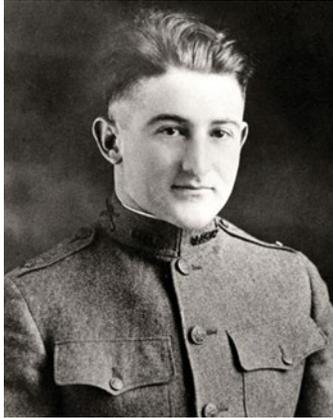


A BRIEF  
HISTORY OF KEESLER AFB  
AND THE  
81st TRAINING WING



## CONTENTS

Second Lieutenant Samuel Reeves Keesler, Jr. ....	3
History of Keesler Air Force Base .....	4
History of the 81st Training Wing .....	16
Keesler Host Unit Commanders .....	19
81st Wing Commanders .....	20
Keesler Senior Enlisted Advisors/Command Chief Master Sergeants .....	22
Lineage and Honors .....	24
Aircraft Assigned .....	25
Chronology .....	26



**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 earned his commission as 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



**The Biloxi airport, ballpark, and golf course as it appeared in 1941.**

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 drastically 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.



**Keesler's first graduating class of African-American airplane mechanics, 1944.**

### **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.



**B-24 maintenance training was taught at Keesler's Airplane and Engine Mechanics School until 1945.**

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 priority to air-sea rescue training. The Emergency Rescue School 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 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 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



**Advances in evolving technology rapidly led to changes in Keesler's training.**

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 53rd Weather Reconnaissance Squadron (known throughout the Gulf region as the Hurricane Hunters) inactivated and transferred to the reserves on 30 June 1991. Its important mission merged with the storm-tracking mission of the 815th WRS, a component of the 403rd 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 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 the 3380th numbered units assumed the 393rd 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 393rd 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 Royal Air Force (RAF) Station 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



**Keesler AFB's premier "Triangle Vision."**

transferred equipment and students from the Marine Corps Logistics Base (MCLB) in Albany, Georgia, to Keesler. The course load and 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 27th, 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 28th, and declared HURCON 2. Base shelters opened that afternoon at 5:00 p.m., and the 45th Airlift Squadron and 403rd 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 29th, 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 online. By October 20, all enlisted initial skill courses were approved to be taught, although some at less than 100 percent capacity; by November 1st, 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 45th AS inactivated on 15 July 2011 ending seven years of pilot training. Today, the 81st Training Wing (81 TRW) trains thousands of Airmen

and members from 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 is host to many associate units with their own histories.

### **Keesler AFB Became the Air Force's Cyber Training Campus**

The Air Force Announced in 2009 that the 81st 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.

**Motto:** Le Nom-Les Armes-La Loyauté (The Name, The Arms, The Loyalty)

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 Airfield:**

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
Col Heather W. Blackwell	16 May 19
Col William H. Hunter	17 Jun 21

**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
Col Ramon R. Melton	8 Jul 67
Col George S. Dorman	5 Jul 68
Col Devol Brett	25 Sep 68
Col David J. Schmerbeck	29 Aug 69
Col John C. Bartholf	6 Mar 70
Col James W. Enos	4 Sep 70
Col Dwaine L. Weatherwax	22 Jun 71
Brig Gen Charles E. Word	16 Aug 72
Col John R. Paulk	19 Apr 74
Brig Gen Clyde H. Garner	14 May 75
Col Gerald D. Larson	11 Feb 76
Col Rudolph F. Wacker	6 May 77
Col Gorden E. Williams	7 Aug 79
Col Richard M. Pascoe	24 Apr 81
Col Dale C. Tabor	20 Aug 82
Col Lester P. Brown, Jr.	20 Mar 84
Col William A. Studer	26 Mar 86
Col Harold H. Rhoden	30 Jul 87
Col Tad J. Oelstrom	5 Aug 88
Col Roger R. Radcliff	12 Jul 91

**81st Training Wing:**

Brig Gen Karen S. Rankin	1 Jul 93
Brig Gen Andrew J. Pelak, Jr.	7 Nov 95
Brig Gen John M. Speigel	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. Dickenson	20 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
Col Heather W. Blackwell	16 May 19
Col William H. Hunter	17 Jun 21

**81st Training Wing:**

Col Jason D. Allen	13 Dec 22
Col Billy E. Pope, Jr	23 Mar 23

**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 – May 20

## **COMMAND CHIEF MASTER SERGEANTS**

### **81st Training Wing:**

CMSgt Sarah M. Esparza  
CMSgt Michael J. Venning

Jun 20 – Jun 23  
Jul 23 - 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  
1 Jul 17 - 30 Jun 18  
1 Jul 18 - 30 Jun 20

## **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: \***

F-47	1948-1949
F-80	1949
F-86	1949-1955
F-51	1951
F-84	1954-1959
F-101	1958-1966
F-4	1965-1979
F-16	1988-1990
A-10	1979-1993

\*Includes aircraft assigned to 81st Fighter Wing, 1948-1950; 81st Fighter- Interceptor Wing, 1950-1954; 81st Fighter-Bomber Wing, 1954-1958; 81st Tactical Fighter Wing, 1958-1993; and 81st Training Wing, 1993-Present. The 81st Fighter Group was a component of the wing from 1 May 1948 to 8 February 1955.

## **CHRONOLOGY (1941 through 2021)**

### **1941**

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- 6 Mar        The War Department announced that the Army Air Corps would establish a technical school at Biloxi.
- 12 Jun        The War Department activated Army Air Corps Station No. 8, Aviation Mechanics School, Biloxi, Mississippi, and assigned it to Technical Training Command.
- 25 Jul        The base opened its first facility, a medical dispensary, in the Naval Reserve Park.
- 21 Aug        The first group of recruits arrived for basic training.
- 25 Aug        The War Department designated Army Air Corps Station No. 8 as Keesler Army Airfield.
- 8 Sep         The 310th Technical School Squadron, a basic training unit, was the first squadron to move from tent city to new barracks.
- 20 Sep        The Army Air Corps Replacement Training Center (Technician) was activated to train new recruits.
- 29 Sep        The Airplane and Engine Mechanics School began operation.
- 1 Dec         The Post Exchange (PX) opened its first full-service store on Keesler Field.

### **1942**

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- 27 Feb        The first airplane mechanics class graduated.
- 7 Mar         Keesler Field opened its first hospital and the facility admitted 92 patients during its first day of operation.

### **1943**

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- 9 Mar         The 1002d Quartermaster Company, Keesler's first boat rescue unit, activated and headquartered at the Biloxi Yacht Club.
- 10 May        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.
- 1 Jun         Workers built a 10,000-seat outdoor theater adjacent to the Officers Club.

- 1 Jul           The War Department leased Horn Island for chemical warfare studies.
- 29 Nov         The Airplane and Engine Mechanics School received its first foreign students – 13 Chinese officers.
- 13 Dec         Signal Corps Technical Training School opened. It was discontinued in February 1944.
- 27 Dec         The first bank, Keesler Field Bank, opened.

**1944**

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- 1 May           The 3704th Army Air Forces Base Unit (Technical School and Basic Training Center) activated as Keesler's host unit.
- 1 Jul           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.
- 25 Jul         Keesler officials opened recreation facilities on Ship Island.
- 31 Jul         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).  
  
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).

**1945**

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- 1 Sep           Forty-five (45) Civil Service employees resumed a five-day, 40-hour work-week.

**1946**

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- Apr-Jun        The War Department inactivated all Army Air Forces airplane mechanics schools except for Keesler.
- 23 Apr         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).

- 30 Jun Basic training ended at Keesler. As a result, the 3704th again changed its name, 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**

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- 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 member ship 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**

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- 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**

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- 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**

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

## **1951**

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

## **1953**

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- 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**

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- 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**

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- 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**

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- 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.
- 20 May     The SM-65 Atlas Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) ground training courses began.

## **1961**

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- 1 Dec      Keesler built a closed-circuit television studio to teach electronics principles. The studio was placed in Building 409, a former bowling alley.

## **1962**

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- 30 Jun     The base closed its recreational facilities on Ship Island.

## **1964**

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- 24 Mar     Officials dedicated a new NCO Club, building 2221.

## **1965**

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- 1 Apr      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.
- 9 Sep      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.

## **1967**

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- 15 Jan     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.

## 1968

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- 11 Jun Keesler's technical school graduated its one-millionth student.
- 1 Jul 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.

## 1969

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- 1 Jul Keesler's student load peaked at 14,000 during the Vietnam War.
- 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

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- 15 May Groundbreaking ceremonies took place for the new Base Exchange (BX) shopping center.

## 1971

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- 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 groundbreaking ceremony for the new Commissary.

## 1972

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

## 1973

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

## 1974

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- 10 Jun Blake Fitness Center opened.

## 1975

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

## 1976

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- 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.

## 1977

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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.

## 1978

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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

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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

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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

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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.

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**1982**

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- 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.

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**1983**

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- 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 403rd Rescue and Reconnaissance Wing.

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**1984**

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

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**1985**

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

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**1986**

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- 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.

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**1987**

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- 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.

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**1988**

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- 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.

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## 1989

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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.

Contractors began building a new squadron operations center that would also house three tenant organizations. They included the 7th Airborne Command and Control Squadron, the 53rd Weather Reconnaissance Squadron and the 24th Weather Squadron.

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## 1990

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28 Aug Members of the 7th Airborne Command and Control Squadron deployed to Southwest Asia in support of Operation Desert Shield.

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## 1991

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22 Jan Over 260 Keesler medical personnel deployed to various locations in support of Operation Desert Storm.

30 Jun Military Airlift Command inactivated the 53rd Weather Reconnaissance Squadron. The 53rd's hurricane hunter mission transferred to the 403rd Airlift Wing, Keesler's Air Force Reserve unit.

12 Jul Keesler AFB celebrated its 50th anniversary.

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## 1992

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14 Feb Air Training Command (ATC) redesignated the technical training center as Keesler Training Center, the 3300<sup>th</sup> 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.

6 Apr The Department of the Navy assumed control of the base printing plant.

15 Sep All 3380th-designated units were redesignated as 393rd units.

1 Dec 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.

## 1993

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- 16 Feb Fisher House was dedicated. It provided temporary quarters for families of seriously ill patients at Keesler Medical Center.
- 29 Apr A new two-story 87,000-square foot weather training complex was officially dedicated.
- 1 Jul 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. The command inactivated Keesler Training Center and all its subordinate organizations, except for the 393rd 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

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- 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. They consisted of 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**

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- 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**

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- 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. They included Staff Sergeant Rondal Burns of the 333 TRS who was seriously injured and subsequently awarded the Purple Heart. Furthermore, SrA Martie Capoeman of the Wing's Public Affairs office received an Air Force 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." It started a \$123 million project to replace the ten early 1950s era dormitories by the year 2002.

## **1997**

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- 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 1947.
- 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 flagpole 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. This consolidation was ordered in 1994 by the Interservice Training Review Organization (ITRO).

## 1998

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- 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

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- 17-18 Feb The 403rd 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

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- 15 Jan The 403rd 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

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- 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

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- 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**

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- 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.
- 29 Aug 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**

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- 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 332nd Training Squadron, as part of the enlisted aircrew training transition to the Career Enlisted Aviator Center of Excellence at Lackland AFB, Texas.

## **2007**

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- 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. They included an external freezer storage building, a produce storage building, and four new freezer display cases. Moreover, the commissary added 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.

## **2008**

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- 3 Apr The Sablich Center re-opened nearly three years after Katrina rebuilding began.
- 25 Apr Baughman Boulevard was permanently closed because of the construction of the new Radiation Oncology Center, located between the Tyler House and Keesler Medical Center's emergency room.
- 28 Oct 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.
- 19 Nov 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.
- 1 Dec 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.
- 17 Dec 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 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.

## **2009**

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- 6-13 Jun Keesler Air Force Base hosted the 2009 Conseil International du Sport Militaire (CISM) Women's Armed Forces Soccer Championship. The tournament included teams from Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, The Netherlands, The Republic of South Korea and the United States.

- Jul 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.
- Sep 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.
- Dec 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.

## **2010**

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- 5 Jan 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.
- Jan-Feb Medics from the 81st Medical Group deployed to Haiti in response to a devastating earthquake and to Chile where another earthquake killed over 300 people.
- 22 Mar 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, and 136 NCO units in West Falcon Park. Additionally, the project included 200 mixed-use units in the first phase of Bayridge housing in the former Shadowlawn and Maltby Hall neighborhoods. Furthermore, it added 364 homes in Northwest Falcon Park and a final 130 units for senior NCOs and officers in Bayridge.
- Apr USNORTHCOM designated Keesler AFB as a base support installation for DOD forces responding to the crisis caused by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.
- 6 Apr Keesler AFB began a new era of post hurricane Katrina reconstruction. It included the grand opening of the newly completed, \$64.5 million, 275,000 square feet Commissary and Base Exchange facility that featured a shopping mall, food court, and state-of-the-art pharmacy.
- 19 Apr A new \$3.3 million postal facility on Meadows Drive opened. It replaced a wooden structure built in 1941 that had termite problems and major flood and roof damage from Hurricane Katrina.
- 15 Jun 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.

- 17 Sep 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.
- 7 Dec Fifteen officers from Keesler's first Undergraduate Cyber space Training course graduated after twenty-four weeks of training focused on developing experts in 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. It required operational rigor and mission assurance for effectively establishing, controlling, and leveraging cyberspace capabilities.

## 2011

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- 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 333rd TRS 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. They 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.

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## 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 impacted Mississippi Gulf Coast. Keesler AFB closed on 28-29 August. Full operations were restored on 30 August.

15 Oct 81 TRG implemented Teal Rope program. The program was designed to address issues surrounding sexual assault through student involvement. The color symbolized 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.

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## 2013

1 Feb Keesler Medical Center conducts ribbon-cutting ceremony for its new Back Bay Tower. The new tower, officially opened in December 2012. It housed 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 338th 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.

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## 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. They transitioned 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 335th 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**

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- 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).

## 2016

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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 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. It was 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

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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 sensor. 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 81st 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 81st 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.
- 23 Oct The Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, Kaleth O. Wright, came to Keesler Air Force Base to for a ribbon cutting for the new Military Training Leader Course schoolhouse. He also toured the base from 23 through 25 October 2017.
- 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

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- 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 81st 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 81st Training Wing (81 TRW) celebrated 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 335th Training Squadron (335 TRS) and National Weather Service (NWS) representatives demonstrated the NWS SkyWarn program to 335th 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 81st 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.

## **2019**

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- 8 Jan The 338th Technical Training Squadron announced A1C Devin McDivitt completed a 54-day Cyber Transport Course in a record-breaking 18.5 days with 95 percent score. He served in the 268th Combat Communications Squadron as a cyber-transport technician for the Illinois Air National Guard in Springfield. A1C McDivitt took advantage of the Air Force self-paced continuum of learning initiative program to finish the course early.
- 8 Feb The Air Force Honor Guard Drill Team came to Keesler to practice their routine in preparation for their tour season and to reveal their newest drill performance to the entire Keesler Air Force Base population. The team is the nation's most elite Honor Guard, serving the President of the United States, the Air Force's most senior leaders and performing nationwide for the American public.
- 18 Mar The 81 TRW/CC, Colonel Debra Lovette, held a Keesler Housing Forum at the Bay Breeze Event Center Main Ballroom. The program provided the community the opportunity to discuss their concerns about KAFB housing to the base leadership.
- 12 Apr The 81st Training Wing (81 TRW) held an Arbor Day Ceremony at the Child Development Center (CDC). The 81st Training Wing Vice-Commander (81 TRW/CV), Colonel Lance Burnett, read an Arbor Day proclamation during the event.

- 4-5 May Keesler AFB and Biloxi conducted an Open House and Air Show, Thunder Over The Sound, at the KAFB flight line and the White House Hotel Front Lawn. However, the 81 TRW/CC, Colonel Debra Lovette, cancelled the Saturday 4 May segment due to inclement weather. Nevertheless, approximately 90,000 spectators attended the event. The Honorable Andrew “FoFo” Gilich, Mayor of Biloxi, and Colonel Lovette made opening remarks both on base and on the beach. The Air Force Thunderbirds presented aerial demonstrations and fly-overs. Moreover, the event included static displays of weapons systems, support aircraft, and WWII vintage aircraft along with ground demonstrations.
- 10 May Special Olympics Mississippi Summer (SOMS) took place at KAFB. The athletes participated in unified relays for the first time. The program paired SOMS competitors with able-bodied athletes from nearby high schools in a 4X400 relay.
- 16 May Colonel Debra Lovette, 81 TRW/CC, relinquished command to Colonel Heather Blackwell during a change of command ceremony at the KAFB Parade Field.
- 20 May The 81st Training Wing earned the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award (AFOUA) for exceptionally meritorious service from 1 July 2017 through 30 June 2018.
- 26 Jun The Air Force Personnel (AFPC) Roadshow came to KAFB. The AFPC team offered Officer, Enlisted, and Civilian Town Halls at the Roberts Maintenance Facility. They presented updates, discussed assignments, and professional development.
- 23 Jul The Institute for Defense Robotic Surgical trained the 100th team on robotic surgery at the 81 Surgical Operations Squadron on KAFB. This in-house training provided one million dollars in savings.
- 16 Aug The 81 Security Forces Squadron (81 SFS) hosted a Ruck Obstacle Course at the Crotwell Track. It was one of their culminating events during the Year of the Defender. The teams competed in ammunition carries, pull-ups, tire flips, and other activities.
- 29 Aug Major General Andrea Tullos assumed command of Second Air Force (2 AF) from Major General Timothy Leahy during a change of command ceremony at KAFB.
- 11 Sep The Center for Naval Aviation Technical Training Unit (CNATTU) held a 9/11 memorial ceremony in front of the 81 TRW Headquarters on KAFB. The CNATTU honored the victims of the 9/11 terrorists’ attacks.
- 4 Oct The Keesler Medical Center (KMC) hosted the eighth annual Health Expo and Mammoth to bring attention to Breast Cancer Awareness month. Twenty-five clinics, such as nutritional medicine and the blood donation center, offered information.

- 19 Nov The 81 SFS announced they ended the KAFB Trusted Traveler Program as an additional security measure. Department of Defense (DoD) cardholders could no longer vouch for non-DoD card holders to enter KAFB. Therefore, everyone attempting to access KAFB had to present a DOD identification card or a visitor's pass.
- 11-14 Dec Colonel Heather Blackwell, 81 TRW/CC, convened an "Improv to Improve" class at the Bay Breeze Event Center on KAFB. B.J. Lang, Air Force Wounded Warrior Program Comedy Coach, taught the course. The class provided an improvisation, comedy, and resiliency experience for Service-Members. "Improv to Improve" gave the participants a safe and interactive learning environment to cope with stress. The course also taught the Service-Members to build resilience in an unconventional manner.

## **2020**

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- 17 Jan Colonel Marcia Quigley, 81st Mission Support Group Commander (81 MSG/CC), assumed command of the new 81st Civil Engineer Squadron (81 CES).
- 23 Jan The 81st Medical Group (81 MDG) members and guests celebrated Mardi Gras and crowned the Krewe of Medics "Royalty" at the Bay Breeze Event Center Ballroom (BBEC). The 81 MDG members chose the "Royalty" by purchasing tickets. The participants took part in the "Gamer's Paradise" theme by dressing as their favorite classic arcade game character.
- 18 Feb The 81 CES reactivated during a ceremony at the Keesler Fire Department Apparatus High Bay in building 4225.
- 21 Feb Colonel Heather Blackwell, 81st Training Wing Commander (81 TRW/CC), and Chief Master Sergeant (CMSgt) David Pizzuto, 81 TRW Command Chief (81 TRW/CCC), presented mementos at the 2020 CMSgt Recognition Ceremony. CMSgt Tamar Dennis, Air University Command Chief (AU/CCC), acted as the guest speaker. The event took place at the BBEC Ballroom.
- 15 Mar Colonel Blackwell, 81 TRW/CC, issued a Special Commander's Alert regarding access to the Keesler Medical Center (KMC) in response to the spread of the COVID-19 virus. The order directed KMC staff and patients to enter the KMC only through the main entrance or the Emergency Room effective 16 March 2020. Furthermore, no individuals under the age of 18 and no individuals with a cough, fever, or cold could visit inpatients effective 16 March 2020. Moreover, only patients with appointments could visit the outpatient clinics at the KMC effective 16 March 2020.

- 16 Mar The 81 TRW/CC, Colonel Blackwell, announced she cancelled some large events scheduled for March and April 2020 due to COVID-19. Moreover, she said that she would update the Health Protection Condition (HPCON) to correspond to the COVID-19 situation.
- 16 Mar Colonel Marcia Quigley, 81 MSG/CC, informed the Keesler Air Force Base (KAFB) community about facility closures along with reduces hours of services. The closings included the BBEC Club, all fitness centers, the bowling center, and Outdoor recreation.
- 17 Mar The 81 TRW/CC, Colonel Heather Blackwell, announced KAFB entered HPCON-B. The HPCON-B measure indicated moderate disease threat level for the KAFB community.
- 21 Mar The 81 TRW/CC, Colonel Heather Blackwell, directed KAFB to enter HPCON-C. The HPCON-C measure indicated a substantial threat level for COVID-19 spreading on KAFB.
- 27 Mar The 81 TRW/CC, Colonel Heather Blackwell, issued a directive all Active-Duty military, reservists, and National Guard personnel on Title 10 orders. She ordered them to limit stops between their duty station and their residence or temporary duty lodging (TDY). Furthermore, Colonel Blackwell told military personnel not to go beyond a 40-mile radius of KAFB unless they traveled to their residence. She encouraged civilian employees and contractors to follow the same guidance.
- 31 Mar Detachment 5 of the 737th Training Group (DET 5, 737 TRG) activated at Keesler Air Force Base (KAFB), Mississippi (MS). Lieutenant Colonel (Lt Col) Jerry T. Hambright took command of the detachment. The unit initiated the Keesler Basic Military Training (BMT) Proof of Concept.
- 3 Apr Colonel Heather Blackwell, 81 TRW/CC, released a Public Health Emergency Order (PHEO) and a KAFB wide curfew. The PHEO restricted Airmen-in-Training to KAFB. Furthermore, the PHEO provided isolation and quarantine instructions for military members and civilians who had been in contact with someone who had COVID-19. Moreover, the 81 TRW/CC established KAFB curfew covering 2300 through 0500 daily. Colonel Blackwell also announced personnel in quarantine and isolation could receive government furnished meals free of charge.
- 6 Apr Colonel Heather Blackwell, 81 TRW/CC, emailed COVID-19 mitigation protocols for KAFB. She directed only Operationally Critical (OpCrit) personnel with OpCrit badges to report to duty on the installation. Colonel Blackwell instructed the rest of the personnel to coordinate with their supervisors to establish telework procedures. Furthermore, Colonel Blackwell instituted a base curfew covering 2300 hours until 0500 daily. Moreover, she told personnel to wear cloth covered masks on their faces.

- 7 Apr Senior Airman (SrA) Jazay Martin emailed a Commander's Intent notification that KAFB entered Health Protection Condition-C (HPCON-C) in response to COVID-19 as of 6 April 2020. Colonel Blackwell ordered KAFB personnel to clean their duty stations before and after their shifts. Colonel Blackwell also directed personnel to continue to don cloth face masks when they could not maintain six feet of distance from other people.
- 7-8 Apr DET 5 of the 737 TRG received 58 recruits at KAFB. This action started the Keesler Basic Military Training (BMT) Proof of Concept. The recruits incurred a 14-day Restriction of Movement (ROM) at the start of their training. The KAFB BMT allowed Lackland Air Force Base, Texas to disperse recruits from that centralized Air Force BMT location as a COVID-19 mitigation measure. The KAFB recruits trained for six weeks.
- 6 May Colonel Heather Blackwell, 81 TRW/CC, launched the Keesler Strong Action Plan (K-SAP) to initiate the KAFB recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The KSAP re-opened Outdoor Recreation, the Bowling Center, and the Golf Course. Additionally, the KSAP called for the Arts and Crafts Engraving Shop to re-open. Colonel Blackwell emphasized KAFB members would have to contribute to COVID-19 mitigation protocols. She said these measures included staying six feet away from others, wearing cloth masks, and washing hands.
- 11 May The 81 TRW/CC, Colonel Heather Blackwell, rescinded the restriction for Permanent Party Airmen to reside off KAFB. She also ended the KAFB 2200 through 0500 curfew. Moreover, Colonel Blackwell approved non-prior service technical school Airmen to return to the Triangle Gym. Additionally, she permitted the BBEC and the Bowling Alley to serve carry out meals.
- 1 Jun The 81 TRW/CC, Colonel Heather Blackwell, addressed the racial tensions the nation faced after the death of George Floyd. She called for the KAFB to resolve these problems through dialogue, diversity, and inclusion.
- 3 Jun Colonel Heather Blackwell, 81 TRW/CC, issued PHEO Three. Colonel Blackwell returned KAFB to HPCON-B. The measure indicated a moderate threat of the spread of COVID-19 in the KAFB community. Colonel Blackwell directed KAFB members to limit gatherings to a maximum of 50 people. Additionally, Colonel Blackwell ended the 40-mile radius movement and the home-to-work restrictions. Furthermore, she authorized TDY personnel to stay off-base. Colonel Blackwell also approved pre-COVID-19 access to the Commissary, BX, and the Shoppette starting 5 June for Active-Duty members and Retirees.
- 26 Jun The 81 TRW/CC, Colonel Heather Blackwell, disseminated PHEO number four (PHEO 4) to the KAFB community. The 81 TRW/CC ordered the installation to enter HPCON-C. She restricted gatherings to a maximum of 10 people. Colonel Blackwell also reinstated the home-to-work order under specific parameters. Additionally, the 81 TRW/CC, updated the local leave area to the state of Mississippi.

- 1 Jul Colonel Heather Blackwell, 81 TRW/CC, established a series of panels entitled “Courageous Conversations.” She said the group discussions would develop racial consciousness and assist with revealing bias.
- 4 Aug Colonel Heather Blackwell, 81 TRW/CC, revealed her vision to enhance the KAFB community to be an inclusive and diverse environment in response to national racial tensions.
- 3 Sep The 81 TRW/CC, Colonel Heather Blackwell, issued PHEO number five (PHEO 5) in which she ordered KAFB to enter HPCON-B in response to lower positive COVID-19 cases. She restricted KAFB gatherings to a maximum of 25 people. Moreover, Colonel Blackwell directed KAFB members to maintain a distance of six feet from others. Furthermore, she ordered members to wear cloth face masks.
- 3 Sep Colonel Heather Blackwell, 81 TRW/CC, warned the KAFB community that the highest COVID-19 contract locations included restaurants and off base gyms. She also directed people to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and the flu. Colonel Blackwell said to stay home and to undergo a test for COVID-19 or the flu for if they feel ill.
- 8 Sep Colonel Heather Blackwell, 81 TRW/CC, released revised PHEO 5. The updated PHEO 5 included a COVID-19 civilian employee travel guide to accompany the military flowchart.
- 11 Sep The Center for Naval Aviation Technical Training Unit-Keesler (CNATTU-Keesler) hosted a September 11th remembrance ceremony. The event honored nearly 3,000 lives lost in the 11 September 2001 attacks. The CNATTU held the ceremony at the Base Flagpole in front of the 81 TRW Headquarters.
- 18 Sep Lieutenant General James Hecker, Air University Commander (AU/CC), served as the reviewing official at a KAFB Basic Military Training (BMT) Graduation. CMSgt Tamar Dennis, AU/CCC, acted as the guest speaker during the event at the Levitow Training Support Facility Parade Field.
- 9 Nov The 81 TRW/CC, Colonel Heather Blackwell, issued PHEO six (PHEO 6). She instituted a confidentiality policy for medical tracing to improve contract tracing data. Additionally, Colonel Blackwell delegated Stop Movement Waiver Authority for PCS and TDY to the first O-6 (Colonel level) in the chain of command. She also directed unit commanders must approve leave outside of the state of Mississippi. Moreover, the 81 TRW/CC delegated travel assessments and leave within Mississippi to supervisors or unit commanders.

- 17 Nov Colonel Heather Blackwell, 81 TRW/CC, announced Hurricane Zeta damaged approximately 180 trees on KAFB. Furthermore, she said the storm damaged almost 240 items such as roofs, fences, and signs. The 81 TRW/CC added that the contracting process for large tree removal and roof repair would be a long-term process. However, Colonel Blackwell assured everyone the KAFB team would work diligently to restore the installation to accomplish the mission.
- 23 Nov The 81 TRW/CC, Colonel Heather Blackwell, alerted the KAFB community to a 35 percent increase of positive COVID-19 cases on the installation. However, she said that most of the infected members had followed Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines at their duty stations. Therefore, Colonel Blackwell noted the quarantine inflicted only minimal impact on mission. Additionally, Colonel Blackwell reminded the KAFB community to maintain COVID-19 protocols during the holiday season.
- 7 Dec Colonel Heather Blackwell, 81 TRW/CC, announced she would re-establish some COVID-19 measures in HPCON B in response to a 14-day rise of positive COVID-19 cases. She said the number of positive cases had increase on and off KAFB. The 81 TRW/CC prohibited dining at restaurants indoors or outdoors at off base facilities. However, she authorized take-out orders from restaurants. Colonel Blackwell also ordered the 81 FSS facilities to implement more spacing for indoor dining.
- 14 Dec The 81 TRW/CC, Colonel Heather Blackwell, heralded the COVID-19 vaccine by encouraging everyone to volunteer to receive this immunization once it is available at KAFB. She added that the vaccination would not be mandatory, but she emphasized the immunizations would protect the KAFB community. Colonel Blackwell reminded everyone to avoid gatherings and to maintain COVID-19 protocols during the holiday season.
- 16 Dec The 81st Training Wing (81 TRW) received the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for exceptionally meritorious service from 1 July 2018 through 30 June 2020.

## **2021**

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- 5 Jan Colonel Heather Blackwell, 81st Training Wing Commander (81 TRW/CC), announced she would maintain the same priorities for 2021. Colonel Blackwell listed diversity, inclusion, empowerment, and resilience for her culture concern. Moreover, the 81 TRW/CC said the unit would transform learning and leading missions. Furthermore, Colonel Blackwell emphasized safety and security in housing, dorms, and facilities. Colonel Blackwell also prioritized community partnerships.

- 7 Jan The 81 TRW/CC, Colonel Heather Blackwell, sent an email in response to the 6 January riot at the United States Capitol Building. Colonel Blackwell encouraged leaders to engage their people to determine if they needed to discuss this incident.
- 11 Jan The 81st Training Wing Commander (81 TRW/CC), Colonel Heather Blackwell, released her Keesler Air Force Base (KAFB) Diversity and Inclusion Plan. Colonel Blackwell encouraged community members to contribute ideas and feedback to this mission.
- 11 Jan Colonel Heather Blackwell, (81 TRW/CC), directed KAFB members to limit social gatherings to no more than 10 people due to an increase of positive COVID-19 cases. Colonel Blackwell instituted this strategy because the cases rose on and off base. However, she announced KAFB would be receiving regular deliveries of the COVID-19 vaccine to help protect KAFB members. Moreover, Colonel Blackwell instructed Squadron Commanders to consider positive COVID-19 cases before they approved leave.
- 15 Jan Colonel Heather Blackwell, 81st Training Wing Commander (81 TRW/CC), hosted a Keesler Club Day at the Keesler Air Force Base (KAFB) Bay Breeze Event Center (BBEC). KAFB members had the opportunity to select from 30 activities such as self-defense, photography, and cooking.
- 19 Jan The 81 TRW/CC, Colonel Heather Blackwell, instituted COVID-19 surveillance testing on KAFB in her Public Health Emergency Order Eight (PHEO 8). Colonel Blackwell also restricted official and unofficial activities to a maximum of 10 people per event to decrease the transmission of COVID-19.
- 1 Feb Colonel Heather Blackwell, 81 TRW/CC, explained her KAFB COVID-19 surveillance testing program randomly examined various asymptomatic Active-Duty members. Furthermore, Colonel Blackwell emphasized this action would contribute to reducing the spread of COVID-19.
- 7 Feb The 81 TRW/CC, Colonel Heather Blackwell, announced the 81 TRW pleased her by passing the Unit Effectiveness Inspection (UEI) that occurred the prior week.
- 8 Feb The 81 TRW/CC, Colonel Heather Blackwell, said positive COVID-19 cases were decreasing on and off base. However, Colonel Blackwell revealed the 81st Medical Group placed some asymptomatic KAFB members in quarantine via her COVID-19 random surveillance testing program.
- 8 Feb Mr. Aundra Moore, 81 TRW Human Resources Officer, encouraged the KAFB community to recognize National African American History Month. Mr. Moore directed everyone to join the virtual events on Facebook and ZoomGov due to COVID-19 protocols.

- 10 Feb First Lieutenant Linda Davila, 81 FSS, announced the Air Force approved new female hair standards. One of the changes provided Females the option to wear their hair in a ponytail instead of just pinned-up while in uniform.
- 11 Feb The 81 MSG first responders received a suspicious package report from the Keesler Medical Center (KMC). The first responders secured the scene and evacuated the location near the parcel. However, they determined the package did not contain hazardous material.
- 18 Feb Colonel Heather Blackwell, 81 TRW/CC, authorized a maximum of 25 members to gather for official and unofficial activities. However, Colonel Blackwell directed members to wear face masks to prevent the transmission of COVID in PHEO 9.
- 1 Mar The 81 TRW/CC, Colonel Heather Blackwell, attributed a rise in positive COVID-19 cases to escalated surveillance testing of asymptomatic KAFB members. Therefore, Colonel Blackwell emphasized to personnel to maintain physical distance, wear masks, and to wash their hands.
- 1 Mar Mr. Aundra Moore, 81 TRW Human Resources Officer, encouraged the KAFB community to recognize Women's History Month. Mr. Moore directed everyone to join the virtual events on Facebook and ZoomGov due to COVID-19 protocols
- 10 Mar The Mississippi Veterans Affairs Military Women's Summit took place at the BBEC. The participants discussed subjects such as leadership and work/life balance.
- 24 Mar Ms. Kimberly Toney, Air Force Personnel Center Executive Director, conducted a mentoring session with Civilian Airmen at the Sablich Center.
- 30 Mar Major Patrick King, 81 TRW Executive Officer, emailed the KAFB community that April would be Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month (SAAPM). Major King provided a schedule of the SAAPM activities such as self-defense classes and athletic events.
- 1 Apr The KAFB Blake and Dragon Fitness Centers re-opened to Family Members of Active-Duty personnel. However, everyone still had to follow COVID-19 prevention protocols such as social distancing and wearing masks.
- 3 – 10 Apr KAFB observed Holocaust Days of Remembrance. The observance project officer, Master Sergeant (MSGT) April Winchel, 81 TRW Law Office Superintendent, emailed education material about this tragic period to the KAFB community.

- 5 Apr Colonel Heather Blackwell, 81 TRW/CC, informed KAFB members the positive COVID-19 cases decreased as the number of vaccinated personnel rose. Nevertheless, Colonel Blackwell directed members to continue to follow COVID-19 mitigation procedures to maintain this progress.
- 30 Apr The 81 TRW/CC, Colonel Heather Blackwell, ordered KAFB units to participate in the base wide clean-up day. Colonel Blackwell instructed facility managers to acquire equipment and supplies for this mission from the Self-Help store.
- 6 May Lieutenant General Marshall B. Webb, Air Education and Training Command Commander (AETC/CC), presented the first ever iChallenge first place Torch Award during the Gathering of the Torch iExpo. Mr. Matthew Correia, Profession of Arms Center of Excellence instructional systems specialist, received this honor from General Webb at the BBEC.
- 17 May Colonel Heather Blackwell, 81 TRW/CC, heralded the availability of the COVID-19 vaccinations to all beneficiaries at the Keesler Medical Center (KMC).
- 17 May The Honorable Anh “Joseph” Cao, former U.S. Representative, gave the keynote address at the Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month Observance at the BBEC.
- 20 May Twelve KAFB Senior Leaders represented the installation at the 31st State of the City of Biloxi Address Luncheon at the Beau Rivage Resort and Casino. The Biloxi Bay Area Chamber of Commerce hosted the event. Colonel Brian Stumpe, 2 AF/CV, and Colonel James Kafer, 81 TRW/CV, attended. Additionally, Colonel Stuart Rubio, 403rd Wing Commander (403 WG/CC), along with nine other KAFB leaders took part in this gathering.
- 1 Jun The 81 TRW hosted a Congressional Staff Visit from the Office of U.S. Representative Steven Palazzo. Mr. Aaron Hall, Legislative Assistant, and Ms. Michele Garigiulo, District Director, toured KAFB. They talked to KAFB leadership and attended mission briefs.
- 17 Jun Colonel William Hunter assumed command of the 81 TRW from Colonel Heather Blackwell at the Levitow Training Support Facility. Major General Andrea Tullos, 2nd Air Force Commander (2 AF/CC), presided over this ceremony.
- 18 Jun The KAFB community observed the new Juneteenth National Independence Day holiday because 19 June, the actual date of the event, came on Saturday.
- 22 Jun The KAFB community hosted a Juneteenth celebration at the BBEC. The attendees learned about this annual observance of the emancipation of the last American slaves in the state of Texas.

- 25 Jun The Keesler LGBTQ+ Month Committee hosted an informational expo event at the Roberts Maintenance Auditorium for Pride Month.
- 28 Jun Major Anthony Perez, 81st Force Support Squadron Commander (81 FSS/CC), announced the KAFB Youth Center would be closed 29 June. Major Perez said the facility would undergo deep cleaning due to a confirmed positive case of COVID-19. Nevertheless, the Youth Center re-opened 30 June after the 81 MDG Public Health Office inspected it.
- 29 Jun Colonel William Hunter, 81 TRW/CC, led attendees at the City of Biloxi Inauguration Ceremony in the Pledge of Allegiance at the Biloxi Civic Center. The Honorable Andrew “FoFo” Gilich, Mayor of the City of Biloxi, and seven councilmembers participated in this oath of office ceremony.
- 1 Jul The 81 TRW celebrated its 28th anniversary. Headquarters AETC activated the 81st Training Wing and assigned it to Second Air Force. The 81 TRW assumed the old Keesler Technical Training Center (KTTC) mission.
- 10 Jul Colonel William Hunter, 81 TRW/CC, swore-in 10 Air Force Delayed Entry Program recruits at Biloxi Shuckers baseball game during pre-game activities in Biloxi. Colonel Hunter also threw the ceremonial first pitch of the game.
- 12-16 Jul Two members of the 81 TRW Public Affairs Office (81 TRW/PA) represented the 81 TRW at the 16th Annual Federal Government Statewide Conference. Mr. Ted Rivera and SSgt Holly Cook took part in the All-Majors virtual panel with 173 other participants. The Florida International University’s Career and Talent Development Office hosted this conference. More than 1,300 students and alumni logged into this virtual conference. Additionally, representatives from 46 Federal agencies acted as guest speakers and panelists during this forum.
- 13 Jul The 81 TRW/CC, Colonel William Hunter, swore-in 10 Delayed Entry Program recruits prior to a Biloxi Shuckers baseball game at MGM Park. Moreover, Colonel Hunter threw the ceremonial first pitch of the game between the Shuckers and the Birmingham Barons.
- 15 Jul The Keesler Technology Expo provided networking opportunities for the KAFB community with hi-tech companies at the BBEC. The 81st Communications Squadron (81 CS) and the Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association (AFCEA) hosted this activity.
- 26 Jul Mr. Gerald Cross, 81 FSS, announced the Biloxi School District would waive out-of-district tuition fees for Service-Members who provided them a housing non-availability letter. However, the Service-Members would need to provide the transportation for their children to attend Biloxi Schools.

- 29 Jul The 81 TRW Public Affairs Office (81 TRW/PA) emailed KAFB members they must wear masks at indoor facilities on the installation. The 81 TRW/PA cited guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Secretary of Defense (SecDef) as the reason for this action.
- 30 Jul Major General Michele Edmondson assumed command of Second Air Force (2nd AF) from Major General Andrea Tullos during a change of command ceremony at the BBEC. Lieutenant General Marshall Webb, Air Education and Training Command Commander (AETC/CC), presided over this event. The Honorable Andrew “FoFo” Gilich, Mayor of Biloxi, attended the ceremony along with several other distinguished visitors.
- 1 Aug The 81 SFS demonstrated Military Working Dog techniques before the Biloxi Shuckers baseball game at MGM Park. Five dog handlers and three dogs provided demonstrations to the audience during this Bark in the Park event. One of the handlers, SSgt Cody Garton, 81 SFS, threw the ceremonial first pitch of the game.
- 5 Aug Colonel William Hunter, 81 TRW/CC, implemented Health Protection Condition Bravo (HPCON B) on KAFB. Colonel Hunter directed KAFB members to be vaccinated against COVID-19 to use the fitness centers. Moreover, he restricted large indoor gathers to a maximum of 50 percent capacity. Furthermore, the 81 TRW/CC, mandated members to wear face masks indoors.
- 5 Aug The KAFB mourned the loss of 31-year-old Senior Airman (SrA) Taylor Labrier in a vehicle accident on nearby Interstate-110 in D’Iberville, Mississippi. SrA Labrier had been serving on a temporary duty assignment with the 81 TRW in an Air Force school. Furthermore, SrA Labrier was a member of the Illinois Air National Guard in the 183rd Wing’s Communications Squadron.
- 9 Aug Mr. Louis Bridges, 81 FSS Education Service Specialist, earned one of the 2021 Veteran Champions of the Year for Higher Education awards. Mr. Bridges was the only winner out of 19 people to serve on a military installation. Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University nominated Mr. Bridges for this award.
- 10 Aug The 81 TRW/CC, Colonel William Hunter, notified KAFB Active-Duty members to prepare for the possibility of mandatory COVID-19 vaccinations. Colonel Hunter said the SecDef had asked the approval of the President to implement this measure within 30 days. Additionally, Colonel Hunter assured personnel the 81 MDG would be ready to execute mandatory vaccinations.
- 12 Aug Colonel William Hunter, 81 TRW/CC, reiterated to KAFB members they must be fully vaccinated to use the Fitness Centers in PHEO 12. Colonel Hunter also repeated his restriction of a maximum of 50 percent room capacity for gatherings along with his indoor mask mandate.

- 13 Aug The 81 TRW held a Celebration of Life ceremony for the late Airman Daniel Germenis at the Roberts Consolidated Aircraft Maintenance (CAM) Facility. Airman Germenis served as an Airman-in-Training in the 336th Training Squadron (336 TRS). He succumbed to injuries he suffered in an on-base automobile collision with pedestrians on 28 July. Three other Airmen sustained injuries in this incident. Airman Germenis had earned the title of Cyber Systems Operator. The 336 TRS offered a livestream at the KAFB Welch Theater of his 6 August funeral in the Calvary Baptist Church in Bastrop, Texas.
- 18 Aug The Honorable Andrew “FoFo” Gilich, Mayor of the City of Biloxi, hosted 81 TRW Senior Leaders at his office in City Hall. Colonel William Hunter, 81 TRW/CC, and CMSgt Sarah Esparza, 81 TRW/CCC, met with the mayor and some City of Biloxi staff members. Additionally, Mr. Brian Thompson, 81 TRW/DS, attended this meeting. The 81 TRW leaders informed the mayor that no Afghan travelers would be coming to KAFB. Furthermore, the group discussed the challenges Service-Members encountered finding housing in Biloxi.
- 20 Aug Major Anthony Perez, 81 FSS/CC, announced fully COVID-19 vaccinated members could use the Blake Fitness Center 24 hours a day and seven days a week. However, Major Perez instructed members to complete a Statement of Understanding regarding the rules for the facility during unmanned hours.
- 22 Aug The Keesler Medical Center (KMC) organized a 22-person team to deploy to Baton Rouge, Louisiana to provide Defense Support to Civil Authorities for COVID-19. The team included three physicians, four Intensive Care Unit nurses, four Emergency Department nurses, six clinical nurses, two respiratory technicians, and three support personnel.
- 25 Aug The KAFB community recognized the 80th anniversary of the installation. The War Department redesignated Army Air Corps Station Number 8 to be Keesler Army Airfield on 25 August 1941. The War Department named the base in honor of Second Lieutenant Samuel Reeves Keesler, Jr of Greenwood, Mississippi. Lieutenant Keesler posthumously received the World War I Victory Medal with a Silver Star for gallantry he displayed until his death. He died on 9 October 1919 in the Verdun sector of the Western Front in France from injuries he sustained the previous day in combat.
- 25 Aug Key leaders from the 81 TRW met with the Honorable Billy Hewes, Mayor of the City of Gulfport, in City Hall. The 81 TRW/CC, Colonel William Hunter, the 81 TRW/CCC, CMSgt Sarah Esparza, and the 81 TRW/DS, Mr. Brian Thompson met with the mayor. They discussed ways to enhance community relationships between KAFB and Gulfport.

- 26 Aug The 81 TRW hosted a Women's Equality Observation Day at the Bay Breeze Event Center (BBEC) Ballroom. A panel of female senior Enlisted, Officer, and Civilian leaders discussed the challenges and rewards women incurred to become successful in the Air Force. Colonel William, 81 TRW/CC, gave the closing remarks for this occasion.
- 27 Aug The 81 TRW/CC, Colonel William Hunter, emailed all KAFB leaders to shelter-in-place at 11:20 a.m. under Hurricane Condition 3 (HURCON 3) for Tropical Storm Ida. Colonel Hunter told leaders to prioritize safety for all personnel by avoiding risk to members, facilities, and resources. Additionally, Colonel Hunter said personnel should wait until the inclement weather to move beyond KAFB before departing their shelter that day. Moreover, the 81 TRW/CC instructed members to COVID-19 mitigations during this period.
- 27 Aug The Keesler Medical Center (KMC) assembled a nine-person team to deploy to Holloman Air Force Base, New Mexico. The team of six physicians, one Critical Care Nurse, and two Enlisted members provided medical support to Afghan Travelers.
- 31 Aug The 81st Training Wing Command Post (81 TRW/CP) emailed an "All Clear" notification to KAFB members at 10:57 a.m. Thus, all declared hurricane conditions ended for KAFB.
- 1 Sep The 81 TRW/CC, Colonel William Hunter, and 81 TRW/CCC, CMSgt Sarah Esparza, toured the 85th Engineering Squadron (85 EIS). Both Senior Leaders took part in a tower climbing demonstration during their 85 EIS immersion behind Maltby Hall.
- 10 Sep The Center for Naval Aviation Technical Training Unit (CNATTU) Keesler held a 9/11 Memorial Ceremony at the 81 TRW Headquarters flagpole. The event honored the approximately 3,000 lives America lost on 11 September 2001 in terrorist attacks. Major General Michele Edmonson, 2 AF/CC, Colonel William Hunter, 81 TRW/CC, attended the ceremony along with other senior leaders.
- 10 Sep Keesler Air Force Base hosted the second annual 9/11 Memorial Run. This 24-hour event paid tribute to the victims of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks.
- 12 Sep Colonel Donnette Boyd, AETC Command Chaplain, gave a speech at the 50th anniversary of the Keesler Gospel Worship Service. "Growing Stronger, Growing Deeper, Reaching Higher," was the theme of the event.

- 13 Sep Major General Michele Edmondson, 2 AF/CC, received a KAFB Immersion Tour led by the 81 TRW/CC, Colonel William Hunter. Major General Edmondson stopped by the 81 TRG and the 81 MDG. Additionally, the 2 AF Command Chief (2 AF/CC), CMSgt Adam Vizi, provided Major General Edmondson with a virtual-reality system demonstration at the 334 TRS. Furthermore, Major General Edmondson conducted an open discussion forum with Military Training Leaders (MTL) in the Levitow Training Support Facility.
- 18 Sep Major General Jim Martin, U.S. Air Force retired, served as the guest speaker at the 81 TRW Air Force Ball. The 81 TRW celebrated the 74th birthday of the Air Force at the Golden Nugget Hotel and Casino Grand Ballroom in Biloxi. Colonel William Hunter, 81 TRW/CC, and his spouse, Mrs. Blanca Hunter came along with other senior leaders. The Honorable Scott Delano, Mississippi State Senator, and other distinguished visitors also attended this celebration.
- 19 – 25 Sep The KAFB community honored Fallen Service-Members for their service and sacrifice during Gold Star Families Remembrance Week. The activities included a Meadow of Memories Walking Trail and a Fallen Heroes Butterfly Garden dedication and butterfly release.
- 25 Sep 150 Non-Prior Service Airmen in training (NPS AiT) attended an 81 TRG ball for these students. These NPS AiT operated the ball. Military Training Leaders (MTLs) offered mentorship to the students during this activity.
- 27 Sep The 81 TRW/PA informed the KAFB to honor “Constitution Day and Citizenship Day” on the KAFB Facebook page. The day commemorated the signing of the U.S. Constitution 234 years ago.
- 30 Sep Members of the KAFB community participated in a Prisoner of War/Missing in Action (POW/MIA) Run and Vigil which began at the Levitow Drill Pad. Lieutenant Colonel (Lt Col) Jill Heliker, 81 TRG Deputy Commander (81 TRG/CD), provided opening remarks.
- 1 Oct The 81 TRW leadership participated in a meet and greet with U.S. Representative Steven Palazzo’s staff in his Gulfport office. Colonel William Hunter, 81 TRW/CC, CMSgt Sarah Esparza, 81 TRW/CCC, and Mr. Brian Thompson, 81 TRW Director of Staff, attended this meeting. The 81 TRW leaders discussed projects such as improving base housing and adding new permanent party dormitories.
- 1 Oct The 81st Training Support Squadron (81 TRSS) partnered with the KAFB Marine Detachment’s Marine Corps Lance Corporal Leadership and Ethics Seminar. Two Airmen from the 81 TRSS completed the 11-day Professional Military Education (PME) course.

- 1 Oct The 81 MDG offered KAFB members an opportunity to make appointments for several types of cancer at the 10th Annual Health Expo in the BBEC. The 81 MDG held this event to recognize Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Furthermore, attendees could schedule examinations for chronic diseases. The participants visited information booths to receive health care education. The 81st Dental Squadron (81 DS) even provided dental examinations to some of the attendees.
- 1 Oct The 81 FSS presented a Rock Festival at the KAFB Heritage Park. The bands included Brett Scallions of Fuel, 3oh!3, and Sick Puppies.
- 2 Oct The KAFB community continued its tradition of holding a “Cruisin’ Keesler” car show and parade a day before the local “Cruising the Coast” event began. The “Cruisin’ Keesler” show started at the KAFB Marina Park.
- 5 Oct Colonel Stuart Rubio, 403rd Wing Commander (403 WG/CC), participated on a Hispanic Leaders Panel at BBEC to recognize National Hispanic-American Heritage Month.
- 5 Oct The KAFB community participated in the 81 SFS National Night Out at the Bay Ridge Community Center. The event offered 81 SFS Defenders and residents the opportunity to enhance their relationships.
- 13 Oct Colonel William Hunter, 81 TRW/CC, acted as the guest speaker at POW/MIA Retreat Ceremony at the 81 TRW/HQ flagpole. Colonel James Kafer, 81 TRW/CV, and other senior leaders also attended this tribute.
- 14-15 Oct The 336th Training Squadron (336 TRS) hosted the Department of the Air Force (DAF) Artificial Intelligence (AI) Accelerator Team. Additionally, faculty from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) came with the Accelerator Team to learn about the Air Force Computer Programming Initial Skills Training Course.
- 15 Oct Major General Michele Edmondson, 2 AF/CC, revealed the 334th Training Squadron (334 TRS) received a 50-thousand-dollar award from AETC’s 2021 challenge. The 334 TRS would procure cloud services for establishment and preliminary execution of an Air Traffic Control (ATC) Pocket. Furthermore, the 334 TRS coordinated with the Air Force Material Command (AFMC) and the Air Force Installation Contracting Center on this mission.
- 15-22 Oct Two technicians from the 81st Training Support Squadron (81 TRSS) deployed to Qatar to install Early Warning Radar (EWR) Simulator computer software for the Qatari military. The 81 TRSS established the source code for this product. Moreover, the 81 TRSS provided Qatar, a coalition partner, with a custom version of the software after the Foreign Disclosure Office approved this mission.

- 19 Oct The 81 TRW/PA informed the KAFB community the installation entered HPCON Alpha Plus (HPCON A+). Therefore, fully vaccinated personnel could access Fitness Centers without proof of their immunizations. Furthermore, all Force Support Squadron facilities returned to 100 percent capacity. Nevertheless, members still had to wear face masks in all indoor facilities.
- 20 Oct Forty business and community leaders from the Mississippi Gulf Coast Chamber of Commerce's Leadership Gulf Coast 2021 – 2022 class visited KAFB for Military Day. Colonel William Hunter, 81 TRW/CC, presented an overview of the KAFB initiatives during the attendees' lunch at the BBEC. Furthermore, the class toured the Air Traffic Control and Airfield Management Schoolhouses.
- 26 Oct The 22-person KMC team that deployed to Baton Rouge on 22 August to provide Defense Support to Civil Authorities for COVID-19 returned to KAFB. The team included three physicians, four Intensive Care Unit nurses, four Emergency Department nurses, six clinical nurses, two respiratory technicians, and three support personnel.
- 29 Oct The 81st Force Support Squadron (81 FSS) provided a Ghouls in the Park Halloween event at KAFB Marina Park. Children and their families enjoyed collecting candy, a haunted house, a boo bus, and several games.
- 29 Oct The 81 TRW/CC, Colonel William Hunter, thanked the KAFB community for participating in Base Clean-up Day. Colonel Hunter said that these efforts demonstrated KAFB was an amazing place to live and work.
- 2 Nov The 81 TRW posted a Mission Brief on the Web at <https://youtu.be/HFJ-np91JKw>. The video showed viewers how all the KAFB units executed their missions.
- 3 Nov The Director of Weather, Brigadier General Brian McDaniel oversaw a ribbon cutting ceremony as the 81 TRW commenced the first Space Weather Support Course. The first in-residence portion of the two-part hybrid class started that day. The students initiated the course with three weeks of distance learning, and then they would complete a three-week in-residence class.
- 5 Nov The 81 TRW/PA announced KAFB transitioned to HPCON A, per a 4 November memorandum from the 81 TRW/CC, Colonel William Hunter. Therefore, fully vaccinated members no longer had to wear masks. However, the KMC, Child Development Center, Youth Center, quarantine, and isolation areas maintained the face masks mandate. Nevertheless, members still had to wear masks in all indoor facilities if they were not fully vaccinated.

- 6 Nov One hundred and eighty-five members of the 81 TRG led by their Commander, Colonel Chance Geray, marched in the Gulf Coast Veterans Parade in Downtown Biloxi. Major General Michele Edmondson, 2 AF/CC, and CMSgt Sarah Esparza, 81 TRW/CCC, rode in Corvette convertibles during this event.
- 7 Nov The 81st Civil Engineer Squadron (CES) started a renovation project on Larcher Chapel. The 81 CES planned to transform a two-pipe mechanical system to a four-pipe operation. Furthermore, renovation included a fire suppression system with alarms and a mass notification system. Moreover, the 81 CES intended to add a new exterior patio and a game room.
- 8 Nov Major General Michele Edmondson, 2 AF/CC, visited the 81 TRW for an immersion tour around Keesler Air Force Base (KAFB). Major General Edmondson stopped by some student dormitories, Bryan Hall, and Vandenberg Hall along other KAFB facilities. Additionally, the 2 AF/CC spoke to some 81 TRG Airmen in the Levitow Training Support Facility.
- 10 Nov Colonel William Hunter, 81 TRW/CC, explained the 81 TRW mission, vision, and priorities to the KAFB community. Colonel Hunter said the 81 TRW mission would be to train, develop, and deliver focused driven warriors. Furthermore, the 81 TRW/CC revealed the 81 TRW vision would be to develop a culture of excellence. Moreover, the Colonel Hunter said the 81 TRW prioritized people, the installation, the community, and the mission.
- 12 Nov The 81 TRW/PA announced beneficiaries ages five and older could receive Pfizer COVID-19 vaccinations at 3D in the KMC through the end of November. These beneficiaries would start receiving the COVID-19 vaccinations at the Immunizations Clinic beginning 1 December.
- 19 Nov Ms. Deatrice Jimerson, Civilian Personnel Officer (CPO), announced civilian employees who did not comply with the COVID-19 vaccination mandate would face disciplinary measures. Ms. Jimerson said these actions would include oral admonishments, suspensions without pay, and removal.
- 24 Nov The KMC deployed a 22-person team to Saint Cloud, Minnesota to offer Defense Support to Civil Authorities with COVID-19. The team included three physicians, four Intensive Care Unit nurses, four Emergency Department nurses, two respiratory technicians, and three support personnel.
- 25 Nov Keesler Air Force Base Commanders, Chiefs, First Sergeants, and their spouses served the Thanksgiving meal to Airmen at the Azalea Dining Facility.
- 29 Nov The 81 TRW/PA informed KAFB members they must wear face masks in the commissary regardless of their COVID-19 vaccination status. They also repeated that members must still wear masks in the KMC, the Child Development Center, and in the Youth Center.

- 29 Nov The Air Force Manpower, Personnel and Services Office (AF/A1) restricted Airmen who were not fully vaccinated against COVID-19 from permanent change of station (PCS) moves. The Airmen could not PCS until they completed their vaccinations or until they received a medical or religious exemption for a COVID-19 vaccination.
- 30 Nov Colonel William Hunter, 81 TRW/CC, provided welcoming remarks at the KAFB National Native American Heritage Month Panel Discussion in the BBEC. The event honored Native American traditions and ancestry.
- 1-7 Dec The 81 TRW coordinated with the Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL) to simulate combat simulations for the Cyber Officer Training pipeline. The students created and executed thorough solutions for complicated tactical challenges with Joint All-Domain principles.
- 2 Dec The KAFB senior leadership and community took part in pre-game activities at a professional hockey game in Biloxi. Colonel William Hunter, 81 TRW/CC, conducted an oath of office ceremony with 16 Air Force delayed entry program recruits before the game. Furthermore, the 2 AF/CC, Major General Michele Edmonds, initiated the ceremonial puck drop during this event. The KAFB Honor Guard also performed during the pre-game festivities.
- 3 Dec Key leaders from KAFB went to the Biloxi Chamber of Commerce's Breakfast with the Mayor event in the Edgewater Mall Food Court in Biloxi. Major General Michele Edmondson, 2 AF/CC, Colonel William Hunter 81 TRW/CC, and Colonel Stuart Rubio, 403 WG/CC, along with other KAFB key leaders participated. The Biloxi Chamber of Commerce gave a small welcome gift to Major General Edmonson, Colonel Hunter, and Colonel Rubio.
- 3 Dec Keesler Air Force Base (KAFB) hosted Winter Fest at the Marina Park. The event included a holiday tree lighting ceremony. Additionally, Santa Claus came to listen to children ask him for gifts.
- 4 Dec Keesler Air Force Base leadership judged over 25 decorated boats during the 36th annual Christmas on the Water Boat Parade in Biloxi. Colonel William Hunter, 81 TRW/CC, his spouse Blanca reviewed the contestants. Additionally, Colonel James Kafer, 81 TRW/CV, and his spouse Rachel, along with other KAFB senior leaders participated in this event.
- 9 Dec The FOX News channel came to do a story about the KAFB Space Force Weather Training Program. Ms. Hunter Davis, FOX Weather Multimedia Journalist, interviewed the 335 TRS/CC, Lieutenant Colonel Kevin Brockler, about the Space Weather Support Course. Ms. Davis also spoke with Mr. Arthur Nelson, an instructor, during her visit at the Weather Training Complex.

- 10 Dec The 81st Operational Readiness Medicine Squadron (81 ORMS) confirmed the KAFB water supply was safe to drink because they disinfected it with chlorine. The 81 ORMS released the Annual Water Quality Report (Consumer Confidence Report) that also noted KAFB added fluoride to the base water.
- 13 Dec The nine-person KMC team that deployed to Holloman Air Force Base, New Mexico on 27 August returned to KAFB. The team of six physicians, one Critical Care Nurse, and two Enlisted members provided medical support to Afghan Travelers.
- 20 Dec Colonel William Hunter, 81 TRW/CC, transitioned KAFB to HPCON B because the local positive COVID-19 cases increased. Additionally, the 81 TRW/CC informed the KAFB community this action was part of a team effort to co-exist with COVID-19. Colonel Hunter issued a face mask mandate for the installation regardless of the vaccination status of the person. Moreover, the 81 TRW/CC said personnel accessing the fitness facilities would need to be fully vaccinated and wear face masks unless they were exercising. Furthermore, Colonel Hunter restricted indoor capacity to a maximum of 50 percent for the workplace and for mass gatherings starting 4 January 2022.
- 21 Dec The Department of the Air Force (DAF) approved the option of including pronouns such as he/him, she/her, or they/them in official signature blocks. However, this action did not mandate the use of pronouns in official signature blocks. The DAF implemented this initiative to address barriers to service and to promote a more inclusive culture.
- 22 Dec “Mr. Air Traffic Control,” Mr. Francis Herbert received military honors during a funeral service at the Biloxi National Veterans Cemetery. He lived to the age of 101. Mr. Herbert served as the last Air Force Air Traffic Control (ATC) Warrant Officer when he retired in 1972. Furthermore, “Mr. Air Traffic Control” worked as a civilian ATC instructor at KAFB for 20 more years. The 81 TRW dedicated the Herbert ATC Lab in Cody Hall in 2016 in his honor. Four members of the 334 TRS represented their unit at the funeral. Major Matthew Francom, 334 TRS Director of Operations, and M. Robert Brown, 334 TRS ATC Flight Chief, attended the service. Additionally, Mr. Edward Curley, 334 TRS ATC Instructor Supervisor, and Mr. Jeffrey Haynes, 334 TRS Airfield Operations Officer Instructor, went to the funeral.
- 28 Dec Keesler Air Force Base Commanders, Chiefs, First Sergeants, and their spouses served the Christmas meal to Airmen at the Magnolia Dining Facility.
- 29 Dec Lieutenant General Robert I. Miller, Air Force Surgeon General, encouraged personnel to acquire their COVID-19 vaccinations along with the booster vaccinations. Lieutenant General Miller emphasized the vaccinations reduced the stress on the health care system.

## 2022

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- 1 Jan-5 Mar The 81st Medical Group deployed a Medical Response Team (MRT) to the Regional Hospital of Scranton, Pennsylvania. The MRT contributed to lowering the statewide COVID-19 positive cases from 29,941 to 7,855. The team included one physician, one physician's assistant, five registered nurses, seven medical technicians, and one administrative Airman.
- 4 Jan The 81st Training Wing Commander (81 TRW/CC), Colonel William Hunter, restricted indoor capacity to a maximum of 50 percent for the workplace and for mass gatherings. Colonel Hunter issued this directive in his 30 December 2021 Health Protection Condition Bravo (HPCON B) email.
- 11 Jan Major General Michele Edmondson, Second Air Force Commander (2nd AF/CC), went to a Rotary Club of Biloxi Meeting at Mary Mahoney's Old French House. Col Brian Stumpe, 2nd AF Vice Commander (2nd AF/CV), accompanied Major General Edmondson. The Executive Director of the Gulfport-Biloxi International Airport, Mr. Clay Williams, acted as the guest speaker.
- 12 Jan Colonel Ryan Crowley, 81st Mission Support Group Commander (81 MSG/CC), closed two Child Development Center (CDC) pre-toddler classrooms due to some positive COVID-19 case exposures. Colonel Crowley said the classrooms would reopen on 20 January 2022.
- 14 Jan Keesler Air Force Base (KAFB) leadership, along with community members, played in the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) Closeout Golf Scramble at the Bay Breeze Golf Course. These golfers, both from on and off base, participated to boost donations for the CFC.
- 15 Jan The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) directed Federal Employee Health Benefits (FEHB) Carriers to provide coverage for over the counter (OTC) COVID-19 tests to FEHB participants. However, the FEHB plans could restrict the number of tests to eight per person.
- 18 Jan Chief Master Sergeant (CMSgt) Kodi Bailey, 333rd Training Squadron Senior Enlisted Leader (333rd TRS/SEL) announced he would serve as the 81 TRW Diversity and Inclusion (D & I) Manager. CMSgt Bailey said he would establish a D & I Council to implement D & I missions. Additionally, CMSgt Bailey asked 81 TRW members to provide D & I feedback, mentorship, special observances, and other activities.

- 19 Jan The 81 TRW Public Affairs Office (81 TRW/PA) emailed the KAFB community about COVID-19 restrictions. Only Active-Duty Service-Members and family members within the ages of five to eleven could receive COVID-19 vaccinations. Furthermore, the 81 TRW/PA referred non-Active-Duty adults to off-base providers for COVID-19 vaccinations. Moreover, the 81 TRW/PA informed the community the booster shot interval changed to five months instead of six months. Additionally, the 81 TRW/PA revealed members could order free COVID-19 tests at [www.covidtests.gov](http://www.covidtests.gov).
- 25 Jan The 81 TRW hosted Biloxi Chamber of Commerce Junior Leadership Program. The 81 TRW provided a KAFB tour to 17 students from Biloxi High School and Saint Patrick Catholic High School.
- 26 Jan The 403rd Wing (403rd WG) announced they would reinstate their Orientation/Incentive Flight Program to enhance understanding of weapons systems starting 24 February. Additionally, the 403rd said the program would incentivize 81 TRW members to display outstanding performance to earn a flight on an aircraft.
- 27 Jan Major General (retired) Mark Brown acted as the guest speaker at the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Luncheon in the BBEC Ballroom. Colonel William Hunter, 81 TRW/CC, provided the opening remarks.
- 1 Feb The 81 TRW Total Force Development Council announced they would hold the first Keesler “Dragon’s Breath” Toastmasters Club meeting on 24 February. The Toastmasters Club would teach public speaking and leadership skills to KAFB members.
- 7 Feb Colonel William Hunter, 81 TRW/CC, directed commanders and supervisors to review updated guidance for travel risk assessments. Colonel Hunter informed leaders the Department of Defense (DoD) revised protocols on 10 January for personnel traveling during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 8 Feb The 81 Force Support Squadron (81 FSS) announced the United States Air Force (USAF) transitioned to a new Enlisted and Officer evaluation system called myEvaluation (myEval). Additionally, the 81 FSS noted this change boosted the IT and talent management transformations for Total Force Airmen and Guardians.
- 8 Feb The KAFB Black History Month Observance Committee held a ZUMBA class to celebrate Black Health and Wellness at the Blake Fitness Center Gymnasium.
- 11 Feb The Defense Health Agency (DHA) offered each beneficiary a maximum of eight free COVID-19 test kits per month each 90 days through Tricare. The Military Treatment Facilities (MTFs) would provide the kits to each identification (ID) card holder.

- 11 Feb - 17 Mar The 81 MDG deployed a Medical Response Team (MRT) to the University of 17 Rochester Strong Memorial Hospital Level One Trauma Center in New York State. The MRT supported the COVID-19 pandemic response by offering skilled support and services to patients. The team included four physicians, eleven registered nurses, two respiratory therapists, two medical technicians, and one administrative Airman.
- 13 Feb The 2nd AF/CC, Major General Michele Edmondson, and the 81 TRW/CC, Colonel William Hunter, along with their spouses attended the Fred Haise Statue Unveiling Ceremony. Mr. Haise had served as an Apollo 13 astronaut and fighter pilot. The ceremony took place at the Biloxi Lighthouse. Mr. Haise, The Honorable Andrew “FoFo” Gilich, Mayor of the City of Biloxi, and other local leaders spoke at this event.
- 15-17 Feb The 333rd TRS represented the 81 TRW at the Headquarters Air Combat Command (HQ ACC) Cyber Training Consortium at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Virginia. Major Adam Ray and Captain Jason Kimball of the 333rd TRS presented an overview of how the 333rd TRS taught students cyber training. They explained the 333rd TRS trained Joint Cyber Forces to win our nation’s wars.
- 18 Feb The Black History Month and African American Heritage Committee offered the KAFB community a chance to network as they embraced art. The participants painted, enjoyed appetizers, and sipped beverages at the Keesler Arts and Crafts Center.
- 18-20 Feb KAFB helped approximately 60 Special Olympics of Mississippi athletes train for their summer games. Eighty KAFB staff members assisted these competitors in golf, powerlifting, bowling, and other activities. The athletes also played the KAFB “Chiefs and Eagles” in a softball game. The 2022 Special Olympics USA Games took place from 5 through 12 June in Orlando, Florida.
- 22 Feb Colonel Marcia Smith, 81st Inpatient Operations Squadron (81 IPTS), acted as the guest speaker at the Black History Month Gospel Brunch in the BBEC. The 81st Medical Group (81 MDG), in conjunction with the 81 TRW, sponsored this Health and Wellness activity.
- 22 Feb The 81 TRW/PA announced changes to the Sexual Assault and Prevention Program (SAPR). One new option permitted Service-Members to still file a Restricted Report even if the Chain of Command knew about it. Furthermore, Service-Members whose adult family members filed an Unrestricted Report to the SAPR Office could request an expedited transfer.

- 1 Mar Senior KAFB leaders rode in floats at the Gulf Coast Carnival Association Mardi Gras parade in Biloxi. The KAFB representatives included Colonel William Hunter, 81 TRW/CC, and his wife Blanca.
- 3 Mar The 81 TRW transitioned from HPCON B to HPCON A and lifted the face mask mandate for vaccinated members. However, people still had to wear mask indoors on KAFB if they were not fully vaccinated. Nevertheless, the Keesler Medical Center (KMC) and the Child Development Center maintained their face mask mandate for their facilities.
- 3 Mar Major Kurtis Snyder Jr, 81st Logistics Readiness Squadron Commander (81 LRS/CC), instructed members to prepare as early as possible for upcoming permanent change of station (PCS) moves. Major Snyder added that commercial trucking labor shortages would cause significant delays during PCS moves this summer. Moreover, Major Snyder urged members to be flexible when scheduling their PCS during the peak moving season of 15 May through 31 August.
- 9 Mar The 81 TRW hosted its Dragon University Open House at the BBEC. The new school offered a Professional Development Incentive Program to all KAFB Service-Members and civilian employees.
- 11 Mar The 81 TRW held a Women’s History Month Business and Information Fair at the BBEC. The 81 TRW entitled the theme of the event “Providing healing and promoting hope.”
- 12 Mar One hundred-and-five KAFB Airmen marched in the Hibernia Marching Society of Mississippi’s Annual Saint Patrick’s Day Parade in Biloxi. The 81 TRW/CC, Colonel William Hunter, and the 81 TRW/CV, Colonel James Kafer, participated from the reviewing stand of the Biloxi mayor at City Hall.
- 16 Mar Colonel William Hunter, 81 TRW/CC, presented a 10-minute update on KAFB activities during the Military One Coast Annual Meeting. The gathering took place at the Knight Nonprofit Center in Gulfport, Mississippi. Colonel Stuart Rubio, 403rd Wing Commander (403rd WG/CC), also spoke at the meeting along with other local senior military leaders.
- 18 Mar The Air Force Assistance Fund (AFAF) held a free Irish-themed spread at BBEC third floor lounge in conjunction with Saint Patrick’s Day. The AFAF supported the Air Force Aid Society, Air Force Enlisted Village, Mrs. Curtis E. LeMay Foundation, and the Air Force Villages Charitable Foundation.

- 18 Mar Colonel William Hunter, 81 TRW/CC, issued an updated mask and screening testing guidance memorandum to KAFB. The 81 TRW/CC granted personnel and visitors, regardless of vaccination status, the option to not wear face masks. However, Colonel Hunter still mandated face masks to access an 81st Medical Group (81 MDG) facility. The 81 TRW/CC said as long as the COVID-19 Community Level remained low, face masks would be optional. Therefore, Colonel Hunter maintained the Health Protection Condition Alpha (HPCON A) in accordance with the low COVID-19 Community Level.
- 21 Mar Mrs. Deatrice Jimerson, 81 TRW Civilian Personnel Officer, informed 81 TRW Senior Leaders about new COVID-19 workplace re-entry guidance. Mrs. Jimerson cited a 16 March memorandum from the Deputy Secretary of Defense, The Honorable Kathleen H. Hicks, for this updated guidance. The new workplace flexibilities incorporated telework along with planning for work locations and schedules.
- 22 Mar Colonel William Hunter, 81 TRW/CC, and Colonel Stuart Rubio, 403 Wing/CC, joined other KAFB Senior Leaders at the Biloxi Chamber of Commerce Breakfast. The Mayor of the City of Biloxi, The Honorable Andrew “FoFo” Gilich, also attended this gathering at the Merit Health Biloxi’s Cafeteria in Biloxi. Colonel Hunter presented Mayor Gilich and the City of Biloxi Chief Administrative Officer, Mr. Michael Leonard, KAFB economic impact statements at the breakfast.
- 28-29 Mar The 81st Security Forces (81 SFS) and the Naval Security Force for Naval Construction Battalion Center Gulfport conducted joint legal training at KAFB. The participants received lectures about crime scene procedures during the first day of the course. Furthermore, the attendees practically applied their skills in mock court room proceedings.
- 28 Mar-1 Apr AETC Schoolhouse Commanders and related Career Field Managers (CFMs) met during a KAFB CFM Working Group. They devised plans to boost Airmen-centric mission-focused training. The event ended with a Drill Down competition.
- 31 Mar The U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Ohio, Western Division issued an injunction for disciplinary action for Active Duty COVID-19 Vaccine Refusals. Therefore, the court ordered the USAF to stop taking adverse actions until the end of the litigation for the *Doster v. Kendall* case.
- 8 Apr Mrs. Deatrice Jimerson, Civilian Personnel Officer, emailed 81 TRW Senior Leaders that the nationwide injunction blocking mandatory COVID-19 vaccinations was no longer in effect.

- 11 Apr Lieutenant Colonel (Lt Col) Anthony Perez, 81st Force Support Squadron, announced the Keesler UNITE Program, a unit resiliency program, would be available on KAFB. Furthermore, Lt Col Perez said Active- Duty members, Reservists, Appropriated Fund Civilians, and Non-appropriated Fund Civilians could participate in this activity. Moreover, Lt Col Perez explained this program offered recreation and fun to enhance unit cohesion within squadrons.
- 12 Apr Colonel William Hunter, 81 TRW/CC, revealed three 81 TRW Airmen received AETC Outstanding Airmen of the Year Awards. Senior Airman (SrA) Joshua L. S. Rodriguez, 81st Training Support Squadron, earned the AETC Airman of the Year honor. Staff Sergeant Blake S. Bennett, 338th Training Squadron (338 TRS), won the Honor Guard Member of the Year recognition. Technical Sergeant (TSgt) Alvin R. Morris, 336th Training Squadron (336 TRS), received the Military Training Leader of the Year Award.
- 15 Apr Colonel Matthew Hopkins, 334 TRS/CC, gave the opening and closing remarks at the Airman First Class (A1C) Antoine Holt Memorial 5K Run/Walk. The activity took place at the Levitow Training Support Facility Drill Pad. Colonel Hopkins and CMSgt Mark Paraoan, 334 TRS/SEL, presented trophies. Additionally, Colonel James Kafer, 81 TRW/CV, and CMSgt Sarah Esparza attended this event.
- 22 Apr Colonel James Kafer, 81 TRW CV, gave remarks during the Earth Day Ceremony and presented a plaque for this occasion. The activity took place at the Airman's Oak on the corner of Meadows Avenue and First Street.
- 26 Apr The annual Keesler Technology Expo offered networking opportunities for the KAFB community with hi-tech companies at the Roberts CAM Facility Auditorium. The 81st Communications Squadron (81 CS) and the Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association (AFCEA) co-hosted this activity.
- 27 Apr Colonel William Hunter, 81 TRW/CC, announced two AETC individual and team award recipients. The 333rd TRS earned the AETC 2021 General Larry O. Spencer Innovation Award for Undergraduate Cyber Warfare Training Course Instructors. Staff Sergeant Kristen K. Adams, 335 TRS, received the AETC 2022 American Legion Spirit of Service Award.
- 28 Apr Keesler Air Force Base presented an Arbor Day program outside of the Child Development Center. Colonel William Hunter, 81 TRW/CC, Colonel Stuart Rubio, 403 WG/CC, and Meacham Harlow, Urban & Community Forestry Partnership Coordinator, led the ceremony.

- 2 May The Hunt Housing contractor renovated 40 homes through the Keesler Housing Moisture Remediation Program (MRP). Nevertheless, incoming Airmen incurred on and off base housing shortages. The MRP encompassed 365 homes, which included 30 percent of the base housing. Unfortunately, 257 of the MRP homes remained vacant. Both Hunt Housing and the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force Energy, Installations, and Environment submitted fund solutions. However, they must receive approval from the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) before implementing these plans.
- 3-13 May The 81 MDG participated in the U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM) Defense Chemical Biological Radiological Nuclear Force Response Force (DCRF) Guardian Resolve -22 Exercise. The 81 MDG deployed 96 members to Camp Atterbury, Indiana to rehearse for Defense Civil Response Force contingencies. More than 3,000 personnel took part in this joint exercise. The 81 MDG DCRF deployment team earned a citation for setting an Air Force record, 33 hours, for constructing a fully mission capable field hospital.
- 4 May Keesler Air Force Base (KAFB) hosted an Air Expeditionary Force (AEF) Ribbon Cutting Ceremony behind Jones Hall. Approximately 700 students each year would attend the Radio Frequency Operations Apprentice Course in the AEF Training Area. Lt Col Tobiah Jones, 338th TRS/CC, and U.S. Army Captain Olivia Theodore, 823rd Red Horse Squadron Project Engineer, cut the ceremonial ribbon together.
- 9 May The 81st SFS and the Biloxi SWAT conducted joint training at Keesler Air Force Base.
- 11 May The 81 TRG and the 81 SFS participated in the Biloxi Shuckers Education Day for local public-school students at the nearby MGM Stadium. The 81 TRG provided displays including radio, radar airfield, and weather systems. Additionally, the 81 SFS presented a Military Working Dog demonstration to the children, parents, and educators.
- 13-15 May KAFB hosted the 2022 Special Olympics Mississippi Summer (SOMS) Games after a two-year absence due to COVID-19 restrictions. The opening ceremony occurred 13 May at the Levitow Training Support Facility Drill Pad. Colonel James Kafer, 81 TRW/CV, gave the opening remarks. Mr. Warren Gaffney, 81 CS, served as the emcee.
- 17 May The majority of Department of Air Force (DAF) civilian employees transitioned to become Defense Health Agency (DHA) staff. Most DAF civilian employees at the 81<sup>st</sup> MDG continued their duties as members of the DHA. The DHA assumed control of military medical treatment facilities (MTFs) on 30 September 2021 in accordance with the National Defense Authorization Acts of 2017 and 2019.

- 20 May Keesler Air Force Base honored fallen law enforcement during a National Police Week Retreat Ceremony at the Base Flagpole in front of the 81 TRW Headquarters.
- 20 May Some members of the KAFB community participated in the Asian-American and Pacific Islander Heritage (AAPI) Month Family Night on the BBEC Lawn. The AAPI Committee offered the families bounce houses, the Disney movie “Moana,” and the option to purchase meals from AAPI food trucks.
- 26 May Colonel William Hunter, 81 TRW/CC, and Biloxi Mayor, Andrew “FoFo” Gilich, slashed the ribbon during the Division Street Gate Ribbon Cutting Ceremony. Additionally, Major General Michele Edmondson, 2<sup>nd</sup> AF/CC, took part in the ribbon cutting. Furthermore, Colonel Hunter provided remarks. Brigadier General Thomas Harrell, (AFMRA/CC), U.S. Representative Steven Palazzo, and several other distinguished visitors also attended the ceremony.
- 31 May The 81 MDG transitioned away from a dedicated COVID-19 Testing Clinic. Beneficiaries took their tests as walk-in patients at their assigned primary clinic. However, members would not be eligible for leisure travel COVID-19 testing at the Keesler Medical Center because TRICARE did not cover it.
- 31 May The 81 MDG Pharmacy flight implemented a plan to expedite prescription dispensing with enhanced technology. The Pharmacy flight acquired \$119,000 to upgrade dispensing capacity with smart filing cabinets. Furthermore, they partnered with the 81st Civil Engineer Squadron (81 CES) to improve the traffic patterns around the pharmacy.
- 18 Jun The new Division Street Gate opened to personally owned vehicles (POVs). However, the Commercial Vehicle Gate and the Visitor Center, still under construction, would open later.
- 30 Jun The Keesler Air Force Base (KAFB) community enjoyed Freedom Fest during the Independence Day holiday weekend at the BBEC. The attendees had the opportunity to play a variety of games, taste a wide assortment of food, and watch fireworks.
- 12 Jul Lieutenant General Caroline M. Miller, Deputy Chief of Staff (DCS) for Manpower, Personnel and Services announced a name change for the Airman and Family Readiness Center (A&FRC). Lt Gen Miller revealed the activity would be designated the Military and Family Readiness Center (M&FRC). She said the new name would be more inclusive of the USAF and Space Force joint communities.
- 21 Jul The USAF initiated the Connect to Care (CTC) Approach and Implementation to support sexual assault victims. The program established the “No Wrong Door” principle to smoothly transition clients from one service provider to another without barriers to their care.

- 29 Jul The 81 TRW flew the flag of the United States at half-staff to honor the late CMSgt of the Air Force, James M. McCoy, USAF Retired.
- 1 Aug The 81 MDG consolidated all outpatient pharmacy services at the Exchange Satellite Pharmacy. The 81 MDG took this action in response to projected staffing shortages. However, the 81 MDG expected to restore normal pharmacy operations after resolving their personnel issues.
- 5 Aug The 81 FSS held the grand opening of the Indoor Golf Simulator at the Bay Breeze Golf Course on KAFB.
- 9 Aug Colonel William Hunter, 81 TRW/CC, congratulated the AETC Annual Tech Training Winners via an email to the KAFB community. TSgt Melissa R. Anderson, 334 TRS, earned the Instructor Non-Commissioned Officer Category recognition. Master Sergeant Kendra Harris, 334 TRS, received the Instructor Senior Non-Commissioned Officer Category award. Additionally, the Training Support Senior Non-Commissioned Officer Category recognition went to MSgt Bradley Boltz from the 81st Training Support Squadron (81 TRSS). Mrs. Lauren Lowe, 338th TRS, earned the Training Support Civilian (Category one) Category award. Furthermore, Mr. Michael Gulino won the Training Support Civilian (Supervisory) Category recognition.
- 15 Aug The new Visitor Control Center (VCC) opened at the Division Street Gate. However, the Commercial Vehicle Gate at the Division Street Gate remained closed due to ongoing construction.
- 21 Aug – 1 Sep The Keesler Immunization Clinic offered Active Duty members and appropriated fund civilian employees Novavax vaccinations to prevent COVID. The eligible individuals could visit the clinic for the first dosage and then return 21 days later for the final vaccination. Novavax provided an alternative to members seeking waivers from mRNA COVID vaccines.
- 22 Aug The Honorable Gina Ortiz Jones, Under Secretary of the Air Force (USECAF), approved all outdoor Department of the Air Force (DAF)-sponsored in-person meetings with less than 250 participants. Additionally, the USECAF permitted indoor meetings with less than 250 attendees. Ms. Ortiz Jones added that these activities could occur in a county where the CDC Community Level was “High.” Nevertheless, the USECAF noted organizations must implement Force Health Protection mitigation measures for these gatherings to take place.
- 22-24 Aug The 81st TRG connected with the Salute to Life program to register members of the training squadrons as potential bone marrow donors. The volunteers joined a national database in which they could possibly become a match for a hopeful bone marrow recipient.
- 25 Aug Colonel Jason Allen, 81st TRW/CV, gave opening remarks at the Keesler Air Force Base 81st Birthday Celebration. MSgt Larry McAnally, USAF Retired,

served as the guest speaker. The activity occurred in the Levitow Training Support Facility Fishbowl.

- 26 Aug Major General Michele Edmondson, 2nd AF/CC, served as panel member during the KAFB Women's Equality Day Celebration in the BBEC Second Floor Ballroom. The event recognized the date, 26 August 1920, the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution authorized women to vote.
- 9 Sep The Center for Naval Aviation Technical Training Unit (CNATTU) hosted a 9/11 Memorial Ceremony in front of the 81st TRW Headquarters at the Base Flagpole. The event honored the approximately 3,000 victims who died during the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks. The 81st TRW/CC, Colonel Bill Hunter, and other 81st TRW Senior Leaders attended the ceremony.
- 16 Sep The 81st TRW conducted a Prisoner of War (POW)/Missing in Action (MIA) retreat at the base flagpole in front of the 81st TRW Headquarters.
- 17 Sep The 81st Training Wing (81 TRW) hosted the United States Air Force 75th Birthday Ball at the IP Casino Resort Spa in Biloxi. Retired Air Force General Robin Rand served as the guest speaker.
- 3 Oct DoD identification card holders began using the 81 LRS Base Shuttle bus Monday through Friday from 5:00 in the morning until 5:00 in the evening. The Base Shuttle replaced the installation taxi service. However, if the member displayed COVID-19 symptoms they could not board the bus. Nevertheless, the member could call the Ground Transportation Dispatch to ask for separate transportation to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.
- 7 Oct The 81st MDG hosted the annual Health and Wellness Expo in the Don Wiley Auditorium at the Keesler Medical Center (KMC). Beneficiaries took advantage of health screenings, flu vaccinations and even prizes during this activity.
- 13 Oct The KAFB housing contractor, Hunt, received approval from the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force-Installations (SAF/IEI) for a 58 million dollar Moisture Remediation Program (MRP). The new funding should enable Hunt to accelerate renovations to 25 homes per month for the 793 homes awaiting repairs. Hunt had renovated 235 homes at this point during the MRP.
- 21 Oct DoD cardholders and their guests returned to the reopened Keesler Marina Fuel Pier. The site had been undergoing repairs since 2020. Furthermore, the Keesler Marina acquired some Bennington pontoon boats to boost the recreational opportunities at the facility.
- 14 Nov The 81st FSS Civilian Personnel Flight hosted a KAFB Job Fair in the BBEC. Twenty-seven employers such as the Keesler Commissary, the University of Southern Mississippi, and Vectrus sought new workers at this activity.

Additionally, candidates took a resume classes and USA Jobs navigation lessons. More than 170 job seekers came to the job.

- 5 Dec Colonels and Chief Master Sergeants (CMSgts) competed in the second annual Chief V Eagles Softball Game at MGM Park in Biloxi. City of Biloxi Mayor Andrew “FoFo” Gilich threw the ceremonial first pitch. In addition, the 81st SFS presented a military working dog demonstration before the game for the audience. Moreover, the 338th put on a freestyle drill competition during the pre-game activities.
- 13 Dec Major General Michele Edmondson, 2nd AF/CC, relieved Colonel William Hunter, 81st TRW/CC, of his command. Major General Edmondson cited a loss of trust and confidence in the capability of Colonel Hunter to successfully lead the 81st TRW for this action. Major General Edmondson appointed the 81st TRW/CV, Colonel Jason Allen, as the acting 81st TRW/CC.

## 2023

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- 3 Jan Civilian employees learned about civilian development education and professional development during the KAFB Civilian All-Call. The event took place at the Roberts Maintenance Facility Auditorium.
- 3 Feb Col Laura King, 81st Training Group Commander (81st TRG/CC), reviewed performances at the 81st Training Group (81st TRG) Student Drill Down. The competition took place at the Levitow Training Support Facility Drill Pad. Colonel King and CMSgt Jeremy Phillips, 81st TRG Senior Enlisted Leader (81st TRG/SEL), presented awards. The Drill Down highlighted “esprit de corps” and underscored military training.
- 6 Feb The 85th Engineering Installation Squadron (85th EIS) Redesignation and Change of Command Ceremony took place at the 85th EIS Compound. Lieutenant Colonel (Lt Col) Whit Walker relinquished command of the 85th EIS to Lt Col Christopher Dauer. Col Heather Uhl, 38th Cyberspace Engineering Installation Group Commander (38th CEIG/CC), officiated the Redesignation Ceremony. Col David Abel, 5th Combat Communications Group (5th CCG/CC), officiated the Change of Command.
- 9 Feb Col Jason Allen, 81st TRW Commander (81st TRW/CC), and CMSgt Sarah Esparza, 81st TRW/CCC, presented awards and diplomas at the Airmen Leadership School (ALS) graduation. The ceremony took place at the Bay Breeze Event Center (BBEC).
- 14 Feb Lt Col C. Alex Lamkin, 81st Training Support Squadron Commander (81st TRSS/CC), was the guest speaker at the Black History Month Luncheon in the

- BBEC Ballroom. Col Chad Gemeinhardt, 81st Mission Support Group Commander (81st MSG/CC), gave the closing remarks at the event.
- 24 Feb Brigadier General (BG) Lyle Drew, 82nd TRW/CC, was the guest speaker at the 2022 81st TRW Annual Awards Ceremony in the BBEC Ballrooms. Col Jason Allen, 81 TRW/CC, and CMSgt Sarah Esparza, 81st TRW/CCC, bestowed honors on behalf of Team Keesler and made closing comments.
- 9 Mar Senior Master Sergeant (SMSgt) MyTien Pham, 81st Medical Support Squadron (81st MDSS), made opening remarks at the Women's History Month Panel. The event occurred at the Roberts Consolidated Aircraft Maintenance (CAM) Facility.
- 22 Mar Col Nick Dipoma, 2nd Air Force Commander (2nd AF/CD), provided a Tech Transformation Planning Update which emphasized strategic change. He explained how the evolution of the 6th Generation learning environment necessitated a holistic systems approach.
- 23 Mar Major General (Maj Gen) Michele Edmondson, 2nd Air Force Commander (2nd AF/CC), presided over the 81st TRW Assumption of Command Ceremony for Col Billy Pope. The activity took place at Levitow Training Support Facility Parade Field.
- 29 Mar Ten members of the Keesler Air Force Base Fire Department (KAFB/FD) assisted Harrison County Fire Rescue (HCFR) with a Hazardous Material (HAZMAT) incident in Biloxi. The KAFB/FD helped the HCFR with a suspicious package that a local residence received. Fortunately, the parcel tested negative for HAZMAT.
- 30 Mar Captain John Presswood, 338th TRS/Director Operator (338th TRS/DO), performed guest speaker duties at the Military Training Leader (MTL) Graduation. The ceremony occurred in room 220 of the Levitow Training Support Facility. Col Laura King, 81st TRG/CC, and CMSgt Jeremy Phillips, 81st TRG/Senior Enlisted Leader (81st TRG/SEL), gave certificates and pin Aiguillettes to the MTL graduates.
- 31 Mar Mathies Non-Commissioned Officer Academy (MNCOA) Class 23-3 graduated at the Roberts CAM Facility Auditorium. SMSgt Mark Castleberry, 366th TRS/Detachment 6 (366th TRS/Det 6), served as the guest speaker during the ceremony.
- 6 Apr Detachment 407 of the Air Force Office of Special Investigations relocated to room 118 in the Sablich Center. Furthermore, the office announced it would offer foreign travel briefings each Thursday.
- 14 Apr Col Laura King, 81st Training Group Commander (81st TRG/CC), assessed routines at the 81st Training Group (81st TRG) Student Drill Down. The activity took place at the Levitow Training Support Facility Drill Pad. Colonel King and

- CMSgt Jeremy Phillips, 81st TRG Senior Enlisted Leader (81st TRG/SEL), presented awards. The Drill Down focused on “esprit de corps” and accentuated military training.
- 18–19 Apr The BBEC hosted a Holocaust Remembrance Mini-Museum in the First Floor Function Room. Visitors viewed items such as displays, videos, and photographs that chronicled this horrible era.
- 21 Apr Col Jason Allen, 81st TRW/CC, and CMSgt Jeremy Phillips, representing 81st TRW/CCC, presented awards during the 81st TRW First Quarter Awards Ceremony at the BBEC Ballroom. Additionally, Colonel Allen and CMSgt Phillips provided closing remarks.
- 24 Apr The 81st TRW conducted an Arbor Day Ceremony at Division Street Gate on Keesler Air Force Base (KAFB).
- 28-30 Apr The City of Biloxi and KAFB hosted the United States Air Force (USAF) Thunderbirds for a joint Thunder Over the Sound Air and Space Show. Col Billy Pope, 81st TRW/CC, presented gifts to the Honorable Andrew Gilich, Mayor of the City of Biloxi, and to the Thunderbirds during the pre-flight social on 28 April. The social occurred at the BBEC. Maj Gen Michele Edmondson, 2nd AF/CC, also attended the gathering along with other local dignitaries. Around 100,000 people turned out to view the Thunderbirds, other aerial performers, and nearly 90 static displays on 29 and 30 April.
- 9 May Ms. LisaMarie Mariglia, 81st TRW Violence Prevention (81st TRW/CVI), provided KAFB Senior Leaders with a “Leaders Guide to Limited Privilege Suicide Prevention Program (LPSP).” This Department of the Air Force (DAF) publication addressed the need to minimize the risk of suicide among members encountering investigations or possible punishments.
- 12-13 May More than 500 athletes competed in the 35th annual Special Olympics Mississippi (SOMS) on KAFB. The participants strove for victory in categories such as flag football, golf, powerlifting, swimming, and track.
- 15-19 May The 81st SFS Police Week activities including a golf tournament, a memorial five kilometer ruck, and a law enforcement demonstration took place on KAFB. Additionally, some participants took part in a pistol competition. Moreover, the 81st SFS honored fallen law enforcement officers in the closing ceremony.
- 16 May Lt Col Kevin Brockler relinquished command of the 335th TRS to Lt Col Christopher Donahue during the 335th TRS Change of Command Ceremony. The event occurred on the Levitow Training Support Facility Drill Pad.
- 24 May Col Billy Pope, 81st TRW/CC, conducted two All Call sessions for 81st TRW permanent party personnel in the BBEC Ballroom. Colonel Pope took these opportunities to explain his commander’s intent. Moreover, he advised us to listen

to be good leaders. Additionally, he said that the 28,000 students we train are the ultimate deliverables for competing with China, Russia, and other adversaries. Furthermore, the 81st TRW/CC explained the significance of the Mississippi Cyber Initiative for KAFB. Colonel Pope also said innovation includes guts, ownership, persistence, and taking care of each other. In addition, he informed us he expected a climate of dignity, respect, and inclusion. Finally, Colonel Pope told us success encompasses taking care of people, dedication, and some fun.

- 24-26 May KAFB observed Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Month with multiple events. The Dragon's Lair Lounge in the BBEC hosted an AAPI Celebration Social with free food samples on 24 May. Their menu included coconut shrimp, Polynesian chicken, spring rolls, teriyaki vegetables, and Thai chicken satay. Additionally, KAFB honored the World War II Bataan Death March Veterans with a Bataan Memorial five kilometer run/ruck on the Triangle Track. Furthermore, non-prior service (NPS) students enjoyed a home-cooked meal during the AAPI Taste of Home event in the Fishbowl Center.
- 6 Jun Col Christopher Estridge, 81st Medical Group Commander (81st MDG/CC), presided over the 81st Operational Medical Readiness Squadron (81st OMRS) Change of Command Ceremony. Lt Col David Shwalb relinquished command of the 81st OMRS to Lt Col Denise Lemon in the Keesler Medical Center Don Wylie Auditorium.
- 8 Jun Lt Col Alecia Campbell handed over leadership of the 81st Contracting Squadron (81st CONS) to Major (Maj) Brad Rajchel during a Change of Command Ceremony. The event occurred in the Keesler Medical Center Don Wylie Auditorium. Col Chad Gemeinhardt, 81st MSG/CC, officiated the ceremony. Senior leadership from the 81st TRW and the 403rd WG attended the 81st CONS Change of Command Ceremony.
- 10 -23 Jun Pride Month events on KAFB included a brunch themed Pride Paint and Sip to enjoy art and a meal. Furthermore, the Welch Theater hosted a movie screening of "Everything Everywhere All at Once." In addition some members celebrated a decade of progress with a 2000's Karaoke.
- 12 Jun Lt Col Elizabeth Vaccaro took charge of the 334th TRS as Lt Col Matthew Hopkins relinquished command during the 334th TRS Change of Command Ceremony. The transition took place in the BBEC Ballroom.
- 14 Jun The 81st Training Wing Public Affairs Office (81st TRW/PA) warned KAFB Airmen in an email about not becoming victims of sexual extortion. Additionally, the 81st TRW/PA informed Airmen they could report these scams to their supervisor or to the Office of Special Investigations.
- 16 Jun The 81st Security Forces Squadron (81st SFS) responded to vandalism and theft complaints from numerous residents and Service-Members by disseminating 81st SFS Crime Prevention Tips. They advised the KAFB community to take actions such as securing all vehicles, homes, and personal property. Additionally, the 81st SFS urged members to call 911 to report suspicious activities.

- 16 Jun Keesler offered multiple activities for the Juneteenth Celebration. The events included a Jamboree Walk, a panel discussion, and a Freedom Bowl at the Guade Lanes bowling alley.
- 23 Jun Col Peter Kulis replaced Col Christopher Estridge as the 81st Medical Group Commander (81st MDG/CC) during the 81st MDG Change of Command Ceremony. The event occurred in the BBEC Ballroom. Col Billy Pope, 81st TRW/CC, officiated the ceremony. Dr. Brian Lein, Assistant Director, Healthcare Administration, Defense Health Agency (DHA), along with multiple other distinguished visitors attended the event.
- 26 Jun The 81st TRW/CC, Col Billy Pope, directed Airmen to wear their dress uniforms when he designated the last duty day of each month as Blues Day. Colonel Pope said, “It is a symbol of our service and a source of pride for everyone who has the honor of calling themselves a United States Airman or Guardian.” The new policy took effect on 31 July 2023.
- 27 Jun Col Billy Pope, 81st TRW/CC, released his initial 81st TRW/CC Commander’s Annual Inspection Report. He noted the 58 million dollars in refurbishments of 300 homes through the Moisture Remediation Program. Furthermore, Colonel Pope accentuated the three million dollar KAFB marina renovation project.
- 27 Jun The 81st Training Wing established a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) initiative. The program focused on enhancing inclusivity, equity, and diversity within the unit.
- 28 Jun Maj Michael Palmer, 81st Operational Medical Readiness Squadron Commander (81st OMRS/CC), informed the KAFB community that the base drinking water was safe. In addition, Maj Palmer said his unit tested the water in accordance with Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards. The 81st TRW/PA emailed the entire 81st OMRS Annual Water Quality Report to the KAFB community.
- 30 Jun Lt Col Stephanie Forsythe assumed command of the 81st Medical Support Squadron (81st MDTs) during an Assumption of Command and Promotion Ceremony. Col Chrystal Henderson, Air Force Inspection Agency Medical Operations (AFIA/SG), led the promotion ceremony for Lieutenant Col Forsythe. Col Peter Kulis presided over the assumption of command ceremony. Col Billy Pope, 81st TRW/CC, and other 81st TRW Senior Leaders attended the event in the Keesler Medical Center Don Wylie Auditorium.
- 30 Jun The KAFB community kicked off the Independence Day holiday weekend with Freedom Fest at the BBEC. The event offered entertainment including a balloon twister along with stilt walker and juggler performances. Participants also engaged in food competitions and even a mullet toss. Furthermore, Maj Gen Michele Edmondson, 2nd AF/CC, and Col Billy Pope, 81st TRW/CC, co-hosted a Freedom Fest Civic Social in the BBEC Dragon’s Lair. Senior leaders from the 81st TRW, the 403rd WG, and the community attended the gathering. Freedom Fest went out with the bang of a Fireworks show.

- 7 Jul Detachment two of the 39th Information Operation Squadron 39th IOS Change of Command Ceremony occurred at the Roberts CAM Facility. Maj Josiah Lane assumed command of the 39th IOS from the outgoing commander, Lt Col Omayra Genao. Lt Col Lauren Elkins, 39th IOS/CC, presided over the event.
- 16-20 Jul The Columbus, Mississippi High School football team stayed on KAFB for an enrichment camp. The 81st TRW hosted 100 members by providing them tours of KAFB, giving them presentations, and introducing them to senior leaders. The team resided in Avery Manor for this visit.
- 17 Jul Col Stephen Gasparovich began his tour as the 81st Dental Squadron Commander (81st DS/CC). Col Peter Kulis, 81st Medical Group Commander, officiated this Assumption of Command Ceremony in the Keesler Medical Center (KMC) Don Wylie Auditorium.
- 19 Jul General Charles Q. Brown, Jr., Chief of Staff (CSAF) of the USAF, directed all units to redesignate the title vice commander (CV) to deputy commander (CD) effective 1 August. General Brown said this change would align the USAF with other branches within the Department of Defense (DoD).
- 21 Jul The 81st TRW/CCC, CMSgt Michael Venning, emailed the KAFB community that the Department of the Air Force (DAF) restored funding for special bonuses. CMSgt Venning also noted the DAF would restart payments for permanent change of station (PCS) moves.
- 25 Jul Col Billy Pope, 81st TRW/CC, introduced his new Command Chief, CMSgt Michael Venning, to the KAFB community via email. Colonel Pope expressed his confidence in the new Dragon Chief.
- 4 Aug The 81st TRG hosted the first KAFB Dragon Gaming event in the McBride Commons. The activity served as a team-building mission for the KAFB community.
- 17 Aug The 81st TRG hosted the first KAFB Dragon Gaming event in the McBride Commons. The activity served as a team-building mission for the KAFB community.
- 18 Aug The 81st TRW/CC, Col Billy Pope, issued his FIRE Action Order to the wing. Colonel Pope directed the unit to execute the mission through **Focused** Training, **Installation** Excellence, **Ready** Airmen, and **Empowered** Airmen (FIRE).
- 24-26 Aug KAFB celebrated the 82nd anniversary of the installation starting with a ceremony on 24 August. KAFB turned 82 on 25 August. Moreover, the KAFB Service-Members took part in the Five Kilometer Color Run on 26 August. Additionally, the KAFB community enjoyed the 2023 Summer Sizzler which included competitions in water balloons, cornhole, and tug of war on 26 August.
- 25 Aug Maj Gen Michele Edmondson, 2nd AF/CC, gave the opening remarks during the KAFB Women's Equality Day Celebration in the BBEC Ballroom. The 81st TRG/CC, Col

Laura King, served as a member of the discussion panel for this event. In Addition, Col Billy Pope, 81st TRW/CC, gave the closing remarks during the celebration.

- 25 Aug The 81st SFS held a retirement ceremony for Military Working Dog (MWD) Gamma in the Roberts CAM Facility Auditorium. MWD Gamma retired after completing seven years of active duty service. Col Billy Pope, 81st TRW/CC, along with other 81st TRW Senior Leaders attended the ceremony.
- 6 Sep Col Laura King, 81st TRG/CC, explained 81st TRG FIRE “Focused Training” Lines of Effort (LOEs) during the weekly 81st TRW Staff Meeting. She revealed LOE one would be “Enable and Empower Faculty and Students.” Furthermore, Colonel King said LOE two would be “Modernize the Training Environment and Infrastructure.” Finally, Colonel King noted LOE three would be “Implement Data-Driven Decision-Making.”
- 11 Sep KAFB held a September 11th (9/11) Remembrance Ceremony at the Base Flagpole in front of the 81st TRW Headquarters building. The 81st Operations Support Flight (81st OSF) also held its second annual 9/11 Tower Run to honor the 2,996 victims of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Teams of four people ran up and down the stairs of the Air Traffic Control Tower in 20 minute intervals as a tribute to the fallen.
- 13 Sep Col Chad Gemeinhardt, 81st Mission Support Group Commander (81st MSG/CC), presented the 81st MSG FIRE “Installation Excellence” LOEs during the weekly 81st TRW Staff Meeting. He announced LOE one would be “Community Collaboration.” Additionally, Colonel Gemeinhardt said LOE two focused on “Infrastructure Enhancement.” Moreover, he stated LOE three would encompass “Quality of Life for Personnel and Families.”
- 15 Sep The 81st TRW recognized National Prisoner of War/Missing in Action (POW/MIA) Day with a POW/MIA Vigil. Moreover, the unit hosted a POW/MIA Run. Both of these activities took place at the Triangle Track. Additionally, The 81st TRW carried out a POW/MIA Retreat Ceremony at the Base Flagpole.
- 19 Sep The United States Space Force (USSF) Detachment two of the 533rd Training Squadron activated on KAFB in the BBEC Ballroom. Multiple USSF distinguished visitors along with 81st TRW Senior Leaders attended the event.
- 20 Sep Col Jason Allen, 81st TRW/CD, briefed senior leaders about the FIRE “Ready Airmen” LOEs in the weekly 81st TRW Staff Meeting. He said LOE one would pertain to “All-Encompassing Readiness.” Colonel Allen also identified LOE two as “Attract and Cultivate Talent.” In addition, he revealed LOE three would advocate the theme of “Do Routine Things Routinely Well.”
- 20 Sep-13 Oct Members of the KAFB community had multiple opportunities to enjoy National Hispanic Heritage Month. The activities included book readings for children, Spanish lessons, a Hispanic Heritage Panel, Zumba lessons, and Latin Night.

- 23 Sep Col Billy Pope, 81st TRW/CC, gave opening remarks during the Keesler Air Force Base Birthday Ball. The 76th birthday event took place in the Golden Nugget Biloxi Hotel and Casino in Biloxi. CMSgt Don Gurganus, USAF Retired, served as the guest speaker for the ball.
- 27 Sep CMSgt Michael Venning, 81st TRW/CCC, apprised senior leaders about the details of the FIRE “Empowered Airmen” LOEs during the weekly 81st TRW Staff Meeting. CMSgt Venning revealed LOE one would center on “Diversity-Driven Empowerment.” Moreover, he emphasized LOE two would “Promote Innovation.” Furthermore, CMSgt Venning noted LOE three would “Amplify Airmen’s Voices.”
- 30 Sep Maj Christopher O’Dell, 81st Comptroller Squadron Commander (81st CPTS/CC), emailed KAFB Senior Leaders that there would be no U.S. Government shutdown. Major O’Dell added that the U.S. Congress passed a Continuing Resolution (CR) to fund government operations through 17 November.
- 6 Oct The 81st SFS and the 403rd SFS honored heroes with a five mile Fallen Defender Ruck March. The tribute took place at the KAFB Triangle Track.
- 8-14 Oct The KAFB Fire Department along the 81st SFS offered numerous safety tips and educational activities to the community during Fire Prevention Week. Furthermore, the KAFB Fire Department hosted an open house on 14 October. The event included free door prizes, food, games, and, of course, the chance to meet Sparky the Fire Dog.
- 10-27 Oct Air Force Civil Engineer Center (AFCEC) independent and third party contractors inspected 100 percent of KAFB privatized housing. The assessments would confirm the well-being and quality of quarters for military and civilian residents. The 2020 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) mandated this process to improve privatized housing.
- 18 Oct Mr. Jeffrey Frye, 81st TRW Inspector General/Plans Office, (81st TRW/IGP), presented the alternate Crisis Action Team/Emergency Operations Center/Command Post (CAT/EOC/CP) timeline. He said the alternate CAT/EOC/CP would accomplish initial operational capability (IOC) in Thomson Hall on 24 May 2024 during the weekly 81st TRW Staff Meeting.
- 25 Oct Col Billy Pope, 81st TRW/CC, directed all KAFB members to comply with his Combating Trafficking in Persons (CTIP) guidance. He informed the community that TIP was the second largest criminal activity in the world. Moreover, Colonel Pope instructed personnel to report TIP activities to their chain of command, the Inspector General, the Office of Special Investigations (OSI), or to Security Forces. Furthermore, Colonel Pope emphasized the Air Force had a zero tolerance policy for TIP.
- 26 Oct A Military Training Leader (MTL) Graduation occurred at the Levitow Training Support Facility Drill Pad. The 335th Training Squadron Commander, Lt Col Christopher Donahue, served as the guest speaker. Lt Col James Roberts, 81st Training

Group Deputy Commander (81st TRG/CD), along with CMSgt Benjamin Johnson, 81st TRG/SEL, presented certificates and pin Aigullettes during the ceremony.

- 31 Oct KAFB injected \$1,098,771,857 into the local economy according to the fiscal year 2023 Economic Impact Statement. The 14,363 personnel assigned to KAFB contributed to this astounding figure.
- 31 Oct The Biloxi Chamber of Commerce sponsored the “State of Keesler Air Force Base” Annual Morning Call. The event took place in the BBEC Ballroom. Maj Gen Michele Edmondson, 2 AF/CC, Col Billy Pope, 81st TRW/CC, and Col Elissa Granderson, 403rd Operations Group Commander (403rd OG/CC), updated the attendees on the status of their missions. The Chamber of Commerce convenes a Morning Call each quarter to connect businesses and community leaders. KAFB usually hosts this event once a year.
- 1 Nov The KAFB community received the initial “The Flame” one-page newsletter in an email from the 81st TRW/CC, Col Billy Pope. In addition, Colonel Pope said the publication merged information from reliable material into one concise source regarding significant events and accomplishments. Furthermore, Colone Pope advised he would disseminate “The Flame” every two weeks.
- 1 Dec Col Stuart Rubio relinquished command of the 403rd Wing (403rd WG) to Col John Benson during the 403rd WG Change of Command Ceremony. The event took place at the Roberts CAM Facility Auditorium on KAFB. Brigadier General Melissa Coburn, 22nd AF/CC, and CMSgt Chin Cox, 22nd AF/CCC, attended the ceremony. In addition, Col Billy Pope, 81st TRW/CC, along with multiple 81st TRW Senior Leaders came to the event.
- 1 Dec CMSgt Donald Pedro, Secretary of the Air Force Diversity/Equity/Inclusion Senior Enlisted Leader (SAF/ DEI/SEL, visited KAFB. He met with Airmen and Civilians to discuss successful DEI actions including the authorization for women to wear ponytails along with two-piece flights. Moreover, CMSgt Pedro talked to personnel working on the night shift to promote DEI.
- 19 Dec Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force (CMSAF) JoAnne S. Bass led an All Call KAFB personnel in the BBEC Ballroom. Additionally, the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Manpower and Reserve Affairs (SAF/MR), The Honorable Alex Wagner, joined CMSAF Bass for this event. Furthermore, CMSgt John Alsvig, Air Force First Sergeant Special Duty Manager, came with CMSAF Bass.
- 19 Dec Fisher House One reopened on KAFB after undergoing 15 months of renovations. The staff of the Fisher House provided tours of the facility along with refreshments for the attendees at this event.
- 21 Dec The 81st TRW/PA emailed the KAFB Community the 2023 Lead/Copper Water Survey results for drinking water. The notification stated that lead measurement of 0.002

milligrams per liter (mg/L) was well below the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) actionable level of 0.015 mg/L. Furthermore, the assessment found no indication of copper in the KAFB drinking water.

**81 TRW History Office  
Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi  
June 2024**