

**APPENDIX F**  
**HOLLOMAN AFB AND REGIONAL HISTORICAL CONTEXT**



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## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Humans have inhabited the area near Holloman AFB for at least 12,000 years. The climate of the American Southwest was once cooler and moister supporting megafauna such as mammoth, musk ox, giant beaver, mastodon, and sloth. The first inhabitants of the area, termed Paleo Indians, were big game hunters that relied on megafauna until their extinction approximately 10,000 years before the present (BP). They are best known through the artifacts left behind, principally projectile points (e.g., Clovis and Folsom spear points).

Later, during the Archaic Period (approximately 8,000 to 2,800 years BP), the climate gradually became warmer and drier, forests gave way to desert scrub and grassland. By the middle of the period, vegetation in the area largely resembled the conditions of today. Populations continued to rely on hunting but developed diverse technologies and used a greater variety of plant resources, as evidenced by an increased variety of flaked and ground stone tools.

After the Archaic Period and until about 1,000 years ago, groups became increasingly less mobile and dramatically increased their reliance on agriculture, particularly maize production. People of this time developed sophisticated irrigation technologies, fine and elaborately decorated ceramics, long distance trade, solar calendars, and social and political systems to manage the higher population densities that are possible with a successful, agriculture-based economy. Large multi-room pueblos were constructed, perhaps housing as many as a thousand people (Fagan 1991). Toward the end of the 13th century A.D., a major drought occurred throughout the Southwest. When agriculture failed and populations naturally reduced through attrition, groups relocated to environments that could support them (Holloman AFB 2005).

Spanish explorers entered the region beginning in the mid-1500s, encountering Apache resistance. Apache occupation continued until the mid-1700s, when the Comanche entered the region and engaged in raids against eastern Pueblo and Spanish settlements that led to military campaigns by the Spanish.

In 1810, a treaty between the Spanish and the Mescalero Apache established a reservation for the Mescalero. The treaty was renewed by the Mexican government in 1832. In the following decades, Mescalero encounters with the American military led to additional short-term treaty and reservation arrangements. After a period of instability following the American Civil War, a new reservation was established in 1873 for the Mescalero and Chiricahua Apache at its present location near the Sacramento Mountains northeast of Holloman AFB.

After the war between the U.S. and Mexico in 1846, most of New Mexico and Arizona was ceded to the U.S. The Texas/New Mexico borders were established in 1850. American military forts were established by the early 1860s to defend routes of travel through the region. Most settlement occurred after 1882 and the arrival of the Southern Pacific Railroad. Ranching, which began in the late 1800s, continued to be important into the 1900s. Mining began in the nearby San Andres, Oscura, Mockingbird, and Jicarilla mountains during the 1870s, spurring local settlement and the development of water control systems (Holloman AFB 2005). Travel and development throughout the region relied on supply routes and trails, most of which followed

previously established Native American trails. Several of these trails are now recognized as National historic Trails.

A modern military presence was established in the area during World War II. Alamogordo Army Air Field (later renamed Holloman AFB) was created in 1942 in New Mexico's Tularosa Basin between the San Andreas and Sacramento mountain ranges. The base occupies 59,639 acres of land, 90 miles north of El Paso, Texas, and 70 miles east of Las Cruces, New Mexico (Holloman AFB 2005). Originally the base was to serve as a center for the British Overseas Training Program where aircrews would train over the uninhabited expanses of New Mexico. Due to events in Europe, Britain decided not to pursue its overseas training program with the December 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor. The U.S. elected to establish a base at the same location to train its own growing military. For the remainder of WWII, the base served as the training grounds for B-17, B-24, and B-29 bomber crews. Crews commonly trained for approximately six months before being deployed to the Pacific or European Theaters (Holloman AFB 2005).

After WWII, the base was renamed Holloman Air Force Base and, along with the adjacent White Sands Proving Ground (WSPG), became the primary testing area for pilotless aircraft, guided missiles, and other research programs (Holloman AFB 2005). WSPG was assembled from existing firing ranges, the Alamogordo Bombing Range, and large tracts of both private and public lands. WSPG was separated from the Alamogordo Bombing and Gunnery Range, and assumed control of huge tracts of private and public land. WSPG was renamed White Sands Missile Range (WSMR) in 1958. Work at the range included V-2 rocket firings and developmental testing of such missiles as Nike, Viking, Corporal, Lance and Multiple Launch Rocket System. The National Park Service designated the V-2 complex a National Historic Landmark in 1985. It is still active today and is known as Launch Complex 33.

Through the 1950s and 1960s, the Air Force Missile Development Center at Holloman AFB was the location of numerous developments in aerospace and aeromedical technology. In 1952, two Philippine monkeys rode an Aerobee rocket to an altitude of 36 miles, reaching a speed of 2,000 mph. The primates were recovered unharmed and provided significant data later applied to manned space missions (Air Force Museum of Space and Flight 2004). In 1954, Lt Col John Stapp rode a rocket sled to a speed of 632 mph, setting a land speed record. In 1960, in an attempt to evaluate techniques for high altitude bail out, Capt Joseph Kittinger jumped from a balloon at a height of more than 102,000 feet. During the 13 minute free fall, he reached a speed of 614 mph and broke four world records. In 1961 a chimpanzee trained at Holloman was the first specimen successfully launched into orbit (Holloman AFB 2005).

In 1968, Holloman AFB became the home of the 49<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Wing (TFW) employing the F-4 Phantom. In 1971, Holloman AFB became part of the Tactical Air Command (TAC), and shifted from missile testing to fighter pilot training. In 1972, the 49 TFW transitioned to the F-15 Eagle, the Air Force's top air to air weapon (Global Security 2006). In 1992, the base became part of Air Combat Command (ACC) as the 49 TFW transitioned aircraft once again. The base is now home to arguably the most advanced fighter aircraft ever produced, the F-117A Nighthawk, or Stealth Fighter (Holloman AFB 2005). The most recent development at Holloman AFB is the establishment of the German Air Force Tactical Training Center (TTC). Currently, more than 300 German Air Force members are assigned to the base in the only program of its kind in the country.

Today Holloman AFB supports approximately 21,000 active duty, guard, reserves, retirees, DoD civilians and their family members. Personnel from Holloman AFB have participated in Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm, Operation Allied Forces, Operation Southern Watch, Operation Northern Watch, Operation Enduring Freedom and many more. Holloman personnel also assist the WSMR in maintaining the White Sands Space Harbor, an alternative runway for Space Shuttle missions (Holloman AFB 2005).

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