deactivation of the Minuteman II weapon system. This day also marked the end of SAC and the beginning of Air Combat Command (ACC), which the 44 MW was assigned to.

June 1991 The highest missile on-alert rate in the history of the 44 SMW is attained-99.705 percent-for 150 missiles.

1 September 1991 The 44 SMW is redesignated as the 44th Missile Wing (MW) and becomes an associate unit assigned to the 20th Air Force. Additionally, the 812 SPG, 812 MSS and 813 MSS are redesignated as the 44 SPG, 44 MSS and the 45 MSS respectively, all assigned to the 44 MW. The 44th Maintenance Group (MAG) and the 44th Operations (OG) are activated. To support these newly activated groups, the 44th Operations Support Squadron (OSS) and the 44th Maintenance Support Squadron (MSS) are activated. The 66, 67 and 68 SMSs are redesignated as the 66th, 67th, and 68th Missile Squadrons (MIS).

27 September 1991 President Bush addresses the nation, on television, announcing a series of dramatic actions to lower nuclear era military tensions. The “plan for peace” required the withdrawal actions to lower nuclear era military tensions. The “plan for peace” required the withdrawal from alert, within 72 hours, of all 450 Minuteman II ICBMs. The 150 missiles assigned to the 44 MW and already scheduled for deactivation, are withdrawn from alert in accordance with the presidential directive.

28 September 1991 During Phase I of Minuteman II deactivation, maintenance, security police and operations personnel work around the clock to dissipate the launch codes in 15 launch control facilities install safety control switches in 150 launch facilities. The enormous task is accomplished within 47 hours.

October 1991 The 44 MW assumes a second, distant mission of deactivation. Removal of re-entry vehicles (Phase II) from the 67 MIS begins.

November 1991 The “Record of Decision”, the approval to begin deactivating the Minuteman II weapon system, is signed by Mr. James F. Boatwright, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force, Installations.

December 1991 The wing attains a 99.8 percent alert rate for 100 Minuteman missiles.

3 December 1991 The first missile is removed from G-02 near Red Owl, SD.

The 67th Missile Squadron (MS) was inactivated on 15 August 1992

6 November 1992 Missile removal from the 67th Missile Squadron is complete.

31 December 1992 44th personnel completed the year by pulling and shipping 61 missiles. Fifty six launch facilities and five launch control centers are turned over to the base civil engineers for further disposition.

8 January 1993 As a result of all 44th nuclear assets being removed/shipped, all personnel assigned to the 44th Missile Wing (with the exception of the senior staff) are removed from the Personnel Reliability Program (PRP).

20 May 1993 The National Park Service selects D-01 and D-09 for preservation.

29 July 1993 Missile removal from the 66th Missile Squadron completed.

66 MS was inactivated on 1 September 1993. On 1 July 1993 the 44 MW changed hands from ACC to Air Force Space Command along with all other ICBM wings. Keeping pace with its patriotic roots and with its mission complete, the 44th Missile Wing formally inactivated on 4 July 1994.

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORIES

Created: 25 Jan 2025

Updated:

Sources

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