



Military Corner

Barksdale Air Force Base

Barksdale AFB, Louisiana, was established in 1932 as Barksdale Field and is named for World War I aviator and test pilot 2nd Lieutenant Eugene Hoy Barksdale (1896–1926). The name was changed to Barksdale Air Force Base in 1948, with the establishment of the USAF as a separate military branch.

Airships were still in use when field construction began, so Hangars One and Two were built large enough to accommodate them. No airships were ever assigned, but each hangar was large enough to accommodate two B-52 aircraft wingtip to wingtip, which proved invaluable for later modifications managed by Boeing's Wichita plant between 1965 and 1973. Half of the B-52Fs mentioned were deployed from Barksdale, but never returned as they were replaced by B-52Gs.

Barksdale was developed as an Air Corps flying school on November 1940. In 1940, Barksdale Field was host to the Army's "complete military maneuvers", simulating European combat operations. Some 320 aircraft from throughout the Army Air Corps participated, as Major General Dwight D. Eisenhower watched. General George C. Marshall, the U.S. Army Chief of Staff, also briefly visited Barksdale Field during the maneuvers. During World War II, the airfield trained replacement crews and entire units between 1942 and 1945. In 1949, Barksdale was reassigned to Strategic Air Command (SAC), and became home of Headquarters Second Air Force. Barksdale remained a SAC base for nearly the next half-century. However, with the change of commands, the mission of Barksdale initially remained that of a training base where units were formed and organized, then were reassigned to front-line operational bases.

Following 9-11, Barksdale provided a safe haven for President George W. Bush on his return flight to the nation's capitol. Then, the National Command Authority called upon the base to provide substantial forces to spearhead the war on terrorism. Barksdale warriors and B-52s played a key role in Operation Enduring Freedom, which saw the elimination of the repressive Taliban regime of Afghanistan. It also resulted in the destruction of Al-Qaeda leadership and training infrastructure that had resided there with impunity. Returning yet again to the skies of Iraq, Barksdale B-52s flew over 150 combat sorties against military targets throughout the southern half of the country during Operation Iraqi Freedom. *[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barksdale_Air_Force_Base]*

