

# **DEPOT, MIDDLETON, PA**

## **LINEAGE**

## **STATIONS**

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

## **COMMANDERS**

## **HONORS**

### **Service Streamers**

### **Campaign Streamers**

### **Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

## **Decorations**

## **EMBLEM**

## **EMBLEM SIGNIFICANCE**

## **MOTTO**

## **NICKNAME**

## **OPERATIONS**

When World War I came to a close with the signing of the armistice on November 11, 1918, the Army Air Service was operating a number of supply depots in the continental United States. These depots were located at Americus, Georgia; Buffalo, New York; Detroit, Michigan; Fairfield, Ohio; Garden City, Long Island, New York; Houston, Texas; Little Rock, Arkansas; Los Angeles, California; Middletown, Pennsylvania; Morrison, Virginia; Richmond, Virginia; San Antonio, Texas; Sacramento, California; San Francisco, California; and Washington, D.C. The depots, with a complement of about a dozen officers and a few hundred enlisted men, received, stored, and issued all supplies and equipment to the airfields in the United States. Three aviation repair depots were responsible for the repair and maintenance of aircraft. These depots were at Dallas, Texas; Indianapolis, Indiana; and Montgomery, Alabama. The Air Service also operated an experimental laboratory at McCook Field, Dayton, Ohio, and one at Langley Field, Virginia. At first, the laboratory at McCook Field was called the Airplane Engineering Division and, later, just the Engineering Division. Both laboratories reported directly to the Chief of the Air Service.

The Air Service consolidated its repair activities at three locations-Fairfield; San Antonio; and Rockwell Field, North Island, San Diego, California--in 1920 and 1921. In 1920, it transferred the repair facilities at Indianapolis to the depot at Fairfield, erected new repair facilities at Rockwell

Field, and moved the supply depot at Los Angeles to Rockwell. It transferred the repair facilities at Dallas to San Antonio in the spring of 1921. Middletown did not become both a repair and supply depot until 1925.

In January 1921, the depots at San Antonio, Middletown, Rockwell Field, Fairfield, Little Rock, Richmond, Montgomery, and Americus became air intermediate depots. Seven months later, in July, the Air Service transferred control of the depot system from Washington, D.C., to Wilbur Wright Field, Ohio, and established a new organization consisting of six military and 55 civilian employees to supervise all supply and maintenance activities at the depots. This new organization was called the Property Maintenance and Cost Compilation Section and its first chief was Captain Elmer E. Adler.

The Air Service made a number of changes in its depot structure between 1921 and 1923. During this period, it established a depot at Scott Field, Illinois, and deactivated the depots at Richmond, Montgomery, and Americus. The depot at Scott Field became the air intermediate depot for airship and balloon equipment. On January 26, 1924, the Property, Maintenance and Cost Compilation Section became the Field Service Section (FSS).

Before 1939, the hiring, working hours, pay, and promotion of civilians were not standard throughout the Air Corps. Both the workday and workweek varied from depot to depot. Some depots worked eight hours a day, five days a week, while others worked seven hours a day, five and a half days a week. Administrative leave without pay was also used during the 1930s whenever funds were low, and some civilian employees did not receive the minimum pay that was authorized for their grades. At various times during the 1930s, the depots were not permitted to replace employees who had died, retired, or resigned. During Fiscal Year 1936, the four major depots employed a total of 386 civilians in their Supply Departments. The Supply Department at Fairfield had 111 civilian employees; Middletown, 72; San Antonio, 115; and Rockwell, 88. Despite the difficulties, all of the depots managed to retain a core of highly experienced civilian personnel who provided some continuity in their supply operations and who could provide on-the-job training for the new employees who began to come into the depots in 1939 and 1940.

While AFLC was working on its program to inactivate the Rome Air Materiel Area, Secretary of Defense McNamara announced that three more of the command's air materiel areas—Middletown, Mobile, and San Bernardino would be closed. When he made his announcement on November 19, 1964, Secretary McNamara indicated that all of the functions at the three air materiel areas would be phased out and transferred to other AFLC organizations by July 1969.

The chain of events that eventually led to the closing of the three air materiel areas actually began in the middle of August 1963 when Secretary McNamara asked the Secretaries of the Army and Air Force for valid figures on how much it cost to support the aircraft that were assigned to each service. At the time, the Army was increasing its aircraft inventories, while the Air Force was reducing its inventories because it was replacing some of its aircraft with missiles—in Fiscal Year

1961, the Air Force had 2,500 strategic bombers and tankers and about 100 strategic missiles; in Fiscal Year 1966, it had 1,200 bombers and 1,500 missiles.

Headquarters AFLC submitted its plan to Headquarters USAF on September 24, 1964. This plan listed the air materiel areas in order of their retention value to AFLC, based on their facilities and the nature of their work loads. Mobile, Middletown, and San Bernardino received the lowest ratings. At the same time, Headquarters AFLC advised Air Force headquarters that it was opposed to the proposed consolidation because it would have a serious impact on the command's personnel skills, since experience had shown that people did not readily transfer with their functions."

When it became evident that only a relatively small percentage of the civilian personnel at Middletown, Mobile, and San Bernardino would transfer with their positions, Headquarters AFLC permitted the command's five remaining air materiel areas to hire additional personnel before they actually received the required manpower authorizations. It gave the five air materiel areas a total of about 4,497 advance hire authorizations. The Oklahoma City Air Materiel Area received approximately 996 advance hire authorizations; Ogden, 520; Sacramento, 1,271; San Antonio, 1,065; and Warner Robins, 645. Headquarters AFLC also permitted the five air materiel areas to initiate extensive training programs for many of their personnel. For example, the Oklahoma City Air Materiel Area established special training programs at Middletown, Mobile, and Tinker Air Force Base. It sent about 1,445 people to Middletown and 150 to Mobile for on-the-job training in those areas where only a small percentage of the civilian personnel had indicated that they would transfer with their positions. The personnel sent to Middletown and Mobile accounted for a total of about 1,047,352 training hours, while the 1,307 personnel who participated in the training programs at Tinker Air Force Base accounted for a total of 859,394 hours. Most of the training hours at Middletown and Tinker Air Force Base were devoted to the repair of instruments and the J79 engine because the Oklahoma City Air Materiel Area was scheduled to replace Middletown as the specialized repair activity for a number of navigation, flight and engine instruments and the J79.

The San Bernardino and Middletown Air Materiel Areas were inactivated much earlier than the July 1969 date specified by Secretary McNamara in November 1964. All of San Bernardino's management responsibilities and repair activities were transferred to other AFLC organizations by January 1966, and all of its stocks were removed by June 1966. As a result, the San Bernardino Air Materiel Area was inactivated on July 1, 1966, and Norton Air Force Base was transferred to the Military Airlift Command on the same day. Middletown's responsibilities and stocks were all transferred to other AFLC organizations by September 1967, and the air materiel area was inactivated on October 1, 1967. The Mobile Air Materiel Area was not inactivated until June 30, 1969, the date originally established by Secretary McNamara. Mobile's closing was delayed because it had served as a storage point for a great deal of materiel that belonged to the Defense Supply Agency and it took some time to transfer this materiel to other locations, and because difficulties were encountered in finding some civilian use for all of Brookley Air Force Base.

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Air Force Order of Battle

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Sources