

Dedication

We dedicate this pamphlet to all past, present and future members of the 28th Bomb Wing and especially to those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

The accomplishments contained within serve as proof the core values of Integrity First, Service before Self, and Excellence in All We Do, were and will continue to be the foundation of Team Ellsworth.



28th Bomb Wing Emblem

Significance

Blue and Yellow are the Air Force colors. Blue alludes to the sky, the primary theater of Air Force Operations. Yellow refers to the sun and the excellence required of Air Force personnel. The emblem reflects the Wing's predecessor World War II unit, the 28th Bombardment Group. The nebuly partition line symbolizes clouds and denotes the Wing's area of operation within the Air Force global reach mission.

Wing Motto

"Guardian of the North"

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HISTORY OF THE 28th BOMB WING

Introduction

The 28th Bomb Wing (28 BW) is Air Combat Command's lead B-1B conventional bomb wing. It is responsible for training and equipping combat-ready forces for the application of conventional airpower worldwide. It is the host unit to Ellsworth AFB, South Dakota, and provides aviation, logistics, base support, and medical infrastructure to the eight other associate units.

To understand the history of the 28 BW, you must first understand its relationship to the 28th Bombardment Group (28 BG). The wing received its designation from its main operational unit, the 28 BG, at the time of its creation. The new wing combined all the assets necessary for combat operations under a single commander. It still had the same aircraft and mission as the group, but it now controlled everything from supply and maintenance to food service, all in the best interest of keeping the aircraft flying. Nevertheless, in tribute to the group's gallant exploits, a short sketch of earliest days provides background helpful in explaining how it later fit into the wing's structure.

28th Bombardment Group

The 28th Bombardment Group was constituted as the 28th Composite Group on 22 December 1939 and activated three months later at March Field, California. The group soon found its way to Elmendorf Field, Alaska,

where its assigned squadrons operated primarily from bases in the Aleutian Islands. They flew various aircraft including the B-17 *Flying Fortress*, B-18 *Bolo*, B-24 *Liberator*, B-25 *Mitchell*, B-26 *Marauder*, and P-38 *Lightning*, and compiled an impressive combat record against the enemy in the Northern Pacific. After the war, the group inactivated temporarily before coming back as the 28th Bombardment Group (Heavy) to work for the new Strategic Air Command (SAC). This time the group's assigned squadrons flew the B-29 *Superfortress* while they conducted six months of post-war arctic operations in Alaska. In May 1947, the group and its subordinate units relocated to Rapid City Army Air Field (later Ellsworth AFB) and awaited the activation of their new headquarters—the 28th Bombardment Wing.

28th Bomb Wing

The 28th Bomb Wing was established on 28 July 1947 under the “Hobson Plan”, designed to streamline peacetime forces after WWII. The wing existed only on paper until 15 August 1947 when SAC organized it under the Fifteenth Air Force. Upon its activation, the wing included the 28th Bombardment Group (Heavy), 28th Airdrome Group (now Mission Support Group), 28th Maintenance and Supply Group (now split between Operations Group, Mission Support Group, and Maintenance Group), 28th Station Medical Group (now 28th Medical Group), and the 612th Army Air Forces Band (now inactive).

Wing's First Deployment

One of the wing's first deployments began in the latter part of 1947 when at least one of its squadrons flew to airfields in occupied Germany. Its other squadrons followed in 30-day rotations through early 1948. These highly classified deployments provided aircrews some mobility and navigation experience. Additionally, they experienced the different weather patterns over Europe. These training missions paid off when the wing supported the Berlin Airlift.

Berlin Airlift

In mid-1948, the wing deployed its entire 28th Bombardment Group—including the 77th, 717th, and 718th Bombardment Squadrons (BS)—to England for 90 days to demonstrate American airpower during the Soviet blockade of Berlin. Although these B-29s were incapable of carrying nuclear weapons, the Soviets were probably unaware of this limitation. The thought of nuclear weapons so close kept the Soviets at bay throughout the operation.

The Peacemaker

The wing flew the B-29 until 1950 and maintained proficiency in heavy global bombardment. By 1950, however, the wing had gradually transitioned out of the *Superfortress* and into the *Peacemaker*. With the change in aircraft also came a modified mission: global strategic reconnaissance with bombardment as a secondary tasking. The wing's name changed again in

April 1950, this time to the 28th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing, (Heavy). Meanwhile, intermediate command assignments changed from the Fifteenth to the Eighth Air Force. In May 1951, the wing flew a record setting B-36 training mission lasting 41 hours without refueling. In June 1952, SAC inactivated the old 28 BG and assigned its squadrons directly under the 28 BW. Although the wing's aerial reconnaissance capability lasted until September 1958, by April 1955 the Air Force had already changed the wing back to its former status as the 28th Bombardment Wing, (Heavy), under the Fifteenth Air Force (later attached to the 3rd Air Division), specializing almost exclusively in ordnance delivery.

Into the Jet Age

The 28 BW began replacing its B-36s with the new, all-jet, B-52 Stratofortress in 1957. In September 1958, a pair of the wing's hot new B-52s set two world speed records over a closed course without payload, simultaneously setting a record for jet closed course distance without refueling. In February 1959, the wing gained its first KC-135 *Stratotanker* along with the new 928th Air Refueling Squadron (AREFS). This unit provided in-flight refueling for long-range sorties during lengthy domestic or overseas deployments. The 717th and 718th Bombardment Squadrons inactivated in February 1960. The 28 AREFS succeeded the 928 AREFS in October, when it inactivated. In 1961, the 28 BW began flying airborne indoctrination sorties for SAC. From December 1960 through January 1962 the wing even controlled a non-equipped *Titan* ICBM unit, the 850th Strategic Missile Squadron. The 97 AREFS and

its KC-97 *Stratofreighters* also joined the wing from July 1962 until March 1964. In 1965, the wing gained the new EC-135 post attack command and control systems (PACCS) aircraft to perform airborne launch control functions for USAF Minuteman (and later Peacekeeper) missile wings.

Vietnam

In March 1966, the 28 BW sent its first B-52s to Southeast Asia. Some of these planes flew the first Arc Light bombing missions over Vietnam. Wing bombers earned the distinction of flying both the 1,000th and 5,000th B-52 sortie against the enemy in this theater. The wing's extensive involvement in Southeast Asian combat (flying both bombers and tankers) continued for nine years. In December 1972, Captain John D. Mize, 77 BS, was the first person in SAC to receive an Air Force Cross for heroism for his efforts to save the lives of his crewmen after a surface to air missile (SAM) attack during a Linebacker II mission over Hanoi.

Changing to Meet New Requirements

The wing's hardware improvements and organizational changes continued. In April 1970, the 4th Airborne Command and Control Squadron (ACCS) joined the 28 BW. In June 1971, the wing's intermediate headquarters changed to the 821st Air (later Strategic Aerospace) Division. On 15 January 1973, headquarters again changed to the 4th Strategic Missile (later 4th Air) Division. The 37th Bomb Squadron joined the 28 BW from July 1977 to October 1982.

In 1982 the 28 BW assumed the bomber role in the Strategic Projection Force and maintained readiness for global conventional operations with specially modified B-52s. The B-52 mission expanded in 1984 to include sea reconnaissance, surveillance, and conventional operations from forward bases overseas. The wing tested this latter capability during its first deployment to Egypt during Bright Star '85. Also during this year, upgraded KC-135R tankers replaced the wing's older "A" models. In March 1986, 30 years of B-52 service ended as the last B-52H departed in preparation for the arrival of the new B-1B *Lancer*.

The 28th Bomb Wing and the B-1B *Lancer*

The 37 BS returned to operational duty with the 28 BW in January 1987, just in time to join the 77 BS in training on the sleek new bombers. The first B-1B *Lancer* arrived on 21 January 1987. In July 1988, the 57th Air Division became the wing's new higher headquarters. In 1989, the wing's B-1Bs earned the Fairchild Trophy, Crumm Linebacker Trophy, Eaker Trophy, and the Omaha Trophy for superior bomber operations and the most outstanding wing in SAC. The wing also provided tanker support for Operation Just Cause, December 1989-January 1990.

Desert Shield/Desert Storm

In July 1990, the Strategic Warfare Center became the latest of the wing's intermediate headquarters. In September 1990, the 28 BW earned the Sweeny Trophy. Adding to its extensive combat experience, the wing deployed both tanker and airborne

command post aircraft to Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm from August 1990-March 1991.

28th Bomb Wing Once Again Host to Ellsworth AFB

On 1 September 1991, SAC redesignated the 28 BW as the 28th Wing, and once again assigned it directly under Eighth Air Force—and as part of the new objective wing organization—reactivated the old 28 BG under the new name of the 28th Operations Group. The 28th Wing also regained host wing responsibilities for Ellsworth AFB from the 44th Missile Wing.

End of an Era

On 28 September 1991, the Secretary of Defense ordered B-1Bs and tankers off alert. The 4 ACCS continued to maintain an alert crew until May 1992. On 1 June 1992, simultaneously, SAC inactivated, Air Combat Command (ACC) activated, the 28th Wing changed names to the 28th Bomb Wing, and the 28 AREFS became a geographically separated unit assigned to Malmstrom AFB, Montana. In September 1992, the 4 ACCS also inactivated, having effectively worked themselves out of a job by helping America's deterrent resolve win the Cold War.

Conventional Munitions Upgrades

In 1993, the 28 BW continued to adapt to meet new defense demands in light of the world's changing

threats. The wing's versatile B-1Bs were the first in ACC to transition from their former strategic role to an all-conventional mission. The 28th's operational squadrons could conceivably touch anywhere in the world to meet national defense needs. Ellsworth tested this concept in 1993 and early 1994 during such events as: "Team Spirit" (the first B-1Bs ever to land in Korea); "Global Power" (various long-duration, round trip sorties flown from Ellsworth to bomb training ranges on another continent); and "Bright Star" (the wing's second but the B-1Bs first visit to a major JCS exercise in Southwest Asia).

Dakota Challenge

From June through December 1994, 28 BW B-1Bs participated in a congressionally directed operational readiness assessment known locally as "Dakota Challenge." This test, conducted exclusively by the 28 BW, proved the B-1B to be a versatile and reliable weapon system—the mainstay of America's heavy bomber fleet for years to come.

Upgrades and Sacrifices

On 31 March 1995, the 77 BS, a unit that had served under the wing since 1948, inactivated. Its B-1Bs became part of ACC's reconstitution reserve. This action freed funds to allow the Air Force to develop new precision-guided munitions.

The Air Force announced in early 1996 that the 77 BS would once again activate under the 28 BW on 1 April 1997. In November 1998, they received the first Block D

upgraded B-1B in the USAF inventory. The Block D upgrade brings the capability for the B-1B to drop the Joint Direct Attack Munition (JDAM), which is a global positioning system (GPS) guided munition.

Desert Fox

In December 1998, 28 BW deployed-aircraft, which flew under the flag of the 28th Air Expeditionary Group in Operation Desert Fox, were the first B-1Bs to drop bombs on an enemy target. In its two combat missions, the B-1B silenced its critics and proved its value as a weapons system.

Expeditionary Aerospace Force Lead Wing

In March 1999, the Air Force announced that the 28 BW would be a lead unit for the new Expeditionary Air Force concept. This represents a fundamental change in the way the Air Force will fight wars. Expeditionary Aerospace Forces (EAF) will respond quickly to worldwide crises while reducing the operations tempo for Air Force personnel.

Operation Allied Force

Five B-1Bs from the 28th Bomb Wing joined NATO forces in Operation Allied Force and began striking military targets in Kosovo on April 1, 1999. By the end of the conflict in June 1999, Ellsworth B-1Bs had flown 100 combat missions. Once again, the B-1B and Team Ellsworth proved themselves an invaluable asset to national security interests.

Bright Star 99/00

The 28th Bomb Wing deployed a total of 3 B-1Bs and 403 personnel to Cairo West Air Base, Egypt in support of Bright Star 99/00, from September-November 1999. The Wing participated in this US Central Command combined-coalition, computer-aided command and control exercise along with approximately 18,000 other military personnel from our sister services and ten other countries.

Operation Enduring Freedom

After the events of September 11, 2001, Team Ellsworth once again answered the nation's call by deploying a number of B-1B's in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Aircraft from the 37th BS at Ellsworth AFB joined additional B-1B's from the 34th BS at Mountain Home AFB and formed the 28th Expeditionary Bomb Squadron. The squadron deployed to Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean and recorded an impressive record against terrorist factions.

28th EBS mission effectiveness was greater than 95% and they boasted 5% of the total strike aircraft missions. They dropped 39% of the total tonnage of bombs, which was a greater share than any other platform. During their deployment, the 28th EBS dropped 2,974 JDAMs, 1,471 Mk-82, 135 Mk-84, and 70 CBU-87 bombs, a truly tremendous amount of ordnance.

34th Bomb Squadron replaces the 77th Bomb Squadron

On September 19 2002, the 34th Bomb Squadron joined the Ellsworth team and arrived from Mountain Home AFB, ID. Due to a drawdown in the number of B-1B aircraft in the Air Force inventory, the 77th BS at Ellsworth inactivated and the “Thunderbirds” of the 34th BS moved to Ellsworth to take their place.

Operation Iraqi Freedom

The 34th and 37th Bomb Squadrons deployed to undisclosed locations in the Middle East in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. B-1Bs from the 28th Bomb Wing were involved in high-tempo operations over Iraq in support of ground operations. Currently, the 28th Bomb Wing and personnel from Ellsworth Air Force Base continue to be the lead wing for AEF 8, and Ellsworth personnel continue to deploy in support of operations around the globe.

Operation Odyssey Dawn

On 30 March 2011, aviation history was made as B-1B Lancers touched down on the runway at Ellsworth. The 28th Bomb Wing crews had just completed the first-ever operational B-1 global strike mission launched from the United States. These crews launched from Ellsworth, struck targets in Libya, landed at a forward operating location, where their aircraft were refueled and rearmed, and hit additional targets in Libya on the return trip to

Ellsworth. This was all accomplished with the same crewmembers.

The 28th Bomb Wing and the Future

Drawing from its storied past and the combined experience of thousands of veterans who have gone before, the 28 BW continues to set pace for the future. The wing stands tall as the “Pioneer of Peace for the 21st Century.”

Aircraft of the 28th Bomb Wing

- P-38 *Lightning*, ca. 1941
- P-39 *Airacobra*, ca. 1941
- P-40 *Warhawk*, ca. 1941 - 1943
- B-17 *Flying Fortress*, ca. 1941 - 1945
- B-18 *Bolo*, ca. 1941 - 1943
- B-26 *Marauder*, ca. 1941 - 1943
- LB-30 *Liberator*, ca. 1941 - 1943
- B-24 *Liberator*, ca. 1943 - 1945
- B-25 *Mitchell*, ca. 1943 - 1945
- C-45F *Expedito*, ca. 1947 - 1957
- C-47 *Skytrain*, ca. 1947 - 1960
- B-29 *Superfortress*, 1947 - 1950
- RB-29 *Superfortress*, 1950
- B-36 *Peacemaker*, 1949 - 1950
- RB-36 *Peacemaker*, 1950 - 1957
- B-52 *Stratofortress*, 1957 - 1986
- T-29 *Flying Classroom*, 1958 - 1975
- KC-135 *Stratotanker*, 1959 - 1992
- KC-97 *Stratofreighter*, 1962 - 1964
- EC-135 *Stratotanker*, 1965 - 1992
- T-38 *Talon*, 1976 - 1995
- B-1B *Lancer*, 1987 - Present

Helicopters

- H-19 *Chickasaw*, 1954 - 1965
- HH-43F *Huskie*, 1957 - 1960
- U/HH-1F/H *Iroquois*, 1965 - 1994

28th Bomb Wing Awards

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

- 1 Sept 1957 - 30 Jun 1958
- 1 Jan 1966 - 21 Dec 1966
- 1 Jan 1968 - 1 Mar 1968
- 2 Mar 1968 - 1 Jul 1968
- 9 Jun 1972 - 10 Jul 1972
- 1 Jul 1976 - 30 Jun 1978
- 1 Jul 1978 - 30 Jun 1980
- 1 Jul 1981 - 30 Jun 1983
- 1 Jul 1988 - 30 Jun 1990
- 1 Jun 1994 - 30 Nov 1994
- 1 Jun 1997 - 31 May 1999
- 20 Sep 2001 – 17 Jan 2002 (with Valor)
- 1 Jun 2001 - 31 May 2003 (with Valor)
- 1 Jun 2003 – 31 May 2005

Blue Steel Trophy (RAF Bombing Competition): 1972

Barrentine Trophy: 1982 and 1984

Fairchild Trophy: 1989

Crumm Linebacker Trophy: 1978, 1979, 1989

Omaha Trophy: 1989

Eaker Trophy: 1989, 1992, 1998

Sweeny Trophy: 1990

Hoban Trophy: 1991

28th Bomb Wing Assignments

- Fifteenth Air Force, 15 August 1947 - 12 July 1948
- Fifteenth Air Force, 12 July 1948
- Eighth Air Force, 1 April 1950
- Fifteenth Air Force, 1 April 1955 (attached to 3d Air Division 14 April - 24 July 1955)
- 821st Air (later 821st Strategic Aerospace) Division, 1 January 1959
- 47th Air Division, 30 June 1971
- 4th Strategic Missile (later 4th Air) Division, 15 Jan 1973
- 57th Air Division, 1 April 1982
- 12th Air Division, 15 July 1988
- Strategic Warfare Center, 31 July 1990
- Eighth Air Force, 1 Sept 1991
- Twelfth Air Force, 1 Oct 2002

28th Bomb Wing Stations

- March Field, California, 1 Feb 1940
- Moffett Field, California, 10 Dec 1940 - 12 Feb 1941
- Elmendorf Field, Alaska , 23 Feb 1941
- Adak, Alaska, 14 Mar 1943
- Shemya (Now Eareckson AFS), Alaska, 26 Feb 1944 - 20 Oct 1945
- Grand Island Army Air Field, Nebraska, 4 Aug - 6 Oct 1946
- Elmendorf Field, Alaska, 20 Oct 1946 - 24 April 1947
- Rapid City Army Air Field (Now Ellsworth AFB), South Dakota, 3 May 1947 – Present

28th Bomb Wing Commanders, 1940-Present

- Lt Col William H Crom 1 Feb 1940 - 12 Feb 1940
- Maj Lotha A. Smith 12 Feb 1940 - 1 Sep 1940
- Maj William O. Eareckson 1 Sep 1940 - 21 Oct 1940
- Maj Donald E. Titus 21 Oct 1940 - 27 May 1941
- Maj William O. Eareckson 27 May 1941 - 7 Nov 1941
- Maj Norman D. Sillin 7 Nov 1941 - 1 Jan 1942
- Lt Col William Eareckson 1 Jan 1942 - 23 Jan 1943
- Col Earl H. Deford 23 Jan 1943 - 19 Mar 1943
- Maj Robert C. Orth 19 Mar 1943 - 27 Mar 1943
- Lt Col Jack N. Donohew 27 Mar 1943 - 18 Apr 1943
- Lt Col Ralph W. Rodieck 18 Apr 1943 - 27 Oct 1943
- Lt Col John W. Massion 27 Oct 1943 - 4 Jan 1944
- Lt Col Alexander Bryant 4 Jan 1944 - 1 Apr 1944
- Col Robert H. Herman 1 Apr 1944 - 24 Jul 1944
- Lt Col John W. Massion 24 Jul 1944 - 26 Aug 1944
- Col Robert H. Herman 26 Aug 1944 - 26 May 1945
- Lt Col John C. Larson 26 May 1945 - 27 Jun 1945
- Col Robert H. Herman 27 Jun 1945 - 21 Jul 1945
- Lt Col Walter L. Wheeler 21 Jul 1945 - 27 Sep 1945
- Lt Col John C. Larson 27 Sep 1945 - 20 Oct 1945
- Col Richard Montgomery 4 Aug 1946 - 15 Aug 1946
- Col Thomas J. Gent, Jr. 15 Aug 1946 - 17 Sep 1947
- Col Raymond L. Curtice 17 Sep 1947 - 28 Sep 1947
- Lt Col Everett Holstrom 28 Sep 1947 - 9 Oct 1947
- Col Raymond L. Curtice 9 Oct 1947 - 15 Oct 1947
- Col Thomas J. Gent, Jr. 15 Oct 1947 - 10 Jul 1948
- Col William W. Jones 10 Jul 1948 - 19 Aug 1948
- Col Albert T. Wilson, Jr. 19 Aug 1948 - 15 Nov 1950
- Brig. Gen. Richard E. Ellsworth 15 Nov 1950 - 18 Mar 1953
- Col Howard W. Moore 18 Mar 1953 - 30 Apr 1953

- Col Areil W. Nielson 30 Apr 1953 - 15 Jun 1955
- Col Neil D. Van Sickle 15 Jun 1955 - 20 Apr 1957
- Col Loran D. Briggs 20 Apr 1957 - 6 Jul 1959
- Col Francis W. Nye 6 Jul 1959 - Jun 1962
- Col Allen B. Rowlett Jun 1962 - 1 Jul 1962
- Col Leo C. Lewis 1 Jul 1962 - 10 Jul 1965
- Col Albert H. Schneider 10 Jul 1965 - 27 Dec 1966
- Col Edgar S. Harris, Jr. 27 Dec 1966 - 4 May 1967
- Col Albert H. Schneider 4 May 1967 - 2 Jun 1967
- Col Edgar S. Harris, Jr. 2 Jun 1967 - 24 Jul 1968
- Col James Wagner 24 Jul 1968 - 1 Feb 1970
- Col Richard L. Lawson 1 Feb 1970 - 18 Jun 1971
- Col Junior B. Reed 18 Jun 1971 - 30 May 1973
- Col Harold B. Coffee 30 May 1973 - 8 Apr 1974
- Col James E. Light, Jr. 8 Apr 1974 - 21 Apr 1976
- Col Harold J.M. Williams 21 Apr 1976 - 11 May 1976
- Col Clinton H. Winne, Jr. 11 May 1976 - 24 Apr 1978
- Col Clarence R. Autrey 24 Apr 1978 - 5 Mar 1979
- Col Alan B. Renshaw 5 Mar 1979 - 18 Aug 1980
- Col Wayne W. Lambert 18 Aug 1980 - 26 Oct 1981
- Col Robert F. Durkin 26 Oct 1981 - 20 May 1983
- Col Carl B. Krueger 20 May 1983 - 28 Aug 1984
- Col Steven W. Nielson 28 Aug 1984 - 21 Mar 1986
- Col Harold B. Adams 21 Mar 1986 - 15 Apr 1988
- Col Thomas A. Twomey 15 Apr 1988 - 4 Apr 1990
- Col Charles R. Henderson 4 Apr 1990 - 25 Nov 1991
- Col Edgar A. Ott 25 Nov 1991 - 22 Jan 1992
- Brig Gen J. C. Wilson, Jr. 22 Jan 1992 - 30 Nov 1994
- Brig Gen Robert C. Hinson 30 Nov 1994 - 22 Aug 1995
- Col Leroy Barnidge, Jr. 22 Aug 1995 - 19 Feb 1997
- Col William M. Fraser III 19 Feb 1997 - 27 May 1998
- Col Anthony F. Przybyslawski 27 May 1998 - 30 May 2000
- Col Edward A. Rice, Jr. 30 May 2000 - 29 Apr 2002

- Col James M. Kowalski 29 Apr 2002 - 27 Feb 2004
- Col Joseph D. Brown 27 Feb 2004 – 6 Jun 2005
- Col Jeffrey F. Smith 6 Jun 2005 – 1 Jun 2007
- Col Scott M. Vander Hamm 1 Jun 2007 – 4 Jun 2009
- Col Jeffrey B. Taliaferro 4 Jun 2009 – 13 May 2011
- Col Mark E. Weatherington 13 May 2011 - Present

28th Bomb Wing Command Chief Master Sergeants 1970 – Present *

- CMSgt Bobby L. Horton 1 Apr 1970 - 1 Sep 1971
- MSgt Harry R. Fordyce 1 Sep 1971 - 1 Apr 1973
- SMSgt Earnest L. Carpenter 1 Apr 1973 - 1 Sep 1973
- SMSgt Robert L. Powers 1 Sep 1973 - 15 Sep 1975
- SMSgt James V. Jones 15 Sep 1975 - 1 Jun 1976
- CMSgt Fred H. Quinn 1 Jun 1976 - 15 May 1978
- CMSgt George H. Hall 15 May 1978 - 31 Mar 1979
- VACANT 31 Mar 1979 - 24 Jul 1979
- CMSgt Robert L. Livingston 24 Jul 1979 - 1 Jun 1980
- CMSgt Neil E. Sperle 1 Jun 1980 - 18 Aug 1986
- CMSgt William S. Eldridge 18 Aug 1986 - 7 Jun 1988
- CMSgt Paul R. Hammett 7 Jun 1988 - Jun 1995
- CMSgt John J. Bernot Jun 1995 - 14 Jan 1997
- CMSgt Paul R. Hammett 14 Jan 1997 - 14 Feb 1999
- CMSgt Michael E. Wilson 14 Feb 1999 - 23 Jun 2000
- CMSgt Russell J. Johnson 23 Jun 2000 – April 2002
- CMSgt Donald S. Ingram April 2002 – 27 May 2004
- CMSgt Clyde W. Aune 27 May 2004 – Sep 2006
- CMSgt John R. Gillette Sep 2006 – April 2008
- CMSgt Clifton G. Cole Jul 2008 – Dec 2010
- CMSgt Brian D. Lavoie Dec 2010 - Present

* - Position officially created in 1970, formerly known as Senior Enlisted Advisors - changed to Command Chief Master Sergeants on 1 Nov 1998

HISTORY OF ELLSWORTH AFB

US War Department Establishes Rapid City Army Air Base

On 2 January 1942, the U.S. War Department established Rapid City Army Air Base as a training location for B-17 *Flying Fortress* crews. From September 1942—when its military runways first opened—until mission needs changed in July 1945, the field's instructors taught thousands of pilots, navigators, radio operators and gunners from nine heavy bombardment groups and numerous smaller units. All training focused on the allied drive to overthrow the Axis powers in Europe.

After World War II, the base briefly trained weather reconnaissance and combat squadrons using P-61 *Black Widow*, P-38 *Lightning*, P-51 *Mustang*, and B-25 *Mitchell* aircraft. Those missions ended and Rapid City Army Air Field temporarily shut down from September 1946 to March 1947.

Base Becomes Rapid City Air Force Base, Home for the 28th Bombardment Wing

When operations resumed in 1947 the base belonged to the new United States Air Force. The primary unit assigned to Rapid City Air Force Base was the new 28th Bombardment Wing (BMW) flying the great B-29 *Superfortress*.

Base Named Weaver AFB, Only for a Short Time

The installation changed names a few more times during its early years. In January 1948, Air Force Chief of Staff, Gen Carl A. Spaatz, renamed it Weaver Air Force Base in honor of Brig Gen Walter R. Weaver, a pioneer in the development of the Air Force. In June, in response to overwhelming public appeals, Secretary of the Air Force Stuart Symington returned it to its previous name; the base also became a "permanent installation" in early 1948.

The New B-36 Peacemaker Arrives

Shortly after additional runway improvements in July 1949, the 28 BMW began conversion from B-29s to the huge B-36 *Peacemaker*. In April 1950, the Air Staff reassigned the base from Fifteenth Air Force to Eighth Air Force.

Base Renamed Again in Honor of Brig. General Richard E. Ellsworth

The base experienced one of its worst peacetime tragedies in March 1953 when an RB-36 and its entire crew of 23 crashed in Newfoundland while returning from a routine exercise in Europe. On 13 June 1953, President Dwight D. Eisenhower made a personal visit to dedicate the base in memory of Brig Gen Richard E.

Ellsworth, commander of the 28th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing, who perished in the accident.

Ellsworth AFB Gets the New B-52 Stratofortress

Military organizations periodically upgrade manpower and machines to adapt to new national security requirements. Ellsworth Air Force Base was no exception. Headquarters Strategic Air Command (SAC) reassigned the 28 BW from Eighth Air Force back to Fifteenth Air Force in October 1955. Approximately one year later, SAC set plans in motion to replace the 28th's B-36s with the new, all-jet, B-52 *Stratofortress*. The last B-36 left Ellsworth on 29 May 1957 and the first B-52 arrived sixteen days later. In 1958, all base units came under the command of the 821st Strategic Aerospace Division, headquartered at Ellsworth.

Ellsworth AFB Receives Missiles

In October 1960, Ellsworth entered the "Space Age," with the activation of the 850th Strategic Missile Squadron, initially assigned to the 28 BMW. For more than a year this squadron prepared for the emplacement of *Titan I* intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM), which finally arrived in 1962, shortly after the activation of the 44th Strategic Missile Wing (SMW) in January. At that time, Headquarters Strategic Air Command also named the 44 SMW as host wing at Ellsworth.

Titan had a short life span. In July 1962, SAC had effectively rendered it obsolete by activating the 66th

Strategic Missile Squadron, the first of three such units slated to operate 150 *Minuteman I* ICBMs under the 44 SMW. The 67th Strategic Missile Squadron joined the 44th in August, followed by the 68th Strategic Missile Squadron in September 1962.

On 1 June 1971, SAC inactivated the 821st Strategic Aerospace Division. By October of that year, an upgraded *Minuteman II* also replaced earlier missiles.

Ellsworth AFB Becomes “Bad to the Bone”

Ellsworth claimed the titled "The Showplace of SAC" as it continued to fight the Cold War by maintaining two legs of America's strategic triad: strategic bombardment and ICBMs. It carried out these vital missions for more than 15 years with relatively little change. Then, the 1980s brought many new challenges. In 1986, the base and the 28 BMW made extensive preparations to phase out the aging B-52 fleet and become the new home for the advanced B-1B *Lancer*, affectionately known as the “Bone.” Contractors completed new unaccompanied enlisted dormitories in March; a new security police group headquarters in October; and gave Ellsworth's 13,497-foot runway a much-needed facelift. In addition, they completed new aircraft maintenance facilities for the complex new bird. The last 28 BMW B-52H left in early 1986. In January 1987, the wing received the first of 35 B-1B bombers.

The 12th Air Division Moves to Ellsworth

The 12th Air Division moved to Ellsworth on 15 July 1988. This organization was responsible for training

B-1B, transient B-52, and the 28th's KC-135 *Stratotanker* aircrews. Headquarters SAC activated a third wing, the 99th Strategic Weapons Wing (SWW) at Ellsworth on 10 August 1989. This wing assumed primary responsibility for B-1B and B-52 advanced aircrew training.

The Cold War Ends, Brings More Changes to Ellsworth AFB

The destruction of the Berlin Wall in October 1989 signaled the impending collapse of the Soviet Union. Simultaneously, the US Air Force also had to reshuffle its organizations and resources to meet the changing threat. Changes came quickly. In less than four months, on 3 January 1990, Strategic Air Command redesignated the 812th Combat Group as the 812th Strategic Support Wing (SSW), which, for a short time, became Ellsworth's fourth wing. The 812 SSW consolidated all combat support activities into one organization. On 31 July 1990, the Strategic Warfare Center (SWC) replaced the 12th Air Division, providing operational command and administrative control over Ellsworth's subordinate units. Then, as part of the Strategic Air Command's intermediate headquarters and base-level reorganization plan, on 1 September 1991, SAC renamed the 28 BMW the 28th Wing, the 44 SMW the 44th Wing, and the 99 SWW the 99th Tactics and Training Wing. Ten days later SAC inactivated both the SWC and the 812 SSW. Once again, the 28th became Ellsworth's host organization and it absorbed all previous 812 SSW functions. It was also during this period that the Secretary of Defense ordered alert operations to stand down in acknowledgment of the elimination of the Warsaw Pact. The decades-long Cold War had ended.

Reorganization Brings More Change to Ellsworth AFB

On 1 June 1992, as part of the first major reorganization since its creation in 1947, the US Air Force inactivated SAC and assigned Ellsworth's organizations (including a renamed 28th Bomb Wing (BW) to the newly activated Air Combat Command (ACC). After less than a year under the new command, the 28th's mission changed from strategic bombardment to worldwide conventional munitions delivery. The mission of the 99th Tactics and Training Wing (later to become the 99th Wing) also continued, albeit slightly modified to fit the requirements of the new force concept. The 44th Missile Wing had ably accomplished its deterrence mission. On 3 December 1991, the wing permanently pulled the first missile from its silo. On 6 April 1992, the first launch control center shut down. Deactivation of the entire missile complex ended in April 1994. In keeping with its patriotic Minuteman tradition, the 44th Missile Wing formally inactivated on 4 July 1994.

In March 1994, Ellsworth welcomed the 34th Bomb Squadron, a geographically separated unit awaiting airfield upgrades before it could return to its parent organization, the 366 BW, at Mountain Home Air Force Base, Idaho. The 34th's B-1Bs are part one of the Air Force's composite wings, which include F-15 Strike Eagles, F-16 Fighting Falcons, and KC-135s.

Team Ellsworth and the B-1B Soar to New Heights

During 1994, the Air Force selected Ellsworth as the exclusive location from which to conduct a congressionally mandated operational readiness assessment of the B-1B, known locally as "Dakota Challenge." After six months of hard work, under both peacetime and simulated wartime conditions, the 28 BW and Ellsworth passed the test "with flying colors" and proved the B-1B to be a reliable and capable weapons system, the mainstay of America's heavy bomber fleet for years to come.

Ellsworth Makes Changes to Improve the B-1B

In 1995, the 99th Wing departed for a new assignment at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada, although a small contingent formerly attached to that wing remained behind to continue bomber tactics training and radar munitions scoring from a handful of dispersed detachments. The year also saw the inactivation of one of Ellsworth's oldest units, the 77th Bomb Squadron. While the unit (as an administrative entity) departed to save Air Force dollars for development of new follow-on B-1B munitions, the organization's aircraft remained at Ellsworth (in a flying reserve status) under the able care of its sister unit, the 37th Bomb Squadron.

A reversal of fortune occurred in early 1996. On 26 March, the Air Force announced that the 77th Bomb

Squadron would soon return to Ellsworth. On 1 April 1997, the squadron again activated at Ellsworth as the geographically separated 34th Bomb Squadron completed its transfer to its home at the 366th Wing, Mountain Home AFB, Idaho. Currently the 77th has seven of its B-1Bs out of the reconstitution reserve.

Ellsworth Host to Expeditionary Air Force Unit

In March 1999, the Air Force announced a reorganization plan that makes Ellsworth AFB and the 28 BW partners in the new Expeditionary Air Force (EAF) concept. The 28 BW is a lead wing in the new EAF. Under this new plan, the 77 BS will gain six additional B-1Bs, and Ellsworth AFB will gain about 100 more uniformed personnel. The expeditionary forces will help the Air Force respond quickly to any worldwide crisis while making life more predictable for military personnel.

Ellsworth Chosen as B-1B Showplace

On 19 September 2002, the 77th Bomb Squadron at Ellsworth AFB inactivated and the 34th Bomb Squadron arrived from Mountain Home AFB, Idaho to take its place. Due to an Air Force wide drawdown of B-1B bombers, Ellsworth was a premier location for two of the most historic bomber squadrons in the Air Force, the 34th and the 37th Bomb Squadrons.

Ellsworth Takes the Lead in the War on Terror

The 28th Bomb Wing led the Air Force in supporting the war on terror. In September of 2001, B-1B bombers from the 37th Bomb Squadron on Ellsworth AFB moved to Diego Garcia to join the 34th Expeditionary Bomb Squadron. Together with B-1Bs from Mountain Home AFB, they compiled an impressive combat record against the terrorist factions in Afghanistan. The 34th EBS dropped over 3 million pounds of ordnance and generated an impressive 91.3% effectiveness rating. Currently, the 28th Bomb Wing has many deployed personnel worldwide in support of ongoing operations, particularly in the Middle East.

Looking to the Future

The men and women of Ellsworth AFB draw from past experiences to plan for the future. As they embrace the core values of – Integrity First, Service Before Self, and Excellence in All We Do – they stand ready to provide “Global Power for America”!