



## Fact Sheet

# United States Air Force

91st Strategic Missile Wing  
Minot AFB, North Dakota 58705

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### 5th BOMBARDMENT WING (HEAVY)

The 5th Bombardment Wing (Heavy) is a major Strategic Air Command unit. Operational control, command jurisdiction and administrative responsibilities of the wing are exercised by the 57th Air Division, also located here. From there, the chain of command leads to 15th Air Force, headquartered at March AFB, Calif., and ultimately to Strategic Air Command Headquarters at Offutt AFB, Neb.

The wing is comprised of seven squadrons, which includes the 23rd Bombardment Squadron (Heavy), 906th Air Refueling Squadron (Heavy), 5th Organizational Maintenance Squadron, 5th Field Maintenance Squadron, 5th Avionics Maintenance Squadron, 5th Munitions Maintenance Squadron, and the 5th BMW Headquarters section.

The mission of the wing is to develop and maintain operational capability to permit the conduct of strategic warfare according to Emergency War Orders and conventional warfare according to contingency war plans. Operations are conducted with the Boeing B-52H Stratofortress and KC-135A Stratotanker. Worldwide support is provided by the KC-135 to the 5th BMW and other Strategic Air Command aircraft and also to other commands and the Air National Guard.

The history of the 5th BMW is the oldest in 15th Air Force and second oldest in SAC. Originally activated on Aug. 15, 1919, the wing has accumulated more than 66 years of flying experience. The long and proud history of the wing embodies the evolution of American aviation, particularly U.S. strategic airpower. In 1921 the unit was redesignated as the 5th Group (Observation), and a year later as the 5th Group (Pursuit and Bombardment), with the wing's first aircraft being the DeHaviland DH-4.

Flying in the early days of the Army Air Corps was always exciting and frequently quite dangerous. The 5th Group was assigned to the Territorial Air Service and performed a wide variety of tasks throughout the Hawaiian Islands. They helped survey and chart the islands and performed such diverse activities as seeding fig trees from the air, dropping equipment and supplies for forestry projects, and numerous ferry missions.

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(Current as of August 1985)

Among the group's many famous accomplishments during this time was the bombing of the erupting Mauna Loa volcano by a flight of B-10s of the 23rd BMS and 72nd Bombardment Squadron. By dropping 20 600-pound bombs with pinpoint accuracy, a molten lava flow was diverted from pouring into the city of Hilo. From this event, the 23rd BMS took its' squadron patch, which depicts five bombs falling into a volcano.

Early on the morning of Dec. 7, 1941, the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor and Hickam Field by the Japanese inflicted heavy damages on the men and aircraft of the group. Following the four-hour attack, aircraft and crews from the group were among the first to take the offensive.

The months immediately following the devastating attack were among some of the most discouraging times ever faced by the unit. Supplies and fuel were extremely scarce and the ever-present threat of another attack hung over the islands. In spite of this, members of the group responded heroically and began to carry the battle into the enemy's territory. The group played an important role in almost every major campaign in the Pacific. Participating in the Battles of Midway, Guadalcanal, New Guinea, Leyte, Luzon, and many others, the enemy felt the force of the group's aroused patriotism.

In the spring of 1943, the group began replacing its B-17s with B-24s. Operating from Los Negros in the Admiralty Islands, the group reduced the enemy's installations on the Wolaiei Islands to a mere shambles, thereby cutting their supply lines. During September, the group participated in the bombing strikes against Balikpapan, Borneo, the center of the Japanese petroleum industry in the Pacific Theater. The strikes were acclaimed as one of the most heroic exploits of the war and proved that land-based bombers could be used at long range. For their actions, the group was awarded two Distinguished Unit Citations and the Philippine Presidential Unit Citation. Additionally, more than 1,000 decorations for personal valor were won by members of the group.

At the close of the war, the group saw many changes in its mission. Now flying RB-29s out of Clark Field in the Philippines, the group was redesignated as a reconnaissance unit with the mission of photomapping the western Pacific. The years following World War II marked a great change in American airpower with the creation of a separate Air Force. During this period, the group underwent several name and assignment changes. In the late spring of 1947, the 5th Reconnaissance Group was redesignated as the 5th Strategic Reconnaissance Group and assigned to the Strategic Air Command.

By the end of the year, the group had been transferred to Fairfield-Suisun AFB, later to become Travis AFB, Calif. Still flying the RB-29, the group's crews began rotational duty in England performing photo reconnaissance missions over Europe.

The outbreak of hostilities in Korea led to the deployment of group aircraft and crews to the Far East. By the end of 1950, the group began the process of converting from their RB-29s to the RB-36. --

During the Cold War era of the 1950s, the group remained in a high state of combat readiness. Its crews and maintenance personnel kept the aircraft among the top contenders in all competitions, and in October 1955, the wing's reconnaissance mission finally ended when it was redesignated as the 5th Bombardment Wing (Heavy) with a primary mission of strategic bombardment.

In 1958 another major change was marked in the wing's history. During that year, the wing began converting to the B-52G aircraft. While this was a happy moment, it also meant that the wing would be divided into three separate functions: one at Mather AFB, Calif.; another at Beale AFB, Calif.; and the original at Travis AFB. The wing received the GAM 77 Hound Dog and ADM 20 Quail missiles to enhance its strategic deterrence role in this period also.

As the conflict in Southeast Asia developed, crews from the wing's tanker squadron deployed to support Operation Young Tiger, refueling missions for Southeast Asian support. In mid-July 1968, the wing moved here and took control of the assets and personnel of the discontinued 450th Bombardment Wing. In doing so, the wing gained the 906th Air Refueling Squadron, the original SAC unit here.

Although the wing gained the more powerful B-52H because of its move, its mission of strategic deterrence did not change. It continued to support the U.S. efforts in Southeast Asia while at the same time compiling a record of accomplishments for both the operations and maintenance deputies.

In the summer of 1975, the wing gained the AGM69A Short Range Attack Missile (SRAM).

In 1980, the wing was named to be part of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (SPF). In September of that year, the wing deployed to Whiteman AFB, Mo., to test its ability to conduct conventional contingency operations under a bare base concept. The following year the wing again showed its ability to respond on a worldwide basis by flying a 31-hour non-stop mission from here to Cairo, Egypt, and back while dropping bombs on a pre-selected target in the Egyptian desert.

During January 1981, the wing's maintenance community was named the "Best in SAC," and two months later the unit received the 15th Air Force Aircraft Maintenance Performance Award and Munitions Achievement Award. Additionally, in April, the wing was named as the runner-up for the prestigious Air Force Deadalian Award for 1980.

In November 1981, the wing received its first Offensive Avionics System (OAS) modified B-52H. The OAS is the first major modification of the B-52 bombing, navigation and weapons delivery performance capabilities. Basically, the vacuum tube technology of the 1950s was replaced with state-of-the-art computerized circuitry.

During August and September, the wing deployed two tankers and support personnel to Cairo to support Egyptian Air Force (EAF) fighter pilots in learning air refueling procedures. While this contingent was operating in the Middle East, another operation was being conducted. The wing also deployed two bombers and support personnel to Andersen AFB, Guam, to support Indian Ocean operations. This force left Andersen AFB and went to Australia to conduct operations in unison with the U.S. Navy and the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF).

In 1983, the 5th BMW completed conversion to the OAS and became the first operational B-52H OAS wing in the Free World. August 1983 was busy with the wing participating in Bright Star '83, and deploying the first B-52s to ever land in and operate from Egypt. September brought another Busy Island/Glad Customer deployment of B-52s and KC-135s to Guam and Australia. October saw the 5th BMW and the base become host to the largest aircraft alert forces in SAC. In November, the 5th BMW's maintenance complex was named Best in 15th Air Force. In addition, the 5th OMS and 5th MMS were named as the Best Organizational and Munitions Maintenance Squadrons in 15th Air Force respectively.

In February 1984, the 5th BMW was named "Best Bomb Wing in 15th Force" for 1983 winning the Col. Art Neeley Trophy. In November, the 906th AREFS won the prestigious Gen. Carl. A. Spaatz Trophy. In December, the 5th MMS was named "Best in SAC."

In March 1985, the 5th MMS gathered even greater acclaim by being named the "Best MMS in the Air Force." Following that, the wing captured two 15th Air Force awards: the Col. Art Neely Trophy and the 15th Air Force Best ORI/Buy None Award. Further, the wing was also awarded the highly coveted Air Force Outstanding Unit Award.

On June 6, the wing provided Gen. Bennie L. Davis, SAC commander in chief, with his final B-52 flight and during July, the 906th AREFS again captured the coveted Albert L. Evans Memorial Air Refueling Trophy, which signifies boom operator excellence in support of global refueling operations.

The 5th BMW will gain the Air-Launched Cruise Missile (ALCM) in the fall of 1988.