Military Corner

United States Navy

Brookley Air Force Base

Brookley Air Force Base had its aeronautical beginnings with Mobile's first municipal airport, the original Bates Field. However, the site itself had been occupied from the time of Mobile's founding, starting with the home of Mobile's founding father, Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne, in the early 18th century.

In 1938, the Army Air Corps took over the then 1,000-acre Bates Field site and established the Brookley Army Air Field. The military was attracted to the site because of the area's generally good flying weather and the bay-front location. However, later that year, Tampa was also chosen for a military flying installation of its own, which would be named MacDill Field, home of present-day MacDill Air Force Base.

During World War II, Brookley Army Air Field became the major Army Air Forces supply base for the Air Material Command in the southeastern United States and the Caribbean. Many air depot personnel, logisticians, mechanics, and other support personnel were trained at Brookley during the war. Both Air Materiel and Technical Services Command organized mobile Depot Groups at Brookley, then once trained were deployed around the world as Air Depot Groups, Depot Repair Squadrons, Quartermaster Squadrons, Ordnance Maintenance, Military Police, and many other units whose mission was to support the front-line combat units. Air Transport Command operated large numbers of cargo and passenger aircraft from the base as part of its Domestic Wing.

Following World War II and the creation of an independent U.S. Air Force, the installation became Brookley Air Force Base. In 1947, with the closure of Morrison Field, FL, the C-74 Globemaster project was moved to Brookley. At the time, it was the largest military transport aircraft in the world, developed by Douglas Aircraft after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. The long distances across the Atlantic, and especially the Pacific Ocean to the combat areas indicated a need for a transoceanic heavy-lift military transport aircraft.

On 19 November 1964, the Department of Defense announced a progressive reduction in employment and the eventual closure of Brookley Air Force Base.The costs of the escalation of the Vietnam War was cited as the primary reason for the closure. Robert McNamara, the Secretary of Defense, was unpopular both with Congress and with the public. Military bases were sources of employment and federal dollars for states and local communities, which allowed them to handle the cost of them and sales to military people stationed at the base. The reserve 908th TAG was moved to Maxwell AFB, Alabama in April. The incoming Nixon Administration in 1969 confirmed the closure of Brookley as a way to save money because of the Vietnam War, and when it finally closed in June 1969, Brookley AFB represented the largest base closure in U.S. history up to that time, eliminating 10% of local jobs for the Mobile workforce, which provided an annual payroll of $95 million to the local economy. *[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brookley_Air_Force_Base]*