

**THE NAVY COMES TO TINKER AIR FORCE BASE**

by

**DAN M. SCHILL  
OC-ALC/OFFICE OF HISTORY**

**TINKER AIR FORCE BASE**

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## PREFACE

The advent of the United States Navy locating a wing at an inland Air Force installation signaled a new era in the history of Tinker Air Force Base. Tinker became home to Strategic Communications Wing ONE, its aircraft, and people. Tinker enhanced the concept of interservicing and strengthened its position as a leader in depot maintenance.

As time tends to change the reasons for why something happened, the author sought to preserve the history of the Navy locating in Oklahoma. Although this account chronicles the events leading to the decision to locate at Tinker, the process was highly political and without access to key studies and the numerous political figures the real reasons may never be fully known.

James L. Crowder, Chief of the History Office at the Oklahoma City Air Logistics Command, provided the impetus for this project. The author thanks the Navy and Lt Flex Plexico for their cooperation and assistance. Cheryl Weintraub and Carol Cloe of the Financial Management Directorate also contributed with their comments and corrections to the final draft.

Dan M. Schill  
Office of History  
Tinker Air Force Base

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

TITLE PAGE..... i  
PREFACE..... ii  
TABLE OF CONTENTS..... iii  
INTRODUCTION..... 1  
SELECTION OF TINKER AIR FORCE BASE..... 3  
APPENDIX 1: 30-YEAR LIFE CYCLE COST COMPARISON..... 27  
GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATION..... 28  
INDEX..... 29

## THE NAVY COMES TO TINKER AIR FORCE BASE

### INTRODUCTION

(U) The long and arduous struggle to make the US Navy (USN) part of Tinker Air Force Base (AFB) officially ended on 29 May 1992 when the Strategic Communications Wing ONE was commissioned. The decision to locate at Tinker AFB involved numerous issues and parties ranging from the Navy's decision to locate inland, the Air Force's proposed sites, political proposals by Oklahoma's congressional delegation, to counterattacks by opponents from Arkansas, Maryland, Hawaii, and Tennessee. This report depicts and chronicles the events which led to the selection of Tinker AFB as the first time that the US Navy established a full component on the shore-based facilities of another service.<sup>1</sup>

(U) The concept of an airborne communication wing was born in the corridors of the Pentagon on 3 July 1963 when Rear Adm Bernard F. Roeder, USN, gave the order to Take Charge And Move Out. In a traditional military manner, the officer, Lt Jerry O. Tuttle,<sup>2</sup> who received the order, wrote in his notebook the acronym TACAMO which has carried on to this day.<sup>3</sup> This project was based on the concept of a survivable airborne communications link between the National Command Authority and deployed nuclear ballistic missile submarines.<sup>4</sup>

(U) Originally TACAMO was considered a temporary fix until a hardened shore-based system could be developed to communicate with the ballistic missile submarine fleet. However, due to the accuracy of Soviet missiles against fixed geographical locations, the "temporary fix" became a long-term solution. Within 18 months after the initial order was given to determine the feasibility of an airborne Very Low Frequency (VLF) communications system, the first operational TACAMO aircraft was delivered.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Article (U), "After 10-Year Struggle, Navy Becomes Part of Tinker," by Bill May, The Journal Record, 29 May 92, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Vice Admiral and Director of Space and Electronic Warfare for the USN as of 30 May 1992.

<sup>3</sup>Article (U), "Decision to Locate Navy Unit at Tinker Traced Back to 1963," by Bill May, The Journal Record, 30 May 92, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup>Pamphlet (U), Commissioning Ceremony STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS WING ONE, 29 May 92.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

(U) A Lockheed C-130 "Hercules" was initially used to test the electronics and in 1964 four Lockheed EC-130Gs were delivered with two aircraft going to VR-21 TACAMO Component Naval Air Station (NAS) Barbers Point, Hawaii and two planes to VR-1 TACAMO Component NAS Patuxent River, Maryland. At this stage the communications equipment consisted of roll-on/roll-off removable vans that could be installed within hours. On 1 January 1966, the VR-21 component was transferred to Agana, Guam. The TACAMO program was expanded with the addition of eight aircraft with the communications equipment permanently installed in the aircraft. After equipment modification and testing of the airborne VLF communication techniques, Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadrons THREE and FOUR, VQ-3 Naval Air Facility (NAF) Agana, Guam and VQ-4 Patuxent River, respectively, were commissioned on 1 July 1968.<sup>6</sup>

(U) During the years following the formal commissioning, the TACAMO aircraft continued to receive modifications such as a dual trailing wire antenna system, a high-speed reel system, a message processor system, extended range fuel tanks, wing top antenna pods for satellite communications and Electromagnetic Pulse hardening. The VQ-3 squadron in Guam soon became known as the "Ironman Squadron" and was tasked with maintaining at least one aircraft airborne 50 percent of day. In 1981 this squadron moved to Barbers Point, Hawaii and soon it was tasked with providing airborne coverage on an around-the-clock basis. This coverage was essential in order to eliminate the possibility of a Soviet submarine missile attack catching all the aircraft on the ground and leaving the United States without a survivable communications link to its submarines.<sup>7</sup> However, in 1989 the Navy started a no standdown transition from the EC-130Q to the E-6A Mercury. The E-6A was a Boeing 707 airframe powered by four CFM56-2 high bypass turbofan engines. This new aircraft had a 6,000 miles unrefueled range and 16.5 hours endurance.<sup>8</sup>

(U) The TACAMO program had undergone constant improvements since its inception as a VLF Strategic Communications Program. The TACAMO I system was developed and installed in two C-130F aircraft while in December 1964 the TACAMO II system consisted of three self-contained vans which could be installed in the EC-130G aircraft in approximately five hours. The TACAMO III system improvements included an antenna more than five miles long which trailed the aircraft and 25 kilowatts of VLF transmitting power which were permanently installed in the aircraft. With the TACAMO

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid. and pamphlet (U), TACAMO 25th Anniversary.

<sup>7</sup>Article (U), "Naval Communications Squadron Boasts Proud History," by Lt j.g. Raymond Buettner, Tinker Take Off, 23 Apr 93, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup>See note 6.

IV system the aircraft became an airborne communication center with more than 200 kilowatts of power transmitted through a dual trailing wire antenna system.<sup>9</sup>

(U) One of the most significant changes to TACAMO began in 1989 with the delivery of the first E-6A "Mercury" to the Navy. This jet aircraft, a derivative of the Boeing 707-300 series, had greater range, speed, and endurance than the EC-130 aircraft which had been used over 30 years. At nearly 350,000 pounds the E-6A was the heaviest aircraft the US Navy had ever flown.<sup>10</sup> By the end of 1992 the Navy had acquired 16 E-6As with eight being assigned to VQ-3, seven to VQ-4, and one aircraft used as a test bed for new systems being developed.<sup>11</sup>

(U) Until February 1991, the mission required TACAMO to have at least one aircraft and crew airborne over both the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans at all times. At that time however, the mission changed from having crews constantly airborne to a ground alert status. A realignment of defense forces created the Strategic Command which would control both Air Force and Navy strategic forces. Formerly, the Navy controlled the submarine-launched missiles while the Air Force, Strategic Air Command (SAC), controlled high-altitude bombers and intercontinental ballistics missiles. Under the reorganization the commander of the Strategic Command used the TACAMO squadrons for communications.<sup>12</sup>

(U) Along with its mission change and new aircraft, the Navy moved its TACAMO squadrons to Tinker AFB in Oklahoma. On 29 May 1992 Strategic Communications Wing ONE was formally commissioned and by April 1993 both squadrons had completed their move to this new inland Air Force base.<sup>13</sup>

#### SELECTION OF TINKER AFB

(U) The path to the selection of Tinker AFB as the new home for the Navy's TACAMO Wing ONE began in January 1986 when the Secretary of the Navy, John Lehman, directed the Chief of Naval

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<sup>9</sup>See note 7.

<sup>10</sup>See note 6, TACAMO 25th Anniversary.

<sup>11</sup>Article (U), "Completion Draws Near for E-6A Navy Complex," by Bill May, The Journal Record, 6 Feb 92, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup>Article (U), "Navy's Strategic Wing at Tinker to Be Commissioned Friday," by Bill May, The Journal Record, 26 May 92, p. 3.

<sup>13</sup>Article (U), "Navy Wing Welcomes VQ-4 Boss," by Robin Maxey, The Sunday Sun, 7 Feb 93, p. 1.

Operations to "take immediate action to arrange for Air Force to provide required hangars and facilities to support TACAMO operations from the CONUS (contiguous United States). This plan will eliminate the requirement for MILCON (Military Construction) funding and should be no more expensive to operate and maintain than if the Navy was to provide this support." The Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Shipbuilding and Logistics directed the project manager to find a single Air Force base near the middle of the United States for both E-6A squadrons. This mid-continent location offered the operational advantage of reduced vulnerability to enemy attack.<sup>14</sup>

(U) As requested by the Navy, the Air Force initially developed a list of 20 bases for possible consideration of which Tinker AFB was not mentioned because of a shortage of ramps and hangars. Out of the initial listing, the Navy chose seven bases for site surveys: Little Rock AFB in Jacksonville, Arkansas; Whiteman AFB in Knobnoster, Missouri; Blytheville AFB in Blytheville, Arkansas; Grissom AFB in Peru, Indiana; Ellsworth AFB in Rapid City, South Dakota; Dyess AFB in Abilene, Texas; and Offutt AFB in Omaha, Nebraska.<sup>15</sup>

(U) From 22 April through 9 May 1986, preliminary site surveys were conducted at these seven bases. At this point Little Rock and Dyess AFB were deemed to be the most suitable with facilities cost estimates of \$24.7 and \$34.8 million respectively. However, due to the availability of excess space Little Rock was favored.<sup>16</sup>

(U) In a surprise move, U.S. Rep Mickey Edwards (R-Okla) announced on 2 July 1986 that the Navy would locate at Tinker AFB.<sup>17</sup> Although not on the earlier lists of possible sites, the E-6A project office was directed to perform a preliminary site survey at Tinker. According to a Government Accounting Office (GAO) report, the Navy discussed the possibility of basing its E-6As at Tinker even before the Secretary of the Navy issued its January 1986 memorandum. An official in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Shipbuilding and Logistics stated that Tinker offered several operational advantages over other Air Force bases. These advantages centered around the E-3A

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<sup>14</sup>Fact Sheet (U), Aircraft Basing Decision to Base Navy TACAMO Aircraft at Tinker Air Force Base, Oklahoma, by United States General Accounting Office, April 1987, p. 2.

<sup>15</sup>Article (U), "Navy to Base 15 New E-6A Aircraft at Tinker," by Patti Case, The Journal Record, 9 Oct 86, p. 1.

<sup>16</sup>See note 14, p. 10.

<sup>17</sup>Article (U), "Navy Picks Tinker As Squadron Base," by Randy Ellis, The Daily Oklahoman, 3 Jul 86, p. 1.

Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) which was based at Tinker and used the Boeing 707 airframe which would also be used on the Navy's E-6A aircraft. In addition, depot level maintenance of these aircraft was performed at Tinker along with the F108 engine which was similar to the Navy's CFM56 engine. Based on these factors the E-6A project manager was directed to perform a site survey at Tinker AFB.<sup>18</sup>

(U) The announcement that the Navy had selected Tinker AFB as the home port for a squadron of 15 communication planes made headlines in the Oklahoma City area due to its potential economic impact on this area. Although the exact financial impact had not been calculated, the Navy would move approximately 1,200 military personnel to Tinker along with their families. In addition, major construction of facilities would be required as well as acquiring land between the existing base and the General Motors plant to the south. The proposed construction projects included two 50,000 square foot hangars, a 38,000 square foot logistics support facility, a 48,000 square foot maintenance training complex, a 23,000 square foot operational flight training facility and a 15,000 square foot general purpose warehouse.<sup>19</sup>

(U) Despite the good news to Oklahoma, Congressman Edwards, ranking Republican on the military construction subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee, noted that the selection process was not complete. Although Congressman Edwards stated that Navy Secretary Lehman assured him that Tinker was the Navy's choice, Lt Paul Weishaupt, the Navy's public affairs spokesman at the Pentagon, had no comment on the announcement. However, Oklahoma Senators David Boren (D-Okla) and Don Nickles (R-Okla) said in a joint statement: "This is good news for Oklahoma City and our state. We worked very hard as a delegation to bring this about."<sup>20</sup>

(U) On 15-16 July 1986, the Navy site survey team conducted a survey of Tinker and its preliminary cost estimate in facilities and land acquisition for the proposed beddown was \$60.4 million. The Navy preferred acquiring off base land in order to have all their facilities and aircraft parking ramps in a contiguous area.

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<sup>18</sup>See note 14 pp. 2 and 3.

<sup>19</sup>See note 17.

<sup>20</sup>See note 17 and memo (U), Edwards Says Navy has Agreed to Locate Two New Squadrons at Tinker Air Force Base; Could Bring 1400 New Jobs to Area, OC-ALC/Dir of Plans and Prog, 9 Jul 86.

Included in this amount were base support facilities such as a dormitory and dining hall.<sup>21</sup>

(U) Acting Defense Sec William Howard Taft IV gave approval to the plan and on 8 October 1986 Maj Randy Morger, Secretary of Defense spokesman, confirmed Congressman Edward's July announcement in stating that Tinker AFB would become home to the E-6A Navy reconnaissance squadron. The project had not been funded however since the budget was tied up in conference between the House of Representatives and Senate. Larry Lesser, an Edwards aide, believed the differences would be resolved shortly.<sup>22</sup>

(U) The plan to locate the Navy at Tinker continued as a five man team from the Navy visited Tinker on 28-30 October 1986. The purpose of this informational site visit focused on proposed siting and facilities, environmental assessment, activation time tables, and support concept.<sup>23</sup> On 29 October 1986, the Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce obtained options to buy approximately 47 acres of the 56 acres required by the Navy for \$665,000. On 4 December the Chamber acquired an additional option for 11.8 acres at a price of \$13,000 per acre.<sup>24</sup> The Plans and Programs Office at Tinker AFB asked the Navy to program funds to make the land acquisition a priority requirement for Fiscal Year (FY) 1987.<sup>25</sup> From 17 - 21 November 1986 the Navy conducted a more extensive site survey which confirmed the earlier reports that no excess facilities were available.<sup>26</sup> The team projected facility costs of over \$107 million with completion and occupancy beginning in FY91/92.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Ltr w/atch (U), Site Survey to Support an E-6A Beddown Initiative the Week of 14 - 17 Jul 86, Gen William P. Bowden, OC-ALC/Comdr, to AFLC/CS, 21 Jul 86.

<sup>22</sup>See note 15 and article (U), "Navy Plans at Tinker Advancing," by James Johnson, The Daily Oklahoman, 9 Oct 86, p. 12.

<sup>23</sup>Memo (U), E-6A Navy Site Visit, Col Michael W. Handerhan, OC-ALC/Dir Plans and Prog, to OC-ALC/CV, 5 Nov 86.

<sup>24</sup>Ltr w/atch (U), Land Purchase, Edward H. Cook, Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce, to Gen Bowden, Comdr OC-ALC, 23 Dec 86.

<sup>25</sup>Memo (U), Navy E-6A Aircraft Beddown, Dale K. Lewis, OC-ALC/Dir Plans and Prog, to Comdr OC-ALC, 7 Nov 86.

<sup>26</sup>See note 14, p. 3.

<sup>27</sup>Memo (U), History of E-6A Program at Tinker AFB, Ronnie L Williams, OC-ALC/Plans and Prog Div, to OC-ALC/Dir Plans and Prog, 27 Feb 87.

(U) In a January 1987 memorandum to the Secretary of the Air Force, Navy Secretary Lehman again stated that Tinker AFB was the best choice for TACAMO; however he advocated collocating the E-3 and E-6A squadrons in existing facilities at Tinker in order to reduce construction costs.<sup>28</sup> In February 1987 Sen James Sasser (D-Tenn), Chairman Subcommittee on Military Construction (Committee on Appropriations), dealt a blow to the project by putting a "hold on the design of any facilities, either permanent or temporary, which would support the new TACAMO mission." In his letter to Rear Admiral (RADM) John Paul Jones, Jr., Commander Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Senator Sasser expressed concern about the cost of the move and the decision to move inland. Senator Sasser cited a preliminary General Accounting Office (GAO) report, requested by himself and Senators Dale Bumpers (D-Ark) and David Pryor (D-Ark) which stated that TACAMO could locate at either Little Rock or Dyess AFB at much less cost than at Tinker. In addition the GAO report noted that an inland location could necessitate the buying of an additional E-6A aircraft at \$60 million because of the greater distances to the coasts. Thus before funding for design activities was initiated, Senator Sasser required "a thorough and complete justification of the Tinker basing decision must be submitted, along with a study of each of the identified locations which could result in construction savings. The justification should also include a documented study which outlines the need to move the TACAMO mission to an inland base."<sup>29</sup>

(U) As Senator Sasser's letter put design work on hold, Rep Tommy Robinson (D-Ark) said he would rather pass on the Navy squadron and try to obtain the proposed MX missile rail program. Thus, Representative Robinson disagreed with Senators Bumpers and Pryor of Arkansas.<sup>30</sup>

(U) In a 3 March 1987 letter to Senator Sasser, the Department of the Navy defended its selection of Tinker Air Force Base and a single inland location. The inland location provided the advantages of placing every aircraft on strip alert at less vulnerable airfields where they could be launched prior to a nuclear strike; operating the E-6A in such a manner that the aircraft would be able to reach surviving CONUS bases; and protecting the operational, logistical and maintenance support systems for TACAMO. This decision was possible since the E-6A high

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<sup>28</sup>Memo (U), TACAMO Basing, Sec of Navy John Lehman, to Sec of the AF, 12 Jan 87.

<sup>29</sup>Ltr (U), Senator Sasser, Chairman Subcom on Mil Const, to RADM Jones, 5 Feb 87.

<sup>30</sup>See note 27.

speed and long range allowed them to reach the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and communicate with the Trident submarines.<sup>31</sup>

(U) After the Navy made the decision to collocate at a single mid-CONUS base, Tinker AFB was the first choice due to the E-6A and E-3A commonality. Since Tinker already supported the E-3A AWACS weapon system, it provided significant economies in operational, maintenance, and logistics support. Tinker performed depot maintenance on the E3-A and could provide the Navy support in the areas of engine, flight related avionics systems, and airframe systems. Additional cost savings were expected in the joint use of aircrew and maintenance training facilities while existing support facilities were not needed. However, the Air Force did not initially include Tinker in its original list, but at the Navy's request a survey of Tinker AFB was conducted. The original cost estimate for Tinker assumed no existing support facilities were available which tended to inflate construction costs.<sup>32</sup>

(U) The Department of the Navy also added that since its initial surveys, the availability of facilities at Little Rock and Dyess AFBs had changed due to the Army's utilization of several buildings at Little Rock and the Air Force's planned use of Dyess for B-1 aircraft support. Also, the revised estimate of supply and support equipment stand up needs at Little Rock greatly increased from the Navy's original estimates. The Navy further stated that 15 E-6A aircraft would be sufficient and no plans were made to buy an additional aircraft. The letter ended by stating that a revised MILCON plan would be forwarded to Senator Sasser's subcommittee as soon as negotiations with the Air Force were completed.<sup>33</sup>

(U) The Navy's reply apparently did not satisfy Senator Sasser, who, on 8 April 1987, ordered the Navy to provide a more in-depth study and cost analysis by July 1987. Meanwhile, funds for the project were held up, although Senator Sasser allowed the Navy to hire an architectural and engineering firm to design new facilities for the planes as long as the plans were not site specific. The furor over the selection of Tinker was voiced not only by Senator Sasser and the Arkansas senators, but by Maryland's congressional delegation and Gov William D. Schaefer. In fact Rep Roy P. Dyson (D-Md), whose district included the Patuxent Naval Facility, charged the Reagan Administration with rewarding Representative Edwards (R-Okla) for his work in support of U.S. aid to the Nicaraguan contras. Representative Dyson, a member of the House Armed Services committee, used his position to delete partial

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<sup>31</sup>Ltr (U), Off of Asst Sec Shipbuilding and Log, Dept of the Navy, to Senator Sasser, 3 Mar 87.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

funding for the Navy's E-6A aircraft procurement. In freezing the aircraft procurement, Representative Dyson ensured that the Navy would reconsider its basing plan. Much of the controversy, politics aside, centered on a GAO report which questioned the Navy's figures on the costs of locating at Tinker and Little Rock.<sup>34</sup>

(U) Despite these efforts to block the Navy's move to Tinker AFB, Congressman Edwards in a 13 April 1987 press conference expressed confidence that Tinker would prevail since it was the best choice. He added that the Tinker location would save between \$10 and \$46 million over the 30 year life cycle of the airplanes as compared to the Little Rock site. In addition to the savings, the Oklahoma site was supported by the Air Force, Navy, and the Reagan administration.<sup>35</sup>

(U) The funding for the project drew a step closer on 9 July 1987 when the US House Appropriations Committee approved \$11.8 million to begin building facilities. However the full House of Representatives and the Senate needed to approve the funding before actual work on the site could begin. In a related move, Congressman Edwards met with newly appointed Navy Secretary James Webb, who also expressed his support for the Tinker location.<sup>36</sup>

(U) By mid-August 1987, the Senate had still not approved funding of the project and its hold was creating a slippage on the entire project. In a 19 August 1987 letter Maj Gen William P. Bowden, Commander Oklahoma City Air Logistics Command (OC-ALC) which was located at Tinker AFB, asked Senator Boren and other members of the Oklahoma Congressional delegation to "take aggressive action to obtain Senator Sasser's approval to initiate design activity."<sup>37</sup>

(U) In a 26 August 1987 news release, Congressman Edwards announced that a new Department of Defense report concluded that Tinker AFB offered the greatest advantages for basing the Navy's E-6A aircraft. This report analyzed options for basing the planes at sites on each coast, Patuxent Naval Air Station, Maryland and Barbers Point, Hawaii; at Little Rock AFB; and at Tinker AFB. In

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<sup>34</sup>Article (U), "Plans to build sub plane base in Okla. delayed," by Doug Birch, Baltimore Sun, 10 Apr 87, p. E-1.

<sup>35</sup>Article (U), "E-6A Coming to Tinker before End of Decade," by Bill May, The Journal Record, 14 Apr 87, p. 1.

<sup>36</sup>Article (U), "Committee Approves Funds for E-6A Project at Tinker," The Journal Record, 10 Jul 87, p. 1.

<sup>37</sup>Ltr (U), Gen Bowden, Cmdr OC-ALC, to Senator Boren, 19 Aug 87.

a letter which accompanied the report, Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger confirmed earlier reports by stating that "Collocation with the Air Force E-3A AWACS offers significant benefits in the areas of aircraft maintenance, engine maintenance, support, and training. Having the two TACAMO squadrons based together and with the E-3A will improve aircraft availability and operational readiness. A central CONUS base at Tinker provides an extra margin of survivability for the aircraft during a period of national alert."<sup>38</sup> The report, requested by the House Armed Services Committee and the Senate Appropriations Committee, compared three sites over a 30-year life cycle cost. Over this period Tinker was \$20.4 million less than Little Rock and \$31.7 million less than a dual site location. Construction costs at Tinker were significantly higher than the other sites; but on the other hand, maintenance and spares costs were much lower. (see Appendix 1) Tinker AFB also offered synergistic benefits to collocating with AWACS and the depot. Other advantages cited in the report were: on-site depot level maintenance support and equipment; availability of special tests and systems diagnostics support; minimal delays in transporting depot repair items from the home base maintenance site to the depot; availability of on-site U.S. Air Force (USAF) common spares; and a ready pool of on-site depot experts to augment squadron maintenance activities during times requiring quick generation of all aircraft.<sup>39</sup>

(U) Despite the support of the Department of Defense and endorsement of three of the four key congressional committees, funding for the project faced a major hurdle in the Senate Appropriations Committee. In mid-October Senator Bumpers persuaded the committee to not include the \$11.8 million for construction in its FY88 budget.<sup>40</sup> The Oklahoma congressional delegation, led by Representative Edwards and Senator Nickles, planned to push for funding in a U.S. House-Senate appropriation conference committee. Attempts by Senators Nickles and Boren to persuade the Senate committee failed due to opposition from four Democrats on the committee: Daniel Inouye (D-Ha), James Sasser (D-Tenn), Barbara Mikulski (D-Md), and Dale Bumpers (D-Ark). Senators Inouye and Mikulski wanted their respective bases to retain the new E-6A aircraft while Senators Sasser and Bumpers wanted the new facilities to locate in their respective states. Thus, even though

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<sup>38</sup>News Release (U), Office of Congressman Mickey Edwards, 26 Aug 87.

<sup>39</sup>Article (U), "Tinker Best Location for E-6A, Says Report," by Patti Case, The Journal Record, 27 Aug 87, p. 1.

<sup>40</sup>Article (U), "Score 3-to-1 in Oklahoma's Favor for Basing of E-6As", by Patti Case, The Journal Record, 21 Oct 87, p. 2.

legislation authorizing the Navy's program at Tinker passed the House and Senate, its future was not guaranteed. In fact, Representative Wes Watkins (D-Okla) stated that it would be tough to ensure the E-6A program is funded, "because Senator Bumpers is a powerful and well-respected member of the Senate Appropriations Committee."<sup>41</sup> Thus, it was no surprise that on 27 October 1987 the Senate approved appropriation of \$8.5 billion for military construction projects, but conspicuously absent was the \$11.8 million to fund the TACAMO squadron at Tinker AFB.<sup>42</sup>

(U) On 16 December 1987 the Oklahoma congressional delegation announced that House and Senate negotiators on the military construction portion of the Continuing Resolution approved the \$11.8 million for the basing of the Navy's E-6A aircraft at Tinker. Upon receipt of an additional study requested by Senator Inouye on the costs and benefits of basing the planes at Tinker, these construction funds could be spent. In the interim, the Navy would be permitted to purchase the land and complete preconstruction planning.<sup>43</sup> However, before the Navy completed the study Secretary of Navy James Webb resigned in February 1988 in a disagreement with Defense Secretary Frank Carlucci. The study, not yet completed, was delayed until Congress confirmed William L. Ball, the nominee for the Navy secretary post.<sup>44</sup>

(U) On 17 March 1988, Acting Navy Secretary H. Lawrence Garrett III informed Congress that Tinker was the most cost-effective option for moving the squadrons. In his letter Garrett stated that "This base (Tinker) affords maximum survivability against Soviet attack" and "provides operation flexibility for deployment for these vital communications assets, ensures effective aircraft support and maintenance and is least costly to the taxpayer." This report appeared to be the final hurdle prior to

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<sup>41</sup>Article (U), "Panel to be focus of push for Tinker facility funding," The Norman Transcript, 21 Oct 87, p. 20.

<sup>42</sup>Article (U), "Senate Bill Excludes Tinker E-6A Funds," by Ed Kelley, The Daily Oklahoman, 28 Oct 87, p. 1.

<sup>43</sup>Press release (U), U.S. House of Representatives, 16 Dec 87 and article (U), "Tinker Navy Aircraft Squadron Moves Closer to Reality," by Allan Cromley and Ed Kelley, The Daily Oklahoman, 17 Dec 87, p. 35.

<sup>44</sup>Article (U), "Secretary Resignation Delays Navy Project Construction at Tinker," by Bill May, The Journal Record, 2 Mar 88, p. 1.

the start of construction with land acquisition expected to begin on 1 May 1988.<sup>45</sup>

(U) Unfortunately for Oklahoma, the Navy's report was rejected by Senator Sasser, chairman of the Senate appropriations military construction subcommittee, who said the Navy failed to comply with the requirements of the committee. Senator Sasser, along with Senator Bumpers, promised to block appropriations for the project if the report was not received. The Oklahoma congressional delegation, led by Boren and Nickles, urged the Navy to resubmit a new report in a timely manner in order to remove Senators Sasser and Bumpers objections.<sup>46</sup> Representative Edwards of Oklahoma agreed that the Navy did not produce a detailed report and that Senator Sasser would not just let the Navy "blow off" his request for a more comprehensive report.<sup>47</sup>

(U) Although the fate of the Navy project at Tinker was not assured, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was studying the site and assessing the requirements before construction could begin. In addition to this survey, an environmental assessment study was also required. According to Lt Cmdr Bob Pritchard, "This work is being done with funds already granted by the Navy: It is not a part of the appropriations now under consideration."<sup>48</sup>

(U) On 28 April 1988, the U.S. House Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee on Military Construction approved \$38 million for the second phase of construction for the Navy's facility at Tinker AFB. This money would be released on 1 October 1988, the start of the new fiscal year.<sup>49</sup>

(U) On 25 May 1988, the Senate subcommittee chaired by Senator Sasser planned a hearing on the new Navy report with Undersecretary Garret and Air Force Undersecretary James McGovern scheduled to testify. Senators Boren and Nickles were allowed in the meeting and could ask questions, but they would not be allowed to vote

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<sup>45</sup>Article (U), "Final hurdle Cleared for Planes at Tinker," by Bill May, The Journal Record, 18 Mar 88, p. 1.

<sup>46</sup>Article (U), "Report Rejection May Delay Tinker Project," by Bill May, The Journal Record, 24 Mar 88, p. 1.

<sup>47</sup>Article (U), "Lawmakers Defend E-6A Move," by Allan Cromley, The Daily Oklahoman, 25 Mar 88, p. 13.

<sup>48</sup>Article (U), "Engineers Study Site for Basing Navy Squadron," by Bill May, The Journal Record, 24 Mar 88, p. 1.

<sup>49</sup>Article (U), "House Approves \$122 Million for Use With Military Projects," The Journal Record, 29 Apr 88, p. 2.

since they were not members of the subcommittee.<sup>50</sup> The Navy's new report indicated that Tinker was the best location from both economical and national security standpoints. In fact, Undersecretary Garrett testified that even without the economical considerations "that Tinker would be the best choice to base those planes." The unclassified part of the report illustrated that Tinker was the least cost option over the life cycle of the airplanes: basing both squadrons at Tinker would cost \$6.027 billion; basing both squadrons at Little Rock would cost \$6.048 billion; splitting the squadrons between Barbers Point, Hawaii and Patuxent River, Maryland would cost \$6.104 billion; and splitting the squadrons between Patuxent River and Tinker would cost \$6.126 billion. Upon conclusion of the hearing, Chairman Sasser referred the matter to the full committee for consideration. Senator Nickles added "I'm confident we can win in committee. I know we can count on Republican support and if a couple of Democrats vote with us, then we can win both in committee and on the Senate floor."<sup>51</sup>

(U) Even as the Oklahoma delegation prepared to present its case before the Senate Appropriations committee, Senator Bumpers (D-Ark) said that a congressional panel should determine how many times Representative Edwards talked with the Navy secretary prior to an announcement that the Navy squadron would be moved to Tinker AFB. Edwards retorted that he has never "kept track of calls I've made to secretary of the Navy, or to the secretary of the Air Force or to anybody else." As the battle heated up over the basing of the Navy squadron, Senator Bumpers suggested that the decision to move to Tinker "is a political decision and they've been writing one report after another to justify a bad decision." However, Congressman Edwards denied reports that the move to Tinker was a reward for his shepherding a House battle in June 1986 to fund the Nicaraguan rebels.<sup>52</sup>

(U) As Nickles and Boren prepared for the 9 June 1988 Senate Appropriations Committee hearing, Senator Nickles stated that "It will take a major effort to defeat them. If the vote is strictly partisan, we'll lose because there are 13 Republicans and 15 Democrats on the committee. All the Republicans have indicated they will support Tinker in this and if Senator Boren can get at least two Democrats to vote with us, we'll make it." In a letter

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<sup>50</sup>Article (U), "State Congressional Delegation Gears Up for Final E-6A Battle," by Bill May, The Journal Record, 24 May 88, p.6.

<sup>51</sup>Article (U), "Fate of Navy Squadron Move Hangs on Hearing," by Bill May, The Journal Record, 27 May 88, p. 1.

<sup>52</sup>Article (U), "Edwards-Navy Calls Queried," by Ed Kelley, The Daily Oklahoman, 26 May 88, p. 1.

to Sen John Stennis (D-Miss), chairman of the committee, Senator Boren asked for support of the appropriation bill as essential to our national security.<sup>53</sup> However, early in the hearing, Senator Nickles reconsidered his strategy and decided to wait and bring up the matter before the full Senate. The tone in the committee room was such that one observer remarked that "TACAMO actually means take charge and move to Oklahoma." Once again, political considerations rose to the forefront in Oklahoma's battle to secure funding for the Navy project.<sup>54</sup>

(U) On 16 June 1988 the Senate approved an amendment to the FY89 military construction appropriations bill for \$38.08 million to fund Navy facilities at Tinker. Although a major hurdle was overcome, the project still faced several smaller road blocks. The Senate also passed another amendment delaying the actual spending of money until 15 October 1988 which represented only a 15 day delay. In addition, the differences between the House and Senate bills had to be ironed out in a House-Senate conference committee. The Senate vote did not include the \$11.8 million which was authorized in FY88, but had been held up in the Senate subcommittee on appropriations. According to Senator Sasser, the fiscal year 1988 and 1989 funds would probably be released at the same time depending on an upcoming GAO report. Despite the delay, Senator Nickles indicated that Tinker would eventually get the needed funding.<sup>55</sup>

(U) GAO investigators planned to visit both Tinker and Little Rock Air Force bases in late July 1988 before issuing their final report which was due in mid-August. At this time, lawmakers would have an opportunity to review the report before funds were released in mid-October. Senator Boren felt very optimistic about the report and added "The GAO has issued previous reports saying that Tinker was the most cost-effective basing option, and I have no reason to believe that their new report would be any different."<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>Article (U), "Oklahoma Delegation Prepares for Battle over E-6A Squadron," by Bill May, The Journal Record, 9 Jun 88, p. 2.

<sup>54</sup>Article (U), "Nickles Delays Battle Over Tinker Squadron," by Allan Cromley, The Daily Oklahoman, 10 Jun 88.

<sup>55</sup>Article (U), "Senate Approves Plan to Base E-6As at Tinker," by Bill May and Max Nichols, The Journal Record, 16 Jun 88, p. 1.

<sup>56</sup>Article (U), "Tinker Inspection Planned for Navy Squadron Report," by Bill May, The Journal Record, 16 Jul 88, p. 1.

In another positive step, the House and Senate Armed Services Committee members agreed to the procurement of seven additional E-6A planes.<sup>57</sup>

(U) On 3 August 1988 President Reagan vetoed a \$299.5 billion defense authorization bill which contained the provision to house the Navy at Tinker. Senator Nickles and Representative Edwards had earlier stated, however, that they expected the veto since the bill contained arms provisions unsavory to the President. It was noted that authorization and appropriations were distinct issues and that appropriations was the key bill. Indeed most Oklahoma legislators felt that there were not sufficient votes to override the veto or enough time to write another military authorization bill before the end of the fiscal year. Thus, it appeared that the military construction appropriations bill would be altered to include authorization of all the listed projects.<sup>58</sup>

(U) Central Oklahoma residents finally breathed a sigh of relief on 9 September 1988 when the House-Senate conference on the FY89 Military Construction Appropriations bill agreed to fund the Navy facility at Tinker AFB. Included in the \$38.08 million provision to house the Navy was a requirement that the funds would not be released until 15 October 1988. In his press release, Senator Nickles said "This is it, this paves the way for the E-6A's to come to Tinker. I expect this funding, as well as the \$11.8 million from last year that has been held up, to be released October 15. There should be no more roadblocks. The decision to base the planes at Tinker was the logical conclusion. It makes the most sense, both from a strategic and an economic vantage point. The E-6A and the AWACS, which is currently based at Tinker, share so many component parts."<sup>59</sup> Before final approval the bill had to be approved by both houses of Congress and signed by President Reagan. Plans for the facility had already been made and U.S. Army Corp of Engineers had completed the necessary site and environmental surveys. The only possible stumbling block remained the GAO report.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>Article (U), "House, Senate Agree to Fund TACAMO," by Daniel J. Marcus, Defense News, 18 Jul 88, p. 12.

<sup>58</sup>Article (U), "Bill Funding E-6As at Tinker Vetoed," by Bill May, The Journal Record, 4 Aug 88, p. 1.

<sup>59</sup>Press release (U), House-Senate Conferees Agree on \$38 Million To Base E-6As at Tinker, Office of Senator Nickles, 9 Sep 88.

<sup>60</sup>Article (U), "Final Roadblock Removed to Bring Navy E-6A Squadron to Tinker, States Nickles," by Bill May, The Journal Record, 10 Sep 88, p. 2.

(U) The reality of basing the E-6A aircraft at Tinker drew a step closer on 14 September 1988 when the Oklahoma congressional delegation announced that the final GAO report supported the Navy's choice of Tinker as the most cost effective option. With this positive report, Senator Boren added that "I expect the funds for the Tinker basing to become available next month."<sup>61</sup> On the following day, Senator Boren requested that the \$11.8 million which had been held up pending the GAO report be released. The subcommittee agreed with his request and notified the Navy of its approval.<sup>62</sup> However Senator Bumpers disagreed with the GAO report, but he did not know if he would still pursue the issue until he conferred with Senator Pryor, also of Arkansas.<sup>63</sup>

(U) With both houses of Congress approving the FY89 military construction appropriation bill, the only remaining obstacle was a presidential veto which seemed unlikely. However, since several additional appropriation bills were on President Reagan's desk, the date of confirmation was unknown, although expected by the end of September.<sup>64</sup> On 27 September 1988 President Reagan signed the military Construction Appropriations Act which contained \$38.1 million for basing the Navy at Tinker. With this action, Congressman Dave McCurdy (D-Okla) remarked that "The President's signature on this legislation placing the squadron in Oklahoma City is an indication that we have crossed our final hurdle."<sup>65</sup> Upon receiving the news, a local newspaper simply wrote, "It's over." The battle to move the Navy to Tinker started in July 1986 when Congressman Mickey Edwards announced that Tinker AFB would be the new home to the TACAMO squadron. Before President Reagan finally signed this bill, Oklahomans endured four studies, three hearings, and over 26 months of waiting.<sup>66</sup>

(U) Construction and purchase of land was expected to begin late in 1988 as the first construction package was ready to

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<sup>61</sup>Press release (U), Final Report Supports Tinker Basing of E-6A Aircraft, Office of Senator Boren, 14 Sep 88.

<sup>62</sup>Press release (U), Funds Released for Tinker E-6A Basing, Office of Senator Boren, 15 Sep 88.

<sup>63</sup>Article (U), "Tinker Plan a Savings, Study Says," by Ed Kelley, The Daily Oklahoman, 15 Sep 88, p. 6.

<sup>64</sup>Article (U), "E-6A Funding Clears Both House, Senate," by Bill May, The Journal Record, 16 Sep 88, p. 1.

<sup>65</sup>Press release (U), MILCON Appropriations Bill Signed into Law by President Reagan, House of Representatives, 28 Sep 88.

<sup>66</sup>Article (U), "Reagan Ratifies Move; E6-A Moving to Tinker," by Bill May, The Journal Record, 29 Sep 88, p. 1.

advertise for bids. The impact on Oklahoma was succinctly stated by Senator Boren who said, "This decision will mean millions of dollars for the Oklahoma economy and hundreds of new jobs. This is the best news our economy has had in a long time." Although Congressman Edwards initially pushed Tinker for the Navy, he gave credit to the whole Oklahoma congressional delegation, "The entire delegation contributed in overcoming the many obstacles that were placed in the way of basing this aircraft at Tinker."<sup>67</sup>

(U) The impact on the local economy was expected to be significant ranging from construction contracts to the creation of secondary jobs. According to Navy Lt Bruce Cole, nearly \$80 million would be spent over the next four years to provide facilities to house the Navy squadrons. In addition, nearly 1,200 military personnel were scheduled for transfer along with 1,840 dependents and 165 civilian workers. Lt Cole projected the creation of 2,355 jobs in the local economy along with an annual military payroll of \$24 million. Approximately 1,265 off-base housing units would be needed in addition to on-base housing and dormitories. Over the next 30 years the General Accounting Office projected over \$6 billion in expenditures for this program. Besides payroll and construction costs, the money would be used on maintenance, construction supplies, and operational supplies.<sup>68</sup>

(U) On 18 November 1988, the first land purchase for the Navy facility was completed when Oklahoma Investment Properties transferred ownership of 43.66 acres to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for the sum of \$665,000. Two additional tracts of land were needed to complete the site acquisition - 11.8 acres owned by the Santa Fe Land Improvement Company and 12 acres held by several individuals. These purchases were expected to be completed by the end of this year.<sup>69</sup>

(U) The building process continued to take shape as the Tulsa District Corps of Engineers divided the Navy construction program into four construction packages: first, the relocation of the base facilities; second, providing utility runs to the Navy site; third, the providing of all site grading, on-site utility mains, patrol road, and perimeter fence; and the fourth, all vertical

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<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Article (U), "\$79.9 Million to Be Spent for E-6A Facilities at Tinker," by Bill May, The Journal Record, 4 Oct 88, p. 1.

<sup>69</sup>Article (U), "First Tinker Land Purchase Completed for Navy Planes," The Journal Record, 19 Nov 88, p. 5.

construction on the site. All the packages were scheduled for award before the end of 1989.<sup>70</sup>

(U) During the period 14 - 17 February 1989, Navy and Tinker officials conducted a joint Air Force/Navy E-6A Beddown Conference. The purpose of this conference was to determine and finalize Navy support requirements, develop the beddown plan, and set milestone dates.<sup>71</sup>

(U) In February 1989 Buckner & Moore Inc of Moore, Oklahoma started a \$900,000 contract to relocate some buildings in preparation of constructing taxiways and aircraft parking aprons. Work to build a road to the site, security fences, install utility lines and a water tower began in May 1989. McMaster Construction Inc. of Oklahoma City was awarded this \$3.2 million contract. Other contracts already awarded for \$1.2 million included projects to extend utilities to the site, relocate gate 34 and build a new entrance, and relocate security fences around the AWACS. These projects were all awarded to Oklahoma companies: HBH Inc. of Lawton, J. Morris & Associates of Midwest City, and Cactus Construction Co of Oklahoma City, respectively. Major facility construction was expected to be started later in the year and would be under one contract.<sup>72</sup>

(U) Tinker Air Force Base officially welcomed the Navy on 16 June 1989 even though the new E-6A aircraft and the full contingent of Navy personnel were not expected for nearly two years. In addition to Maj Gen William S. Bowden, commander of the Oklahoma City Air Logistics Center, numerous local officials and Oklahoma's congressional delegation attended this day-long function.<sup>73</sup> In remarks made during the ceremony, Frank W. Swofford, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Shipbuilding and Logistics, stated as he held aloft a sailor's cap, "you need to keep a sharp eye out for this. When you start seeing this everywhere, you'll know we are here in force."<sup>74</sup> In his remarks General Bowden noted with irony that the very first aircraft ever repaired at Tinker was a Navy S03C-1 that made an emergency landing

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<sup>70</sup>Newsletter (U), Center Support, prep by Col David M. Nicola, OC-ALC/Dir Plans and Prog, 10 Feb 89.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid.

<sup>72</sup>Article (U), "Boeing to Enlarge Staff at Tinker Air Force Base," by Bill May, The Journal Record, 16 Jun 89, p. 1.

<sup>73</sup>Article (U), "Tinker Plans Welcome of E-6A Navy Personnel," by Bill May, The Journal Record, 15 Jun 89, p. 2.

<sup>74</sup>Article (U), "Officer explains E6-A job," by Robin Maxey, The Midwest City Sun, 22 Jun 89, p. 1.

at Tinker in August 1942 when the plane's engine caught fire. General Bowden added "With borrowed equipment from Will Rogers Field and parts from the Naval Base at Norman, the Oklahoma City Maintenance team repaired the aircraft and had it back in the air in eight days. Yes, our relationship with the Navy has been long standing and professional."<sup>75</sup>

(U) In a February 1990 interview, Cmdr Norman J. Tindall, onboard since January; updated the status of the Navy's move to Oklahoma. Boulton Construction Inc. of Montgomery, Alabama received a \$48.22 million contract in December 1989 to build four major buildings with anticipated completion in early 1992. These contracts included a 127,000 square-foot maintenance hanger; a 97,000 square-foot training building; a 57,000 square-foot warehouse; and taxiways and parking aprons for aircraft and support facilities. In October 1990 approximately ten sailors were to be assigned to Tinker as Strategic Communications Support Unit with other advanced parties of the personnel services division and Naval training group expected to arrive in the fall of 1991. Commander Tindall added that in the summer of 1992 contractor personnel and the major body of Navy personnel were expected.<sup>76</sup>

(U) Even as the Navy presence on Tinker took shape, Commander Tindall in an 1 April 1990 interview cited its importance in that "Rather than being an all-Air Force base, Tinker could become a Defense Department base run by the Air Force. It's something that maybe every other base is going to have to follow." With the anticipated decreases in defense funding, bases which had funding coming from both Air Force and Navy appropriations would be safer than those bases depending upon a single force.<sup>77</sup> Although rainy weather, 15 1/2 inches in the first four months of 1990, delayed work somewhat, the project continued to be on time and within budget.<sup>78</sup>

(U) By December 1990 the construction of the Navy facilities reached the 50-percent mark and by February 1991 55-percent had been completed. The exterior of the training building was nearly complete while structural steel had gone up on the hangars. Also

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<sup>75</sup>Article (U), "Center commander extends Air Force welcome to Navy," by Don L. Schmidt, Tinker Take Off, 23 Jun 89, p. 1.

<sup>76</sup>Article (U), "Navy Squadron Move to City Proceeds Smoothly," by Bill May, The Journal Record, 27 Feb 90, p. 1.

<sup>77</sup>Article (U), "Navy Air Wing at Tinker Could Make Base Safer From Cuts," by James Johnson, The Sunday Oklahoman, 1 Apr 90, p. 21.

<sup>78</sup>Article (U), "Despite weather, Navy project on schedule," by Robin Maxey, The Sunday Sun, 29 Apr 90, p. 1.

taxiways and aircraft parking ramps were nearly 70 percent complete. As work progressed on the physical facilities, plans continued to be made to move the troops and aircraft to Tinker. Along with Commander Tindall, six other Navy personnel had already moved to Tinker as the beginning of Strategic Communications Wing ONE, the future parent unit of the two TACAMO squadrons. In the summer of 1992 VQ-3 was scheduled to depart their home port of Barbers Point, Hawaii, fly their mission and then land at Tinker. In January 1993 the crews of VQ-4 out of Patuxent River, Maryland were slated to follow the same scenario. In addition to changing home ports, the VQ-4 squadron was scheduled to receive the new E-6A aircraft to replace the present EC-130 aircraft. The VQ-3 squadron received its E-6A aircraft between August 1989 and September 1990. In preparation for this transition, a Pilot Exchange Program was set up in 1987 between the Air Force and the Navy wherein Navy pilots received training on Air Force C-135s and KC-135s which were derivatives of the Boeing 707-300. Thus the working relationship between the Navy and Air Force continued to grow and prosper.<sup>79</sup>

(U) Although not affecting the status of the move to Tinker, the TACAMO squadrons underwent a major change in their mission in February 1991. Prior to this date, the two squadrons kept an aircraft aloft in both the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans on a 24-hour a day basis. But, with the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of Warsaw Pact threat to the United States the planes reverted to a ground alert status.<sup>80</sup>

(U) Although the work and plans continued to proceed on schedule, the anticipated movement of personnel showed some reason for concern. According to Commander Tindall, "One thing is we've got to convince the people in Hawaii and Barbers Point that they're going to like Oklahoma. At first, everyone seems to be a little resistant to this, after all there are a lot of good recreation areas in those places." However, he later added "But the people who have gotten here already are pleased, especially about the quality of living here and the cost of living. They are finding out their money goes a lot further here than it does at Barbers Point and Pax River."<sup>81</sup>

(U) By the end of July 1991 approximately 85 percent of the Navy support facilities had been completed. Other work scheduled to begin included a bachelor's enlisted quarters (BEQ), an addition to the mess hall, and a child care facility. Based on the current completed work, the Navy Strategic Communications Wing ONE would be

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<sup>79</sup>Article (U), "Navy Plans Sudden Move of 2 Squadrons to Tinker," by Bill May, The Journal Record, 7 Feb 91, p. 1.

<sup>80</sup>See note 12.

<sup>81</sup>See note 79.

commissioned into service on 1 May 1992. With work and plans proceeding on schedule, Commander Tindall praised the Air Force by saying "This thing could never have happened if the Air Force didn't support this 100 percent. The Air Force has bent over backwards to help." In addition to the Air Force support, the local communities planned a fair in Hawaii the fall of 1991 in order to provide information to the Navy personnel about housing and schools in the Oklahoma City area.<sup>82</sup>

(U) When the U.S. Navy landed one of its new E-6A Mercury aircraft at Tinker AFB on 15 August 1991, a preview of future operations was signified. The aircraft was opened for tours for central Oklahoma chambers of commerce and the press. The E-6A, a modified version of a Boeing 707-C137-E3 plane, was equipped with special equipment to provide jam-resistant communication relay to ballistics missile submarines. The aircraft was designed and equipped, even down to its special white paint coating, to make it resistant to heat or other damage from nuclear attack. In describing the plane, Lt Cmdr Todd Tracy, an E-6A pilot and graduate of the Pilot Exchange Program, stated that "This plane flies between 25,000 and 34,000 feet just like the airliners. We carry 24,000 gallons of fuel. This makes us capable of flying about 16 hours. We have in-flight refueling, and that makes us capable of flying about 72 hours." For around-the-clock operations, the plane was equipped with living quarters for a crew of approximately 14 to 18.<sup>83</sup>

(U) As the Navy continued to expand its presence at Tinker and its new facilities took shape, the planned move to relocate its simulators and training devices from Huntsville, Alabama; Waco, Texas; and Patuxent River, Maryland to Tinker AFB was announced. The simulators which were used to train crewmen aboard the communications aircraft were built by Boeing Aerospace. Boeing received a five-year, \$2 million contract to maintain the simulators once they had been moved.<sup>84</sup>

(U) The year 1991 saw the Navy construction project in full steam with a projected completion date during March of the next year. As of 6 February 1992, Commander Tindall stated "It doesn't look great now, but everything is on schedule; the contractor is about 95 percent complete and expects to be off site by March 1." The commissioning ceremony had been set for 29 May 1992 at which

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<sup>82</sup>Article (U), "Navy Personnel to Move to Tinker," The News, 25 Jul 91, p. 1.

<sup>83</sup>Article (U), "E-6A Unveiled at Tinker in First Local Showing," by Darrell Morrow, The Journal Record, 16 Aug 91, p. 1.

<sup>84</sup>Article (U), "Navy Plans Relocation of Simulators to Tinker," by Bill May, The Journal Record, 31 Aug 91, p. 2.

time the two TACAMO squadrons would fall under the Navy's Strategic Communications Wing ONE. In preparation for the move, equipment and furniture had been ordered and had to be installed and ready for immediate use. The cost of the Naval facility was budgeted for \$78 million which did not include the equipment and furniture purchased.<sup>85</sup>

(U) As small contingents of Navy personnel were welcomed at Tinker, the two main squadrons from Barbers Point, Hawaii and Patuxent River, Maryland were preparing for the move. In May 1992 three naval officers from the Patuxent River squadron visited Tinker and the Oklahoma City area to learn more about their new home. Lt Cmdr J.R. Mathers looked forward to the move and a chance to live in a major metropolitan area since the Maryland site was rural and very expensive compared to Oklahoma. To make his point, Lt Commander Mathers said "The houses here are half the price of Maryland. You get more for your money."<sup>86</sup>

(U) In April 1992, Capt Andy Riddile, who was to assume command of the Navy TACAMO Wing, moved to Tinker and prepared for the final steps in Oklahoma's long battle to secure the navy's wing. Vice President Dan Quayle, the key note speaker for the 29 May commissioning ceremony, was Captain Riddile's boss when he served as his military advisor.<sup>87</sup> Captain Riddile had praised Tinker AFB and the state of Oklahoma since his move from northern Virginia. He stated that he felt one reason the Navy facilities at Tinker were so nice was that the "military construction dollar goes a lot further in Oklahoma than it does in most of the high cost of living areas where the military is used to building facilities."<sup>88</sup>

(U) As the commissioning date drew closer and more Navy personnel slowly trickled in, Captain Riddile remarked:

"This (Strategic Communications Wing ONE) is a unique organization within the Navy. First of all, we will provide all administrative support for the two squadrons; that's not unusual. Next we will provide all the operational support and combat command capabilities of the squadrons; that's not unusual. After that we will provide all the base facilities and support normally found at a shore-based facility for an

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<sup>85</sup>See note 11.

<sup>86</sup>Article (U), "Maryland Navy crew visits," by Merl McManus, The Midwest City Sun, 21 May 92, p. 10.

<sup>87</sup>Article (U), "VP Quayle to headline commission ceremonies," by Robin Maxey, The Midwest City Sun, 21 May 92, p. 1.

<sup>88</sup>Article (U), "'92 busy year for Navy wing commander," by Robin Maxey, The Midwest City Sun, 21 May 92, p. 1.

operational unit; that's not unusual either. What's unusual or unique about our unit is that we will do all three at the same time."

At the same time that the TACAMO squadrons were combining into one wing, the Strategic Command was scheduled to be created on 1 June 1992. This command would combine the Navy and Air Force strategic forces. The timing of the consolidation and reorganization worked perfectly and came at an opportune time.<sup>89</sup>

(U) As the day of the commissioning drew closer, area newspapers were full of stories concerning the Navy, TACAMO, and Oklahoma's long struggle to secure the Navy for Tinker AFB. Although the formal commissioning was to signal the end of the fight, the bulk of the two squadrons were not scheduled to arrive until later. VQ-3, stationed in Hawaii, planned to move during the summer of 1992 while VQ-4, out of Maryland, would move at the first of 1993. At full strength, the wing was expected to have 250 personnel with the two squadrons possessing a strength of 1,200 officers and enlisted personnel.<sup>90</sup>

(U) Although Vice President Quayle was the keynote speaker, numerous dignitaries attended the 29 May 1992 commissioning ceremony for the Navy Strategic Communications Wing ONE. Political dignitaries from Oklahoma on stage were Gov David Walters, Representatives McCurdy and Edwards, and Senator Nickles. In addition to the speakers and actual commissioning act, Duane Anderson, assistant U.S. Secretary of Defense, attended along with numerous admirals, generals, high level civilian officials, and other local area citizens.<sup>91</sup>

(U) As the actual ceremony began, Governor Walters in his welcoming speech praised Oklahoma's congressional delegation and proclaimed the day "United States Navy Day." Governor Walters elaborated by stating that "These things don't happen by accident and we know that. When this project was presented to the subcommittee on military construction, Oklahoma City and Tinker wasn't even on the list." In officially welcoming the Wing One to Tinker AFB, Brig Gen Marcellite Harris, Vice Commander Oklahoma City Air Logistics Command (OC-ALC), acknowledged that the military is facing many challenges and that "We have done our jobs so well in the past that we have virtually worked ourselves out of a job. Our country still deserves the very best. Together we will all

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<sup>89</sup>See note 12.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid.

<sup>91</sup>Article (U), "Ceremony to 'stand up' Navy wing," by Robin Maxey, The Midwest City Sun, 28 May 92, p. 1 and photograph with script (U), Saturday Oklahoman & Times, 30 May 92, p. 1.

work for the security and defense of our country."<sup>92</sup> In his remarks, VADM Jerry O. Tuttle, director of space and electronic warfare for the Navy, recalled how he received the initial order to "Take charge and move out." Thus, in a fitting tribute, the young officer who coined the acronym 'TACAMO' was here to help commission Strategic Communication Wing ONE and its new facilities. Admiral Tuttle proclaimed "That order was to 'take charge and move out'. Since that time we have developed this philosophy and idea of finding a way to communicate with submerged submarines to where it is today. What began in the corridors of the Pentagon on 3 July 1963 ends here in this fine facility."<sup>93</sup>

(U) Vice President Quayle, in his speech to commemorate the opening of the new Navy Wing, praised Tinker AFB and the state of Oklahoma by saying "This is a very proud day for Tinker Air Force Base and certainly for Oklahoma. Much has been said about the change of modern times. If the United States stands tall and stands strong, we can preserve the peace and we can change the world." Even with the upcoming presidential election, Vice President Quayle focused on the military, the new facilities, and Captain Riddile, who served as his military advisor for three years.<sup>94</sup> However, he briefly discussed the importance of values by saying "The security of our future will rest in the end on the character of our people and values that make us who we are. While some may forget that truth, our armed forces never do. Here the terms of integrity, loyalty and hard work and personal responsibility aren't just words, they are a way of life."<sup>95</sup>

(U) In commissioning Strategic Communications Wing ONE, Vice President Quayle charged Captain Riddile to "take command of this vital component of the new unified strategic command. Take care of your people, stand with them, support them as they excel in this remarkable institution we call the armed forces of America." Thus, with the reading of the orders, Wing One was born and Captain Riddile assumed command of this new unit under which the two TACAMO squadrons would fall.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>92</sup>Article (U), "Quayle Focuses on Military During Tinker Dedication," by Steve Lackmeyer, The Saturday Oklahoman & Times, 30 May 92, p. 8.

<sup>93</sup>See note 3.

<sup>94</sup>See note 4.

<sup>95</sup>See note 92.

<sup>96</sup>Article (U), "StratComm 'stands up'," by Robin Maxey, The Sunday Sun, 31 May 92, p. 1.

(U) As Captain Riddile assumed command of the new wing as its first "Commodore,"<sup>97</sup> he proudly accepted the challenge and responsibility and noted the changes as follows: "The world has changed, our aircraft has changed. Our squadrons' home ports are changing. Our organization has changed, our command structure has changed. And even our mission has changed." On the other hand, Captain Riddile said "What won't change is how we will carry out this mission and use these resources to serve our country." He also thanked the local area residents; the Oklahoma congressional delegation; Boeing, who built the E-6A aircraft; and Blount Construction Company, the TACAMO facilities contractor. Lastly, Captain Riddile thanked the Air Force by saying "The people of the United States Air Force have been exceptionally cordial from the very start."<sup>98</sup>

(U) With the conclusion of the ceremony, Strategic Communications Wing ONE (Stratcomm Wing ONE) became part of Tinker AFB and made history by becoming an "inland homeport" for the Navy. Although this day, 29 May 1992, signified the official end of an eight year long battle for the TACAMO squadrons, most of the personnel along with the aircraft involved in this transfer had not yet moved to Oklahoma. However, this transfer was expected to be completed by April 1993.<sup>99</sup>

(U) On 21 August 1992, Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadron Three (VQ-3) was officially activated when Cmdr Robert E. Young arrived from Barbers Point Naval Air Station, Hawaii. VQ-3 thus became the first active duty Navy operational squadron permanently located on an Air Force Base.<sup>100</sup> And, by mid-September 1992, an additional 500 personnel had made the move to Tinker AFB and Oklahoma. As the year 1992 drew to a close, the Navy and Tinker AFB looked forward to the next year when the move would be completed.<sup>101</sup>

(U) When Cmdr Kristopher L. Strance, commander of the TACAMO squadron VQ-4, arrived at Tinker AFB from Patuxent River, Maryland on 5 February 1993, it marked the beginning of the final chapter in the Navy's move to Tinker. An additional 160 personnel accompanied

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<sup>97</sup>Article (U), "Congratulations Navy TACAMO Wing," The Sunday Sun, 31 May 92, p. 7.

<sup>98</sup>See note 96.

<sup>99</sup>Article (U), "Navy Wing Move Under Budget, Ahead of Schedule," by Bill May, The Journal Record, 27 Feb 93, p. 1.

<sup>100</sup>Article (U), "Navy group activated," The Midwest City Sun, 10 Sep 92, p. 6a.

<sup>101</sup>Article (U), "Navy E-6 Personnel Arrive At Tinker in Smooth Transition," by Bryan Painter, The Daily Oklahoman, 9 Sep 92.

Cmdr Strance in the move with the remaining 340 Navy personnel scheduled to arrive by the middle of March.<sup>102</sup> As the project neared completion, Commander Tindall, who was the first Navy officer assigned to Tinker on 3 January 1990, remarked "That whole thing came in under budget and ahead of schedule." Commander Tindall aptly summed up the move when he said "I feel that the Navy made the right decision to move here, that we got a lot for our money. It was the right move."<sup>103</sup>

(U) With the successful transition to Tinker completed, the Navy briefly paused on 23 July 1993 to celebrate the 25th anniversary of TACAMO. During this time frame the concept of an airborne communications link with ballistic submarines became a reality as two TACAMO squadrons were formed to serve the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. The program underwent incremental changes throughout its history, but perhaps none were so significant as the adoption of the new E-6A aircraft, the move to new facilities at Tinker AFB, the assignment and colocation of the two squadrons under the new Wing ONE, and, of course, the end of the Cold War. Thus, in retrospect, TACAMO was justifiably proud of its past 25 years of growth, change and modernization; but at the same time the Navy looked forward to the future as a proud part of Tinker Air Force Base.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>102</sup>See note 13.

<sup>103</sup>See note 99.

<sup>104</sup>Article (U), "Ceremonies to celebrate TACAMO's 25th anniversary," by Lt j. g. Michael Nash, Tinker Take Off, 23 Jul 93, p. 1 and see note 6 TACAMO 25th Anniversary.

APPENDIX 1

30-YEAR LIFE CYCLE COST COMPARISON  
(in million FY 85 Dollars)

Life Cycle Cost Element	Dual Sites*	Tinker	Little Rock
Development Cost	366.6	366.6	366.6
Production			
Flyaway	1,052.9	1,052.9	1,052.9
Support	148.0	148.0	148.0
Spares	128.9	93.8	108.3
	1,329.8	1,294.7	1,309.2
Construction			
Facilities	57.3	80.0	49.7
Moving Costs	7.5	15.0	15.0
	64.8	95.0	64.7
Interim Training Facilities	5.0	5.0	5.0
Total Investment Costs	1,399.6	1,394.7	1,378.9
Flight Utilization Rate	185.0	185.0	185.0
Unit Mission Personnel	1,262.5	1,262.5	1,262.5
Operating Consumables	1,704.4	1,732.0	1,732.0
Depot Maintenance	613.1	618.7	619.8
Intermediate Maintenance	60.0	42.0	60.0
Sustaining Investment	475.3	439.5	451.5
Training Per Diem Travel	37.8	0	0
Positioning of crews & maintenance detachment	8.8	41.0	41.0
30-Year Operating & Support Costs	4,162.5	4,135.7	4,171.9
Total 30-Year Life Cycle Costs	5,928.7	5,897.0	5,917.4
Deltas between options	31.7	-	20.4

\*Patuxent Naval Air Station, Maryland and Barbers Point, Hawaii

Source: The Journal Record, 27 August 1987, p 1.

## GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMS

AFB	Air Force Base
AWACS	Airborne Warning and Control System
BEQ	bachelor enlisted quarters
CONUS	continental United States
DoD	Department of Defense
GAO	Government Accounting Office
MILCON	military construction
NAS	Naval Air Station
OC-ALC	Oklahoma City-Air Logistics Command
SAC	Strategic Air Command
TACAMO	Take Charge and Move Out
USN	United States Navy
VLF	very low frequency
VQ-3	Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadron Three
VQ-4	Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadron Four

## INDEX

Abilene, Texas 4  
Agana, Guam 2  
Anderson, Duane 23  
Atlantic Ocean 8, 20, 26  
AWACS 5, 8, 10, 15, 18  
B-1 aircraft 8  
Ball, William L. 11  
Barbers Point, Hawaii 2, 9, 13, 20, 22, 25  
Beddown Conference 18  
Blount Construction Company 25  
Blytheville AFB 4  
Blytheville, Arkansas 4  
Boeing 707-300 aircraft 20  
Boeing Aerospace 21, 25  
Boren, Senator David 5, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 16  
Boulton Construction Inc. 19  
Bowden, Maj Gen William P. 9, 18  
Buckner & Moore 18  
Bumpers, Senator Dale 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16  
C-130 Hercules 2  
C-135 aircraft 20  
Cactus Construction Co. 18  
Carlucci, Secretary Frank 11  
CFM56 engine 2, 5  
Cold War 26  
Cole, Lt Bruce 17  
Continuing Resolution 11  
Democrats 13  
Dyess AFB 4, 7, 8  
Dyson, Representative Roy P. 8, 9  
E-3A aircraft 4, 7, 8, 10  
E-6A Mercury throughout the study  
Edwards, Representative Mickey 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16,  
17, 23  
Ellsworth AFB 4  
F108 engine 5  
Garrett, H. Lawrence III 11, 12, 13  
General Accounting Office 4, 7, 14, 16, 17  
Grissom AFB 4  
Harris, Brig Gen Marcellite 23  
HBH Inc. 18  
Hercules 2  
Huntsville, Alabama 21  
Inouye, Senator Daniel 10, 11  
Ironman Squadron 2  
J. Morris & Associates 18  
Jacksonville, Arkansas 4  
Jones, RADM John Paul Jr. 7  
KC-135 aircraft 20

Knobnoster, Missouri 4  
 Lawton, Oklahoma 18  
 Lehman, Secretary John 3, 7  
 Lesser, Larry 6  
 Little Rock AFB 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13  
 Maryland 8  
 Mathers, Lt Cmdr J.R. 22  
 McGovern, James 12  
 McCurdy, Representative Dave 16, 23  
 McMaster Construction 18  
 Midwest City, Oklahoma 18  
 Mikulski, Senator Barbara 10  
 Montgomery, Alabama 19  
 Morger, Maj Randy 6  
 National Command Authority 1  
 Naval Facilities Engineering Command 7  
 Nicaragua 8, 13  
 Nickles, Senator Don 5, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 23  
 Norman, Oklahoma 18  
 Offutt AFB 4  
 Oklahoma Investment Properties 17  
 Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce 6  
 Oklahoma City Air Logistics Center 9, 18, 23  
 Omaha, Nebraska 4  
 Pacific Ocean 8, 20, 26  
 Patuxent Naval Facility 8, 9  
 Patuxent River, Maryland 2, 8, 13, 20, 21, 22, 25  
 Peru, Indiana 4  
 Pilot Exchange Program 20, 21  
 Pritchard, Lt Cmdr Bob 12  
 Quayle, Vice-President Dan 22, 23, 24  
 Rapid City, South Dakota 4  
 Reagan, President Ronald 8, 9, 15, 16  
 Republicans 13  
 Riddile, Capt Andy 22, 24, 25  
 Robinson, Representative Tommy 7  
 Roeder, RADM Bernard F. 1  
 Santa Fe Land Improvement Company 17  
 Sasser, Senator James 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14  
 Schaefer, Governor William D. 8  
 SO3C-1 aircraft 18  
 Soviet 11, 20  
 Stennis, Senator John 14  
 Strance, Cmdr Kristopher L. 25, 26  
 Stratcom Wing ONE 25  
 Strategic Air Command 3  
 Strategic Command 23  
 Strategic Communications Support Unit 19  
 Strategic Communications Wing ONE 3, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25  
 Swofford, Frank W. 18  
 TACAMO throughout the study  
 Taft, William Howard IV 5

Tindall, Cmdr Norman J. 19, 20, 21, 26  
Tinker AFB, OK throughout the study  
Tracy, Lt Cmdr Todd 21  
Trident submarine 8  
Tuttle, Vice Admiral Jerry O. 1, 24  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineer 12, 17  
VQ-3 2, 3, 23  
VQ-4 2, 3, 23  
Waco, Texas 21  
Walters, Governor David 23  
Warsaw pact 20  
Watkins, Representative Wes 11  
Webb, Secretary James 9, 11  
Weinberger, Secretary Casper 10  
Weishaupt, Lt Paul 5  
Whiteman AFB 4  
Will Rogers Field 18  
Young, Cmdr Robert E. 25