



THE PATRIOT



439TH TACTICAL AIRLIFT WING

WESTOVER AIR FORCE BASE, MASS.

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The Westover Story: 1940 - 1980

Editor's Note: In special commemoration of Westover's 40 years of military service, this edition of The Patriot is devoted to a review of the base's proud history and accomplishments.

By SSgt. John Wallace Spencer

The concept for Westover was born in 1926 during the golden era of the roaring twenties. Americans had been enjoying seven years of peace following World War I, the nation was prospering and the future looked bright.

Conditions were very different throughout much of war-shattered Europe, for intense bombing had completely destroyed the industrial and community lives of many cities, towns and villages.

The plight of Europe caused unrest and the subsequent rise of dangerous dictators. Joseph Stalin's Communist party was in control of Russia, and Adolph Hitler had become the leader of the "National Socialist German Workers' Party."

In the meantime, Benito Mussolini founded the Italian "Fascist Party" and through fiery speeches led a coup d'etat on Rome which ultimately led to his reign as total dictator. By the mid-1920s the world was unequally divided into the "have" and the "have-not" nations.

Those were the internationally unstable conditions that existed when a young Polish immigrant and first-term Chicopee alderman, Anthony J. Stonina, was sold on the idea that the "flat tobacco plains" area within his community would make an ideal location for an airport. He attempted to interest other local politicians in the con-

cept but was informed that an airfield would be too extravagant for the small, industrial city. Nevertheless, Stonina did not dismiss the intriguing airport concept.

In the fall of 1929, three years into Stonina's political career, the prosperous roaring twenties abruptly ended as the United States suffered the severest business crash in history. The nation sank steadily into an acute depression.

At this point, Stonina, having successfully served two terms as alderman, won the Chicopee mayoral election. As leader, his primary responsibility was

to save the small Western Massachusetts city from sliding into bankruptcy. During the 1930s, Mayor Stonina guided Chicopee through a crucial economic period and its inevitable destiny as host city for one of the nation's most important military airfields.

Fear of Global War

To fully understand the fascinating story of Westover's pre-history and eventual construction, a review of the sequence of international, military, political and economic events of the period is essential. The international economic depression of the 1930s
(continued)



Westover's ARC LIGHT crews, including those from this KC-135, were warmly greeted on their return from Vietnam action.

found any hope of European political stability shattered. In the Far East, economic conditions seriously hampered Japan's principal export industry, causing severe unemployment. Japanese military leaders took advantage of the chaotic times and seized the Chinese Province of Manchuria. China had been involved in a sixteen year civil war between the Nationalist army and Communist rebel forces.

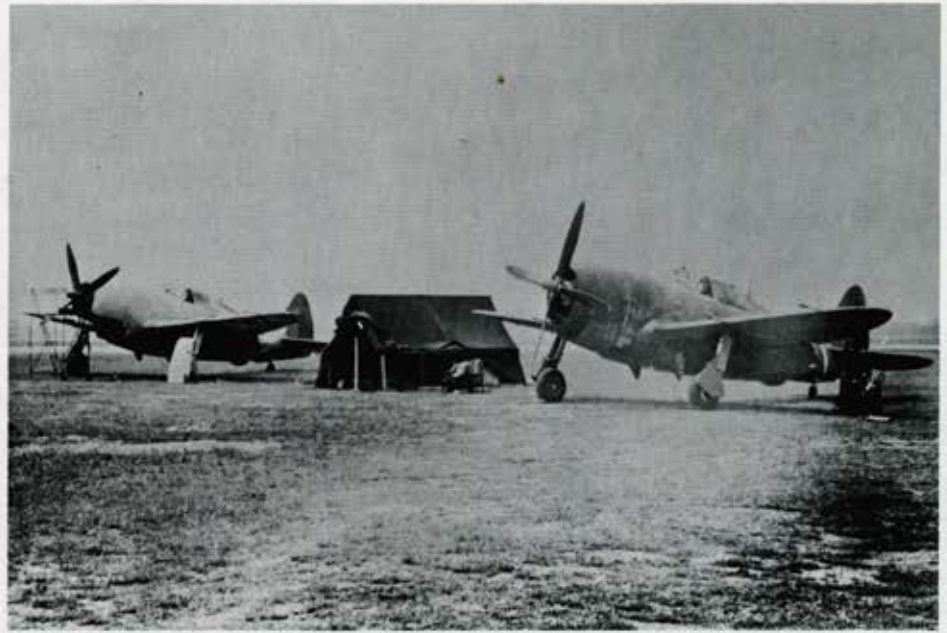
President Roosevelt concentrated all of his energies on ending America's economic recovery program being interrupted by the possibility of a global war involving the United States.

By 1935, Germany had built an unauthorized armed force of six hundred thousand trained combat troops, and within a year the Spanish Civil War erupted. In March 1936, Nazi troops marched into demilitarized districts west of the Rhine River bringing German soldiers uncomfortably close to the French border. Japan and China were fully involved in an undeclared war by mid-1937. Most Americans, in sympathy with the Chinese, supported a twenty five million dollar credit loan, and a "moral embargo" on exporting aircraft to Japan.

The succession of global military actions were an unmistakable, perilous prophecy of a future world war. In October 1937, President Roosevelt proposed aggressive nations be "quarantined" by means of economic boycotts. Relations between the United States and the Axis powers grew increasingly tense.

Convinced that Axis military victories would ultimately endanger democracy everywhere, President Roosevelt supported a policy to prepare the United States for defense. In spite of Congressional opposition, he fought to strengthen the Army, Navy, and Air Corps, and was successful in getting approval for the "Naval Expansion Bill," to rebuild the U.S. Navy into a two-ocean military force.

In the fall of 1935, the "Wilcox Act," (Army Air Base Bill, Number 263), was introduced to Congress calling for construction of several military airfields throughout the United States, including one in the northeast. Although the bill was quickly approved, Congress did not appropriate the necessary funds to finance the project. In the meantime, the Air Corps was organized into a combat force composed



Base maintenance and supply operations were tent-atively located next to Westover's P-47 aircraft.

of fighting units of the air arm of the United States Army. A vast program to build planes, train pilots, and improve equipment was launched. A revolutionary combat plane, the B-17 "Flying Fortress," was being flight tested.

In the fall of 1938, General Henry (Hap) Arnold, was appointed to fill the Chief of the Air Corps position left vacant by the accidental death of General Arnold's long time, personal friend, General Oscar Westover. One of General Arnold's first official acts was to recommend to the War Department that a board of officers be appointed to select sites for the previously approved Army airfields. When Chicopee's fourth term Mayor Stonina learned about the government's air base project in November 1938, he remembered his mid-1920s plan to convert the "tobacco flats" of Chicopee Falls into an airfield. Mayor Stonina wired the Secretary of War suggesting his community be seriously considered for the proposed northeast air facility. But due to lack of approved financing, the War Department project continued to progress slowly.

With Europe teetering on the brink of all-out war, the United States Congress finally approved appropriations for construction of the proposed Army Air Base in New England.

Tobacco Fields Slated

In July 1939, a small contingent of officers arrived in the Connecticut Valley on an inspection tour of potential northeast airfield sites. They visited

Bowles Airport, in nearby Agawam, and made their first surveillance of the land known as "flat plains" in Chicopee Falls and Ludlow.

In Europe, the fears of Britain and France that Poland was to be Hitler's next conquest, came to pass on September 1, 1939. Nazi forces, (Wehrmacht), smashed into poorly equipped Poland in a fierce blitzkrieg (lightning war). Sixteen hundred aircraft of the German Luftwaffe, highly motorized armored units of the Panzer division, and a million trained combat troops easily cut through the inferior Polish defenses. England and France demanded Germany's immediate withdrawal, but Hitler refused. Even though Britain and France were ill prepared to provide direct military assistance to the Poles, on September 3, 1939, the two nations declared war against Germany. Seven days later, Canada followed suit but the U.S.A. remained neutral. The second European war of the Twentieth century was underway.

Shocked and angered by Germany's attack on his homeland, Mayor Stonina rushed to Washington D.C. to con-

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vince General Arnold that Chicopee would be the ideal location for the proposed northeast military airfield. Fifteen days later, (September 15, 1939), the Secretary of War announced Mayor Stonina's city had been selected to "become an important link in the chain of east coast defense" by being the site for the Northeast Army Air Base.

The congressional plan called for construction of a "major repair and overhaul base for the nation's air force in the event of war, and its principal job also would be to ward off enemy attack and serve as a base for pilot training." Within a short time, \$2,070,918 was allocated for the purchase of a seven and one half mile square plot of "tobacco land" within the boundaries of Chicopee, Mass.

During 1940, a dramatic series of rapid moves and counter-moves shaped world destiny. Winston Churchill became Prime Minister of Great Britain; Japan intensified its campaign of conquest in Asia, employing measures to isolate China.

On Army Day, April 6, 1940, a contingent of Air Corps officers, state and city dignitaries and thousands of private citizens assembled on the site of the Northeast Air Base for official groundbreaking and dedication ceremonies. In keeping with Air Corps tradition of naming Army airfields in honor of departed heroes, the Chicopee military facility was named Westover Field in memory of Major General Oscar Westover.



Major General Oscar Westover

Westover had been chief of the Army's Balloon and Airship Division and later took command of Langley Field. He was promoted to the rank of General at the age of 49, and became the assistant chief of the U.S. Army's air activities. Within four years, upon formation of the U.S. Army Air Corps, he assumed a new post of Chief of Staff of the Air Corps, the first man to do so.

In 1938, General Westover took off on a routine flight in his Northrop attack plane, and was killed when it crashed in a California field.

Vital in World War II

During the early 1940s, Westover became a hub of military activities, serving as a training center for fighter pilots and anti-submarine crews. The airfield also played a major role during World War II as a staging area and combat training center for B-17, B-24 and B-26 bomber crews. Thousands of combat missions in both theaters of operations were conducted by Westover assembled crews.

With the conclusion of the Second World War in September 1945, the Chicopee installation was converted into a busy mustering-out center for Army Air Corps personnel. In February 1946, Westover Field was taken over by the Eastern Headquarters of the Air Transport Command, and quickly grew into military prominence as one of the largest domestic and transatlantic passenger-freight aerial ports on the eastern seaboard.

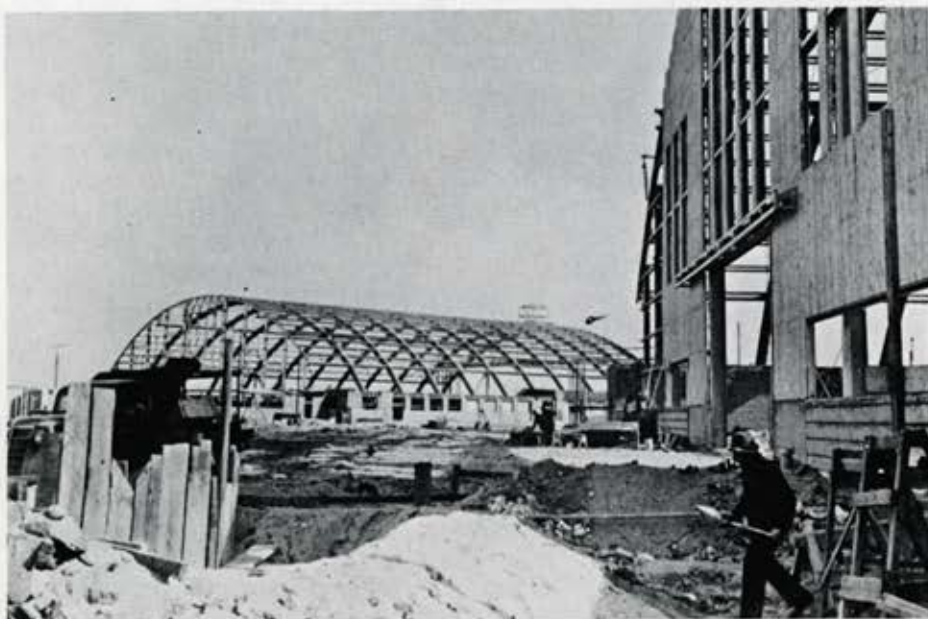
The Chicopee airfield's designation was officially changed to "Westover Air Force Base" in January 1948 as a result of the National Security Act which established the United States Air Force as a separate military service branch. Westover's mission continually expanded and soon air transport service was being provided to Greenland, Labrador, Newfoundland and other northern military installations.

Vital During the Berlin Airlift

The first major peacetime test came for Westover in June 1948 when the Soviet Union attempted to force the Western Powers out of occupied West Berlin by imposing a ground blockade on all rail, highway and water traffic through Russian-controlled East Germany. The Western Massachusetts air base was swiftly transformed into a major staging area under "Operation Vittles" the project name assigned to the Berlin Airlift emergency plan. For 327 days, the Chicopee air installation served as a major link, as thousands of aircraft took off from Westover's runways loaded with food, coal, petroleum and other supplies for the more than two million people of West Berlin.

The dust had hardly settled from the eleven months European blockade airlift when the Korean conflict erupted in June 1950. Westover became a temporary center for the processing of recalled Air Force Reservists to active

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Construction along Hangar Road was well under way by 1940.



Westover served as a staging area for Army troops prior to deployment.

duty. Within a month, Westover's aircraft and crews were dispatched to the forefront of action, providing airlift operations for the American military forces fighting in Korea. Throughout the bitter, three-year "police action," Westover's aircraft were directly credited with transporting thousands of combat casualties to the Westover Military Hospital for treatment or processing to other hospitals throughout the United States.

Becomes a SAC Base

A new era for Westover began on April 1, 1955 when the Strategic Air Command assumed control of the base. The first SAC organization at the base was the 4050th Air Refueling Wing, with its fleet of KC-97 propeller-driven inflight refueling tanker aircraft. Within two months, SAC's most renowned combat element, the Eighth Air Force, moved its headquarters from Carswell AFB, Texas to Westover. The Strategic Air Command's assemblage was completed on Sept. 4, 1956 with the transfer of Headquarters, 57th Air Division, one of the largest Air Force organizations of its type from the Fifteenth Air Force to the Eighth Air Force.

The same relocation order that moved the 57th from Fairchild AFB, Wash. to Westover AFB, Mass. also transferred the Division's subordinate, 99th Bombardment Wing, (Heavy), headquarters; 814th Air Base Group and other assigned units. Within four days of the 57th's arrival at Westover, the 99th Bombardment Wing's first B-52 Stratofortress touched down on

the base's newly completed 11,600 feet long, 300 feet wide, runway.

In February 1957, an Air Force spokesman revealed the Stonybrook Air Station, an independent military facility of the Air Force Logistics Command, existed within the confines of Westover Air Force Base. Top Secret construction took three years to properly prepare the installation for the safe handling and storage of nuclear weapons stockpile. For the protection of the citizens of New England, the awesome nuclear bombs were stored in reinforced underground concrete vaults under the security of a specially trained military guard unit.

Another Eighth Air Force highly classified facility, an underground command post, (the "Notch" — the "Site"), attained operational status in 1958 without official dedication ceremonies. Construction of the windowless, SAC combat operations center, began only two years earlier in the Mt. Holyoke Range located six miles east of Westover AFB in South Amherst.

The task of cutting into the solid rock of the mountain to carve out a four story underground facility, four hundred feet below the summit, was monumental. Nevertheless, the elaborate communications center was completed on schedule, becoming one of the several facilities constructed to augment and serve as a back-up to SAC's command post headquarters in Omaha, Neb.

The "Notch" was a major link in the Strategic Air Command's network of defense. In the event the Omaha center



Westover served as a confinement area for German Prisoners of War. Among other duties, they were used to plant thousands of pine trees in the Stonybrook area.

had been knocked out, within the Westover "Site" was the most modern electronic equipment specifically designed to take over guidance of SAC's far-flung forces. The heart of the system was an impressive computer which utilized most of the forty-seven-thousand square foot space of the "Notch."

During the early 1960s, the Eighth Air Force maintained a mixed contingent of bombers, tankers and fighters at Westover. In the mid-1960s, several B-52s and KC-97s from the Chicopee facility transferred to Pease AFB, N.H. The 4050th Air Refueling Wing was redesignated the 499th Air Refueling Wing and equipped with faster KC-135 jet Stratotankers. Another important event was the secretive moving of the nuclear weapons stockpile from the Stonybrook AF Station on Westover Air Base to another classified location. Since Westover's B-52s carried nuclear devices, Stonybrook was maintained as a restricted, temporary storage depot. In an unrelated action, all fighter units were transferred to other military facilities.

Vietnam Involvement

In April 1961, President John F. Kennedy committed the United States to a treaty of amity and economic relations with South Vietnam in their fight with the communist regime of Hanoi. By December, the first American combat troops were sent to Saigon for the purpose of operating two helicopter companies.

As America's commitment to the South Vietnamese government in-

creased throughout the following two years, the importance of the Eighth Air Force likewise grew as a viable war deterrent force. The 57th Air Division's three tactical groups had been honed into an efficient, combat-vigilant, air-strike-force, capable of deterring potential Communist aggression by means of conventional global bombing or rapid retaliatory nuclear destruction. In March 1963 the Eighth Air Force was given additional responsibility of controlling the nation's intercontinental ballistic missile facilities in Colorado, Wyoming, Kansas and Missouri.

The size and fortune of Westover AFB rapidly multiplied on the wings of its bombers and tankers. The Western Massachusetts installation had been developed into the largest SAC facility in the Eastern United States with more than 10,000 military, nearly 700 civilian personnel, and direct accountability for the well-being of more than 11,000 dependents. The base's annual payroll was running in excess of fifty-five million dollars.

On August 8, 1963, an inventory statement submitted to the House Appropriations Committee showed that the federal government's investment in Westover was nearly ninety-million dollars. Further, a five-year projection of planned spending and authorized improvements indicated the actual value of Westover Air Force Base would increase to nearly one hundred million dollars.

By November 1963, when President Kennedy was assassinated, the number of American military advisers stationed in South Vietnam had grown to more than 16,000. President Lyndon B. Johnson continued the military build-up although United States troops functioned strictly as a defense force.

In mid-1964, the situation drastically changed when two North Vietnamese torpedo boats attacked two U.S. Navy destroyers on patrol in the Gulf of Tonkin. Within hours, President Johnson ordered U.S. Air Force jet aircraft and personnel assigned to permanent duty in Southeast Asia. American air crews were directed to bomb enemy PT boat bases, marking the first offensive attack on North Vietnamese territory by United States forces.

Nonetheless, for the most part, military aggression by American military forces was held in check until early 1965 when Viet Cong guerrillas



B-52s on Westover's ramps — a common site in the 1960s.

invaded two U.S. Army encampments. In retaliation, President Johnson ordered continuous bombing raids carried out on enemy infiltration routes and military installations throughout much of North Vietnam.

In response to the need for heavy bombers to strike enemy targets in support of ground operations, on June 18, 1965 the Strategic Air Command deployed a fleet of giant B-52s to Southeast Asia.

Most of Westover's 99th Bombardment Wing's crews remained on alert status in Western Massachusetts while normal training operations were carried on throughout the United States. In the interim, Westover's 499th Air Refueling Wing was phased out, leaving the 99th Bombardment Wing with just one assigned squadron of KC-135s. Nevertheless, the three squadrons (346th and 348th Bombardment Squadrons and 99th Air Refueling Squadrons) 99th Bombardment Wing remained one of the SAC's largest elements.

By June 1966, U.S. Air Force bombing missions had officially been extended to include enemy targets near Hanoi and the neighboring port of Haiphong. The 99th Bombardment Wing's time of waiting ended in early September 1967 when the air action over Vietnam was accelerated. Under Project Arc Light, all 35 of Westover's B-52s as well as its entire squadron of KC-135s were deployed to Southeast Asia on a six

month temporary aerial combat duty assignment. In addition to aircrews, another 2500 Westover Air Force personnel were sent in support capacities of maintenance, transportation, security, supply, administration, etc.

For organizational purposes, Westover's personnel and B-52s were absorbed into the structure of the 4133rd Bombardment Wing (Provisional). The unique provisional organization was composed of personnel and aircraft on temporary overseas duty in Southeast Asia for a limited time and for a specific mission, namely the "Vietnamese War." The commander of the 99th Bomb Wing, Col. Robert E. Brofft, was appointed commander of the 4133rd which resulted in the 99th serving as the primary cadre unit of the joint aircrews and aircraft involved in B-52 missions over North Vietnam.

In six months, the 4133rd Bomb Wing flew 3,682 sorties out of Anderson AFB, Guam and U-Tapao, Royal Thai AFB, Thailand. Combat missions were carried out over Communist-controlled Viet Cong territory including major military targets. KC-135 tankers of the 99th Bomb Wing were actively engaged in refueling operations, flying 2,186 refueling sorties offloading more than twenty million pounds of jet fuel. The tankers were based at Kadena AB, Okinawa; Thailand and elsewhere throughout Southeast Asia.

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Return of the 99th

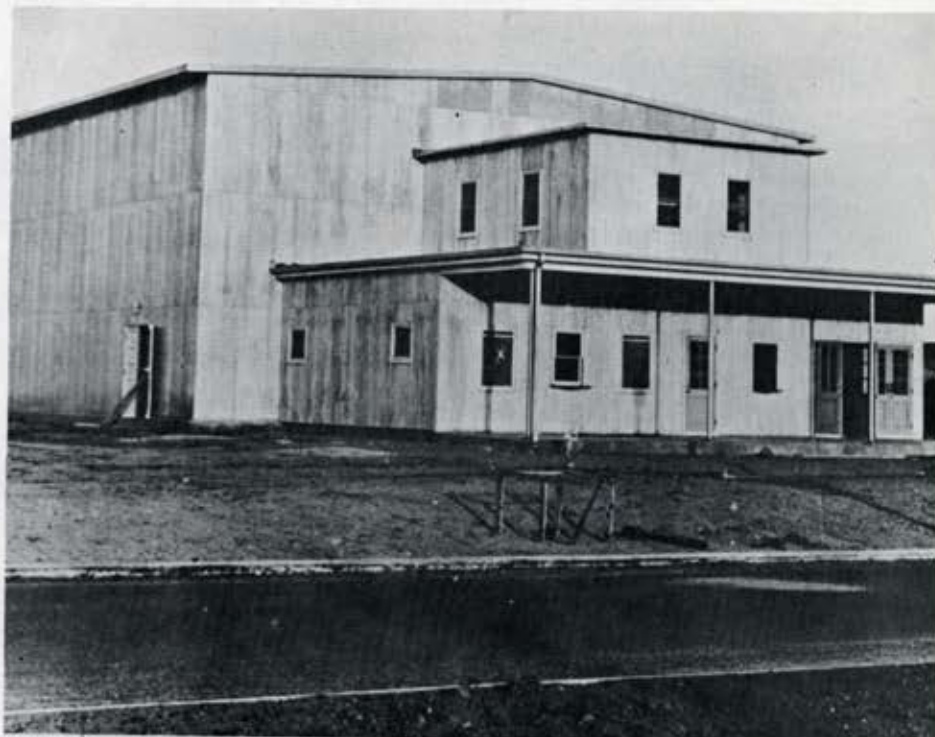
As an inducement to the North Vietnamese to enter into formal peace negotiations on March 31, 1968, President Johnson ordered a major cutback in all bombing missions. Within a couple of weeks, Westover's planes and personnel were back at their home base in Massachusetts. Thousands of spectators lined the streets as combat crews, honor guards, drill teams and parade units marched in celebration of the 99th Bomb Wing's safe return.

America's gesture of near total cessation of bombing of North Vietnam was effective, as peace talks between the Communist government and the United States got underway. Consistent with the fluctuating tempo of the Vietnamese war and shaky peace negotiations, on October 1, 1968, Westover's combat armada was back in Southeast Asia on another six months stint. Within 30 days of their overseas arrival, all bombing and other U.S. military aggression completely ceased.

Early in 1969, the government of South Vietnam and the Viet Cong joined in the Paris peace talks. Again, aircraft and personnel of the 99th Bombardment Wing returned to Westover, and as before, were exuberantly welcomed home with banquets, parades and on-base "open house" celebrations. Shortly after, the Pentagon announced deactivation of Westover's 57th Air Division headquarters, effective July 1, 1969.

For 13 years, with the exception of the 8th Air Force, the 57th Air Division headquarters had been the top operating organization at Westover. As a result of the division's deactivation, command of its top combat subordinate unit, the 99th Bombardment Wing was shifted to the 817th Air Division at Pease AFB, N.Y. Aircraft and personnel assigned to the 99th BW physically remained at Westover. In actuality, only 20 military personnel were transferred due to the 57th Air Division's phaseout.

On June 30, 1969, the Pentagon notified Massachusetts officials of the deactivation of 8th AF Headquarters. As the eventful year 1969 was drawing to a close, the personnel and aircraft of the 99th Bomb Wing were selected for a third temporary combat tour of duty in Southeast Asia. Within a matter of months, the familiar heavy jet bombers and tankers of Westover's 99th Bombardment Wing departed Western



Look familiar? This is the base theatre prior to additions and renovations.

Massachusetts for what turned out to be the last time.

Eighth Air Force Deactivated

On March 31, 1970, the 8th Air Force was deactivated at Westover AFB. Command of most base units, as well as the 817th AD, stationed at Pease AFB, was taken over by SAC's Second Air Force, headquartered at Barksdale AFB, La. Other Westover units were absorbed by SAC's Fifteenth Air Force located at March AFB, Calif.

With the departure of the 8th AF, the underground command post at the "Notch" area on the edge of Amherst and South Hadley was shut down and the property offered for civilian sale. During its peak, in the mid-1960s, the underground "Site" accommodated an operating staff of approximately 900. The 99th Bomb Wing, under 2AF control, was charged with the responsibility of overseeing the winddown of the SAC activities, as well as the orderly reassignment of the command's various organizations and personnel.

Two days following the 8th AF deactivation ceremony at Westover, SAC's 3rd Air Division in Guam was also deactivated and immediately renamed Eighth Air Force. A Pentagon spokesman explained the name change was ordered "to permit continuity and to maintain the tradition of the com-

mand's oldest combat unit," which had been formed in England during World War II.

In February 1971, American and South Vietnamese combat troops, supported by U.S. Air Force B-52s and U.S. Army helicopters swept into Laos to clear away hidden North Vietnamese entrenchments, weapons caches and to cut off Communist supply routes along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. South Vietnamese forces suffered heavy casualties and many U.S. aircraft were shot down. The Communist show of modern weaponry prompted Air Force resumption of bombing raids on North Vietnam targets, Laotian supply routes and other Communist positions.

Paris peace talks were broken off on March 23, 1972 as the tide of battle took an ominous turn for the worse. North Vietnam launched a massive tank and artillery offensive across the demilitarized zone into Quang Tri Province. In April, United States B-52s resumed the first deep penetration bombing raids over North Vietnam since 1967. The following month, President Nixon ordered a blockade of North Vietnam, including mining of enemy ports for the purpose of cutting off war supplies from Russia and China.

As a direct result of intense bombing, by the end of August the Com-

munist offensive had been brought to a complete stop. Henry Kissinger announced that U.S. Air Force bombing had been terminated above the Twentieth Parallel effective October 26. Within a couple of days, secret peace negotiations resumed.

When the peace negotiations abruptly collapsed in mid-December 1972, the U.S. Air Force launched Operation Linebacker II, the full scale bombing of the Hanoi-Haiphong areas. Massive raids were conducted by B-52s, many from Westover, and other attack aircraft, for twelve days. Observers described the operation as "one of the severest aerial assaults in all of history."

On December 29, bombing above the twentieth parallel was again halted followed by the resumption of secret peace negotiations. As a further demonstration of good faith, President Nixon ordered a halt to all American bombing, mining and artillery fire. By January 23, 1973, an agreement on all terms for a formal cease-fire had finally been reached.

In the meantime, regular Air Force strength at Westover continued to slowly dwindle. On March 14, 1974, two twin-jet B-57s lifted off from Westover's runway, climbed steeply, banked and flew over the base in a "flyaway" salute to the giant air base. The two-plane mini-commemoration ceremony marked the exodus of the last regular Air Force aircraft to leave the station.

As of April 1, 1974, the active duty role of Westover came to an end with the deactivation ceremonies of the 99th Bombardment Wing. The brief, reserved event was conducted before a small audience of invited guests and dignitaries. As the pennant of the Second Air Force was unfurled, its vice commander, Maj. Gen. Eugene Q. Steffes, read the inactivation order of the 99th Bombardment Wing.

AFRES Takes Up the Gauntlet

"Bravery and dedication has been a way of life with the men and women who have served at Westover Air Force Base, and there is still that need for dedication today." With those words, spoken by the commander of the Eastern Air Force Reserve Region, Westover underwent a change of command from the Strategic Air Command to the Air Force Reserve. On May 1, 1974, the important Chicopee base became one of thirteen Air Force in-

stallations with a primary operating responsibility of directing AFRES units.

During the early months of 1974, many military facilities were being closed throughout the world. The press and general public mistakenly assumed that activities at the base were merely preliminary to a total shut-down. Unfounded rumors circulated about the base being converted into "an unimportant miniscule operation;" "a mothball facility put into storage by the Federal government;" or "an abandoned, weed-covered, derelict station."

Additional erroneous conclusions were drawn by the Defense Department's declaration that approximately half of Westover's 4,800 acres were no longer needed. Large excess sections of the 49-square mile Chicopee installation were soon converted to civilian industrial use. The golf course and adjacent wetlands went to Ludlow; three schools were acquired by the Chicopee School Department.

Contrary to public general belief, Westover's Air Force usefulness had not ended, but in actuality, was crossing over a threshold into a different, yet important role.

Westover's involvement with the Reserve Forces actually had begun in 1966. Then, the 905th Tactical Airlift Group, which has been operating out of Bradley Field, Windsor Locks,

Conn. for eight years, was transferred to Westover AFB and was reassigned to the newly redesignated Military Airlift Command. Soon 905th Air Reserve crews were flying vitally needed supplies and equipment to Air Force installations throughout the world.

Seven years later, the 901st Tactical Airlift Group, another AFRES unit, was transferred from Hanscom Field, Mass. to Westover. The group became a military airlift organization flying C-124s during early 1975. Prior to its reassignment to Westover, the 901st was converted to twin-engine C-123s.

When SAC's 99th Bombardment Wing (Heavy) was inactivated, management of Westover was placed under the temporary, thirty-day supervision of SAC's 4040th Air Base Squadron. Concurrently, on April 1, 1974, two of Westover's assigned Air Force Reserve transport organizations, the 905th and 901st Tactical Airlift Groups were deactivated. At the same time, with the phaseout, the 439th Tactical Airlift wing and its 439th Combat Support Group were activated.

Less than twenty months after its own formation, Jan. 25 1976, Westover's 439th Tactical Airlift Wing assumed command responsibility for the 914th Tactical Airlift Group out of Niagara Falls International Airport, N.Y. Air Force Reserve organization
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Air Force Reserve forces came to Westover in 1966 flying C-124 Globemasters.



The final mission of the Berlin Airlift was recorded by a flyover and the notation on the side of a Westover C-54: "Last Vittles Flight 17835727 Tons Airlifted to Berlin."

required the change of command of the 1,000-man Reserve group, including the 328th Tactical Airlift Squadron which operates C-130A transports.

Today, Westover operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Active duty Air Force personnel man the control tower, and Air Force communication services are provided by the 1917th Communications Squadron. In addition, Detachment 5 of the 1st Aerospace Communications Group, is always in service.

Westover is by no means an exclusive Air Force installation, for the Army, National Guard, and Army, Navy and Marine Reserve units have on-base facilities. Before securing and remodelling the former SAC Service Club, the other service branches were scattered throughout the region. The consolidated United States Armed Forces Reserve Center has been active over the past few years.

The full-time Mass. Army National Guard units, the 1059th Medical De-

tachment and the Aviation Section of the 3rd Brigade of the 26th Infantry, which flies eight UH-1 and four OH-6 helicopters, operate out of the former SAC Alert Facility. Nearly 800 reservists, including a submarine base group from New London, Conn., use the center for training.

Vital to the Pioneer Valley

The Western Massachusetts air base is one of the largest employers in the Springfield, Holyoke, Chicopee, South Hadley areas. The base provides training for 3,436 Army, Navy, Marine and Air Force personnel. There are 1,151 full-time civilian employees and 133 full-time military personnel, for a grand total of 4,720 people. Only four industries or businesses in the greater Springfield area employ more than 2,000 people.

Westover is also the largest non-profit business in the area with an Air Force payroll of \$22,366,852 and a civilian payroll figure of nearly \$15,000,00. Add the operations and

maintenance of \$4,387,299, locally-awarded contracts of \$3,635,724, moving expenses of approximately \$2,000,000, maintenance and repair of approximately \$1,500,000 and school subsidies of \$350,000. Total dollar input to the local economy as a result of the military's assignment on Westover comes to more than fifty-million dollars annually.

Serving Today

Unlike any other period in history, America's potential enemies have made significant technological advances and increased their means to wage war. To counter the threat of aggression, the United States must maintain a well-trained, well-equipped military force capable of responding in hours, rather than weeks or months. The dedicated citizen-airmen of Westover Air Force Base are important partners in this nation's defense structure and Total Force.

"Total Force" means total commitment and that is what the men and women of Westover pledge. Total Force has allowed the nation to benefit from the skills, talents and energies of a living national resource. The combined efforts are both a commitment to safeguard the way of life we Americans value so highly, and an investment in preserving world peace.

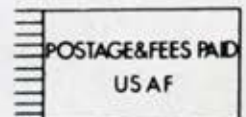
The Minutemen at Lexington and Concord were among America's original Reservists. Today the minutemen and women of the Air Force Reserve are dedicated citizen-airmen from all areas, all groups and all backgrounds—many with prior military service and invaluable combat experience.

There is a recurring lesson of history that applies today just as it did thousands of years ago. It is, the destiny of nations is determined by the will of their people and the strength of their arms.

*Editor's Note: Sergeant Spencer joined the 439th TAW Public Affairs Office in March 1980. He served in the Air Force between 1952 and 1962. This publication of the Westover history is the latest of his writings to appear in print. He is the author of *Limbo of the Lost*, *No Earthly Explanation*, *Limbo of the Lost Today* and *UFO Yearbook*. Their total sales have exceeded 3-1/2 million copies. He is also a noted lecturer.*

HQ 439TH TACTICAL AIRLIFT WING (AFRES)
WESTOVER AIR FORCE BASE, MA. 01022

OFFICIAL BUSINESS
PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE, \$300



THIRD CLASS-BULK RATE