A Brief History of Keesler AFB and the 81st Training Wing
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Second Lieutenant Samuel Reeves Keesler, Jr.
1896 – 1918

Samuel Reeves Keesler, Jr., was born in Greenwood, Mississippi, on 11 April 1896. He was an outstanding student leader and athlete in high school and at Davidson College in North Carolina.

Keesler entered the U.S. Army Air Service on 13 May 1917. He was commissioned a second lieutenant on 15 August, and received training as an aerial observer at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, before sailing to France in March 1918. After additional training in aerial gunnery and artillery fire control, Lieutenant Keesler was assigned to the 24th Aero Squadron, in the Verdun sector of the Western Front, on 26 August 1918.

While performing a reconnaissance mission behind German lines in the late afternoon of 8 October 1918, Keesler and his pilot, 1st Lt Harold W. Riley, came under heavy gunfire from four enemy aircraft. Riley quickly lost control of the badly damaged airplane while Keesler continued to fend off the attackers even as they plummeted to the ground. Seriously wounded during the battle and ensuing crash landing, German ground troops eventually captured and held Keesler and Riley prisoner. Unable to receive immediate medical attention, Keesler died from his injuries the following day. He was posthumously awarded the WWI Victory Medal with Silver Star device for his gallantry.
History of Keesler Air Force Base

Early Development: 1941 - 1949

In early January 1941, Biloxi city officials assembled a formal offer to invite the U.S. Army Corps to build a base to support the WWII training buildup. The package included the Biloxi airport, the old Naval Reserve Park, and parts of Oak Park sufficient to support a technical training school with a population of 5,200 people.

On 6 March 1941, the War Department officially notified Mayor Louis Braun that Biloxi had been selected. The War Department activated Army Air Corps Station No. 8, Aviation Mechanics School, Biloxi, Mississippi, on 12 June 1941. City officials wanted the base named after a notable figure in the local area's history, but it was War Department policy to name installations after service members killed in action. In late June, Mayor Braun received word that the new school would be named in honor of Second Lieutenant Samuel Reeves Keesler, Jr., of Greenwood, Mississippi. Lieutenant Keesler had died of wounds sustained during World War I while serving in France as an aerial observer assigned to the 24th Aero Squadron, U.S. Army Air Service. On 25 August 1941, Army Air Corps Station No. 8 was officially designated as Keesler Army Airfield.

Base Construction

Congress initially appropriated $6 million for construction at Biloxi and an additional $2 million for equipment. By the time the War Department allocated the funds in April 1941, the projected cost had risen to $9.6 million. On 14 June 1941, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers awarded Newton, Glenn, and Knost Construction Company and J. A. Jones Construction Company contracts totaling $10 million to build Biloxi's technical training school. At the time, it was the most expensive government project to have been undertaken in the State of Mississippi.

First Soldiers Arrive

Captain Samuel A. Mundell arrived in Biloxi on 12 June 1941. He was joined two days later by a startup cadre from Scott Field, Illinois, consisting of a second lieutenant and 20 enlisted personnel; they established a temporary headquarters at the Biloxi Armory. Lieutenant Colonel William J. Hanlon arrived on 16 June to assume command from Captain Mundell. The same Arthur W. Brock
who had first examined the site in January, now promoted to colonel, arrived on 17 July to become
the base's first permanent commander.

On 8 September 1941, the 310th Technical School Squadron (the mess unit) became the first
squadron to move to the new barracks. Before the end of the month, three basic training units, the
301st, 303d, and 304th Technical School Squadrons, had also moved into permanent quarters.

**Basic Training**

When the War Department activated Keesler Field in June 1941, the local community thought it
was getting a technical training center with a student population, which might peak, at 20,000
people. Not only was Keesler to house a technical training center, but it would also host one of the
Army's newest replacement, or basic training centers. Keesler's population almost doubled
overnight.

The first shipment of recruits arrived at Keesler Field on 21 August 1941. During World War II,
the Army's basic training program was little more than a reception process. At Keesler, basic
training lasted four weeks, during which classifiers determined the type of follow on schooling
that each recruit would receive. Many stayed at Keesler to become airplane and engine mechanics,
while others transferred to aerial gunnery or aviation cadet schools. Trains passed through Keesler
daily, dropping off new trainees and picking up graduates.

By September 1944, the number of recruits had dropped, but the workload remained constant, as
Keesler personnel began processing veteran ground troops and combat crews who had returned
from duty overseas for additional training and follow on assignments. Basic training wound down
dramatically after the end of World War II, and it was finally discontinued at Keesler on 30 June
1946.

**Technical Training**

Technical training school officers and staff began arriving at Keesler Field in mid July 1941,
primarily from Chanute Field, Illinois. The new academic buildings were still under construction
when the Airplane and Engine Mechanics School opened. Basic Branch students received
instruction in five barracks buildings; Instructor Branch students were assigned to temporary
classrooms set up in commandeered circus tents. In mid-1942 the Army Air Forces directed
Keesler to focus upon the training of mechanics for B-24 Liberator heavy bombers. The school
received its first B 24 in late September 1942. Six more arrived shortly thereafter, and specialized
B 24 maintenance training began on 19 October. Over time, Keesler gradually replaced them with
civilian instructors, including many women.

Women began training here in 1943, as did international students. Students from more than 50
countries have received aviation, personnel and electronics training at Keesler.
Generally unknown to most was the role that the Tuskegee Airmen and other African-American troops played on 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. Many others, like First Sergeant Lucius Theus, a future major general, also served with distinction in Keesler’s permanently assigned African-Americans units. Keesler also trained a small number of black aircraft mechanics from the Tuskegee Institute. These African-American service members took a giant step forward in their goal of winning wars on two fronts - the struggle against racism at home and the fight against foreign enemies abroad.

**Specialized Flying Training**

Keesler continued to focus upon specialized training in B-24 maintenance until mid-1944. Thereafter, the base was directed to expand its mechanics training curriculums to include other aircraft. Changing requirements forced the consolidation of all air-rescue training at Keesler in early 1945, however, and many of these programs had to be moved elsewhere for lack of facility space.

The rapid buildup of heavy bomber units overseas demanded additional aircrew, and Keesler was tasked to assist in the spring of 1944. A B-24 Copilot School began operation in July, and its curriculum was expanded to include B-32 copilot training in October. Procured in small numbers as a back-up aircraft design for the B-29 strategic bomber program, the B-32 Terminator was plagued with mechanical problems and production delays. Its contribution to the war effort was limited and, subsequently, B-32 aircrew training ceased in January 1945. The need for B-24 crews had also diminished, and Keesler stopped training B-24 copilots two months later.
In late July 1944, the Army Air Forces (AAF) consolidated all air-sea rescue training at Keesler. The situation worsened on 4 January 1945, when the AAF Training Command ordered Keesler to give first priority to air-sea rescue training. The Emergency Rescue School was disbanded in April 1946. Thereafter, air-sea rescue training passed to the Air Transport Command's newly established Air Rescue Service.
The Post World War II Era

In late May 1947, the AAF announced plans to move its Radar School from Boca Raton, Florida, to Keesler. The Radar School officially arrived on 14 November 1947, making Keesler responsible for operating the two largest military technical schools in the United States. Thereafter, shrinking budgets forced the base to reduce its operating costs: the Airplane and Engine Mechanics School and the Radar School were consolidated on 1 April 1948.

Meanwhile, in September 1947, the United States Air Force became an independent branch of the armed services. As a result, Keesler Field was officially redesignated as an Air Force base on 13 January 1948.

In early 1949, Air Training Command decided that Keesler should focus its efforts on teaching radar, radio, and electronics maintenance and repair. To make room, the airplane and engine mechanics courses had to be moved elsewhere. Especially since the Air Force also planned to transfer the Radio Operations School to Keesler from Scott AFB, Illinois. In addition to training radio operators, Keesler was to begin teaching air traffic service technicians; aircraft approach controllers, ground radar mechanics, and radar repairman/ground controlled approach specialists. The last mechanics training courses had moved to Sheppard AFB, Texas, by November, and it was at this point in the base's history that Keesler became known as the "Electronics Training Center of the Air Force."

The Korean War and the Fifties: 1950 - 1959

In August 1950, Keesler embarked on a major rebuilding program to upgrade its facilities across the board. The first phase of this project called for the construction of a new electronics laboratory, barracks, and a dining hall for a total cost of $14 million. In 1951, Congress appropriated an additional $44 million to complete Keesler's reconstruction. Plans included four two-story academic buildings (later named Allee, Dolan, Thomson, and Wolfe Halls), a 352-bed hospital, modern family housing units, and a three-story dormitory complex dubbed "the triangle" because of its distinctive layout.

The 1950s also meant organizational change for Keesler. Since August 1948, the 3380th Technical Training Wing had controlled all base activities. Under it were four subordinate units: the 3380th Technical Training Group, which operated the school; the 3380th Maintenance and Supply Group; the 3380th Air Base Group; and the 3380th Medical Group. In 1955, a fifth group was added: the 3380th Installations Group. That arrangement continued until 1 January 1959, when Air Training Command redesignated the wing as Headquarters, Keesler Technical Training Center (KTTC). At the same time, the training group was redesignated as the 3380th Technical School, USAF, and all of its subordinate student squadrons were renamed school squadrons.

Technical Training

Keesler's modernization required more than expanded facilities. For example, Keesler began using television instruction methods as early as June 1953. In 1950, Keesler offered only 14 generalized
courses, but by December 1959 that number had grown to 116, including vital USAF programs such as the aircraft warning and control system.

In early 1956, Keesler entered the missile age by opening a ground support training program for the SM-65 Atlas intercontinental ballistic missile. In addition, school personnel were developing training methods for the newly adopted semi-automatic ground environment (SAGE) system, an integrated defense net intended to protect the United States from Soviet air attack. The base gained even more responsibility in 1958, when the Air Force announced that Scott AFB would relinquish its training mission. As a result, all control tower operator, radio maintenance, and general radio operator courses came to be under Keesler's already broad technical training roof.

**Technology in the Sixties and Seventies: 1960 - 1979**

By 1960 the school at Keesler had earned a solid reputation for high technology training, offering courses in radar, communications, and electronics. During the early 1960s, Keesler lost many of its airborne training courses, and the aircraft they required. The TC-54s assigned to electronic warfare officer training departed for Mather AFB, California, in April 1961. In December 1962, the Air Ground Operations School and its T-33s transferred to Eglin AFB, Florida; they had filled Biloxi's airspace with jet noise since 1957. The last C-47 used for airborne ground approach radar training left in 1966, when it was replaced by a ground-based simulator.

By the mid-1960s, the United States was beginning to deploy substantial forces to Southeast Asia. The Vietnam War buildup caused base-wide shortages of everything from uniforms to post office boxes, but it also returned pilot training to Keesler for the first time since 1953. On 15 January 1967, the 3389th Pilot Training Squadron was activated and equipped with T-28 Trojans. Its mission was to teach Military Assistance Program (MAP) students how to fly. The squadron hosted personnel from many countries, including Iran, Mexico, and Peru, but especially from South Vietnam. Of the 908 pilots who graduated before the squadron inactivated in 1973, 743 were from that beleaguered country. Advances in evolving technology rapidly led to changes in Keesler’s training and infrastructure. Meanwhile, all Air Force basic training at Keesler ceased in 1966, when Air Training Command assigned that responsibility solely to Lackland AFB, Texas.
On 11 June 1968, Keesler reached a milestone when it graduated its one-millionth student. A month later, the school absorbed both personnel and administrative functions that increased Keesler's student population by almost 20 percent.

Keesler remained the largest training base within ATC throughout the 1970s, and it continued to stay on the cutting edge of electronics technology, instructing students in new systems such as the worldwide military command and control system and the 407L radar system. The school was the country's main supplier of electronics technicians, but a traditional division between academic and technical studies meant that Keesler's graduates could not receive college credit for their efforts.

On 31 May 1972, Air Training Command redesignated the 3380th Technical School as the USAF School of Applied Aerospace Sciences. Soon after on 13 December, the school received institutional accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. As a result, Airmen trained at Keesler received a Career Educational Certificate from the newly established Community College of the Air Force. This opportunity was further expanded in April 1977, when Keesler graduates became eligible to apply their technical training towards an Associate of Arts degree.

Keesler's student load dropped to an all-time low after the Vietnam War ended, and Air Force officials responded to changing social conditions by reexamining the school's teaching functions. As a result, Air Training Command inactivated the USAF School of Applied Aerospace Sciences on 1 April 1977 and replaced it with the 3300th Technical Training Wing, which activated the same day.

**Tenant Support**

As the Vietnam War began winding down, so too did the need to train Vietnamese pilots. The MAP foreign pilot training program ended in 1973, again leaving Keesler without a flying mission. That situation did not last long as several flying units were reassigned to Keesler during the 1970s. On 16 April 1973, the Department of Defense announced that Military Airlift Command (MAC) would transfer two squadrons to Keesler: the 1st Aerospace Cartographic and Geodetic Squadron from Forbes AFB, Kansas, and the 53d Weather Reconnaissance Squadron from Ramey AFB, Puerto Rico. The 1st Aerospace Cartographic and Geodetic Squadron used its RC-130s to conduct photomapping assignments worldwide, while the 53d went "hurricane hunting" throughout the Caribbean with its WC-130s.

These squadrons were tenant units at Keesler, meaning they relied on various base organizations for support but were not otherwise a part of Keesler's command structure. Both units were in place by 31 July 1973. In addition to the units belonging to MAC, Keesler also gained an Air Force Reserve tenant in April 1973 when the 920th Tactical Airlift Group activated. This unit flew C-130 Hercules turboprop transport aircraft.

The increased number of large aircraft underscored the need for airfield improvements. Starting in January 1974, engineers began extending the runway and converting two hangars into aircraft maintenance shops. Even before these projects could be completed, however, the Air Force proposed transferring yet another unit to Keesler—the 7th Airborne Command and Control
Squadron, which had previously been assigned to Pacific Air Forces and stationed in Southeast Asia. Active U.S. involvement had ended in Vietnam, and the 7th was no longer needed in the Far East. Keesler was selected as the new home for the 7th's EC-130 airborne command and control aircraft; the squadron arrived in August 1975 as a base tenant unit reporting directly to Tactical Air Command (TAC).

The End of the Cold War and Beyond: 1980 - 1999

Two weapon systems training programs gained attention during the early 1980s. One was the airborne warning and control system (employed aboard the E-3A Sentry aircraft), and the other was the BGM-109 ground-launched cruise missile. Keesler's air traffic control program also garnered its share of publicity - especially after the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization walked off the job in August 1981. When President Ronald Reagan fired the strikers, Keesler-trained military air traffic controllers stepped in to keep the nation's airways flowing smoothly.

Beginning in 1984, school officials worked with Air Force Communications Command's 1872d School Squadron to develop prototype-training programs using interactive videodisc (IVD) technology, which soon supported a variety of Keesler interactive course offerings. Keesler's Wall Studio IVD production capability was one of only two in the entire Air Force, and supported many organizations Air Force wide.

Driven by deep defense budget cuts, the congressionally mandated base realignment and closure process culminated in a major downsizing effort, significantly impacting Keesler's training mission. With base closure forcing an end to technical training at Chanute AFB, Illinois, and Lowry AFB, Colorado, Keesler's growing importance as a technical university would become even more firmly fixed. The first additions arrived in 1990, as Keesler acquired Chanute's weather forecasting courses. Lowry's metrology and precision maintenance electronics laboratory training program followed in 1992-1993.

The Air Force released the "Year of Training" initiatives in 1992. It was a top to bottom reevaluation of the process by which USAF technicians acquired and honed their skills. This action led to a host of organizational changes. One initiative proposed a drawdown of USAF field training detachments (FTD). These detachments were the mechanism by which USAF maintainers still in the planning stages in 1995, the FTD draw down initiative would divide weapon systems training among the major using commands and the technical training centers, and Keesler stood to inherit many new course responsibilities once the draw down plan went into effect.

Another Year of Training initiative resulted in the return of flying training to Keesler for the first time since 1973. Tasked with providing operational airlift support training to pilots in C-12C/F Huron and C-21A Learjet aircraft, the 45th Airlift Squadron was assigned to the 81st Training Group. It began operations in July 1994.

Meanwhile, the massive restructuring of the Air Force in the early 1990s also meant several changes for Keesler's associate units. The first occurred when the 53d Weather Reconnaissance Squadron (known throughout the Gulf region as the Hurricane Hunters) was inactivated and
transferred to the reserves on 30 June 1991. Its important mission was merged with the storm-tracking mission of the 815th WRS, a component of the 403d Wing, Keesler's resident Air Force Reserve unit that includes the 815th Airlift Squadron that also flies C-130s. Another base tenant change occurred when the 7th Airborne Command and Control Squadron and its EC-130 flying command post aircraft relocated to Davis-Monthan AFB, Arizona, in September 1994.

Those restructuring efforts similarly affected units assigned to Keesler Technical Training Center. In February 1992, Headquarters Air Force redesignated the base's host unit as the Keesler Training Center (KTC). The 3300th Technical Training Wing was downsized to become a group, and its component technical training groups became squadrons. The 3305th Student Group also inactivated along with its subordinate squadrons. In mid-September all of the 3380th numbered units assumed the 393d designation, as the base further realigned itself to conform to the Air Force's objective wing structure. In addition, the technical training group also assumed the 393d designation, and its nine technical training and training support squadrons were renumbered to better reflect the new, simplified organizational arrangement.

Yet another major change occurred on 1 July 1993, when Keesler Training Center inactivated, and its lineage and honors retired. On the same day, the 81st Tactical Fighter Wing, formerly located at RAF Bentwaters, United Kingdom, was redesignated the 81st Training Wing and concurrently activated to serve as Keesler's host organization. At the same time, HQ USAF redesignated Air Training Command as Air Education and Training Command (AETC), and the command activated Second Air Force and stationed it at Keesler. Its mission was to oversee all technical training conducted within AETC.

The 21st Century

The end of the Cold War and subsequent military drawdown caused the armed services to refocus on a long dormant issue, namely participation in the Interservice Training Review Organization (ITRO)—a review of military programs to eliminate training duplication and reduce training costs through consolidation. The first results of ITRO made themselves felt at Keesler in 1995, when the ITRO Executive Board determined that all DoD Calibration training would be consolidated at Keesler. The first contingent of students arrived in 1996, as the Navy closed offices and moved equipment from San Diego, California, and Norfolk, Virginia, to Keesler. The Marine Corps followed in 1997, as it transferred equipment and students from the Marine Corps Logistics Base (MCLB) in Albany, Georgia, to Keesler. The course load and

Keesler AFB’s premier “Triangle Vision.”
population increase expected from the FTD drawdown dissipated in 1996, as USAF leaders determined that centralization of training under the FTD would be unrealistic.

On 4 October 1996, Keesler officially implemented “Triangle Vision,” an ambitious five-year, $23-million building project designed to modernize the base’s 1950s era technical training dormitories and dining facilities. The first phase of the project called for the selective short-term repair of existing facilities, including renovation of restrooms and removal of hazardous material. The second phase replaced dormitories with seven new facilities, created a new training support squadron and built an additional dining hall.

Hurricane Katrina

Hurricane Katrina ranked as one of the costliest and deadliest hurricanes in U.S. history. It was the eleventh named storm, fifth hurricane and second Category 5 hurricane of the 2005 Atlantic hurricane season, and sixth strongest Atlantic hurricane ever recorded, to date.

Tropical Depression Twelve formed over the southeastern Bahamas at 4:00 p.m. Central Daylight Time (CDT) on August 23, 2005 partially from the remains of Tropical Depression Ten. The system was upgraded to Tropical Storm Katrina on the morning of August 24, and became a hurricane only two hours before it made landfall on August 25, between Hallandale Beach and Aventura, on the east coast of Florida.

Katrina had a well-defined eye on Doppler radar that remained intact throughout its passage over the state Florida. It had weakened to a tropical storm as it passed over land, but quickly regained strength and hurricane status approximately one hour after entering the Gulf of Mexico. Rapid intensification occurred during the first 24-hours after entering the Gulf, due in part to the storm’s movement over the warm sea surface temperatures of the Loop Current—a large flow of warm water that flows clockwise and dominates circulation within the eastern Gulf of Mexico. On August 25, the storm reached Category 3 intensity on the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale, and became the third major hurricane of the season. President George W. Bush declared a state of emergency in Louisiana, Alabama and Mississippi two days before the hurricane made a second landfall.

At 8:00 a.m. (CDT), on the morning of August 27, the 81st Training Wing commander’s Crises Action Team (CAT) assembled and declared Hurricane Condition (HURCON) 3. The decision was made to evacuate over 10,000 personnel and begin preparations to shelter the remaining 6,000. Katrina continued to intensify and reached Category 5 status on August 28, with maximum sustained winds of 175 mph and a central pressure of 902 millibar (mbar). The CAT reassembled at 8:00 a.m. on Sunday morning, August 28, and declared HURCON 2. Base shelters opened that afternoon at 5:00 p.m., and the 45th Airlift Squadron and 403d Wing deployed their aircraft to safe zones. The CAT reconvened that afternoon and initiated HURCON 1—the outer bands of Hurricane Katrina were already being felt by Sunday evening.

Just after midnight on August 29, although the hurricane was still six hours away from a second landfall, the storm was so large that some areas of the Gulf Coast were already experiencing tropical storm-force winds. Overnight, the system entered an eye-wall replacement cycle and
although its maximum sustained winds had slightly weakened, the storm grew even larger. Katrina made a second landfall at 6:10 a.m. on August 29, near Buras-Triumph, Louisiana (approximately 150 miles west of Keesler AFB), as a Category 3 hurricane with sustained winds of 125 mph.

A few hours later, Katrina made a third and final landfall near the Louisiana/Mississippi border with 120 mph sustained winds—still a Category 3 hurricane. Record storm surge came ashore along the entire Mississippi Gulf Coast and into Alabama, peaking at 34 feet in Bay St Louis, Mississippi, and reaching 13 feet as far away as Mobile, Alabama. Moving at 15 mph, Katrina’s eye passed 43 miles to the west of Keesler. With the base battened down and all conceivable preparations completed, personnel waited for the storm to pass. Scattered across the installation in six, 1,000-person shelters (medical center and training buildings), 6,006 people hunkered down as the base was pummeled for nearly 12 hours.

**Katrina’s Wake**

The water from Biloxi’s Back Bay swamped Keesler’s northern-most thoroughfare, Ploesti Drive. The main road running north and south, Larcher Boulevard—along with 50 percent of the base—became submerged. The BX and Commissary were inundated under more than five feet of water; Keesler Medical Center received massive flooding into its basement, as did countless other facilities. The shelters were battered and took on some floodwater, but remained intact. When the storm surge receded and the winds calmed down, Katrina’s devastating blow to Keesler was estimated at $950 million with 95 percent of the base damaged to some extent.

Personnel and resources from around the Air Force quickly converged on the installation, and the extraordinary reconstruction effort, dubbed Operation DRAGON COMEBACK, began in earnest. Although Keesler’s training mission was temporarily halted, within days several squadrons resumed training for students who were within 7-10 days of graduating from their respective courses. The rapid recovery and repair of training facilities and the remarkable efforts of instructors allowed additional courses to be quickly brought back on line. By October 20, all enlisted initial skill courses were approved to be taught, although some at less than 100 percent capacity; by November 1, there were 1,762 students in training at Keesler; and by years end almost all training facilities, dining halls, and student dorms that had sustained damage became operational. The tremendous efforts of the military and civilians assigned to the 81st Training Wing enabled Keesler’s mission to resume much sooner than anyone originally anticipated, and the remarkable pace of rebuilding the base continued.

At the beginning of the 21st Century, the 81 TRW was one of the largest technical training wings in Air Education and Training Command (AETC). In addition to technical training, Keesler AFB also trained pilots in C-21 aircraft. The C-21’s belonged to the 45th Airlift Squadron (AS), a detachment from Little Rock AFB, Arkansas. The 45 AS inactivated on 15 July 2011 ending seven years of pilot training. Today, the 81 Training Wing (TRW) trains thousands of Airmen and members form the Navy, Army, Marines, Coast Guard, and allied nations. Thousands of Air Force and DoD civilians train at Keesler each year. Thirty-six AFSC-awarding training courses were taught at Keesler; among them are Undergraduate Cyber Training, Command Post, Air Traffic Control, Manpower, Personnel, and DoD Weather. The 81st Medical Group also trains Airmen in
seven enlisted Phase II medical courses and doctors and dentists through its graduate medical and dental education programs. Though the 81 TRW primary missions were that of technical training, Keesler AFB as a whole is host to many associate units with their own histories.

Keesler AFB Became the Air Force’s Cyber Training Campus

The Air Announced in 2009 that the 81 Training Group (81 TRG) at KAFB would establish a cyber campus. Therefore, combat systems, communications, and information officers combined into a cyber warfare officer 17X specialty group. The enlisted members also transitioned the same way into cyber warfare operations (bound/wired) and (unbound/wireless) career fields. This process initiated the path to the Undergraduate Cyber Training (UCT) program. The first officers graduated from the UCT on 7 December 2010.
HISTORY OF THE 81st TRAINING WING

Emblem: Approved 2 Mar 1943, for use by the 81st Fighter Group; approved 14 May 1956 for use by the 81st Training Wing.

Description: Or, a dragon salient wings displayed addorsed azure, armed and langued gules, incensed proper, holding in its dexter claw a stylized boll weevil sable.

Significance: The wing’s mission is symbolized by the fabled fiery dragon, a creature adopted in medieval times with the thought of intimidating enemies. The dragon’s breath of fire renders all opposition useless, while the stylized boll weevil clutched in the dragon’s claw is suggestive of the enemy.


Although not established until 1948, the 81st Tactical Fighter Wing’s bestowed history dates back to World War II, when the 81st Pursuit Group (Interceptor) was activated in February 1942, at Morris Field, North Carolina. In May 1942, the unit was redesignated the 81st Fighter Group and began training with P-39 aircraft. Later that year, the group’s ground echelon arrived in French Morocco with the force that invaded North Africa on 8 November 1942. Its air echelon, which had trained in England, arrived in North Africa in December 1942. Assigned to Twelfth Air Force, the Group supported Allied ground operations against Axis forces in Tunisia. Afterward, the 81st patrolled the coast of Africa and protected Allied shipping lanes in the Mediterranean Sea. The group also provided cover for ship convoys that landed troops on the island of Pantelleria and Sicily, and at Anzio, Italy.

In February 1944, the 81st transferred to India and began training with P-40 Warhawk and P-47 Thunderbolt aircraft. It moved to China in May and became part of Fourteenth Air Force. The group continued training until January 1945, when it returned to combat duty. There, the 81st
attacked enemy airfields and installations and aided Chinese ground forces by attacking Japanese troop concentrations, ammunition depots, communication lines, and other strategic targets. The group inactivated in China on 27 December 1945.

The 81st Fighter Group reactivated on 15 October 1946, at Wheeler Field, Hawaii, and was outfitted with P-51 Mustangs. On 1 May 1948, the 81st Fighter Wing also activated at Wheeler Field, and the 81st Fighter Group became its primary operational component. (The group inactivated in February 1955). Although the wing’s Mustang fighters were replaced with P-47N Thunderbolt aircraft, the wing continued to defend Hawaiian airspace until mid-1949. In June of that year, the 81st moved to Kirtland AFB, Albuquerque, New Mexico, where it began flying F-80C Shooting Star jet fighters. On 20 January 1950, the wing was redesignated the 81st Fighter-Interceptor Wing. Outfitted with the new F-86A Sabre fighter jet, it moved to Moses Lake (later Larson) AFB, Washington, a few months later. Upon arrival, the 81st was assigned to the Western Air Defense Force and given a new mission—air defense of the Pacific Northwest.

Just 14 months later, in August 1951, 81st personnel found themselves packing bags again—this time moving to RAF Bentwaters in England. As part of Third Air Force, the 81st was the first F-86 Sabre unit to be based in Europe where it played a major role in the peacetime air defense of Great Britain. In 1954 the wing converted to the F-84F Thunderstreak, and on 1 April of that year, the unit was redesignated the 81st Fighter-Bomber Wing to reflect its nuclear strike capability. Thereafter, the 81st was charged with tactical operations for the United States Air Forces in Europe in support of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), with air defense as a secondary mission. The wing upgraded to the faster, longer-ranged F-101A Voodoo in early 1958.

On 8 July 1958, two significant events occurred. First, the wing again redesignated, this time as the 81st Tactical Fighter Wing (81 TFW). Second, a nearby installation, RAF Woodbridge, transferred to the 81 TFW. Along with RAF Bentwaters, the two locations would be known as the wing's twin base of operations for 35 years.

Seventeenth Air Force became headquarters to the 81 TFW in 1961, but in September 1963, the wing once again found itself under the command of Third Air Force. In 1965, the 81st converted to the F-4C Phantom II, and then in turn to the F-4D beginning in 1969. The 81st traded in its high-speed, high-altitude F-4s for the slow-flying A-10A Thunderbolt II ground attack aircraft in 1979, and for a time the wing was the Air Force’s largest operator of this nimble, tank-hunting aircraft, affectionately called Warthog by its pilots and ground crews. In the late 1980s, the wing's 527th Aggressor Squadron flew the F-16 Fighting Falcon.

Throughout the 1980s, the 81 TFW mission was to provide close air support and battlefield interdiction in support of NATO ground forces. The wing participated in rotational deployments to air bases in Germany, and it conducted joint training operations with U.S. and British ground forces. Following Operation Desert Storm, the 81st logged over 10,000 flying hours while patrolling "no-fly zones" over northern and southern Iraq enforcing UN sanctions against the rogue nation.
On 1 July 1993, the 81st Tactical Fighter Wing inactivated at RAF Bentwaters. That same day, HQ USAF redesignated the wing as the 81st Training Wing (81 TRW), activated it at Keesler and assigned it to Second Air Force. Although its name and mission have changed, the wing’s illustrious heritage continues unbroken.
KEESLER'S HOST UNIT COMMANDERS

Keesler Army Air Field:
Col Arthur W. Brock, Jr. 17 Jul 41
Col Robert E.M. Goolrick 15 Apr 42

3704th Army Air Force Base Unit:
Col Robert E.M. Goolrick 1 May 44
Col Thomas S. Voss 1 May 45
Col John R. Morgan 6 Oct 45
Brig Gen Hugo P. Rush 8 Feb 46
Brig Gen Edward W. Anderson 15 Apr 47
Maj Gen Charles W. Lawrence 5 Apr 48

3380th Technical Training Wing:
Maj Gen Charles W. Lawrence 26 Aug 48
Maj Gen James F. Powell 18 May 49
Maj Gen Harlan C. Parks 20 Aug 53
Brig Gen James H. Davies 2 Apr 55
Maj Gen Fay R. Upthegrove 1 Sep 55
Maj Gen John R. Sutherland 3 Sep 57

Keesler Technical Training Center:
Maj Gen John R. Sutherland 1 Jan 59
Maj Gen John S. Hardy 12 Jul 60
Maj Gen Romulus W. Puryear 27 Jul 64
Maj Gen James C. McGehee 1 Aug 67
Maj Gen Thomas E. Moore 1 Aug 69
Maj Gen Frank M. Madsen, Jr. 29 Nov 69
Maj Gen Bryan M. Shotts 26 Feb 73
Maj Gen Winfield W. Scott, Jr. 1 Aug 75
Maj Gen John S. Pustay 29 Jul 77
Maj Gen Don H. Payne 24 May 79
Maj Gen Thomas C. Richards 8 May 82
Maj Gen Thomas J. Hickey 26 Sep 83
Maj Gen James G. Jones 18 Aug 86
Maj Gen Paul A. Harvey 22 Jun 88
Brig Gen Paul E. Stein 30 Aug 91

Keesler Training Center:
Brig Gen Paul E. Stein 14 Feb 92
Maj Gen John C. Griffith 30 Apr 92
81st Training Wing:
Brig Gen Karen S. Rankin 1 Jul 93
Brig Gen Andrew J. Pelak, Jr. 7 Nov 95
Brig Gen John M. Spiegel 4 Aug 97
Brig Gen Elizabeth A. Harrell 14 Jul 99
Brig Gen Roosevelt Mercer, Jr. 5 Sept 00
Brig Gen Michael W. Peterson 3 May 02
Brig Gen William T. Lord 20 Apr 04
Brig Gen Paul F. Capasso 15 Nov 05
Brig Gen Gregory J. Touhill 2 Oct 07
Brig Gen Ian R. Dickinson 26 May 09
Brig Gen Andrew M. Mueller 2 Aug 10
Brig Gen Bradley D. Spacy 18 May 12
Brig Gen Patrick C. Higby 23 Aug 13
Col Michele C. Edmondson 26 Jun 15
Col Debra A. Lovette 2 Jun 17

81st WING COMMANDERS
81st Fighter Wing:

Col Thomas W. Blackburn 1 May 48
Lt Col Francis R. Royal 21 May 49
Col Thomas W. Blackburn 28 Jun 49

81st Fighter-Interceptor Wing:

Col Thomas W. Blackburn 20 Jan 50
Col Gladwyn E. Pinkston 28 Apr 50

81st Fighter-Bomber Wing:

Col Gladwyn E. Pinkston 1 Apr 54
Col Harold N. Holt 2 Jun 54
Col Ivan W. McElroy 10 Jun 55
Col Lester L. Krause, Jr. 18 Jun 57
Col Henry L. Crouch, Jr. 8 Jul 57

81st Tactical Fighter Wing:

Col Henry L. Crouch, Jr. 8 Jul 58
Col James R. Dubose, Jr. 6 May 60
Col Eugene L. Strickland 9 Jul 60
Col William C. Clark 9 Jul 62
Col Robin Olds 9 Aug 63
Brig Gen Dewitt R. Searles 26 Jul 65
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Col Ramon R. Melton</td>
<td>8 Jul 67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Col George S. Dorman</td>
<td>5 Jul 68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Col Devol Brett</td>
<td>25 Sep 68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Col David J. Schmerbeck</td>
<td>29 Aug 69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Col John C. Bartholf</td>
<td>6 Mar 70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Col James W. Enos</td>
<td>4 Sep 70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Col Dwaine L. Weatherwax</td>
<td>22 Jun 71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brig Gen Charles E. Word</td>
<td>16 Aug 72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Col John R. Paulk</td>
<td>19 Apr 74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brig Gen Clyde H. Garner</td>
<td>14 May 75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Col Gerald D. Larson</td>
<td>11 Feb 76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Col Rudolph F. Wacker</td>
<td>6 May 77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Col Gorden E. Williams</td>
<td>7 Aug 79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Col Richard M. Pascoe</td>
<td>24 Apr 81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Col Dale C. Tabor</td>
<td>20 Aug 82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Col Lester P. Brown, Jr.</td>
<td>20 Mar 84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Col William A. Studer</td>
<td>26 Mar 86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Col Harold H. Rhoden</td>
<td>30 Jul 87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Col Tad J. Oelstrom</td>
<td>5 Aug 88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Col Roger R. Radcliff</td>
<td>12 Jul 91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**81st Training Wing:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brig Gen Karen S. Rankin</td>
<td>1 Jul 93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brig Gen Andrew J. Pelak, Jr.</td>
<td>7 Nov 95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brig Gen John M. Speigel</td>
<td>4 Aug 97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brig Gen Elizabeth A. Harrell</td>
<td>14 Jul 99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brig Gen Roosevelt Mercer, Jr.</td>
<td>5 Sept 00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brig Gen Michael W. Peterson</td>
<td>3 May 02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brig Gen William T. Lord</td>
<td>20 Apr 04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brig Gen Paul F. Capasso</td>
<td>15 Nov 05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brig Gen Gregory J. Touhill</td>
<td>2 Oct 07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brig Gen Ian R. Dickenson</td>
<td>20 May 09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brig Gen Andrew M. Mueller</td>
<td>2 Aug 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brig Gen Bradley D. Spacy</td>
<td>18 May 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brig Gen Patrick C. Higby</td>
<td>23 Aug 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Col Michele C. Edmondson</td>
<td>26 Jun 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Col Debra A. Lovette</td>
<td>2 Jun 17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
KEESLER SENIOR ENLISTED ADVISORS

Keesler Technical Training Center:

CMSgt Thomas R. Silk   Feb 73 – Mar 74
CMSgt Tommy J. Adkins   Mar 74 – Aug 74
CMSgt James J. Blevins   Aug 74 – Sep 75
CMSgt Tommy J. Adkins   Sep 75 – May 78
CMSgt Alfred R. Smith   May 78 – Nov 78
CMSgt Robert G. Cornelius   Nov 78 – Jun 82
CMSgt Billy W. Carter   Jun 82 – Mar 84
CMSgt James J. Vollmuth   Mar 84 – Jun 87

Keesler Training Center:

CMSgt Thomas E. York   Jun 87 – Sep 92
CMSgt Charles Taylor   Sep 92 – Sep 93

81st Training Wing:

CMSgt Steven T. Wyrick   Sep 93 – Aug 95
CMSgt Janice S. McCuiston   Aug 95 – May 97

COMMAND CHIEF MASTER SERGEANTS

81st Training Wing:

CMSgt Edward A. Walden   May 97 – Sep 99
CMSgt Michael McCann   Sep 99 – Nov 01
CMSgt Robert Tappana   Nov 01 – Aug 03
CMSgt Thomas M. Golden   Aug 03 – Aug 04
CMSgt Aliquippa Allen   Aug 04 – Nov 06
CMSgt Ronald S. Owens   Nov 06 – Feb 08
CMSgt Alexandre Perry   Feb 08 – Aug 09
CMSgt Lonnie Slater   Aug 09 – Mar 11
CMSgt Curtis A. Jennings   Mar 11 – Aug 11
CMSgt Angelica M. Johnson   Aug 11 – Sep 13
CMSgt Ferrell D. Thomas   Sep 13 – Dec 14
CMSgt Harry L. Hutchinson   Dec 14 – Aug 16
CMSgt Vegas M. Clark   Aug 16 – Aug 17
CMSgt Kenneth R. Carter   Aug 17 – Nov 18
CMSgt David A. Pizzuto   Nov 18 - Present
LINEAGE

15 Apr 48: Established as 81st Fighter Wing.
1 May 48: Activated.
20 Jan 50: Redesignated as 81st Fighter-Interceptor Wing.
1 Apr 54: Redesignated as 81st Fighter-Bomber Wing.
8 Jul 58: Redesignated as 81st Tactical Fighter Wing.
1 Jul 93: Inactivated.
1 Jul 93: Redesignated as 81st Training Wing and reactivated.

HONORS

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

(Awarded to the 81st Fighter Wing)
28 Mar 59 - 30 Jun 61
1 Jul 61 - 30 Jun 63
1 Jun 66 - 31 May 68
1 Jul 68 - 30 Jun 70
1 Jul 76 - 30 Jun 78
1 Jul 79 - 30 Jun 81
1 Jul 81 - 30 Jun 83
1 Jun 89 - 31 May 91
1 Jun 91 - 30 Jun 93

(Awarded to the 81st Training Wing)
1 Jul 99 - 30 Jun 01
1 Jul 01 - 30 Jun 02
1 Jun 05 - 30 Jun 06
1 Jul 07 - 30 Jun 09
1 Jul 09 – 30 Jun 11
1 Jul 11 – 30 Jun 13
1 Jul 13 – 30 Jun 15
1 Jul 15 – 30 Jun 17

BESTOWED HONORS

The 81st Training Wing is authorized to display all World War II Campaign Streamers awarded to the 81st Fighter Group prior to 1 May 1948.

European-African-Middle Eastern Theater Campaigns
Algeria-French Morocco
Anzio
Naples-Foggia
Rome-Arno
Tunisia
Air Combat, European-African-Middle Eastern Theater
Asiatic-Pacific Theater Campaigns
China Offensive
China Defensive

Aircraft Assigned
81st Training Wing:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aircraft</th>
<th>Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F-47</td>
<td>1948-1949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-80</td>
<td>1949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-86</td>
<td>1949-1955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-51</td>
<td>1951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-84</td>
<td>1954-1959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-101</td>
<td>1958-1966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-4</td>
<td>1965-1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-16</td>
<td>1988-1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-10</td>
<td>1979-1993</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### CHRONOLOGY
(1941 through 2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>6 Mar</td>
<td>The War Department announced that the Army Air Corps would establish a technical school at Biloxi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12 Jun</td>
<td>The War Department activated Army Air Corps Station No. 8, Aviation Mechanics School, Biloxi, Mississippi, and assigned it to Technical Training Command.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25 Jul</td>
<td>The base opened its first facility, a medical dispensary, in the Naval Reserve Park.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21 Aug</td>
<td>The first group of recruits arrived for basic training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25 Aug</td>
<td>The War Department designated Army Air Corps Station No. 8 as Keesler Army Airfield.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8 Sep</td>
<td>The 310th Technical School Squadron, a basic training unit, was the first squadron to move from tent city to new barracks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20 Sep</td>
<td>The Army Air Corps Replacement Training Center (Technician) was activated to train new recruits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29 Sep</td>
<td>The Airplane and Engine Mechanics School began operation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 Dec</td>
<td>The Post Exchange (PX) opened its first full service store on Keesler Field.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>27 Feb</td>
<td>The first airplane mechanics class graduated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7 Mar</td>
<td>Keesler Field opened its first hospital and the facility admitted 92 patients during its first day of operation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>9 Mar</td>
<td>The 1002d Quartermaster Company, Keesler’s first boat rescue unit, was activated and headquartered at the Biloxi Yacht Club.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10 May</td>
<td>The first women's unit, Detachment, Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC), activated. About two weeks later, the unit was redesignated as the 749th WAAC Post Headquarters Company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 Jun</td>
<td>Workers built a 10,000 seat outdoor theater adjacent to the Officers Club.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Jul</td>
<td>The War Department leased Horn Island for chemical warfare studies.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 Nov</td>
<td>The Airplane and Engine Mechanics School received its first foreign students – 13 Chinese officers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Dec</td>
<td>Signal Corps Technical Training School opened. It was discontinued in February 1944.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 Dec</td>
<td>The first bank, Keesler Field Bank, opened.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>1944</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 May</td>
<td>The 3704th Army Air Forces Base Unit (Technical School and Basic Training Center) activated as Keesler's host unit.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Jul</td>
<td>The B-24 Co-Pilot School opened. The school added B-32 co-pilot training in October, but it was discontinued in January 1945. The B-24 Co-Pilot School ceased operations in March 1945.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Jul</td>
<td>Keesler officials opened recreation facilities on Ship Island.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 Jul</td>
<td>The War Department assigned its only emergency rescue school to Keesler. As a result, the 3704th Army Air Forces Base Unit (Technical School and Basic Training Center) was redesignated as the 3704th Army Air Forces Base Unit (Technical School, Basic Training Center, and Emergency Rescue School).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Army Air Forces Base Unit (Technical School and Basic Training Center) was redesignated as the 3704th Army Air Forces Base Unit (Technical School, Basic Training Center, and Emergency Rescue School).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>1945</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Sep</td>
<td>Forty-five (45) Civil Service employees resumed a five-day, 40-hour work week.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>1946</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr-Jun</td>
<td>The War Department inactivated all Army Air Forces airplane mechanics schools with the exception of Keesler.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Apr</td>
<td>Keesler disbanded its Emergency Rescue School and redesignated the 3704th Army Air Forces Base Unit (Technical School, Basic Training Center, and Emergency Rescue School) as the 3704th Army Air Forces Base Unit (Technical School and Basic Training Center).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 Jun</td>
<td>Basic training ended at Keesler. As a result, the 3704th again changed its name,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
becoming the 3704th Army Air Forces Base Unit (Technical School).

1 Jul  The Air Chemical School opened.

14 Dec  Keesler Women's Army Corps detachment inactivated.

1947

1 May  Officials in Washington announced that the radar school at Boca Raton, Florida, would move to Keesler.

Jul-Sep  Keesler Federal Credit Union was chartered. The membership fee was 25 cents.

18 Sep  The worst hurricane to strike the Gulf Coast since 1915 made landfall south of New Orleans. (The practice of naming hurricanes did not begin until 1953.) The Biloxi area recorded winds in excess of 100 miles per hour and storm surge of 15 feet or more. Beach front buildings and seafood processing facilities sustained heavy damage. Keesler personnel conducted anti-looting patrols, rescued stranded storm victims, and made emergency repairs.

14 Nov  The Air Force officially transferred its Boca Raton radar school to Keesler; classes began in January 1948.

1948

13 Jan  Keesler Field became Keesler Air Force Base.

26 Aug  Keesler replaced its base unit (3704th Air Force Base Unit)-type organization with a wing base plan when Air Training Command designated and organized the 3380th Technical Training Wing. Also on this date, designated, organized, and assigned to the wing were the 3380th Medical Squadron (station hospital), the 3380th Air Base Group, the 3380th Technical Training Group, and the 3380th Maintenance and Supply Group.

28 Aug  Air Training Command discontinued the 3704th Air Force Base Unit (Technical School).

1 Nov  The 3380th Medical Squadron was redesignated as the 3380th Station Medical Squadron.

1949

1 Mar  The Air Force announced that the Airplane and Engine Mechanics Department at Keesler would transfer to Sheppard AFB, Texas, beginning in April.
1 Jun  The Radio Operations School moved from Scott Air Force Base, Illinois, to Keesler. The first course began on 15 June. Nine of the students were Air Force women. This was the first time Keesler had operated a coeducational technical course.

Summer  The Air Chemical School transferred to Lowry AFB, Colorado.

9 Nov  Airplane and engine mechanics training ended.

1950

27 Jun  The 3380th Station Medical Squadron was redesignated as the 3380th Medical Group.

1951

Jul-Sep  Keesler's hospital became the first in the Air Force to establish an appointment system for its outpatient clinics.

1953

Jan-Jun  Airmen began occupying new dormitory style barracks in the area nicknamed the Triangle.

16 Oct  The 3380th Medical Group was redesignated as the 3380th USAF Hospital.

1 Dec  Contractors began clearing the site for a new $5.5 million base hospital.

1957

8 Feb  Tactical Air Command's Air-Ground Operations School arrived from Southern Pines, North Carolina. Its T-33s were the first jets assigned to Keesler.

1958

1 Jul  Scott Air Force Base began transferring its control tower operator and radio operator general courses to Keesler; the process was completed by June 1959. The 3380th USAF Hospital was redesignated as the USAF Hospital Keesler.

1959

1 Jan  Air Training Command redesignated the 3380th Technical Training Wing as the Keesler Technical Training Center and the 3380th Technical Training Group became the 3380th Technical School, USAF. All student squadrons became school squadrons.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20 May 1961</td>
<td>The SM-65 Atlas Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) ground training courses began.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Dec 1961</td>
<td>Keesler built a closed circuit television studio to teach electronics principles. The studio was placed in Building 409, a former bowling alley.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 Jun 1962</td>
<td>The base closed its recreational facilities on Ship Island.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Mar 1964</td>
<td>Officials dedicated a new NCO Club, building 2221.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Sep 1965</td>
<td>Hurricane Betsy lashed the Gulf Coast with winds over 100 miles per hour and storm surge as high as 15 feet above normal. Downtown Biloxi suffered heavy flooding and wind damage. Keesler personnel assisted with rescue efforts, storm clean-up, and emergency repairs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Apr 1965</td>
<td>The last C-47 left Keesler. These aircraft had been used for ground approach radar training, but the adoption of less expensive simulators made their use unnecessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Jan 1967</td>
<td>The command activated the 3389th Pilot Training Squadron at Keesler. This unit trained foreign pilots under the Military Assistance Program (MAP) using the T-28 aircraft; classes began on 23 January 1967.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Jun 1968</td>
<td>Keesler's technical school graduated its one-millionth student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Jul 1968</td>
<td>With Amarillo AFB, Texas, closing, Air Training Command moved its personnel and administration courses to Keesler. The transfer increased Keesler's student load by 20 percent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Jul 1969</td>
<td>Keesler's student load peaked at 14,000 during the Vietnam War.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Air Training Command (ATC) redesignated the USAF Hospital Keesler as the USAF Medical Center, Keesler. At the same time, the facility became one of six regional medical centers in the Air Force hospital system.

18 Aug  Hurricane Camille made landfall at Waveland, Mississippi, clocking wind gusts of over 200 miles per hour and pushing water surges as high as 35 feet above normal. More than 260 people were killed, and communities in five states were devastated. Keesler officials estimated on base damage at $3.5 million. During a subsequent inspection visit, President Richard Nixon praised the base's heroic rescue and community assistance efforts.

1970

15 May  Ground breaking ceremonies were held for the new Base Exchange (BX) shopping center.

1971

4 Jan  Keesler reorganized under the multi-deputy system, and the air base group commander became the base commander.

1 Mar  Air Training Command (ATC) activated the 3380th Student Group and assigned it 18 student squadrons.

1 Jul  Kitchen Patrol, or KP, ended at the base when civilian contractors assumed responsibility for food preparation.

6 Oct  Base officials held a ground-breaking ceremony for the new Commissary.

1972

1 Aug  Air Training Command (ATC) inactivated the 3380th Technical School at Keesler and, on the same date, activated the USAF School of Applied Aerospace Sciences, Keesler, and assigned it to the Keesler Technical Training Center.

1973

25 Apr  The Air Force Reserve activated the 920th Tactical Airlift Group at Keesler and equipped it with C-130s.

4 May  The T-28 pilot training program ended after graduating 908 foreign students – the majority from South Vietnam.

18 Jun  The 53d Weather Reconnaissance Squadron, a Military Airlift Command (MAC) unit, moved from Ramey AFB, Puerto Rico, to Keesler.
Keesler became the prime technical training center for the airborne warning and control system (AWACS).

10 Jun  Blake Fitness Center opened.

18 Aug  The first of seven EC-130 aircraft belonging to the 7th Airborne Command and Control Squadron arrived at Keesler.

1 Jan  A $31.6 million Composite Medical Facility was built to give the medical center a separate clinical research laboratory.

Biloxi city officials obtained government approval for an access bridge which would connect Keesler with Interstate 110.

Workers began constructing a $3.6 million facility to house a reception center, as well as personnel, finance, and traffic management offices. In 1978 the building was renamed the Sablich Center.

Summer  The City of Biloxi began acquiring right of way acquisition along Pass Christian Road between the base and Debuys Road so that it could be widened to four lanes. The Department of Defense would pay for 90 percent of the $3 million project.

30 Dec  Student load fell below 5,000.

1 Apr  HQ ATC inactivated the USAF School of Applied Aerospace Sciences, Keesler, and activated the 3300th Technical Training Wing and assigned it to Keesler Technical Training Center.

Air Training Command (ATC) established the USAF Technical Training School, Keesler, and assigned it to the 3300th Technical Training Wing.

1 Jan  The USAF Technical Training School, Keesler, transferred from the 3300th Technical Training Wing to Keesler Technical Training Center.

Air Training Command (ATC) inactivated the 3300th Technical Training Wing.
### 1979

1 Jan  Construction began on a new logistics/materiel complex, which would later be dedicated as the Taylor Logistics Center.

13 Sep  Hurricane Frederick struck, causing about $11 million in property damage on the base. In addition to base clean up, many Air Force personnel assisted with recovery efforts in several communities along the Gulf Coast.

1 Nov  Air Training Command designated and activated the 3300th Technical Training Wing. Air Training Command reassigned the USAF Technical Training School, Keesler, from Keesler Technical Training Center to the 3300th Technical Training Wing.

### 1980

4 Apr  Base officials dedicated a new control tower. It replaced a tower that had been in use since 1941.

31 Dec  Student load climbed to 6,891.

### 1981

13 Mar  Base officials dedicated the new childcare and dependent-care centers.

27 Apr  The USAF Medical Center opened a new $45.3 million clinic addition.

1 Aug  As a result of the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization strike, the 3300th Technical Training Wing had to increase its production of air traffic controllers.

### 1982

24 Apr  Keesler Air Force Base hosted the first Special Olympics for the mentally challenged. The event drew 350 participants.

4 May  The new Medical Food Inspection Facility, which also housed the base's new veterinary clinic, began operation.

1 Jun  Keesler lost its postal training courses when the Department of Defense consolidated all training at Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana.

### 1983

1 Jan  Surgeons at the medical center began performing cardiovascular surgery.
1 Nov Keesler’s Air Force Reserve unit, the 920th Tactical Airlift Group, inactivated. Its personnel and equipment were absorbed by the reserve’s newly-activated 403d Rescue and Reconnaissance Wing.

1984

10 Aug The base dedicated a new $4.7 million civil engineering complex.

1985

2 Sep Hurricane Elena struck the coast, causing $5 million damage to Keesler.

1986

1 Oct Morse code systems radio operator training moved to Fort Devens, Massachusetts. This training had been at Keesler since 1949, when the general radio operator course moved from Scott Air Force Base.

1987

15 Mar Volunteers completed two super playgrounds on the base using the previous year's energy savings plus money donated by on and off base personnel.

2 Jun A new $7 million computer training facility opened.

1988

1 Mar The Family Support Center was established and located in the Sablich Center.

30 Sep Average daily student load was 3,026—the lowest in the history of the technical school to date.

4 Oct Through the efforts of the John C. Stennis Chapter of the Air Force Association, a Boulevard of Flags was established on Larcher Boulevard.

1989

1 Feb Builders began working on a new operations facility for the 3380th Security Police Squadron. It would replace the converted World War II barracks that the squadron used as a headquarters.

Contracts began building a new squadron operations center that would also house three tenant organizations: the 7th Airborne Command and Control Squadron, the 53d Weather Reconnaissance Squadron and the 24th Weather Squadron.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1990</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>28 Aug</td>
<td>Members of the 7th Airborne Command and Control Squadron deployed to Southwest Asia in support of Operation Desert Shield.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1991</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Jan</td>
<td>Over 260 Keesler medical personnel deployed to various locations in support of Operation Desert Storm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 Jun</td>
<td>Military Airlift Command inactivated the 53d Weather Reconnaissance Squadron. The 53d's hurricane hunter mission transferred to the 403d Airlift Wing, Keesler's Air Force Reserve unit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Jul</td>
<td>Keesler AFB celebrated its 50th anniversary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1992</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Feb</td>
<td>Air Training Command (ATC) redesignated the technical training center as Keesler Training Center, the 3300th Technical Training Wing became a group, and all technical training groups became squadrons. At the same time, Air Training Command inactivated the 3305th Student Group and its subordinate units. Also in line with this reorganization, the command redesignated the Keesler Technical Training Center Medical Center as the Keesler Medical Center.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Apr</td>
<td>The Department of the Navy assumed control of the base printing plant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Sep</td>
<td>All 3380th-designated units were redesignated as 393d units.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Dec</td>
<td>All Air Force weather courses transferred from Chanute AFB, Illinois, to Keesler. Classes were temporarily held in Allee and Wolfe Halls while new facilities were under construction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1993</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Feb</td>
<td>Fisher House was dedicated. It provided temporary quarters for families of seriously ill patients at Keesler Medical Center.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 Apr</td>
<td>A new two-story 87,000-square foot weather training complex was officially dedicated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Jul</td>
<td>HQ USAF redesignated Air Training Command (ATC), headquartered at Randolph AFB, Texas, as Air Education and Training Command (AETC). HQ AETC activated Second Air Force at Keesler and made the Numbered Air Force responsible for all technical training in the command.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The command inactivated Keesler Training Center and all of its subordinate organizations, with the exception of the 393d Technical Training Group, which was redesignated as the 81st Technical Training Group.

HQ AETC activated the 81st Training Wing and assigned it to Second Air Force. The wing assumed the old center mission. Major components of the wing included the 81st Technical Training, 81st Support, 81st Logistics, and 81st Medical Groups.

HQ Keesler Medical Center inactivated, and HQ AETC activated the 81st Medical Group to operate the base hospital, which was still known as Keesler Medical Center.

The First Sergeants Academy moved to Maxwell AFB, Alabama. At the same time, HQ AETC reassigned the academy to Air University.

The paralegal service specialist and chapel management courses moved to Maxwell, falling under the purview of Air University.

1994

15 Apr Keesler’s new Officer's Club was dedicated. The old club, which had been one of three original buildings on Keesler property, closed.

1 Jul The 45th Airlift Squadron was activated and assigned to the 81st Training Group. Equipped with C-12C/F Huron and C-21A Learjet aircraft, it brought flying training back to Keesler for the first time since 1973.

10 Jul Members of the 81st Security Police Squadron went to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, in support of Operation Sea Signal, the resettlement of Haitian refugees.

25 Aug The 81st Medical Group’s functions were divided among four newly activated units: the 81st Medical Operations, 81st Aerospace Medicine, 81st Dental, and 81st Medical Support Squadrons.

24 Sep Crotwell Theater closed its movie-showing function. However, movies still continued to be shown at Welch Theater in the Triangle area.

30 Sep The 7th Airborne Command and Control Squadron, a base tenant reporting to Air Combat Command, was reassigned to Davis-Monthan AFB, Arizona.

1995

31 Jan Keesler’s Aero Club closed its doors after more than 40 years of operation. The Aero Club was established in November 1954.
1996

25 Jun  Terrorists detonated a massive car bomb near the Khobar towers in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. Eleven Keesler personnel were deployed to the Air Base, including Staff Sergeant Rondal Burns of the 333 TRS who was seriously injured and subsequently awarded the Purple Heart, and SrA Martie Capoeman of the Wing’s Public Affairs office who received an AF Achievement Medal with ‘V’ (for valor) device for her performance in providing emergency medical care.

4 Oct  The demolition of Cole Manor (Bldg. 7401) signaled the beginning of “Triangle Vision,” a $123 million project to replace the ten early 1950s era dormitories by the year 2002.

1997

19 Feb  In a ceremony attended by hundreds, Keesler officials raised the USAF 50th Anniversary Flag on the base flagpole adjacent to the Wing Headquarters building. The ceremony marked the first in a yearlong series of events intended to recognize the Air Force’s founding on 18 Sep 47.

24 Feb  Lieutenant General John C. Griffith, AETC Vice Commander, led an official party in breaking ground for the first construction phase of Triangle Vision.

1 Jul  Mirroring an Air Force-wide change, the 81st Security Police Squadron was redesignated as the 81st Security Forces Squadron.

18 Sep  Keesler capped off the year’s 50th Air Force Birthday celebration by burying a time capsule at the foot of the base flag pole and with a parade on Governors’ Field.

16 Oct  The 338th Training Squadron graduated the last class of students to attend the Satellite and Wideband Communications Course at Keesler. Thereafter, the U.S. Army Signal Center at Fort Gordon, Georgia would be responsible for conducting all DoD ‘Satwide’ training under a consolidation ordered in 1994 by the Interservice Training Review Organization (ITRO).

1998

9 Mar  Keesler’s newest facility opened, a 6,000 square foot Marina Recreation Center (Bldg. 6726). The $1 million center hosted fishing, boating, and sailing activities, as well as other outdoor programs.

26-28 Sep  Hurricane Georges, one of the most destructive storms in history to date, slammed into the Mississippi Gulf Coast, causing major damage to Keesler and the surrounding community. The Category IV hurricane swept into Keesler with sustained winds of 142 miles per hour and gusts to 179 miles per hour, flooding over 100 family houses, downing hundreds of trees and power lines, and causing
the loss of power to major pockets of the base. While Keesler suffered no fatalities during the storm, elsewhere over 400 people were killed, including 201 people in the Dominican Republic.

1999

17-18 Feb The 403d Wing, Keesler’s Reserve tenant unit, received the first of the new C-130J trainer aircraft. The “J” model aircraft replaces the 1960s era aircraft, lowering operating costs and enhancing performance and capabilities of the unit’s weather reconnaissance mission.

2002

15 Jan The 403d Wing replaced its older WC-130H aircraft for the newer C-130J models.

10 Dec Keesler AFB’s “giant voice” project was completed. The system enabled the command post to broadcast weather/emergency notifications across the entire base through pre-positioned speakers.

2003

26 Aug Building 2603 was named Lott Hall, in honor of Mississippi Senator Trent Lott. The 42,000 square foot facility contained a C-130J full motion flight training simulator, and the 45th Airlift Squadron staff offices.

2004

31 Mar Detachment 4, Air Mobility Command (AMC) Air Operations Squadron inactivated at Keesler.

31 Dec Keesler’s Defense Reutilization and Marketing Office (DRMO) transferred their incoming property operations to Eglin AFB, Florida.

2005

3 Jan A 23,000 square foot mini-mall, that included a shoppette, concessions, and food court, opened for business in the “Triangle” area.

2 Feb Keesler AFB’s runaway and drainage system underwent a $2.9 million Renovation – the first major revamp since 1986.

13 May The 2005 Base Realignment and Closure commission recommended Keesler Medical Center for realignment.

13 Jun The first Sexual Assault Response Coordinator stood up an office at Keesler.
Hurricane Katrina made landfall near the Louisiana/ Mississippi border as a Category 3 hurricane with sustained winds of 120-mph. Record storm surge peaked at 34 feet and came ashore along the entire Gulf Coast and into Alabama. The local community lay in ruin and Keesler AFB’s damage was estimated at $950 million. Fortunately, no on-base deaths or injuries were reported.

2006

28 Mar Keesler’s newest technical training facility, Cody Hall, was dedicated in honor of Captain Howard Cody. The new 193,000-square foot facility was built using concrete, steel and brick at a cost of $23.5 million.

1 Jun After serving Keesler customers for 55 years, the Pecan Dining facility closed as part of an AETC cost-cutting requirement.

22 Sep Keesler’s military family housing construction project moved forward with the award of a $287.8 million contract for constructing 1,067 new homes. The massive construction project by Hunt Building Company was driven by Hurricane Katrina which destroyed or damaged a large inventory of houses.

19 Dec Ten Keesler students graduated from the last 1A3 airborne mission specialist course in the 332d Training Squadron, as part of the enlisted aircrew training transition to the Career Enlisted Aviator Center of Excellence at Lackland AFB, Texas.

2007

8 Jan After almost a year's delay due to Hurricane Katrina, Keesler Medical Center opened its new labor, delivery, recovery and postpartum unit.

31 Jan Keesler’s temporary commissary opened a new deli. The deli was part of over $700,000 in improvements that included an external freezer storage building, a produce storage building, four new freezer display cases, a 10-ton air conditioning unit for the expanded freezer display, and five air conditioning drops above the cash registers.

29 Oct A ribbon cutting was held for a newly renovated facility for the introduction of a new basic financial management and staff officer course curriculum. The course represented the largest financial management curriculum change in 20 years.

7 Nov The 81st Security Forces Squadron conducted a ribbon cutting ceremony for the reopening of its refurbished building on Larcher Boulevard. The walls, communications systems, flooring, ceiling grids, gutters, downspouts, and roof systems were repaired and hurricane screens were added.

8 Nov Library communication abilities were upgraded with internet capabilities at McBride Library.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 Apr</td>
<td>The Sablich Center re-opened nearly three years after Katrina rebuilding began.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Apr</td>
<td>Baughman Boulevard was permanently closed because of the construction of the new Radiation Oncology Center, located between the Tyer House and Keesler Medical Center’s emergency room.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 Oct</td>
<td>Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Norton Schwartz visited Keesler Airmen at an Airmen’s Call. The general toured the base while in Biloxi to speak at the 20th annual Salute to the Military sponsored by the Mississippi Gulf Coast Chamber of Commerce.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Nov</td>
<td>Arnold Cottage, used to lodge distinguished visitors to the base for the over six decades, was moved to a spot behind the Larcher Chapel, where it was placed on a new foundation and renovated. Its former location at the southwest corner of Larcher Boulevard and Chappie James Avenue was cleared for the construction of a training development facility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Dec</td>
<td>The largest airfield ramp repair project in Keesler history, intended to improve the airfield's capabilities for allowing larger aircraft safely to park, was initiated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Dec</td>
<td>Maj Gen Al Flowers, 2nd Air Force commander, ceremonially started the demolition of Avery Manor, one of the dormitories in the Triangle. There were no plans to redevelop the area because it was located in an airfield clear zone. The building’s demolition was part of a longer-term initiative for bases to reduce physical footprints by 20 percent by removing older, unnecessary buildings.</td>
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</table>

**2009**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jul</td>
<td>The last radio communications operations class in the 336th Training Squadron graduated. The course, which had been taught at Keesler since 1948, graduated about 15,000 students and employed more than 70 instructors. It merged into one of three new career fields.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep</td>
<td>Keesler established a new form of communication for personnel to share Information, ask questions and discuss answers. Keesler's new blog, called “Keesler Commander's Corner,” was developed by the wing commander as a two-way communication tool.</td>
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### 2010

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dec</td>
<td>Demolition of the former Keesler Club on Larcher Boulevard began during the first week of December. The building, located in a flood plain, was heavily damaged during Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The cleared area was retained as green space.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Jan</td>
<td>The 338th Training Squadron marked the end of an era with the final graduation of the ground radio communications apprentice maintenance course after 48 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan-Feb</td>
<td>Medics from the 81 Medical Group deployed to Haiti in response to a devastating earthquake and to Chile where another earthquake killed over 300 people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Mar</td>
<td>The largest military family housing construction project in Air Force history was completed. The massive $287.8 million construction program was launched in conjunction with Hunt Building Co. and W.G. Yates and Sons Construction Co., which formed a partnership to complete 1,028 housing units. The project provided 198 junior NCO family units in Thrower Park, 136 NCO units in West Falcon Park, 200 mixed-use units in the first phase of Bayridge housing in the former Shadowlawn and Maltby Hall neighborhoods, 364 homes in Northwest Falcon Park and a final 130 units for senior NCOs and officers in Bayridge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr</td>
<td>USNORTHCOM designated Keesler AFB as a base support installation for DOD forces responding to the crisis caused by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Apr</td>
<td>Keesler AFB began a new era of post hurricane Katrina reconstruction with the grand opening of the newly completed, $64.5 million, 275,000 square foot Commissary and Base Exchange facility that featured a shopping mall, food court, and state-of-the-art pharmacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Apr</td>
<td>A new, $3.3 million postal facility on Meadows Drive opened, replacing a wooden structure built in 1941 that had termite problems and major flood and roof damage from Hurricane Katrina.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Jun</td>
<td>An undergraduate cyber training course for officers launched. The new course provided initial training for 17DX cyber operations officers, a career field that replaced 33SX communications officers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Sep</td>
<td>The $26.5 million Bay Breeze Event Center opened with a day of celebrations including the annual Keesler vs. Biloxi Bay Chamber of Commerce golf tournament, tours of the center, free entertainment and food, children's activities, prizes and giveaways. The Bay Breeze Event Center was located on the golf course across from the Bay Ridge housing area. It provided myriad services to Keesler personnel and to local neighbors and communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Dec</td>
<td>Fifteen officers from Keesler’s first Undergraduate Cyber space Training course graduated after twenty-four weeks of training focused on developing experts in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
cyber space operations. The inaugural initial skills training for new cyber space operator officer accession replaced Basic Communications Officer Training. The course was part of the Air Force’s vision for a fully developed Air Force cyberspace operations workforce with the required operational rigor and mission assurance for effectively establishing, controlling and leveraging cyberspace capabilities.

2011

14 Apr  333rd TRS Commander Lt Col Douglas Short officially retired the squadron mascot, the “Mad Duck,” replacing it with a new one, the “Spartan”. A formal retirement ceremony was held at the Bay Breeze Events Center, where the “Mad Duck” received a Meritorious Mascot Medal and letter of appreciation for 19 years of honorable service.

18 May  The 333TRS and the 81 TRW hosted a “Salute to Cyber Training: The Future is Now” banquet honoring the first group of students coming out of the new cyber program. The event was held at the Bay Breeze Event Center (BBEC), and featured keynote speaker Mr. Jim Christy, a cyber crime investigations special agent.

Jun  Keesler marked the 70th anniversary of its activation with a month-long celebration including a birthday party and a time capsule collection effort.

17 June  332nd TRS stood down as the result of a manpower study recommending an 81 TRG reorganization. Lt Col Trevor Wall, the squadron’s last commander, presided over a ceremony that day, and on 29 June, went on to take command of the 338th TRS.

20 Jun  The 338th Operating Location A (OL-A) at Keesler Air Force Base officially stood down.

23-26 Jun  Keesler’s Gospel Service celebrated its 40th anniversary and record as the longest running Gospel Service in the Air Force. The theme for the celebration was “Pressing Towards the Mark,” and there were a variety of events throughout the weekend, which culminated in a morning ceremony at Triangle Chapel.

15 Jul  The 45th Airlift Squadron, which operated C-21 aircraft training as part of the 314th Airlift Wing, deactivated. The 45th AS had been assigned to Keesler AFB since 1994.

15 Jul  C-21 aircraft training ended at Keesler with the inactivation of the 45th Airlift Squadron. The squadron had operated at Keesler since 1994. The unit was first assigned to the 81 TRW and later as a squadron assigned to the 314th Airlift Wing at Little Rock AFB, Arkansas.
2012

20 Apr  The 81 SFS conducted a ribbon cutting on its new multi-million dollar in-door firing range.

26-29 Aug  Hurricane Isaac impacts Mississippi Gulf Coast. Keesler AFB closed on 28-29 August. Full operations were restored on 30 August.

15 Oct  81 TRG implements Teal Rope program. The program was designed to address issues surrounding sexual assault through student involvement and the color symbolizes sexual assault awareness and victim support within the student population.

5 Nov  AETC IG deemed 81 TRW “Excellent” after a five day Unit Compliance Inspection, 29 Oct to 2 Nov.

2013

1 Feb  Keesler Medical Center conducts ribbon cutting ceremony for its new Back Bay Tower. The new tower, officially opened in December 2012, houses medical and surgical inpatient wards, intensive care units, a new emergency department, new labs, operation rooms, and a chiropractic clinic.

5 Apr  Keesler named 2013 Air Force Installation Excellence Award winner. Keesler also received $1 million for quality of life projects on the base.

16 Sep  338 TRS hosts street dedication ceremony in honor of CMSGT Richard L. Etchberger. Chief Etchberger, a graduate of Keesler’s Radar Maintenance Course, was killed on 11 March 1968, after placing three wounded comrades and himself onto a rescue helicopter after an early morning raid on Lima Site 85, a radar facility in Laos. Chief Etchberger was mortally wounded by enemy ground fire.

8 Oct  Keesler civilian employees return to work after a four-day federal government shut down.

2014

28 Feb  The McBride Library closed. Many of the library’s daily functions transferred to the Vandenberg Community Center where a smaller “electronic” library opened on 10 March 2014. The new library provided patrons access to computers and e-check-out of magazines and books. A limited number of library books transferred to the new library, but they were only available for in-house use.

29 May  Biloxi City celebrates its Preservation in May 2014 Program event, “Keesler Air Force Base: As Biloxi as Boiled Shrimp and Barq’s,” at the Biloxi Visitors Center.
Keesler AFB opened a 90-day exhibit at the center that displayed the base’s history and its relationship to Biloxi.

4 Jun  Biloxi Chamber of Commerce hosted the Keesler AFB Flag Sponsor Appreciation reception at the city’s Visitors Center. General Higby, the guest speaker at the reception, thanked local business and civic organizations that contributed funds that enabled the base to purchase two sets of the 50 state and six territorial flags that hang on display along Larcher Boulevard – “Boulevard of Flags.” The “Boulevard of Flags” was initially established with donations from the Air Force Association’s John C. Stennis Chapter, Keesler AFB and other groups in 1988.

25 Jun  HQ AETC activated Operating Location (OL) A, 81st Communications Squadron (CS) at Naval Air Station (NAS) Pensacola, Florida. Operating Location A organization change moved communications support for AETC organizations in the NAS Pensacola region from the 479th Operations Support Squadron (NAS Pensacola) and aligned them under the 81 CS (Keesler AFB).

14 Jul  The Air Force began offering Knowledge Operations courses at Keesler AFB. They split it into the two specialties of Knowledge Management and Administration on 1 May 2014. The Air Force did this to improve administrative support provided to commanders across the service.

15 Dec  The 81 TRW was graded “Effective” by the AETC IG after an eight-day Unit Effectiveness Inspection. The inspection team used a 5-tier grading scale and validated the unit’s discipline, effectiveness, efficiency, readiness, and compliance using standards set forth in AFI 90-201 and applicable MAJCOM guidance. The wing was inspected in four Major Graded Areas (MGA) and by HQ AETC for Adequacy of Resources.

15 Dec  The 335 TRS graduated its last class of students in Avionics Fundamentals. The fundamentals class and 59 related avionics courses transferred to Sheppard AFB, Texas on 5 January 2015.

2015

28-29 Mar  Keesler AFB hosted an airshow and open house. The USAF’s Thunderbirds and the Army’s Golden Knights were key acts. This was Keesler’s first airshow since 2011.

30 Apr  The final paper edition of the *Keesler News* was published. The final edition ended the paper’s 61-year continuous publication.

Nov  The 81 Training Support Squadron (81 TRSS) gained Second Air Force’s (2AF) Military Training Leader (MTL) Schoolhouse. The 2 AF transferred the MTL schoolhouse from the 37 TRSS of the 37th Training Group, Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland (JB-SAL).
Jan  The 81 SFS personnel in conjunction with PAE and the Infrastructure Division implemented two courses of action to mitigate traffic congestion at all three gates. First, the SFS increased the number of entry controllers from two to four at the Meadows Street gate. Second, the SFS changed one of the two outbound lanes of Meadows Street gate into an inbound traffic lane between the hours of 6:00 and 7:00 a.m. Eventually, the third inbound lane became permanent.

26 Feb  The 81st Training Group’s quarterly drill down on 26 February 2016 “kicked off” the wing’s 75th anniversary celebration. Colonel Edmondson unveiled the wing’s anniversary logo during the drill down. As Keesler had been part of the Gulf Coast for 75 years, community leaders also attended the drill down.

8 Mar  The 81st Force Support Squadron (FSS) and the 403d FSS, of Keesler’s largest tenant unit, the 403d Wing, merged together to form one Total Force Support Squadron (TFSS) and provide comprehensive Force Support services to all Airmen assigned to the base, regardless of component affiliation. The merger was the end product of Secretary of the Air Force’s TFSS initiative began in 2010.

Spring  81 MSG submits family camp proposal to the Air Force Non-appropriated Funds Council for approval.

3 May  Biloxi’s JLUS application was approved by OEA in September 2015. After Biloxi received funding for the JLUS, Matrix Design Group, consultant for JLUS, formed three committees and began the process of the land use study by subject matter experts. The kick-off event with all three committees present to discuss the JLUS occurred on 3 May 2016.

Jun  The Keesler Air Force Base community celebrated the 75th anniversary of the installation.

3 Jun  Base leaders, community partners, and Biloxi elected representatives gathered at the Biloxi Visitors Center on 3 June 2016 to celebrate Biloxi/Keesler Partnership Day. The evening event highlighted Keesler’s partnership with the City of Biloxi through a city proclamation read by the city’s Mayor, Andrew Gilich and a Keesler historical display featuring Keesler’s 75 years on the Gulf Coast.

July  Southern Mississippi Living Magazine (July 2016 edition) celebrated Keesler’s 75 years by highlighting Keesler’s past and its present in stories and pictures. The magazine also featured a Keesler AFB timeline between pages 33-51.

4 Nov  Colonel Michele Edmondson, 81 TRW Commander hosted the 75th Anniversary Gala, the final anniversary celebration to honor Keesler’s namesake, Second Lieutenant Samuel Reeves Keesler, Jr., and the base’s 75 years in Biloxi.
Mississippi. Members of Keesler’s family attended the gala. The gala featured historical displays, classic cars, a big band, period dancing performances, and food catered from Biloxi’s Half Shell Oyster House.

2017

14 Feb the 81st Communications Squadron hosted the 22nd annual Technology Expo at the Roberts Consolidated Aircraft Maintenance Facility at Keesler Air Force Base. Private sector vendors provided briefings to attendees about their electronic products.

23 Mar the first Science on a Sphere appeared at the 335th Training Squadron’s Weather Training Complex on Keesler Air Force Base. The Department of Defense (DoD) sent this electronic globe as its newest weather training aid. The 48-inch carbon fiber device utilizes computers with high-end graphic cards and video projectors to display data onto the globe.

28 Mar Major Lauren Buck, Surgical Operations Squadron (81 MSGS) general surgeon, and her surgical team completed the first robotic surgery in the Air Force. They utilized the da Vinci Xi robot to conduct a ventral hernia repair on a patient. This new two million dollar device significantly reduced the need for the 81 MSGS to outsource this type of procedure.

Apr The 81st Medical Group’s Cardiology Clinic began extending the CardioMEMS HF System to selective Department of Veterans Affairs patients through a partnership. The device is a pulmonary artery pressure censor. The Department of Veterans Affairs partners did not have a CardioMEMS HF System. This relationship offered training opportunities for the Airmen performing the procedures.

13 Apr Airmen of the 81 Medical Operations Squadron carried out the first Micra Transcatheter Pacing System for patient insertion procedure in the Air Force. They implanted the smallest pacemaker in the world for patients with bradycardia at Keesler Medical Center. The device is approximately the size of a vitamin and it weighs the same as a penny.

19 May Keesler Air Force Base hosted the 2017 Special Olympics Mississippi Summer Games 19 through 20 May. The participants competed in track and field, weightlifting, aquatics, bowling and other events.

1 Jun KAFB, Biloxi, and State of Mississippi leaders announced a 37 million dollar Division Street new main gate construction project during a ceremony at KAFB. The event highlighted the Air Force Community Partnership Program that KAFB started on 3 May 2017.
17 Jul  The 81 Training Support Squadron Military Training Leader Course moved to the new Lott Hall building on KAFB. This upgraded facility offered more space and better equipment.

2 Aug  Detachment 1 of the 352nd Battlefield Airman Training Squadron (Det.1, 352nd BATS) activated at Keesler Air Force Base. Captain Jesse Sullivan, Det. 1, 352nd BATS commander, assumed command of the unit from Major Trent Joy, 352d BATS commander from Pope Air Force Base, N.C. The detachment will train mission ready combat controllers and special operations weathermen.

23 Aug  The new Second Air Force (2 AF) commander, Major General Timothy Leahy, assumed command of 2 AF from Major General Bob LaBrutta at KAFB. The change of command ceremony took place at the Levitow Training Support Facility parade field.

24 Sep  Staff Sergeants Christopher Pineda, David Campbell and Joseph Hartsfield from the 81st Training Support Squadron (81 TRSS) won first place in HackState at Mississippi State University. These three Keesler Air Force Base Airmen received the award for presenting the best safety project within a 24-hour period.


11 Nov  Hundreds of KAFB Airmen participated in the Mississippi Gulf Coast Veterans Parade in Biloxi, MS. The parade included other military units, marching bands, and 100 floats to honor Veterans.

7 Dec  Keesler Air Force Base Outdoor Recreation hosted a Christmas party at the Bay Breeze Event Center on the installation. They offered ornament decorating, games, cookies, and visits with Santa.

15 Dec  The 81st Security Forces Squadron held a ribbon cutting ceremony for a new security system at the West Falcon off base housing area. They demonstrated a camera surveillance system. The 24-hour video monitoring system will deter crime.

2018

26 Jan  Mr. David Allen, legislative assistant for Congressman Steven Palazzo from Mississippi, visited Keesler Air Force Base. He received updates on base construction projects from KAFB senior leaders.

22 Feb  The Keesler Medical Center earned the 2017 Hospital of the Year award. The Air Force Surgeon noted the outstanding performance of the unit.
19 Mar  The Air Education and Training Command (AETC) recognized the 81 Training Wing (81 TRW) with 2017 Innovation Challenge Mission Accomplishment award. Additionally, the 81 TRW earned a monetary award the unit may spend for any operations and maintenance fund purchases. The 81 TRW received this honor during the AETC Senior Leadership Conference at Vandenberg Air Force Base, CA. The event occurred 19 through 21 March 2018.

13 Apr  A large crowd of more than 800 people attended the sixth Annual Bay Breeze Crawfish Cook-Off at the Bay Breeze Event Center at KAFB. Twenty-one teams competed to win free entry into the 26th Annual Mississippi Coast Coliseum Crawfish Festival Cook-Off. The first place trophy went to the victorious “Craw-Fish Pot-Nahs.” team.

11 May  Keesler Air Force Base hosted the 32nd Special Olympics Mississippi Summer Games. The more than 3,000 participants enjoyed the competition. The games included swimming, volleyball, running, bowling, and javelin.

6 Jun  Senior leaders from KAFB joined local officials at the Mississippi Gulf Coast Community Partnership Conference. They discussed providing federal assistance to the local communities to support the military missions at the Biloxi Civic Center in Biloxi.

6 Jul  The Biloxi Police Department presented six Keesler Air Force Base Airmen with humanitarian medals during a recognition ceremony at the Salvation Army Kroc Center in Biloxi. The Airmen received the awards for assisting with the recovery effort after a train collided with a bus off base on 7 March 2017.

17 Aug  The 81 Force Support Squadron (81 FSS) held their grand opening of an Outdoor Recreation Center satellite store in the Vandenberg Commons at KAFB. The 81 FSS revealed the name of the new facility is “The Outpost.” The store will provide recreational items for Airmen.

11 Sep  The Keesler Air Force Base community honored the victims of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks. The event took place in front of the 81 Training Wing headquarters building.

22 Sep  The 81 Training Wing (81 TRW) celebrated at the 71st Air Force Birthday Ball at the Imperial Palace Casino in Biloxi. The John C. Stennis Chapter Air Force Association co-hosted the event with the 81 TRW.

16 Oct  Hurricane Michael evacuees from Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida attended the first of two Evacuee Open-Houses in the Bay Breeze Event Center. The participants took advantage of one-stop assistance to help them with their evacuation. The second open-house happened on 18 October 2018.
2 Nov  The 335 Training Squadron (335 TRS) and National Weather Service (NWS) representatives demonstrated the NWS SkyWarn program to 335 TRS weather students for the first time on KAFB. Students can earn certifications to become official storm spotters through this 81 TRW and NWS partnership.

10 Nov  Keesler Air Force Base Airmen marched in the 18th annual Gulf Coast Veterans Day Parade in Gulfport.

19 Dec  The 81 Training Wing received the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award (AFOUA). The unit earned this honor for displaying exceptionally meritorious service covering the period of 1 July 2015 through 30 June 2017.