

SAN BERNADRINO AIR MATERIEL AREA

MISSION

LINEAGE

San Bernardino Air Depot established, 17 Nov 1941

Redesignated San Bernardino Air Depot Control Area Command, 1 Feb 1943

Redesignated San Bernardino Air Service Command, 27 May 1943

Redesignated San Bernardino Air Technical Service Command, 14 Nov 1944

Redesignated San Bernardino Air Materiel Area, 2 Jul 1946

Inactivated, 1 July 1966

Discontinued, 8 Jul 1966

STATIONS

Norton AFB, CA

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

Maj Gen Edward W. Anderson, #1955

Brig Gen John S. Mills, #1959

Maj Gen B. I. Funk, #1961

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

The Air Corps had completed most of its plans for constructing the seven new depots before the Japanese attacked the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941, and the United States entered World War II. These plans called for the new depots to be constructed at Ogden, Utah; Mobile, Alabama; Rome, New York; Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Wellston (later Warner Robins), Georgia; San Bernardino, California; and Spokane, Washington.

In June 1941, two teams of Air Corps officers examined a number of areas in southern California to select a site for one of the depots that had been authorized by the Wilcox-Wilson bill. Five months later, on November 10, 1941, the War Department announced that the new Air Corps maintenance and supply depot would be constructed on a 1,500-acre site at San Bernardino. The War Department took its first steps to activate the depot near the end of January 1942 when it directed Colonel Lucas V. Beau, Jr., to proceed to San Bernardino to assume command of the new depot. When Colonel Beau and his staff arrived at San Bernardino and inspected the site of the new depot, they found that the area consisted of farmland dotted with ranch houses and other small structures. Only one building, a hangar which had been occupied by the Morrow Aircraft Corporation, was usable for Air Corps purposes. The War Department officially activated the depot at San Bernardino in early March 1942.

The chain of events that eventually led to the closing of the three air materiel areas began in the middle of August 1963 when Secretary McNamara asked the Secretaries of the Army and Air Force for valid figures on how much it cost to support the aircraft that were assigned to each service. At the time, the Army was increasing its aircraft inventories, while the Air Force was reducing its inventories because it was replacing some of its aircraft with missiles-in Fiscal Year 1961, the Air Force had 2,500 strategic bombers and tankers and about 100 strategic missiles; in Fiscal Year 1966, it had 1,200 bombers and 1,500 missiles. Headquarters AFLC submitted its plan to Headquarters USAF on September 24, 1964. This plan listed the air materiel areas in order of their retention value to AFLC, based on their facilities and the nature of their work loads. Mobile, Middletown, and San Bernardino received the lowest ratings. At the same time, Headquarters AFLC advised Air Force headquarters that it was opposed to the proposed consolidation because it would have a serious impact on the command's personnel skills, since experience had shown that people did not readily transfer with their functions."

The plan reported that the bulk of San Bernardino's system and item management responsibilities and personnel would be transferred to the Ogden Air Materiel Area. It stated that San Bernardino would transfer 4,012 personnel authorizations to other AFLC organizations

When it became evident that only a relatively small percentage of the civilian personnel at Middletown, Mobile, and San Bernardino would transfer with their positions, Headquarters AFLC permitted the command's five remaining air materiel areas to hire additional personnel before they actually received the required manpower authorizations. Headquarters AFLC also permitted the five air materiel areas to initiate extensive training programs for many of their personnel.

The San Bernardino was inactivated much earlier than the July 1969 date specified by Secretary McNamara in November 1964. All of San Bernardino's management responsibilities and repair activities were transferred to other AFLC organizations by January 1966, and all of its stocks were removed by June 1966. As a result, the San Bernardino Air Materiel Area was inactivated on July 1, 1966, and Norton Air Force Base was transferred to the Military Airlift Command on the same day.

USAF Unit Histories
Created: 27 Feb 2023
Updated:

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