



Vietnam War: Pilot and Air Support Training on U.S. Military Installations Historic Context Subtheme

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Background:

The Korean War provided a wake-up call that reinforced the reality that small-scale warfare using aerial components like tactical bombers and fighters remain strategically important. Given this, Department of Defense (DoD) planners sought to shift military strategy away from conventional warfare and toward massive retaliation and air defense—a strategy known as New Look—that shaped the military and aviation strategy on the eve of the Vietnam War.



USAF Pilots Refueling In-Route to a Bombing Target in North Vietnam

Source: Miscellaneous Vietnam Photographs, 1958 - 1974, Record Group 306, National Archives.

Pilots were needed to fly a myriad of aircraft for the Vietnam war effort. Missions involving aircraft included defending villages and outposts, attacking enemy troops and convoys, escorting road convoys and bombing strikes, dropping flares for attacking fighters, flying armed reconnaissance, search and rescue, transporting troops and equipment, refueling, interdicting the movement of enemy forces and supplies, directing air strikes and bombing runs, spraying defoliants, and psychological warfare.

Objective:

The involvement of the United States in the Vietnam conflict necessitated training for many personnel to fly and maintain fixed-wing aircraft. Many construction projects associated with Vietnam-era pilot and air support training are approaching 50-years old. This will require evaluation of their historical significance under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). The project objective is to provide a historic context and building typology for facilities on DoD installations that specifically supported pilot and air support training during the Vietnam War, 1962-1975.

Summary of Approach:

Department of Defense OFFICE OF PREPUBLICATION AND SECURITY REVIEW

The historic context process included a literature review, investigation of primary and secondary sources for context, site visits to select installations, and report development. Researchers accessed primary and secondary sources at the National Archives and Records Administration, military libraries and museums, university libraries, and other sources. DoD installation staff provided additional information and documentation.

Benefit:

The resulting historic context report provides cultural resource managers and professionals with a standardized approach to identify property types, determine historical significance of associated properties, and assess integrity, thereby greatly increasing efficiency and cost-savings in compliance with the NHPA and management.

Accomplishments:

Produced a report that provides context and typology for Vietnam War (1962–1975) pilot and air support training-related resources on DoD installations in the United States. The report also includes specific examples of U.S.-based installations that conducted pilot training and air support missions during the war.

The report can be used to develop installation-specific contexts to support the identification and evaluation of Vietnam War special school facilities on those installations.



An Instructor at Lowry Air Force Base, Colorado, Explains Elements of the F-4C Offensive Fire Control System

Source: History of Air Education and Training Command 1942-2002, Thomas A. Manning

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