

AIR FORCE WEAPONS LABORATORY

LINEAGE

Air Force Weapons Laboratory constituted, activated and organized, 1 May 1963

STATIONS

Kirtland AFB, NM, 1 May 1963

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

EMBLEM SIGNIFICANCE

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

In the wake of the full-scale tests and signing of the test ban treaty, the Air Force Weapons Laboratory was created from elements of the Special Weapons Center. The Weapons Laboratory built facilities during the 1960s to simulate nuclear effects such as transient radiation, x-rays and electromagnetic pulse. To study the latter, the Trestle, the largest simulation facility ever built, was completed on the east side of Kirtland AFB during the late 1970s.

Armed Forces Special Weapons Command also constructed two operational sites. One of these sites was known as Site Able, located in the foothills of the Manzano Mountains, just east of

Sandia Base. On February 22, 1952, Site Able was renamed Manzano Base, and operated by the Air Force.

The Special Weapons Center took over management of Air Force Systems Command's test and evaluation facilities at Holloman AFB near Alamogordo, New Mexico, during the summer of 1970. Just one year later on July 1, 1971, Kirtland merged with Manzano and Sandia Base, its neighbors to the east, creating a sprawling military complex known as Kirtland Air Force Base. Twelve months after the merger, Kirtland AFB became home to one of the country's most important industrial management units when the Air Force Contract Management Division (a component of Air Force Systems Command) moved to the base from Los Angeles.

Early in 1974, the Air Force Test and Evaluation Center was organized at Kirtland AFB to direct and oversee operational testing of emerging aircraft and systems.

Due to budget restrictions and reorganization, the Special Weapons Center was disestablished during 1976. Its responsibilities as Kirtland AFB's landlord were transferred to Contract Management Division, and a new support organization, the 4900th Air Base Wing, was created to discharge those responsibilities.

In 1976, as these organizational changes were being made, the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service moved its 1550th Aircrew Training and Test Wing (later becoming the 1550th Combat Crew Training Wing) to Kirtland AFB from Hill AFB, Utah. That unit's helicopter and fixed wing training brought regular flight operations to Kirtland AFB in addition to the usual support provided for transient military aircraft.

On July 1, 1977, the base once again changed hands as the 1606th Air Base Wing was created when Military Airlift Command took over responsibility for operating Kirtland AFB from Air Force Systems Command.

Kirtland AFB became the hub of Air Force space technology when the Air Force Space Technology Center was activated October 1, 1982.

In June 1990, the Air Force Contract Management Division was deactivated as a result of the Defense Management review. And, in December 1990, the Air Force Space Technology Center and Weapons Laboratory consolidated to become Phillips Laboratory, and later, the Air Force Research Laboratory.

Air Force Order of Battle
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Sources