

CALIFORNIA MILITARY DEPARTMENT HISTORICAL PROGRAM
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History of the 146th Airlift Wing (2007)

Extracted from undated command briefing, 146th Airlift Wing, Channel Islands Air National Guard Station. Digitized by California Military Department History Office, 29 July 2018

3.1. INTRODUCTION

Background

The 146th Airlift Wing (146th AW) began its rich flying tradition in 1924 as the 115th Observation Squadron, attached to the California National Guard's 40th Infantry (Sunburst) Division stationed at Clover Field, Santa Monica, California. The Wing moved to the Van Nuys Airport in 1946 and was based there until 1988, when it was moved to its new home: Channel Islands Air National Guard Station (CIANGS), located in Ventura County, California. Sitting adjacent to the Pacific Ocean, Channel Islands ANGS is bordered to the east and south by NAS Point Mugu, with whom the base shares the runway system. The base offers picturesque views of the Coastal Mountain Ranges, the Channel Islands, Pacific Coast Highway, and the Pacific Ocean. Today, the 146th AW flies the venerable Lockheed C-130J, and participates in contingency and humanitarian airlift, airborne fire fighting, counter-drug operations, and humanitarian relief missions around the State, around the Country, and around the World. Members of the Wing have flown, fought, and supported every war and conflict from World War I to OPERATIONS IRAQI FREEDOM and ENDURING FREEDOM. The men and women of the 146th Airlift Wing continuously bring a proud heritage, a terrific attitude, and unparalleled work ethic to the long, rich history of aviation in Southern California.

Demographics

The base was master-planned prior to construction in 1988. Channel Islands ANGS is situated on 206 acres. Today, the CIANGS has 22 buildings totaling 347,034 square feet of floor area. Our fulltime population is approximately 220 people consisting of AGRs, Federal Technicians, and California State employees. During UTA weekends the Base population approaches 1,100 people.

Tenant Units

At this time, the 146th AW has two tenants. The 146th AW is proudly one of three Air National Guard Units in the Country with the Mobile Airborne Fire Fighting System (MAFFS) Mission, and is host to the United States Forestry Service. Please see Chapter 5 for more information on the MAFFS mission. Additionally, the 146th AW hosts the 562nd Air Force Band.

3.2. THE HISTORY OF 146th AIRLIFT WING

Credit: MSgt Michael Drake, 2005

The Beginnings

The California Air National Guard's 146th Airlift Wing has been part of Southern California's rich aviation history since the mid-1920s. The wing traces its roots to the fledgling days of the 115th Observation Squadron, an early military aviation unit of the California National Guard's 40th Infantry Division. The 115th Observation Squadron was founded in the summer of 1924 at Clover Field in Santa Monica, the site of today's Santa Monica Airport.

In January 1925 the unit moved its operations to Griffith Park Aviation Field near Glendale. Major Corliss Moseley, military aviation proponent and civil aviation pioneer, was the unit's primary organizer and first commander. Among the 115th's original members was America's first World War I ace, Captain Paul Baer.

Inter-War Years and World War II

Throughout the 1920s and into the 1930s, the 115th operated a variety of aircraft including the World War I-vintage Curtiss JN4-D 'Jenny', Douglas 02-H, Consolidated 0-17, and Douglas 0-38. In October 1938 the 115th began flying the North American 0-47, the unit's first all-metal monoplane.

During the year following the December 7, 1941 disaster at Pearl Harbor, the 115th was fragmented, sending most of its experienced pilots and other air and ground crew members to Army Air Corps units fighting in various combat theaters around the world.

Many of the unit's World War II combatants - as well as other members of the California National Guard - distinguished themselves in battles in the Pacific, European, and China-Burma-India theaters.

The Tuskegee Airmen

On December 12, 1942, the first Air Defense Wing (later re-designated the 62^d Fighter Wing) was activated at Mitchell Field, New York, under the command of Gen. Elwood R. Quesada. February 1943 found the Wing at Casablanca, French Morocco, providing air defense for the area.

Outstanding units which served under the 62^d's command was the sharpshooting, all-black 332^d Fighter Group, which included America's first black combat fighter squadron, the famous "Fighting 99th." Over Sicily, Captain Charles B. Hall of the 99th Fighter Squadron became the first black pilot to shoot down an enemy airplane. Colonel Benjamin O. Davis Jr., was the commander of the 332^d Fighter Group, of which the 99th was a part. The "Fighting Red Tails" destroyed a total of 261 enemy aircraft while flying a total of 15,553 combat missions. His unit has the unique distinction of being the only Army Air Corps unit that never lost a bomber doing escort missions.

The 62^d was deactivated when the war ended while stationed at Pomigliano Airdrome, Italy, on September 12, 1945. In May of 1946, the unit was allocated to the California National Guard. It was extended federal recognition at Van Nuys Air National Guard Base on September 14, 1946.

The legacy of the famed Tuskegee Airmen and their association with the 146th Airlift Wing is part of a proud tradition of the wing that spans several decades. Today, several Tuskegee Airmen can frequently be seen at the Channel Islands Air National Guard Station as they continue to participate in 146th Airlift Wing activities, including the wing's annual Black History program, as well as other special occasions, such as the Channel Islands dedication ceremonies and the 50th anniversary celebration.

Van Nuys Years

Following World War II, previously splintered Army Guard and Army Guard Air Corps units were reformed and restructured under the newly created Department of Defense. On September 16, 1946, the 62d Fighter Wing, 146th Fighter Group and 115th Bombardment Squadron (the former 115th Observation Squadron) were given federal recognition, and flew their first missions out of Van Nuys Air National Guard Base, adjacent to Van Nuys Airport in the San Fernando valley of Los Angeles. One year later, almost to the day, on September 18, 1947, the United States Air Force became a separate branch of service. President Harry S Truman named Stuart Symington as the first secretary of the Air Force; and one week later, General Carl "Tooney" Spaatz became the first Air Force Chief of Staff. In 1948, several units moved to Burbank Airport, only to return to Van Nuys a short time later, after too little ramp space at Burbank proved a hindrance to accomplishing the wing's missions.

That same year, Major Bob DeHaven, a WWII Ace and 146th Fighter Group Operations Officer, broke the speed record, flying from San Francisco to Los Angeles in 36 minutes and 9 seconds. DeHaven's record was one of many significant events which culminated in the National Guard acknowledging the 146th Airlift Wing as the outstanding unit in the Air National Guard and awarding the unit the Spaatz Trophy in 1949 - our first of four wins of that particular trophy.

Other aircraft flown by the wing since the late 1940s include truly classic military aircraft such as the B-26 Invader, B-45 Tornado, F/P-51 Mustang, F-80 Shooting Star, F-86 Sabrejet, and the C-97 flown for combat air support missions in the early 1950s in the Korean War, and again in the 1960s in the Southeast Asia Conflict.

1960 brought a new mission and a new aircraft. With transportation recognized as a critical wartime need, the 146th was selected to receive the C-97 "Stratofreighter" and was re-designated the 146th Air Transportation Wing (heavy). Our present day course as airlifters was set. The next year the 146th was once again honored when the Air Force Association awarded the wing the Earl T. Ricks Memorial Trophy, following a flight of 22,815 miles from Van Nuys to Japan and back to Philadelphia, beating the competition by 623 miles.

Later in July of 1961, as tensions of the cold war flared, President Kennedy made it clear to the Soviet Union that the United States would maintain the integrity of Berlin. The 146th was activated once again and flew numerous missions during OPERATION VITTLES providing supplies of food, fuel, and other life supporting essentials to the people of Berlin.

The sixties also marked the beginning of other humanitarian missions with our new airlift capabilities. In 1964 a devastating earthquake all but leveled Anchorage, Alaska; floods ravaged Arcata; and in 1968, Hurricane "Camille," the most disastrous in history, hit the Gulf Coast with a fury. In each disaster, the 146th provided airlift for critical relief supplies and equipment. The unit returned to a wartime mission from 1965 to 1969, once again providing critical airlift in Vietnam.

1970 brought a new name - the 146th Tactical Airlift Wing; a new command; and a new aircraft - the C-130E Hercules, aircraft we continue to fly even into the new millennium in addition to the CC-130J. Also in the early 1970s, USAF "Total Force" policy brought the wing into full partnership with its Air Force counterparts by mandating cooperation and teamwork between Air Guard and active duty Air Force units in all phases of military airlift operations. As a result, in the succeeding years the wing's C-130s have traveled to all corners of the world, airlifting troops, passengers, and cargo during training missions, exercise deployments, and real-world military operations to support federal and state military airlift requirements. The wing and its subordinate units participated in Cold War military exercises such as Team Spirit, Volant Oak, Red Flag, and Reforger. Other JCS exercises included "Ember Dawn IV" in Alaska, and "Brave Shield" in Europe. In 1979 the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserves

assumed full responsibility for airlift operations in Central and South America, a commitment we continue to fulfill today.

In mid-December 1989, and continuing for several weeks, wing aircraft, air crews, and support personnel on deployment for exercise Violent Oak at Howard AFB in Panama flew combat airlift missions for U.S. Southern Command during OPERATION JUST CAUSE in Panama. More than 100 combat sorties were flown by 146th aircraft and crews, with no casualties or damage to aircraft.

Channel Islands ANGS

In December 1988, after more than six decades of Air National Guard flying tradition in the San Fernando Valley, the 146th Airlift Wing began moving from Van Nuys to a brand new state-of-the-art facility built on 204 acres of state-owned land adjacent to Naval Air Weapons Station Point Mugu, an active duty Navy flying installation. Located in Ventura County near the cities of Oxnard and Port Hueneme sixty miles northeast of Los Angeles, Channel Islands Air National Guard Station was constructed at a cost of more than \$70 million dollars, and is widely recognized as the newest and best flying facility in the Air National Guard. The buildings, hangars, flight-line, and grounds feature high-tech design and construction. The 146th operates from the military airfield on NAWS Pt Mugu, along with Navy and other federal aviation activities.

By March 1990 all but a small handful of wing personnel had transferred operations to Channel Islands ANG Station. Shortly thereafter, the old Van Nuys facility was closed and turned over to the city of Los Angeles. On April 30, 1990, the flag at Van Nuys ANG Base was lowered for the last time during a special ceremony. With all units now in place at Channel Islands ANGS, the 146th settled into a late spring and early summer of preparing for the official base dedication scheduled for early September 1990. But there were ominous clouds overhead.

The Persian Gulf

By the second week in August 1990 the world was moving swiftly toward armed confrontation in the Persian Gulf. A "line in the sand" had been drawn. President George Bush, and a nervous world waited as Iraq taunted the United Nations from a recently invaded and conquered Kuwait.

As the wing passed in review during base dedication ceremonies on September 8, 1990, the specter of war hovered overhead. On January 17, 1991, combat operations began to drive Saddam Hussein from Kuwait – OPERATION DESERT STORM. By late January 1991, the 146th Airlift Wing had provided U.S. Central Command and U.S. Air Forces in Europe more than 650 personnel, voluntarily and involuntarily activated, who participated in OPERATIONS DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM. Three wing subordinate units were partially activated by presidential order, including the 146th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, 146th Aerial Port Squadron, and the 146th Medical Squadron. Aeromedical evacuation and aerial port personnel served in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and other Persian Gulf locations for several months while aircraft and air crews from the 115th Airlift Squadron flew two month-long tours of duty in OPERATION VOLANT PINE, a backfill of military airlifters to Europe by Air National Guard C-130s.

The Third Millennium

The new century brought several new developments and unseen challenges. Following the September 11th terrorist attacks on America, hundreds of men and women of the 146th were activated for state and federal active duty throughout the U.S. and overseas - the largest unit activation since the Berlin Crisis. Within days of the terrorist attacks nearly 200 personnel from throughout the wing volunteered and were activated for OPERATION SAFE PASSAGE, a seven-month assignment providing 24/7 security augmentation at LAX – the largest airport security detail in the nation provided by a single unit.

In the ensuing months additional personnel from throughout wing to include security forces, air crews, maintenance personnel, aerial porters, aeromedical evacuation crews, and others completed approximately 1400 deployment assignments in the United States, Iraq, Kuwait, UAE, Afghanistan, and elsewhere in Southwest Asia in support of OPERATIONS ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM – worldwide deployments that continue even today.

In June of 2002, the unit celebrated the arrival of two state-of-the-art CC-130J Hercules - the first aircraft ever delivered directly from the factory to the wing. Two additional CC-130J aircraft arrived in 2004. The new Hercules aircraft - the latest in a C-130 production run spanning fifty years - demonstrates vast improvements in performance, range, load, and other capabilities over the older C-130E models utilized by the 146th that date back to the early 60s. The new J-model also guarantees the 146th's position at the forefront of tactical airlift well into the future.

Modular Airborne Fire Fighting System (MAFFS)

The 146th is one of only four C-130 units whose contribution to our nation's aerial fire fighting capability includes equipment and techniques for efficient, effective suppression of large wildland fires from the air. Since 1974, using the Modular Airborne Fire Fighting System (MAFFS) units supplied by the U.S. Forest Service and mounted in four C-130s, the wing's aerial fire fighting crews have been credited with saving many lives and countless millions of dollars worth of structures, forests, and brush land in California, throughout western states and worldwide.

During a particularly difficult fire season around the Mediterranean Sea, the Italian government requested and received MAFFS-equipped aircraft, crews, and support personnel from the 146th. For several weeks, our aircraft and crews fought fires in Italy and Sardinia, while training local firefighters in MAFFS techniques, and earning the respect and admiration of many European aerial firefighters.

The fire seasons of 1993 and 1994 were the worst on record. The Malibu fires of '93 literally burned to the edge of our base. But it was in 1994, with over 55,000 wildfires raging throughout the western states, that the 146th, along with the three other MAFFS-equipped guard and reserve units flew nearly 2,000 missions, dropping fifty-one million pounds of fire retardant on raging wildfires. To date over 6500 aerial fire fighting missions have been flown by the 146th and its other guard and reserve MAFFS partners.

Nation Building and Humanitarian Deployments

Since 1995, members of the 146th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, along with other wing support personnel, have traveled throughout the Republic of Chile on annual missions demonstrating aeromedical equipment and techniques. This ongoing mission has resulted in the formation of the Escuadrilla de Redespliegue Sanitario Aerotransportable Modular (ERSAM), a fully trained and certified aeromedical evacuation squadron within the Fuerza Aerea de Chile. The success of the 146AES missions has been lauded by the U.S. embassy in Santiago, as well as 12th Air Force personnel and General Sergio Olmedo, at that time the surgeon general of the Fuerza Aerea de Chile.

In 1997 the two units traveled to the island of Rapa Nui (Easter Island) where they successfully conducted a joint mass casualty exercise in the aftermath of a mock aircraft disaster, rendering immediate medical care and mass casualty evacuation. It was an exercise also witnessed by various officials of the U.S. Air Force and other South American and European nations.

In November 2000 members of the 146AES and other personnel from the 146AW conducted a series of intensive workshops at the Air Force Hospital in Santiago in advanced cardiac life support, pre-hospital trauma response, and survival training. Following the medical symposiums, 146th personnel, pararescuemen from the 129th Rescue Wing at Moffett Federal Airfield, members of ERSAM and

doctors and surgeons from the Air Force Wilford Hall Medical Center deployed to the Atacama Desert - the second most hostile environment on the planet, second only to Antarctica - for a grueling mass casualty evacuation exercise. In less than six hours PJs from the 129th and medical personnel from two nations, speaking different languages, had effectively rescued, triaged, treated and evacuated all simulated crash victims in a seamless mission. The success of that exercise demonstrated the interoperability of units working together yet speaking different languages, able to fulfill a mission in the most difficult and demanding of conditions.

In May 2000 members of the 146th deployed to Ukraine for OPERATION ROUGH & READY 2000 - a key element in the Partnership For Peace Program. Working with Ukrainian military and civilian disaster relief personnel, members of the 146th Airlift Wing and 129th Rescue Wing participated in a series of disaster relief and mass casualty evacuation scenarios including a flood, air crash, earthquake and bio-hazard emergency. It was indeed a rare sight of two California Air Guard C-130 Hercules aircraft on the ramp at Sheguyev airfield - a former Soviet air base. Warmer still was to witness the interaction of U.S. and Ukrainian personnel as new friendships were being formed between former adversaries now working together in a humanitarian mission.

Honors

In its most recent inspections as a wing, the Wing scored an overall Excellent in the Operational Readiness Inspection (ORI) of 2010, an Excellent in the Unit Compliance Inspection (UCI) of 2007, and the Operational Readiness Inspection in 2009.

Previous inspection history within the Wing is also excellent: the 146th earned an Excellent in its ORI of 1999, an excellent in the Quality Air Force Assessment (QAFA) of 1996 (with two squadrons rated as superior), and another excellent in the Air Force Formal Standard Evaluation (FSEV) of 1996. In the Hospital Services Inspection of 2001, the 146th Medical Squadron scored a 92-rating, the second highest in California and the second highest in the nation for that year.

Just one year after the terrorist attacks in September 2002, despite hundreds of wing personnel being deployed worldwide, the unit earned a score of "Excellent" in the Unit Compliance Inspection (UCI), with the wing's Intelligence, Civil Engineering, and Communications and Information sections all garnering ratings of Outstanding.

In 1997 the 146th Airlift Wing was once again awarded the General Carl Spaatz Trophy - designating it as the Outstanding Air National Guard unit - the third time this honor has been presented to the 146th, a feat not duplicated by any other unit in the Air National Guard. In addition, the Air Force Association named the 146th as the Outstanding Unit in the Air National Guard; and the National Guard Bureau named the 146th as the "Outstanding Air Guard Unit" for 1997. It was a year of accomplishment and rich in recognition - one which so appropriately culminated with the 50th Anniversary Celebration of the U.S. Air Force commemorating a half a century of excellence.

In January 1998 the 146th Airlift Wing was praised for extraordinary service to the nation, state, and local communities and presented with its fourth Air Force Outstanding Unit Award. During the period of January 1996 through June 1997, the unit played critical roles in support of DoD missions deploying to Oman and Saudi Arabia in support of Southern Watch; to Germany, Hungary, and Bosnia as part of OPERATIONS JOINT ENDEAVOR and JOINT GUARD; and to the Persian Gulf during OPERATIONS DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM. The 146th was also cited for its involvement during hostilities in Panama as well as peacetime humanitarian airlift and aerial fire fighting missions.

The year 2000 brought even more honors to the 146th winning the prestigious 15th Air Force Solano Trophy. In making the presentation, Lt. Gen. Walter S. Hogle Jr., Commander of 15th Air Force,

commended the 146th for the “highest ops tempo of any C-130 unit in the Air Guard,” as well as its ongoing statistics of superior aircraft readiness (again highest in the reserve component) and its superior safety record of 271,000 hours of accident-free flying spanning 35 years.

Golden Legacy: Boundless Future

The 146th Airlift Wing has a legacy of service in time of war and humanitarian missions during natural disasters. Our proud history includes missions in the skies over Europe during World War II, flying food and other critical supplies into Tempelhof (Berlin), flying F-86s during the Korean Conflict, service in Vietnam, in OPERATIONS DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM, in Panama during OPERATION JUST CAUSE, in Bosnia for OPERATION JOINT ENDEAVOR, and more recently personnel serving worldwide in OPERATIONS IRAQI FREEDOM and ENDURING FREEDOM in the war against terrorism, as well as countless humanitarian missions to include disaster relief following hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, in addition to aerial firefighting.

Today, as before, our true strength, and our most precious asset, are our 1,100 Guard men and women who comprise and sustain one of the largest and most capable airlift wings in the nation and who constantly and consistently portray the Air Force Core Values of Integrity – Excellence – Service. We are proud of our cadre of more than 220 highly dedicated and professional full-time civil service and active duty military technicians and civilian employees.

Our Lockheed CC-130J Hercules aircraft are constantly engaged in military flying operations, fulfilling state and federal missions throughout the United States and the world. The Wing’s federal taskings, performed under the aegis of USAF Air Mobility Command, help accomplish the total airlift requirements of the Department of Defense and the United States Government. State missions are flown when so directed by California ANG Headquarters in Sacramento, or the National Guard Bureau in Washington, D.C.

The members of the 146th Airlift Wing are justifiably proud of their achievements and record of excellence and of the heritage that goes back to the dawn of military aviation history in Southern California. Ever mindful of our heritage and the accomplishments of those who have gone before us, today’s men and women of the 146th Airlift Wing continue that tradition of excellence and dedicated service to our nation, state, and local communities, all the while standing ready and vigilant for the challenges of the future.

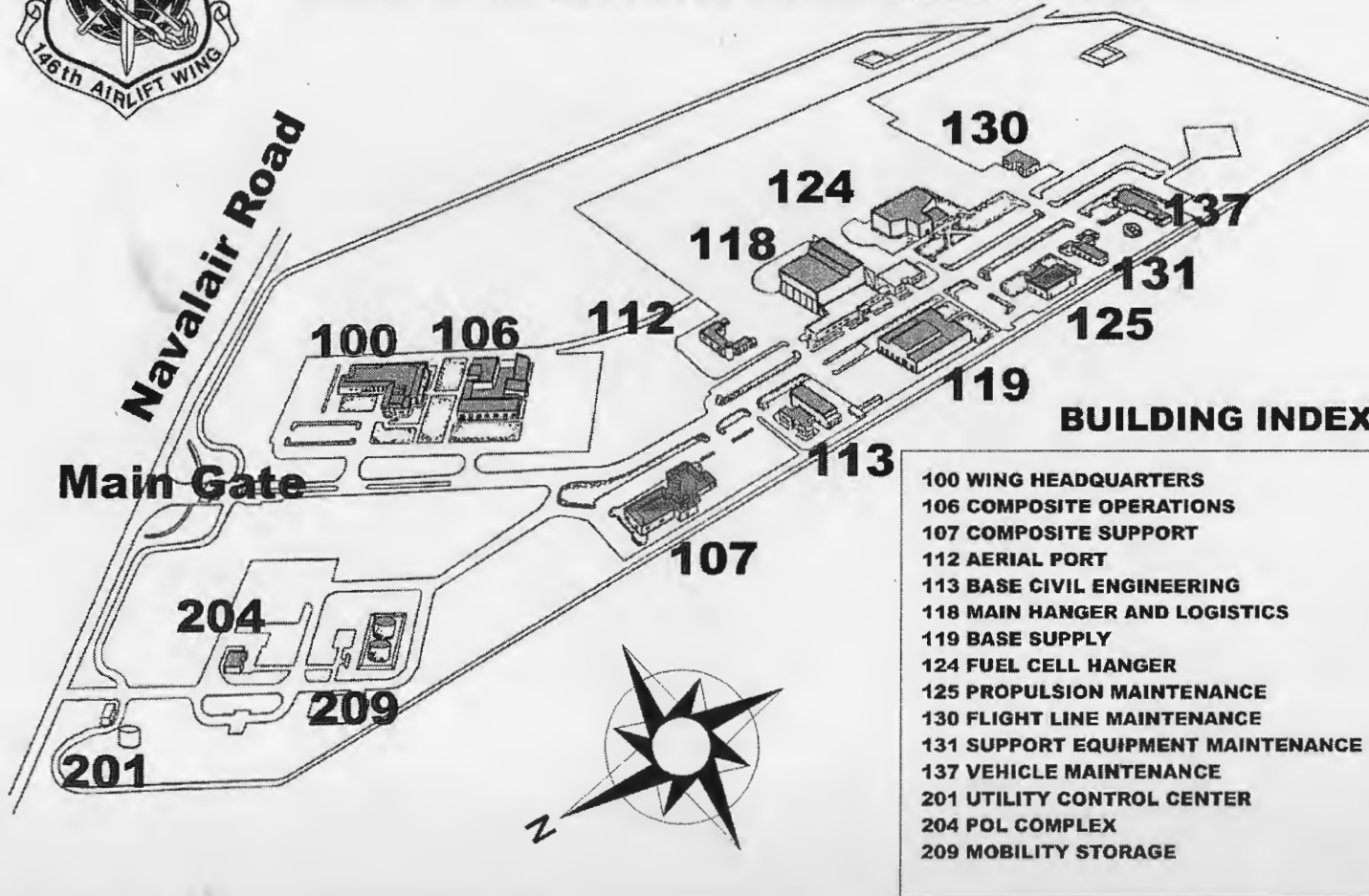


CHANNEL ISLANDS ANG'S MAP



146th AIRLIFT WING

CHANNEL ISLANDS AIR NATIONAL GUARD STATION





146AW STRENGTH



- 21 Squadrons and Flights
- AUTHORIZED Personnel-----1,042 (163 Officer, 879 Enlisted)
- ASSIGNED Personnel-----1,078 (162 Officer, 916 Enlisted)
- Wing Strength-----103.45%
- Effective Manning-----96.34%
- Fulltime Manning (Technician/AGR)-----264





CIANGS

