HISTORY

TRAVIS AIR FORCE BASE

Although Travis is home to the largest airlift organization in the Air Force, it began as an isolated airstrip with a few tar paper shacks set in the middle of a wind-swept prairie during World War II. The field was named Fairfield-Suisun Army Air Base, after the two closest, mostly agricultural towns. The base was first planned shortly after the December 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor, serving as the home for medium bombers and fighters assigned to defend the West Coast.

The first runway and temporary buildings were constructed by the Army Corps of Engineers in the summer of 1942. They were used initially by Army and Navy fighter planes for takeoff and landing practice. For a few months, the outline of an aircraft carrier's deck was painted on the runway to help newly-commissioned Navy pilots practice maneuvers. The strong local prevailing winds nearly duplicated those at sea.

Shortly after construction began, the base's potential as a major aerial port and supply transfer point for the Pacific theater led the Army Air Corps to assign it to the newly-designated Air Transport Command. The base officially opened on June 1, 1943, with a primary mission of preparing various military aircraft, mainly bombers and transports, for the Pacific war zone and ferrying them to that region.

Travis Air Force Base is named in honor of Brigadier General Robert F. Travis who was killed when his B-29 crashed on the installation August 5, 1950. At the time of his death, General Travis was the commander of the 5th Strategic Reconnaissance and 9th Bombardment Wings. General Travis' popularity and the shock of his death led base officials and the local community to sponsor renaming the base in his honor. The proposal was favored in Washington D.C., and on April 21, 1951, the base was re-named Travis Air Force Base.

From 1969 to the present, the 60th and 349th Air Mobility Wings have worked closely to make Travis one of the best and most versatile bases in the United States Air Force. The base provided continuous airlift support in the face of world-wide contingencies for decades prior to adding air refueling to its mission in September 1994.

Once a major hub for transporting passengers and cargo in the Pacific, Travis has become an integral part of the total force. The base is now called upon to perform its mission anywhere in the world at a moment's notice.