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# Brief History of Dow Air Force Base and the 4060th Air Base Group

United States Air Force

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INFORMATION SERVICES OFFICE

Headquarters  
4060th Air Base Group  
United States Air Force  
Dow Air Force Base, Maine

Prior to 1940 various flying services operated from the location of what is now Dow Air Force Base. However, it was not until February 11, 1941 that construction was begun on the site of the small municipal airport, established originally as a northern terminus for Northeast Airlines. It was to be a combined military and commercial, class airport, with the agreement that Bangor would supply the land and the federal government the funds.

Shortly after World War II, Dow was placed on "stand-by" status and remained so until 1946 when it was reactivated. Again in December 1949 Dow returned to the deactivated list and with the exception of use by the Maine Air National Guard, remained idle until reactivated in April 1951.

During this period, construction was at a standstill and not until Dow was made a permanent base in September 1954 were new buildings and facilities programmed and funds allocated for beginning construction.

During 1954 and 1955 a total of \$13,726 was expended on Dow construction but in 1956 construction expenditures jumped to the amazing figure of \$12,147,000. Included in the 1956 programming was a 13,440 foot heavy duty runway. After work on the runway had started, the plans were changed to include "frost free" construction. "Frost free" construction meant a deeper base and sub-base and the use of portland cement rather than bituminous material as originally planned.

Dow has come a long way since World War II when its buildings were temporary structures. Structures that were made "to do" until Dow was designated a permanent base.

Following is a synopsis of the history of Dow AFB:

Dow Air Force Base was named in honor of 2nd Lt. James Frederick Dow of Oakfield, Maine who was killed during a training flight in June of 1940. A graduate of the University of Maine, class of '38, he was active in various school activities. For three seasons, he was a starting halfback on the Black Bear Football team. After graduation from the U. of M., Lt. Dow went to Parks Air College in St. Louis and then to Randolph Field, San Antonio where he won his wings in March, 1940. Three months later, he was killed in a collision of two bombers over Queensboro, New York.

General "Billy" Bitchell was the first to recognize the potential of the Bangor area as an airdrome. In 1923, Gen Mitchell landed with the entire Air Corps, which then consisted of 15 Martin bombers and 11 De Havilland scout planes. On August 15, 1940 construction of a combined military-community airfield was begun with the federal government supplying the funds and the city of Bangor furnishing the land. During World War II, Dow played a major role in the defense of the country. In the early part of the war Dow served as a training base for bombing and reconnaissance groups. In the summer of 1943, the Air Transport Command began using the base as a staging area for crews headed for Europe. In September of 1952 Dow became a Strategic Air Command installation, and in September 1954 the base was given a permanent status. In March of 1955, the 4060th Air Refueling Wing, one of SAC's two air-to-air refueling wings, replaced the 506th Strategic Fighter Wing. Dow is presently a member of the Strategic Air Command and an Eighth Air Force Installation.

Dow Air Force Base is an integral part of the Eighth Air Force and the Strategic Air Command. The Strategic Air Command, known worldwide by its clipped designation--SAC, is the long-range nuclear striking arm of the United States Air Force.

SAC has achieved what has been described as the highest state of organized readiness ever known in time of peace by conducting training operations as nearly as possible like it plans to conduct combat operations. In fact, the change from peacetime operations to a global war would only involve the selection of new targets.

Under this concept of training, SAC bombers theoretically destroyed industrial centers in almost every city in the United States with a population of over 25,000 last year. In this program, the command flew over 100,000 individual missions totalling slightly over 1,000,000 hours of flying time. As an example of the respect of Strategic Air Command has earned throughout the free world, Sir Winston Churchill has stated:

"The United States Strategic Air Command is a deterrent of the highest order and maintains ceaseless readiness. We owe much to their devotion to the cause of freedom in a troubled world. The primary deterrents of aggression remain the nuclear weapon and the ability of the highly organized and trained U.S. Strategic Air Command to use it."

In supporting the global striking capabilities of SAC, the 4060th Air Refueling Wing, Dow's tactical and primary organization, is charged with the mission of organizing and training an air refueling force capable of immediate and sustained refueling operations in any part of the world, utilizing the latest technical knowledge and advanced procedures.

In carrying out its mission, the 4060th Air Refueling Wing presently utilizes the ~~Boeing~~ Boeing KC-97 Stratotanker. It is the air-to-air refueling provided by these aircraft and other refueling organization stationed around the globe that gives SAC's bombers the capability of striking targets any place in the world. In fact, the range of the bomber is only limited by the physical endurance of the members of its crew.

Historically speaking, the 4060th Air Refueling Wing is not an old organization, even though it is the first of its kind--the first completely air refueling wing in SAC. The 4060th was formed at Dow AFB on March 8, 1955 with the organization of the 71st Air Refueling Squadron. The arrival of the 341st Air Refueling Squadron from Castle AFB, California on August 15 of the same year gave the wing its second tactical squadron and put it in business as an operational refueling wing.

Dow AFB itself has a little longer history. Its origins can unofficially be traced back to August 1923 when General Billy Mitchell landed on the F. F. Rich farm, where the base is presently located, with a flight of 18 bombers and 11 scout planes. At that time General Mitchell told the citizens of Bangor that he "saw a great future in the Bangor area as an air center."

It wasn't until 1940, however, that construction actually began on a large scale. At that time plans called for the base to serve as a forward airdrome for the active defense against an enemy attack from Europe. In January 1942, Dow Air Force Base was officially named in honor of Second Lieutenant James F. Dow of Oakland, Maine who was killed during a training flight in June of 1940.

Dow Air Force Base played a very active part in World War II. Such organization and commands as the 1st Fighter Group, 91st, 92nd, 93rd, 97th

303rd, 306th and 308th Bombardment groups were here as well as the 92nd Reconnaissance Group, the 332nd Sub-Depot, the Air Transport Command, the 1905th, 1906th, 1913th and 942th Aviation Engineer Regiments and the Headquarters of the 135th Army Airways Communications System operated from here.

During the course of the war nearly 100,000 combat crew members passed through Dow AFB with their aircraft either enroute to, or returning from, the war theaters. The strength of the base varied from a low 1,200 to a high 7,000 personnel.

Dow's present population of about 5,200 people comes from all corners of the country and from several foreign countries. It includes approximately 836 families with over 1,000 children. These personnel and the strategic location of the base offer a maximum return for defense dollars and a more effective striking force to act as a deterrent to enemy aggression.