



FACT SHEET

U.S. Air Force Fact Sheet NELLIS AIR FORCE BASE

Mission

Nellis Air Force Base, a part of the United States Air Force's [Air Combat Command](#), is located approximately eight miles northeast of Las Vegas, Nev. The base itself covers more than 14,000 acres, while the total land area occupied by Nellis and its restricted ranges is about 5,000 square miles. An additional 7,700 miles of airspace north and east of the restricted ranges are also available for military flight operations.

Nellis is a major focal point for advanced combat aviation training. Its mission is accomplished through an array of aircraft, including fighters, bombers, refuelers, and aircraft used for transport, close-air-support, command-and-control and combat search-and-rescue. The Nellis work force of about 9,500 military and civilians makes it one of the largest single employers in Southern Nevada. The total military population numbers more than 40,000, including family members and military retirees in the area.



Cars line up at the Nellis Air Force Base main gate as they undergo security checks. Nellis AFB, the “Home of the Fighter Pilot,” is located about 8 miles northeast of Las Vegas, Nev. (U.S. Air Force photo)

Background

Nellis began as the Las Vegas Army Air Field in late 1941, hosting the Army Air Corps Flexible Gunnery School which started B-17 gunnery training in early 1942. In 1944, B-17 co-pilot training was added. During the height of World War II, more than 600 gunners and 215 co-pilots graduated from the school every five weeks. In March 1945, B-17 co-pilot training was cancelled and the gunnery program gave way to B-29 gunnery training. Following the end of the war, the base was a separation center and then placed on temporary standby status, finally closing in January 1947.

Reopened in 1949 as Las Vegas Air Force Base, it was renamed the next year in honor of [Lieutenant William Harrell Nellis](#). Lt Nellis, a P-47 pilot from southern Nevada, was killed in action Dec. 27, 1944, while on his 70th combat mission over Luxembourg during the Battle of the Bulge in support of the besieged 101st Airborne Division.

Initially an advanced pilot training base, the mission changed to F-86 flight training and gunnery for qualified pilots. During the Korean War, the training received at Nellis AFB was directly responsible for the 14-1 kill ratio of the F-86 against the superior MiG-15. At the time, Nellis was the only base training F-86 combat pilots - pilots returning from the theater were used as instructors at the Combat Crew Training School, and provided the air expertise that allowed the United States to maintain air superiority throughout the war.

With a 1958 transfer from Air Training Command to Tactical Air Command, the mission transitioned from initial aircraft qualification and gunnery training to advanced, graduate-level

weapons training. The USAF Tactical Fighter Weapons Center (now [Warfare Center](#)) was activated in 1966. In 1975, [Red Flag](#) air-to-air exercises were started and in 1990, the Air Warrior, now [Green Flag-West](#), air-to-ground training mission moved to Nellis AFB.

Today, as part of the [USAF Warfare Center \(USAFWC\)](#), units at Nellis continue to provide training for composite strike forces that include every type of aircraft in the [U.S. Air Force inventory](#), along with air and ground units of the [Army](#), [Navy](#), [Marines](#) and air units from allied nations. Nellis is also responsible for operational test and evaluation, as well as tactics development.

The [57th Wing](#) is the operational element of the center. The wing's major units are the 57th Operations Group, 57th Maintenance Group, [U.S. Air Force Air Demonstration Squadron "Thunderbirds"](#), U.S. Air Force Weapons School, [414th Combat Training Squadron \(Red Flag\)](#), [547th Intelligence Squadron](#) and the [549th Combat Training Squadron \(Green Flag-West\)](#).

Other USAFWC units at Nellis AFB are the [99th Air Base Wing](#) and [Nevada Test and Training Range \(NTTR\)](#), along with the [53d Test & Evaluation Group \(53d Wing, Eglin AFB, Fla.\)](#) and [505th Operations Group \(505th Command & Control Wing, Hurlburt Field, Fla.\)](#).

The [NTTR](#) organization is responsible for developing, maintaining, and operating facilities on the NTTR to satisfy requirements for a realistic combat environment.

The [99 ABW](#) has three groups. The 99th Mission Support Group provides a wide array of services including transportation, supply, services, contracting, civil engineering, mission support and communications for both Nellis AFB and [Creech AFB](#). The 99th Medical Group provides a growing range of medical services to the base and retiree population at the [Mike O'Callaghan Federal Medical Center](#), operated jointly with the [Department of Veterans Affairs](#). The 799th Security Forces Squadron provides base security and, through ACC's Silver Flag-Alpha Training Center at Creech AFB, training for SF defenders deploying to combat zones.

Tenant units at Nellis include the [926th Group, Air Force Reserve Command](#); [820th Red Horse Squadron](#) and 555th Red Horse Squadron (AFRC); [Operating Location Alpha, 563d Rescue Group](#) and more than 50 smaller tenant units and activities. Also present is an Armed Forces Reserve Center hosting [US Navy Reserve](#), [US Army Reserve](#) and [US Marine Corps Reserve](#) units.

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