

# BAND OF THE AIR FORCE RESERVE



## LINEAGE

Air Force Band, Mitchel Field, NY constituted, 24 Sep 1941  
Activated, 1 Oct 1941  
Redesignated 81<sup>st</sup> Army Air Forces Band, 10 Aug 1942  
Redesignated 581<sup>st</sup> Army Band, 27 Dec 1943  
Redesignated 581<sup>st</sup> Army Air Forces Band, 26 Feb 1944  
Redesignated 581<sup>st</sup> Air Force Band, 26 Sep 1947  
Redesignated Command Band of the Air Force Reserve, 1 Oct 1991  
Redesignated Band of the Air Force Reserve, 1 Oct 1994  
Redesignated Band of the United States Air Force Reserve, 15 May 1997

## STATIONS

Mitchel Field (later, Mitchel AFB), NY, 1 Oct 1941  
Robins AFB, GA, 16 Apr 1961

## ASSIGNMENTS

First Air Force, 1 Oct 1941  
Air Defense Command, 21 Mar 1946  
First Air Force, 17 Nov 1947  
Continental Air Command, 25 Mar 1958  
Air Force Reserve (later, Air Force Reserve Command), 1 Aug 1968

## COMMANDERS

### HONORS

**Service Streamers**  
World War II American Theater

**Campaign Streamers**

None

## **Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

None

### **Decorations**

#### Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

1 Jan-31 Dec 1968

1 Jun 1973-1 Jun 1975

1 Oct 1976-30 Sep 1978

1 Jan 1983-30 Jun 1984

1 Jun 1988-31 May 1990

#### Air Force Organizational Excellence Awards

1 Oct 1992-30 Sep 1994

1 Oct 1994-30 Sep 1996

1 Oct 1997-30 Sep 1999

1 Oct 2000-30 Sep 2002

1 Oct 2002-30 Sep 2004

1 Oct 2003-30 Sep 2005

1 Oct 2008-30 Sep 2009

### **EMBLEM**

Approved 17 Sep 1990

### **EMBLEM SIGNIFICANCE**

### **MOTTO**

### **NICKNAME**

### **OPERATIONS**

The band travels in excess of 100,000 miles per year performing more than 400 concerts extensively throughout their primary geographic area of Georgia, Florida, Tennessee, Alabama and Mississippi. The band has also performed in many overseas locations to include Russia, Italy, Turkey, Portugal, Antigua, Panama, Germany, Australia and the Caribbean.

The Band of the U.S. Air Force Reserve consists of 50 full-time professional musicians who are assigned to perform in at least three ensembles. All members are assigned to perform in the Ceremonial and Marching Band which normally utilizes 25-40 personnel.

The 43-member Concert Band is the largest and most versatile ensemble with a repertoire that includes classical overtures, Sousa marches, Broadway show tunes and popular music favorites. Sub units of the Concert Band include Full Spectrum, which performs contemporary and traditional Big Band selections; the Pipe Band which performs in authentic Scottish attire; Brass and Woodwind Quintets which feature a variety of chamber music literature.

Reserve Generation, is a highly flexible and popular music combo that performs primarily at

festivals, high schools, and military socials. They also have a special show they perform throughout the United States specifically for fifth and sixth grade students to promote counter drug awareness called "Drug-Free."

The Band of the U.S. Air Force Reserve prides itself on its American heritage and the opportunities to represent America in the international arena. In May, 1992 the band became the first foreign military band to parade through Red Square in Moscow, Russia during the Peace Victory Parade. They were also the only foreign band to perform in the fiftieth celebration of the Victory in Europe Day Parade in St. Petersburg, Russia in May of 1995. Additionally, each year the Concert Band's Operation Seasons Greetings tour takes them to various countries throughout Europe. This USO style show is geared towards overseas troops, and generally contains appearances by special guest artists.

All members of the Band of the U.S. Air Force Reserve are full time professional Air Force musicians working in support of Air Force Reserve recruiting and community relations objectives.

Active-duty musicians who make up the Band of the Air Force Reserve all have their orders now and will soon be packing up their gear and heading to their next assignment. "Everybody knows where they are going now, and they will be leaving Robins (Air Force Base, Ga.,) in increments over the next few months," 1st Lt. Thomas Gamboa, the band's commander and conductor, said during a recent interview. The band found out in March 2012 that it was being inactivated. The official inactivation takes place Sept. 30. "We have had a few people retire, but the 30 or so members of the band who are still here should all be PCSed by mid-September," Gamboa said. He said most of the members of the Band of the Air Force Reserve will be heading to four different locations: Joint Base San Antonio- Lackland, Texas, home of the U.S. Air Force Band of the West; Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Va., home of the U.S. Air Force Heritage of America Band; Scott AFB, Ill., home of the U.S. Air Force Band of Mid-America or Travis AFB, Calif., home of the U.S. Air Force Band of the Golden West. The conductor has his own orders to Ramstein Air Base, Germany, where he will be assigned to the U.S. Air Forces in Europe Band. The force structure announcement of March 2012 hit the Air Force bands hard. In addition to the Band of the Air Force Reserve, the U.S. Air Force Band of Liberty at Hanscom AFB, Mass., and the U.S. Air Force Band of the Pacific-Alaska at Joint Base Elmendorf- Richardson, Alaska, were slated for inactivation. The U.S. Air Force Band of Flight, Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio, and the U.S. Air Force Heartland of America Band, Offutt AFB, Neb., each went from 45 members down to 15. Gamboa assumed command of the band on July 3, 2012, and he has been at the helm for what has been a difficult transition year. "It's been tough because the Band of the Air Force Reserve has such deep ties with the local community," he said. "Saying goodbye to all of the friends we have made over the years is difficult." A lot of the band members themselves have deep ties to Middle Georgia. Staff Sgt. Juan Jimenez, a French horn player, has been with the Reserve band since September 2002. "I've been here for more than 10 years," he said. "This is the only assignment I have ever had. When I heard they were shutting down the band, it was heartbreaking." Jimenez has orders to report to the Heritage of America Band at Langley later this summer. The sergeant said he has some great memories of his time with the Band of the Air Force Reserve. "Operation Season's Greetings, Holiday Notes from Home, the Independence Day concerts ... It's been a

tremendous assignment,” he said. “We’ve entertained thousands of people over the years, and we’ve had a ball doing it.” Gamboa agreed. “We are all extremely proud of what the Band of the Air Force Reserve has done over the years,” he said. “It’s remarkable the places we have been, the shows we have put on and the audiences we have played for. Now it’s time to look to the future and set our sights on serving the Air Force where we are needed the most.” Originally known as the U.S. Army’s Air Force Band, located at Mitchel Field, N.Y., the band has been known by a number of names over the years: the 81st Army Air Forces Band, the 581st Army Air Forces Band, the 581st Air Force Band, the Command Band of the Air Force Reserve, the Band of the Air Force Reserve and the Band of the U.S Air Force Reserve. I proudly served as the band’s commander in 1988, 25 years ago. What a privilege to have led this group of talented musicians and professional active-duty Airmen. Our band members just didn’t come in to work to beat the drums, toot their horns or tickle the ivory; they continually rehearsed and performed before a myriad of audiences and were our Air Force Reserve goodwill ambassadors of music. Our band members were paired up with many associated tasks within the unit related to operations, from accounting to supply, transportation to contracting, public affairs to security. The many compliments I received for our performances were of the highest praise as young and old witnessed the Air Force uniform worn proudly by men and women dedicated in service to our nation. Preparation for a musical performance meant hours of rehearsal. Performance set-ups and tear-downs of portable stages were strenuous endeavors that kept band members physically fit and mentally alert. For years, Middle Georgia residents have enjoyed the annual Independence Day concert at McConnell-Talbert Stadium in Warner Robins. Band leadership often recruited headline performers to join them in the musical salute to our nation’s birthday, followed by one of the most awesome fireworks displays in the state. Back in the days before 9/11, an artillery detachment from Fort Sill, Okla., would be invited to the festivities, adding a thunderous ingredient to the band’s signature closing tune of the evening, Tchaikovsky’s “1812 Overture.” The band was a great recruiting tool for the Air Force Reserve, with performances targeting high schools and college campuses throughout the Southeast. Bottom line … the band was just terrific. Hearing sounds from home when you were deployed half-way around the world in some isolated location meant the world to a homesick Airman. Their performances helped you get through those days of loneliness and family separation by bringing a piece of Americana straight to your encampment tent. Over the years, the band has been notorious for having a musical ensemble that no other major command band has — the bagpipers. Ron Hamilton, a member of the band in the early 1960s, recounted how the bagpipers came about. “General Timberlake (Lt. Gen. Edward J. Timberlake, commander of Continental Air Command from 1962 to 1965) decided that his band needed a bagpipe unit,” Hamilton said. “We were given the equipment and only two weeks to get ready for our first parade. The pipers were ‘volunteered’ from the clarinet section. … they weren’t too happy about that. I believe there were six pipers and two drummers in the first unit.” Today, like yesterday, talented woodwind musicians practice on an instrument that they have no prior experience with, successfully mastering the art of the “pipes” and marching in full festive regalia to the beat of snare and base drums. Their kilts are authentic; their tartan colors officially registered with Scottish heraldry. There may be a few music aficionados who do not truly appreciate the sounds of bagpipes; however, if you’ve ever heard the pipes as they are being played during a parade, formal retreat or regimental military tattoo ceremony, you know their sounds instantly generate pride and patriotism. Whether playing “Scotland the Brave” or the old spiritual “Amazing Grace,” the end result is always a deep appreciation of the men and

women in uniform and an emotional connection with all in attendance. Then there were special people throughout the years who helped to make the band what it is today. Professional senior noncommissioned officers and mentors, Airmen like Chief Master Sgts. John Grove, Jimmie Self, Dave Ballengee and Jay Willis; Senior Master Sgts. Roger Ferrell, Ken Rankin and Jake Story; Master Sgts. Jim Larimer, Deb Rankin and Jeff Bare; and so, so many others. I fondly recall Tech. Sgt. Will Jackson (deceased), who was most eager to learn the bagpipes from scratch and instrumental in helping to design the unit's patch. However, from all my band memories, I remember With roots that date back to 1941, the Band of the Air Force Reserve has provided music and military pomp and circumstance to millions of service members, families, dignitaries and common folk across this continent and around the world. This distinguished group of professional musicians has played before prince and pauper, foreign and domestic, both in peacetime and during war. In March 2012, the Department of the Air Force, in a downsizing and costcutting initiative, announced its intention to inactivate the band, effective Sept. 30. After nearly 72 years of continuous service, one of the longest operating bands in the Air Force will soon be "history." 2013



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Air Force Order of Battle

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Updated:

Sources