

HISTORY OF KELLY AIR FORCE BASE, TEXAS

As the first military air base in Texas and one of the first in the United States, Kelly Air Force Base has a colorful history.

Kelly AFB was named in July 1917 in honor of 2d Lt George E. M. Kelly, the first military pilot to lose his life in an aircraft accident. Lt Kelly was killed May 10, 1911 when a brace on his Curtiss biplane collapsed while making a landing at Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

During the first 26 years of operation, Kelly was known principally for its pilot training activities. Since 1943, however, it has become known as an aircraft and engine logistical support center.

From early 1917 until the end of World War I, Kelly grew from a mesquite patch to the largest flying field in the world. Kelly served as a reception and testing center for recruits, and its training department conducted training, for pilots, ground officers, and enlisted mechanics. Approximately 250,000 men were given trade tests and organized into aero squadrons. The fact that both primary pilot training (the first actual flying after ground school) and instructor flying training were conducted brought all fliers trained during World War I to Kelly AFB. The ground school for Adjutants, and Supply and Engineering Officers was the first of its type and aptly termed "Father of Ground Schools." The largest and most active of the training schools was for enlisted men. It is estimated that approximately 2,000 airplanes and motor mechanics and chauffeurs were training monthly in this school during the war. After the war, Kelly alumni carried the ideas and systems developed at Kelly to other flying fields throughout the country.

During the approximate 20-year period between the World Wars, Kelly AFB became famous as a pilot training center. During this time, Kelly served as a graduate school for pilots (Air Service Advanced Flying School). Advanced-type pursuit, bombardment, observation, and attack training were consolidated at Kelly. From 7 July 1922 through 30 December 1940, 3,945 pilots were graduated, making Kelly the Alma Mater of most of the fliers trained prior to World War II.

Growing up at Kelly somewhat in the shadow of the colorful flying school was an aviation supply and maintenance depot. Aviation supply activities had been located at Kelly Field in September 1917. Facilities for repairing aircraft (the Aviation Repair Depot) had been moved to Kelly from Dallas, Texas, in March 1921 and consolidated with the supply depot to form the San Antonio Air Intermediate Depot.

When both flying and depot activities began expanding at the beginning of World War II, it became necessary to move one of these operations. Since training facilities were the easier to move, the supply and maintenance

depot took over the field in 1943. Thereafter, instead of training pilots, Kelly became a huge industrial-type establishment that concentrated on repairing airplanes, engines, and accessories, and shipping equipment to the Air Force fighting men.

During World War II, Kelly shops repaired and modified thousands of airplanes of all types, from training craft to transports, and its engine reconditioning plant turned out an average of 1,400 aircraft engines a month. Through its huge warehouses moved mountainous tons of supplies for the fighting squadrons of an air arm scattered over the world, and its depot training units taught many thousands of recruits how to take care of aircraft in the field.

Following close on the heels of World War II, Kelly AFB won nationwide attention as the depot that worked around-the-clock to overhaul engines for the C-54 aircraft that supplied the western section of Berlin, Germany, during the Russian Blockade from mid-1948 until mid-1949.

During the police action in Korea, 1950-1953, Kelly again worked around-the-clock to remove aircraft from storage and ready them for combat.

Since 1949, Kelly has steadily become more important as the home of Headquarters San Antonio Air Materiel Area--the organization that evolved from the former supply and maintenance depot. Kelly's principal responsibilities deal with world-wide logistical support of F-102, F-106, B-58, and B-70 weapon systems, approximately half of the engine types utilized by the Air Force, and over 150,000 separate commodities. Kelly also has huge overhaul facilities equipped to repair and modify high performance aircraft, such as B-52 Stratofortress bombers and F-102 all-weather interceptors. Supply inventory is valued at \$1.3 billion dollars, and approximately 20,000 items are processed through its shipping and receiving operation daily. Procurement administers 5½ billion dollars worth of prime contracts through representatives at contractors plants, and annually buys about two-hundred million dollars worth of airframe components, aircraft engine parts and accessories, and other equipment. SAAMA also contracts for the overhaul and modification of these materials.

The increasing demands imposed upon the San Antonio Air Materiel has brought about an expansion of the physical facilities of Kelly AFB. During the 1952-1956 period, several major construction projects were completed. The most important of these were a sixteen and one-half million dollar steel hangar and shops complex, a 11,550 foot heavy runway, and two modern warehouses. In addition, a new Administration Building and other facilities were constructed for Headquarters USAF Security Services which also is located on Kelly AFB.

To perform its multitudinous duties, Headquarters San Antonio Air Materiel has an average of 21,000 civilians and 1,000 military personnel. These personnel together with 4,000 military and 900 civilian tenants, give Kelly AFB an average population of approximately 27,000. The annual payroll

(military and civilian) is one-hundred thirty-one million dollars.

Kelly AFB lies partially within the southwest geographic limits of the city of San Antonio, Texas. It consists of 3,937.45 acres including Kelly Homes, and encompasses the old flying school area, the former Duncan Field, and Camp Normoyle Ordnance Depot. A Kelly Annex located adjacent to Fort Sam Houston, Texas, and officially designated the San Antonio Air Force Station, consists of an additional 245.4 acres.

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