



# Fact Sheet

# United States Air Force

91st Strategic Missile Wing  
Minot AFB, N.D. 58705-5000

Office of Public Affairs  
Telephone (701) 723-6212

## 91ST STRATEGIC MISSILE WING

Located at Minot Air Force Base, N.D., the 91st Strategic Missile Wing is one of six Minuteman missile wings in the Strategic Air Command. The wing is under the jurisdiction of the 57th Air Division, also located at Minot, and 15th Air Force, located at March Air Force Base, Calif.

The wing's mission is to provide a highly ready Intercontinental Ballistic Missile force that contributes to United States deterrence of nuclear war, but if deterrence fails, promptly respond with combat capability that would contribute significantly to a United States victory.

The 91st SMW traces its history back to the 91st Bombardment Group of World War II fame. On April 15, 1942, the original 91st was activated and assigned to 8th Air Force. The group flew B-17 bombing missions in Europe, and earned two Distinguished Unit Citations, including being honored for extraordinary heroism, determination and esprit de corps in action against Germany on March 4, 1943. Despite adverse weather conditions and heavy enemy air opposition, 91st bombers successfully attacked their target, a railroad marshalling yard in Hamm, Germany. The group earned a second citation for a mission into Germany on January 11, 1944. As part of a massive 8th Air Force raid into central Germany to bomb aircraft factories vital to the German war effort, the 91st bomber force overcame fierce resistance from German anticipators and dropped more than half its bomb within 1,000 feet of the targets.

The 91st was inactivated in November 1945, but came back as the 91st Reconnaissance Group in July 1947. From 1947 until 1952 the group flew global reconnaissance missions in RB-17, RB-29, RB-50 and RB-45 aircraft. In May 1952 the group was inactivated and absorbed by the 91st Strategic Reconnaissance Wing. This brings to light a small but important historical point. The original 91st Bombardment Group ceased to exist in May 1952. From Nov. 10, 1948, until its inactivation in May 1952, the 91st Reconnaissance Group functioned as part of the 91st SRW.

Strategic Air Command headquarters activated the 91st SRW in November 1948 in a commandwide effort to replace the group with the wing as SAC's basic combat unit. Unfortunately, the often illustrious histories of World War II groups such as the 91st were retired when a group was inactivated. So in 1954, Air Force headquarters agreed to bestow, or loan, the histories of World War II groups to identically numbered wings. This allows the 91st SMW to keep alive the history of the 91st Bombardment Group.

The 91st SRW conducted worldwide aerial photography and mapping operations and, in 1950, acquired an air refueling capability. The 91st flew KB-29 tankers until 1952 when it converted to the KC-97.

Following inactivation in November 1957 the 91st lay dormant until its reactivation as the 91st Bombardment Wing in November 1962. Stationed at Glasgow Air Force Base, Mont., and equipped with B-52 and KC-135 aircraft, the wing trained in strategic bombardment and air refueling as a member of the SAC deterrent force. In 1966 most of the wing deployed to Southeast Asia for conventional bombing and air refueling in support of American forces in Vietnam. The wing returned to Glasgow in March 1967, but then deployed to Okinawa as a show of United States force after North Korea seized the USS Pueblo in February 1968. While at Glasgow the 91st BMW earned Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards for sustained superior performance, Southeast Asia combat, and participation in the Pueblo incident.

When Glasgow closed in 1968 the wing moved to Minot where, as the 91st SMW, it took control of a Minuteman missile force from the inactivated 455th Strategic Missile Wing. Since that time the 91st has been a leader in the strategic missile community. Completion of a force modernization program in December 1971 made the 91st SMW the first fully operational Minuteman III unit in the Air Force. In 1976 all 91st SMW missiles underwent the Command Data Buffer force modernization. This improved the retargeting capability of all 150 missiles and, in turn, permitted greater flexibility in strategic warfare.

Today, the 91st SMW Minuteman force stands ever ready to defend America's interests.