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## Retired air defenders see remarkable changes at 1st Air Force

**TYNDALL AIR FORCE BASE, Fla.** – When more than 100 loyal alumni of Tyndall's former Air Defense Weapons Center visited 1st Air Force Oct. 23, they saw dramatic technological and operational changes from their previous experiences working in the air defense system.

The most impressive difference, everyone agreed, was the state-of-the-art 601st Air and Space Operations Center. "We are very impressed," said Maj. Gen. (ret.) Bob Taylor, a longtime return visitor to the ADWC alumni reunions. "The facility is more coordinated and efficient than what we had in previous years."



The ADWC alumni groups have been conducting reunions for 25 years; this year was their first exposure to the current U.S. air defense operational facility.

After seeing the \$30 million, 37,000-square-foot air operations center—referred to as "America's AOC"—the retired senior Air Force officers, mostly former pilots, said they greatly enjoyed visiting the new facility for the first time.

General Taylor, who flew fighter aircraft during the mid 1960s for the U.S. Air Force Interceptor Weapons School—also known as the Air Force's first "Top Gun" school—, said the technology today is different, and far superior, to what was available when he began military flying in 1954.

The retired general flew a wide range of fighter planes during his decades-long career. He is still particularly proud of the great speed capabilities of the century-series fighters he flew many decades ago. "I was able to go Mach 2 in 1959 in an F-104A," he said. A speed of Mach 2 is twice the speed of sound.

General Taylor, along with his wife, Betty, and dozens of other attendees and their spouses, have held biennial reunions in the Panama City area for many years, and a return visit to Tyndall and 1st Air Force is always on their itinerary.

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## **2-2-2 AWDC**

Most of the retired alumni served as ADWC pilots during their active duty years from the 1950s to the 1970s.

The ADWC was the Air Force's primary hub for the training of air defense forces in its day. It was originally the largest unit in Aerospace Defense Command, or ADCOM, which was inactivated in late 1979.

After ADCOM closed, the ADWC was placed under the authority of the newly formed Air Defense Tactical Air Command, or ADTAC, headquartered at Langley AFB, Va. ADTAC later became 1st Air Force—one of five numbered air forces under the Air Combat Command. First Air Force moved to Tyndall in 1991.

During their tenure at ADWC, the former military pilots served in five separate organizations: the 4756th Combat Crew Training Squadron which later became the 2nd Fighter Interceptor Training Squadron (currently the 2nd FS here), the USAF Interceptor Weapons School, the 95th Fighter Interceptor Training Squadron and the 475th Test Squadron.

Mostly retiring at ranks ranging from lieutenant colonel to general officer, the former pilots spent their active duty days flying century-series combat aircraft with daring-sounding names: F-101 Voodoo, F-102 Delta Dagger, F-106 Delta Dart, F-4 Phantom and the T-33 Shooting Star.

Lt. Col. (ret.) Bob Reimers and Lt. Col. (ret.) A.J. Kelly were also pilots for the USAF Interceptor Weapons School in the 1960s, flying when voice radio, rather than data link computers, controlled air missions. "Planes today have more thrust," Colonel Reimers, who flew the F-101 Voodoo, said. "But the Voodoo, which was strictly air defense, did a good job, too."

Colonel Kelly, who piloted the F-106, said that particular fighter still holds the world record for speed for a single engine aircraft. The record was set on Dec. 15, 1959, by Maj. Joseph Rogers who flew the F-106A 1,525.93 mph on a straight line course 11 miles long at an altitude of 40,000 feet. "It was cutting edge in our day," said Colonel Kelly.

The retired officers say they have fond memories of their years in the ADWC and still enjoy getting together to renew old friendships and recall their times together. "Our friendships were deep and we developed strong, personal bonds," said General Taylor.

Col. (ret.) Alan Scott, 1st Air Force Chief of Staff and also a member of this elite group, conducted the AOC tour. He said he was exceptionally pleased to welcome back ADWC alumni again this year. "We in 1st Air Force are proud of those who came before us," he said. "They were our 'cold warriors' and air defenders; now we are, so to speak, the grandchildren who inherited their important mission."