

HEADQUARTERS AND HEADQUARTERS SQUADRON, 69 AIR BASE GROUP

MISSION

LINEAGE

Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, 69 Air Base Group

STATIONS

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

The command unit for the new base was the Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, 69th Air Base Group (ABG), which were activated in early June 1941, at Chanute Field. The first officer assigned to the 69th ABG to come to Biloxi was Capt Samuel A. Mundell, who arrived from Scott Field on 12 June as acting base commander. Captain Mundell's "staff" arrived by private automobile 2 days later and consisted of one second lieutenant and 20 enlisted personnel, also from Scott Field.

Because there were no facilities completed on the base, a headquarters was established in the Biloxi armory. On 16 June, Lt Col William J. Hanlon arrived and became acting base commander. Captain Mundell became Air Corps Supply Officer and a member of Colonel Hanlon's staff, which totaled three officers in addition to those enlisted personnel from Scott Field.

Colonel Hanlon remained acting commander of the base until 17 July, when Colonel Brock arrived as the first permanent commander of Air Corps Training School No. 8. As previously mentioned, Colonel Brock was a popular choice with the local civilians.

Arriving with Colonel Brock was Major Sloan. He was assigned as assistant commandant for the school.

In the early days of his tenure, Colonel Brock began to build the staff that would run the school once it was completed. According to Sloan, Colonel Brock was "not overly knowledgeable about the problems of trade school training, but ... was a good executive and could recognize and accept the recommendations of people who did have the knowledge."

Because of this trait, the composition of Colonel Brock's staff changed almost daily during the early part of his tenure. As a new officer was assigned to the base, Colonel Brock would discover his area of expertise. If the new man had more knowledge in a particular subject than the officer holding that position, a change would be made. In this way, the most experienced personnel were always heading their respective sections.

The final staff function, S-4, was primarily concerned with construction progress and supplies. Since Major Sloan's responsibilities as assistant school commandant would not fully begin until the school was constructed and operating, he also held the title of S-4 officer. He was especially charged with seeing that the training hangars and living quarters for students were completed as rapidly as possible. In addition, S-4 coordinated the actions of several other departments such as ordnance, post police, and post fire department.

As stated previously, the original mission of Keesler Field was to train aircraft mechanics. Prior to the field's activation, though, it was decided to expand this mission significantly by also making the field a center for basic trainees. On 24 July, the two provisional wings were established to control the training squadrons. The Provisional Replacement Wing was responsible for all basic training and was commanded by Colonel Hanlon, who had been acting base commander prior to Colonel Brock's arrival. Maj John C. Covington was named to command the Provisional School Wing. On 28 July, the designations of these units were changed to the Provisional Replacement Center Group A, and the Provisional School Group C, respectively.

USAF Unit Histories
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Sources
Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.