

VOLK FIELD COMBAT READINESS TRAINING CENTER



MISSION

Volk Field is one of only four Air National Guard Combat Readiness Training Centers in the nation, and the only one that does not share its airfield with a civilian airport. In addition to its primary mission it is also an Aerial Port of Embarkation.

Training Center Mission is to provide a year round integrated training environment (airspace, facilities, equipment) for units to enhance their combat capabilities and readiness. The CRTC allows training to be accomplished that isn't possible at the unit's home station. Facilities approximate a Forward Operating Location (FOL) and provide a realistic setting for the conduct of unit Operational Readiness Exercises and Inspections (ORE, ORI). Additionally, the CRTC oversees the operations and scheduling of the Hardwood Air-to-Ground Gunnery Range and over 11,000 square miles of special use military training airspace.

We support our mission objectives by: Enabling users to accomplish training which cannot be effectively accomplished or is not available at their home station.

Establishing a training arena that approximates a deployed combat forward operating location.

Providing a realistic setting for deployed Operational Readiness Exercises and Inspections (ORE, ORI).

Providing other site-specific, unique training missions as tasked by the National Guard Bureau.

Providing facilities and services to non-Air National Guard agencies on a non-interference, cost reimbursable basis.

The Commander of the CRTC reports directly to the Deputy Adjutant General for Air in the State Headquarters. The CRTC commander's primary staff consists of the Director of Operations,

Director of Logistics, Director of Engineering, Environmental Manager, Chief Enlisted Manager, and First Sergeant. The CRTC employs approximately 120 military and 85 civilian personnel.

Volk Field has an aggressive Mid-air Collision Avoidance program wherein general aviation pilots are informed of military flying activities. In addition to press releases that are sent out from Volk Field, a flyer is sent out, in cooperation with the Federal Aviation Administration's Milwaukee, Chicago, and Oklahoma City offices, informing them of the exercise and the airspace that is involved.

To further concentrate air safety efforts, there are military radar units, plus AWACS (Airborne Warning And Control Systems) which constitute the Tactical Air Control System. The Volk Field Air Traffic Control personnel are augmented for the exercise by Air Traffic Control and Combat Communications personnel from other units, both active and reserve forces, through the Sentry Vigilance program. In addition, the Tactical Air Control units participating in the exercise control the aircraft after they depart the Air Traffic Control zone in the general zone in the general exercise area. These units are linked to the Exercise Direction Headquarters at Volk Field. All aircraft out of Volk Field are under military Air Traffic Control.

LINEAGE

Volk Field Combat Readiness Training Center

STATIONS

Volk Field, Camp Douglas, WI

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

The origin of Volk Field can be traced back to 1888 when the State Adjutant General, General Chandler Chapman, purchased a site for a rifle range and offered it to the state for training. In

1889, the State Legislature authorized the purchase of 600 acres for a permanent camp and rifle range for the Wisconsin National Guard. By 1903, it had expanded to over 800 acres and became a model training camp that was often visited by officials from other states. At the outbreak of World War I, the 32nd "Red Arrow" Division was expanded to 16,000 men and formed into a second brigade at the site. The site was named Camp Williams in 1927 in honor of Lieutenant Colonel Charles R. Williams who was the Chief Quartermaster of the post from 1917 until his death in 1926.

In 1936 construction of the airfield began, it was August 1940 before the first hard surface runway was opened. During World War II, the airfield was outfitted with lights and numerous administrative and support facilities. The Department of Defense reorganization in 1947 formed the Wisconsin Army and Air National Guard (ARNG, ANG). At this time the 32nd Division moved its training to Fort McCoy and the Wisconsin ANG began annual training at Camp Williams. The next year, the Division began training at Camp McCoy, Sparta, Wisconsin, and the Wisconsin Air Guard began its regular two week training periods at Camp Williams. A more complete schedule started in 1949, with the 126th Fighter Squadron from Milwaukee. The 176th Fighter Squadron of Madison, Wisconsin, trained at Camp Williams from July 16 to July 30, and the 128th Fighter Squadron from Milwaukee followed the next two weeks, both flying P-51 Mustangs. Also in that summer was the 179th Fighter Squadron from Duluth, Minnesota. One of the features of the flying training that summer was air-to-air gunnery practice. An area over Lake Michigan was designated as the range. As the number of flying units increased each summer, and because of the later development of jets with new weapons, the range has become even more important. Another first occurred in 1950 when Guard units from other states arrived for two week flying training. One of the units was the 66th Group of two B-26 bomber squadrons from Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin. The rest of the units flew P-51. They were the 82nd Fighter Wing from Colorado, Wyoming, and North and South Dakota, and the 71st Fighter Wing from Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota and Missouri.

In the reorganization of the Air National Guard in 1953 following the Korean Conflict, the Air Division, National Guard Bureau, established one of the eight permanent training sites at Camp Williams. The new officer in charge was Lt Col Everette E. Roberts, a member of the Air National Guard at Truax Field in Madison. Lt Col Roberts became Training Site Officer in March of 1953, and was promoted to Colonel on September 1 of the same year. The United States government also leased most of the field from the State of Wisconsin. The Air National Guard received 1,440 acres in 1954, and an additional 876 acres in 1958.

Another project started in 1954 was an air-to-ground gunnery range for tactical fighter aircraft to drop practice bombs and fire the fifty caliber machine guns and rockets. Under the direction of Maj Gen Ralph Olson, the Adjutant General, an investigation was begun for a suitable area. The area selected was in the north end of Juneau County in the Townships of Finley and Armenia. The range was two miles wide and six miles long and included 7,680 acres. The Federal government also began an expanded program of construction and rehabilitation of buildings and facilities at Camp Williams in 1954. This included another extension of the main

runway (09-27). It was resurfaced and lengthened to 8,000 feet plus 1,000 foot stabilized grass overruns at each end.

In 1962, another 1,000 feet of hardened runway was completed on the east which made it second only in Wisconsin to the 9,200 foot runway at Billy Mitchell Field in Milwaukee. Facilities constructed included an administration building, a dispensary, a base flag pole, two small maintenance shops, a photo laboratory, a wind direction indicator, and a 5,000 foot security fence. The construction at Camp Williams continued in 1956, with a jet fuel storage facility, forty-three airman dorms, an auto maintenance shop, four storage sheds, an open mess for airmen, four squadron operations buildings, a pump station, and a forward air control radio beacon.

During the 1960s Volk Field was activated as a Dispersed Operating Base for the Active Duty Air Defense Mission from Duluth, Minnesota with over 200 personnel assigned to the base.

The seventies were highlighted with an increasing use of Volk Field for annual training, particularly during the summer months. Units from throughout the United States continued to deploy to the base with entire flying wings and groups. Primary users were the Midwestern states. The F-100 was the main Guard aircraft in this era, but OA-37's, O-2's and later, F-4's were also commonplace. Col Killian Morkin succeeded Col Mattes in 1973 and concentrated on adapting Volk Field to the changing needs of ANG units. Traditional summer camp activities emphasized flying, of course, but units were notorious for their parties and stunts.

Construction in the 1970s at the base and range continued with construction of the main range control tower and operations/maintenance facility at the Hardwood Range. Base construction included the sewage treatment lagoon, apron lighting, building 519 (Squadron Operations), buildings 331 329 (the Civil Engineering complex), barracks 310, 311 and 313, and runway resurfacing. A new arresting barrier, the BAK-12, instrument landing system (ILS) and a visual approach system indicator were installed, as well as a drop zone north of the main runway.

In 1976, a Department of Defense ceiling existed for air technician positions nationwide. The flying units were clamoring for more people and the National Guard Bureau (NGB) could not satisfy their requests. By changing the training sites to civilian contract, almost 200 positions could be transferred to the flying units so the NGB considered a program to replace the air technician detachment at Volk Field with civilian contract employees. This program was supposed to save money and still provide the same level of support to the deploying units. During the next two years, Col Morkin and the other three field training site (FTS) commanders met frequently to present a united front in evaluating this proposal. The FTS commanders pointed toward a potentially serious deterioration in support and safety that could result from relinquishing military control. As an alternate proposal, the site commanders and NGB staff decided to investigate the possibility of replacing the air technician detachments with active duty or Active Guard and Reserve (AGR) personnel. A cost comparison of active duty versus civilian contract employees proved that the active duty force would be less costly. This also solved the problem of relinquishing control that would result from contracting and yet made

available nearly 200 air technician positions for reassignment to the flying units. It was obvious to the four training site commanders that some program was going to be pushed through, and theirs represented a far better solution than did contracting. The commanders then turned their efforts to making sure the transition would be as orderly as possible and that the training sites would continue to provide outstanding service to the visiting units. The final transition from Technician to AGR proved to be an orderly one and today's outstanding AGR staff at Volk Field Combat Readiness Training Center (CRTC) is indeed a tribute to the ultimate success of the program.

In the 1980s Volk Field began year-round operations for training the Wisconsin ANG as well as units from all other services and some foreign countries. Joint tactical training began in 1983 when the Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs hosted the Sentry Independence Composite Force Training exercises. New equipment and missions such as the Air Combat Maneuvering and Instrumentation System and Air Base Operability program were added by the end of the decade. Unit exercises and deployments assumed a different theme; the summer camps were replaced with Checkered Flag deployments to forward operating locations (FOL's) or collocated operating bases (COB's), and training at the FTS was expected to replicate that type of training. Units were inspected with increasing regularity and standards were tightened. Operational readiness exercises and inspections (ORE's/ ORI's) were now conducted at Volk Field by 9th and 12th Air Force, as well as Headquarters Tactical Air Command. Although the ORI's were always strictly business, when the inspection was over

The 1980's culminated the greatest period of expansion and use in the history of Volk Field. In 1980, Col Walton C. Nichols replaced Col Morkin as Commander and the increasing use of Volk Field continued from rather humble beginnings in fiscal year 1980, when 36 units deployed to Volk with 62,632 personnel (mandays), to the hectic fiscal year 1990, when 112 units and 226,733 mandays of training were recorded for a 350 percent increase in utilization in one decade.

Changes in facilities started in 1981 to meet these demands. Additional dormitory renovation was initiated to allow units an expanded training year. Available heated quarters in 1980 totaled 148 billets. In a brief four year period from 1981-1985, the number of useable, year-round billets had increased to the 1,000 level. Major exercises, such as Sentry Independence, and deployments were now possible in other than summer months.

Major runway repair and taxiway repair were completed in 1983, with replacement of taxiway 1 and 1,000 feet of runway 09-27. A new fire station, service club/dining facility, and base headquarters were completed in 1984.

Col Robert E. Woodward succeeded Col Nichols in 1984 and renovation to all flight line facilities, including the Command Post, Squadron Operations and Maintenance Control continued during his tenure. The Main Control Tower and Operations Building at Hardwood Range were renovated in 1985. All support facilities in the exercise, or "play" area near the flight line had been camouflaged or painted in a toned down theme. Deployed units used

camouflaged netting, sandbags, and constructed intricate defense systems with bunkers and concertina wire to protect themselves. Aircraft dispersal and related combat operations were exercised.

In 1985, year-round training became a reality. The 4th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) and Marine Air Group 14, deployed in January to the Volk Field/Fort McCoy complex for two months of intensive winter training. The exercise, Alpine Warrior, has become an annual event and has expanded to include 4,000 to 5,000 personnel with 40-60 aircraft. The deployed Marines provide a unique shift in training at Volk Field and provide a mutually beneficial training opportunity for local ANG pilots in developing and practicing interservice close air support (CAS) and dissimilar air combat training (DACT) tactics.

In 1988, Col Robert D. Green replaced Col Woodward and the additional missions of Air Combat Maneuvering and Instrumentation (ACMI) and Air Base Operability (ABO) were added. The two distinct, but mutually supportive missions allow the aircrews and ground support elements of a unit to truly maximize their training. The no drop bomb scoring (NDBS) feature of the ACMI will allow on-base attacks at Volk, substantially enhancing the realism of training during ABO exercises "Sentry Endurance" or operational readiness inspections.

Construction continued throughout the 1986-1990 period with maintenance and repair projects in dormitory/quarters upgrade, renovation of the main dining hall, replacement of airfield lighting systems, renovation of the main air traffic control tower and vehicle maintenance facility.

On June 13, 1990 the site was designated the "ANG Combat Readiness Training Center" with authorizations for seven officers and 55 enlisted personnel. Volk Field played an important role during Desert Shield/Storm as an Aerial Port of Embarkation (APOE) supporting Army deployments to the Gulf War. It supported 137 military and civilian aircraft movements with aircraft types including C-5, C-141, B-747, DC-10, L-1011 and DC-8. This resulted in the movement of 15,471 passengers, 3,866 tons of cargo, and the upload of 2,410,795 pounds of fuel. Several Air Force tests were conducted at Volk Field during this period to include the Airfield Mobile Lighting System and the Runway Marker System, which were deployed in the war. A five-year Department of Defense test of Joint Camouflage, Concealment and Deception was hosted by the CRTC and completed in 1995.

Modernization of Volk Field's facilities and equipment continues. An \$8 million ramp project was completed in 1993 and a new Radar Approach Control and Base Operations facility was opened in 1995. Other recently completed projects include a fire training area, hot pit refueling system, upgraded dormitories, a motor vehicle maintenance garage and the 128 Air Control Squadron Headquarters. Volk Field's runway and airport lighting were completely replaced in 1998 and a new 232 bed dormitory with an attached state-of-the art conference center was completed in 2002. A new Air Traffic Control tower was completed in 2003, followed by a new Command Post in 2004 and a new Main Gate in 2005. A new using unit Squadron Operations

facility followed in 2006 and several other facility construction and improvement projects are on the books.

The log cabin, or officers' club, was the focal point for many of the social activities of the day, a patriotic friend of the military had opened a nearby restaurant that soon gained equal fame. Target Bluff Supper Club was then and continues today to be a focal point for unit activities. Located on Highway 12, just a few blocks from the Volk Field main gate, "Target" became a favorite place for military visitors. Through years of association with the base, it has become an off-duty command post or military club. In the past, tables were pulled together, maps were spread out, and today's missions were debriefed and tomorrow's were planned.

The base received its current name replacing Camp Williams after 1st Lt Jerome A. Volk, a former Wisconsin Air National Guard pilot who was killed in the Korean War. 1st Lt Volk joined the 126th Fighter Squadron in Milwaukee on January 12, 1949. On February 28, 1951, he was called to active duty with his squadron to serve with the U.S. Air Force. He was then assigned to duty in Korea, where he was killed on November 7, 1951, while flying a mission in an F-80. On June 23, 1956, during the annual Governor's Day observances at Camp Williams, the National Guard rededicated the part of the facility that is used by the Air National Guard as Volk Field. In 1957, by Chapter 114, the Wisconsin Legislature provided, "...that portion of Camp Williams under lease to the Federal government for the use of the Air National Guard shall, as long as so held, be known as Volk Field in memory of 1st Lt Jerome A. Volk, the first Wisconsin Air National Guard pilot killed in combat in the Korean Conflict."

USAF Unit Histories
Created: 27 Feb 2023
Updated:

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