

**RESTORATION MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM
FORMERLY USED DEFENSE SITES (FUDS)
PROJECT FACT SHEET**

26 June 1997

HNC REVISION: 21 OCTOBER 1997

TAG REVIEW DATE: 28 JANUARY 1998

1. SITE NAME: New Castle Army Air Base

SITE NUMBER: C03DE054703

LOCATION:

City: New Castle

County: New Castle

State: Delaware

PROJECT NUMBER: C03DE054703

CATEGORY: OE

INPR RAC: 2

ASR RAC: 1 (CWM ONLY)

TAG RAC: 5

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3. SITE DESCRIPTION: New Castle Army Air Base consisted of approximately 1,475.11 acres near Wilmington, Delaware located in New Castle County. Military use began in May 1942 when the Air Transport Command activated the 2nd Ferrying Group at the New Castle County Airport. The mission of the base during World War II included ferrying new aircraft and shipping supplies to destinations around the globe. After the war, the Army Air Forces declared the base excess, though the War Department withdrew a portion for use by the Delaware Air National Guard, which established its headquarters there in July 1947. In 1950, active Air Force components returned and the airport became a fighter-interceptor base, although civilian joint use continued. These operations were phased out during the late 1950s and the Air Force terminated most of their leases by June 1959. Military use of the facility continues, as the Delaware Air National Guard occupies a portion of the base to this day though commercial aviation constitutes the nucleus of recent operations at the airfield. The ordnance and explosives (OE) and chemical warfare materials (CWM) related features included the use of the skeet range, firing-in butt, ordnance storage areas and two rocket storage checkout and assembly buildings. The site had no permanent chemical gas training or storage areas denoted. Plate 1 shows the general location of the site.

4. SITE HISTORY: Military use of the airfield began when the U.S. Army leased the New Castle County Airport from the New Castle County Levy Court on 26 November 1941. The Army immediately started expanding the facilities at the airport and on 29 May 1942, the Air Transport Command activated the headquarters of the 2nd Ferrying Group. The mission of the 2nd Ferrying Group was to ferry new aircraft to destinations in the European Theater and around the globe. These included bombers, fighters, cargo and liaison aircraft. The name of the installation officially became New Castle Army Air Base in July 1942. Some documents refer to the site as the New Castle Army Airfield but this was not the official name. The 2nd Foreign Transport Group, also stationed at the base, shipped supplies all over the world. This Group gained fame with its Crescent Caravan, consisting of a fleet of C-54 cargo planes which delivered supplies to India and China.

Army Air Forces declared the base excess on 14 March 1946 and recommended it for surplus. Civilian operations at the airport resumed on 6 August 1946, though the military presence did not depart. The War Department withdrew from surplus approximately 20 buildings and the associated land for use by the Air National Guard in October 1946. On 1 July 1947, the Delaware Air National Guard established its headquarters at the airfield, which name once again became known as New Castle County Airport. For a time the airport was officially called the Greater Wilmington Airport but the name has since reverted back to the New Castle County Airport. On 29 November 1947, the majority of the facilities officially returned to the administrative control of the Levy Court of New Castle County and commercial airline passenger service began.

Early in 1950, the Air Force Reserve Corps set up a training facility as a tenant

organization at New Castle. The use of the airport as a fighter-interceptor base began in August that year, when the 4th Fighter-Interceptor Wing moved to the field and participated in the Air Defense Command's perimeter protection network until November. They were replaced by two Air National Guard units called to active duty on 1 February 1951. Assignments included flying intercept missions, along with conducting air to air, air to ground gunnery training missions and rocket training. The Air Force stationed additional fighter-interceptor wings at the base during the Korean Conflict but they left the base by the end of the conflict. The Air Force also stationed a troop carrier wing at the base for a short period between 1950 and 1951.

The Air Force continued use of the New Castle County Airport throughout the 1950's. In 1953, they had leased 95 percent of the former buildings, having entered into a joint use agreement for both military and commercial operations at the airport. Apparently safety distance criteria for armed aircraft doomed the fighter mission for the base. The base was in violation of the Air Defense Command guidance on distance to inhabited off-base buildings in August 1955, when the safety criteria increased to 1,235 feet. By the end of the decade, active duty Air Force operations had been phased out. The Reserve Combat Training Center lasted until just after 31 December 1957. The Air Force terminated most of their leases with the New Castle County by 3 June 1959.

Military use of the facility persists, as the Delaware Air National Guard continues to occupy a portion of the base to this day. During the 1950s, they flew bomber and fighter aircraft.

On 7 April 1962, their mission changed to an air transportation unit.

Commercial operations also continue at the airport, though the major airlines servicing the field terminated operations by 1974. Corporate and business aviation constitutes the nucleus of recent operations at the airfield. Air freight flights also continue as an important function at the airport.

During World War II, New Castle Army Air Base had limited OE facilities, primarily focused on storage of ammunition. Initially, the base stored ammunition and explosives in a temporary frame building.

Ordnance use also occurred on site during this period. In September 1942, the base began plans for construction of a "Testing Pit" [firing-in butt] for firing .30 and .50 caliber machine guns mounted on the aircraft. However, a year later the base commander ordered that the dirt mound built for this purpose be removed. The location for the firing-in butt is not denoted on site maps and could not be reliably determined from aerial photography.

The only identified exterior range on base maps was the skeet range, building number 188, constructed in the spring of 1943. Base personnel suggested using building 133 for an interior small arms range in 1942, though no evidence was found to indicate that this occurred. Small arms qualification training occurred at the off-site Delaware

National Guard Rifle Range near Fort DuPont during World War II and again during the 1950s.

During the 1950s, the Fighter-Interceptor Wings at New Castle conducted air to air and air to ground gunnery training using .50 caliber machine guns at various off base locations. In 1953, the fighter-interceptors began converting from the .50 caliber machine gun to the 2.75-inch rocket. To support this weaponry change, the Air Force constructed another ordnance storage building, two earth covered magazines and two rocket storage checkout and assembly buildings, numbers 2816 and 2817. Safety distance requirements compelled the Air Force to acquire additional land around the high explosive storage igloo area at that time. Another type of explosive at the installation during the period was the M28 A1 seat ejection cartridges, stored in the ammunition storage buildings.

Interviews indicate that the Delaware Air National Guard modified Building 2601 for use as an interior pistol range for a time but tore down this structure in 1975. The Guard continues to use an off site rifle range for training but stores their small arms ammunition in Building 2817.

U.S. Army Technical Escort Unit records indicate that in 1983 they transported laboratory quantities of high explosives via the airport for delivery to the Roy F. Weston company without incident.

The New Castle Army Air Base received a chemical warfare officer on 26 August 1943 and held their first Gas Alert Day on 3 November 1943. Gas Alert Days continued twice monthly afterwards. The chemical officer requested the construction of a gas chamber or that another existing building be furnished for chemical training. Reviewed site maps do not depict a gas chamber building or training area and examined documents do not describe specific gas training exercises. The "Report of Controlled and Other Critical Items of Equipment" inventory report dated 28 February 1945 shows two M1 Detonating Gas Identification Sets at New Castle Army Air Base. These kits contained active toxic chemical agents. Research did not uncover any documentation on the final disposition of these M1 Gas Detonating Identification Sets.

During the Korean Conflict, the base continued a chemical training program. They used the armament building, 176, as a gas chamber in December 1952 for a training exercise with CN (tear) gas.

Interviews indicate that the Delaware Air National Guard continues chemical warfare training from assigned chemical warfare officers. Equipment used in this training is controlled by the chemical warfare personnel.

5. PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

AREA: Entire area
Size, Acres: Approximately 1,475.11
Former Use: Army Air Base
Present Use: New Castle County Airport, commercial interests and private landowners
Probable End Use: Same
Ordnance Presence: None

6. CURRENT STATUS: The Draft Archives Search Report (ASR) was completed by St. Louis District in July 1997.

7. STRATEGY: No Further Action (NOFA)

8. ISSUES AND CONCERNS: The Huntsville Technical Advisory Group reviewed this ASR on 28 January 1998 and determined NOFA for this site based on the following:

Mr. Ken Shott, RCWM Team has reviewed this ASR and his review comments state, a Non-Concur with the current RAC of 1 and recommend a RAC score of 5 be given to this site. The positive identification of OE and CWM being found on base is not satisfied. He revised the RAC form reflecting a score of 5, NOFA.

Based on the ASR, no areas for possible removal action have been identified concerning OE or CWM.

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