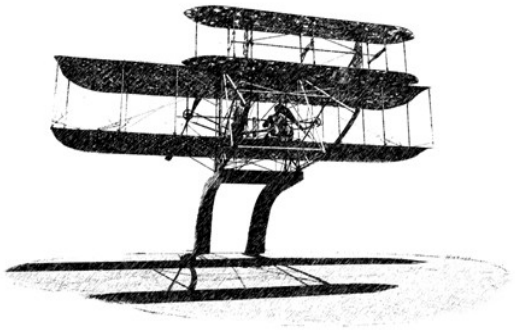
Historic Maxwell Air Force Base



Air Park Tour Guide

I heard the voice of the sovereign master say "Whom will I send? Who will go on our behalf?" I answered, "Here I am, send me!"

–Isaiah 6:8

This biblical quotation inspired the words inscribed on the base of the Richter Memorial, which serves as an anchor point for the Maxwell-Gunter Air Park. Drawn from more scattered locations around the base in the early 1980s, the park has since continued to add aircraft and memorial sites, but its purpose remains unchanged: to remind today's airmen of the valor, service and sacrifice of the airmen who came before them…many of whom had studied here at Maxwell at some point in their service to the nation.

The Maxwell-Gunter Air Park (see map on the back cover) contains eleven military aircraft and an armored convoy escort truck of the type used by ground-based USAF, AFRES and ANG personnel currently serving in Southwest Asia. Eight of the aircraft are clustered on the southern edge of Maxwell's Academic Circle, in the adjacent memorial park area, and just east of the two academic buildings facing Twining Street. Another aircraft is located about one block to the southeast of the main memorial park area. The remaining two aircraft and the gun truck are on the grounds of Gunter Annex, located in eastern Montgomery: a C-47B transport and the gun truck are sited adjacent to the Enlisted Heritage Hall located on Heritage Loop (just off Moore Drive), and the BT-15 trainer aircraft is located just inside Gunter's main gate on Congressman Dickinson Drive.

KARL RICHTER MEMORIAL

An outstanding flyer and a natural leader, 1st Lt. Karl W. Richter graduated from the Air Force Academy in 1964. Lt. Richter went on to become the then-youngest USAF pilot to achieve an aerial victory in the Vietnam War when, at the age of 23, he shot down a MiG-17 on September 21, 1966. Having volunteered for a second combat tour, Lt. Richter was on his 198th mission on July 28, 1967 when his F-105D fighter-bomber was hit by enemy ground fire over North Vietnam, and he was forced to eject. Mortally injured, Lt. Richter died in the rescue helicopter while it was still enroute to safety. An example of the aircraft flown by Lt. Richter on his last mission, the F-105D, is located just to the northeast of the Richter Memorial.

Funded entirely by private donations, the eight-foot bronze statue was created by nationally recognized sculptress Glenna Goodacre of Santa Fe, New Mexico. The Richter Memorial was dedicated in 1992.

REPUBLIC F-105D THUNDERCHIEF

Originally designed as a nuclear strike bomber, the F-105 Thunderchief came to bear the brunt of the USAF's air war over North Vietnam. Nicknamed "the Thud" by its pilots, the F-105D adapted to the tactical role with considerable success. Over 20,000 Thunderchief combat sorties were flown during the Vietnam War, but at a high cost: of the 833 built, 382 aircraft were lost, including 62 operational casualties. At maximum load, the Thud could carry sixteen 750-pound bombs—more than a heavy bomber in WWII. It could also carry other air-to-ground munitions, including napalm canisters and pods containing 2.75-inch unguided rockets, or up to four AIM-9 Sidewinder air-to-air missiles using a special rack allowing two to be carried on a single stores pylon. In the early years of the Vietnam War, F-105s went into combat in a natural metal finish; beginning in 1966 this gave way to a more warlike camouflage scheme featuring a disruptive pattern of tan, green, and olive drab on top and grayish white on the bottom.

The aircraft on display (AF Ser. 61-0176) is painted and marked as it appeared in late 1966 while serving with the 388th Tactical Fighter Wing based at Korat Royal Thai Air Base, Thailand. It fought in Vietnam for a total of three years and nine months, during which it served in three different fighter wings. This aircraft is dedicated to Colonel Michael Muskat., fighter pilot and Air University Chief of Staff, 1982-85.

Length: 64 ft. 5 in.	**Max Speed: 1,390 mph**
Height: 19 ft. 8 in.	**Max Wt: 52,838 lbs.**
Wing Span: 34 ft. 11 in.	**Max Range: 2,206 miles**

McDONNELL RF-101C VOODOO

Derived from the F-101 Voodoo fighter-interceptor that had served during much of the Cold War, the RF-101C photo-reconnaissance aircraft played an important role in the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962. The first Voodo, an F-101A, made its initial flight on September 29, 1954. With nearly 800 built, F-101A production ended March 1961. F-101B interceptors served in the US and Canadian Air Forces. Modified for the specialized photo-reconnaissance mission, the unarmed RF-101C first flew in July 1957 and entered service in 1958. The RF-101C was sent to Vietnam in 1961, becoming the first USAF jet aircraft to serve there. The Voodoo saw heavy service during the Vietnam War; enemy ground fire claimed the first RF-101C lost in combat in November 1964. In some 35,000 sorties, a total of 44 RF-101C aircraft were lost, including 31 to anti-aircraft fire, five to surface-to-air missiles, and one to a MiG-21 interceptor. By late 1970, the RF-101C had been replaced by the McDonnell Douglas RF-4C Phantom II.

The aircraft on display (AF Ser. 56-0135) was delivered on April 27, 1959 and served thereafter with the 432nd Tactical Reconnaissance Wing, the 66th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing and the 363rd Tactical Reconnaissance Wing before going to the Air National Guard in 1971.

Length: 69 ft. 3 in.	**Maximum Speed: 1,000 mph**
Height: 18 ft.	**Max Wt: 51,000 lbs.**
Wing Span: 39 ft. 8 in.	**Max Range: 2,060 miles**

McDONNELL DOUGLAS F-4D PHANTOM II

The McDonnell Douglas F-4 Phantom II was orginally developed for the U.S. Navy's fleet defense force; it entered naval service in 1961. The USAF began to acquire its own version of the F-4 for use in interdiction and counter-air operations in 1962. Production deliveries of the F-4C began November 1963, with an improved F-4D making its first flight on December 9, 1965. The F-4D offered more accurate bombing and better air-to-air capabilities, eventually receiving credit for 44 aerial victories over Southeast Asia. After Vietnam, later versions of the F-4 continued to serve with US military forces and allied air forces around the world for another two decades and more. In 1991, during Operation Desert Storm, USAF Phantoms carried out strategic strikes and reconnaissance missions against Iraqi military sites and formations. In 1996, after nearly forty years of service, the F-4 was retired from operational squadron use, but even now unmanned versions of the F-4 continue to serve in the USAF as high speed target drones.

The F-4D Phantom II on display (AF Ser. 65-0660) was delivered in July 1966 to the 4525th Fighter Weapons Wing. It later served with six different Weapons and Tactical Fighter Wings before being retired in 1986.

Length: 58 ft. 2 in.	**Max Speed: 1,400 mph**
Height: 16ft. 6 in.	**Max Wt: 58,000 lbs**
Wing Span: 38 ft. 5 in.	**Max Range: 1,750 miles**

NORTH AMERICAN F-100D SUPER SABRE

Originally designed as a Cold War air superiority fighter, the North American F-100D Super Sabre was the chief USAF strike aircraft used during the early years of the Vietnam War. Developed as a follow-on to the F-86 Sabrejet, the F-100 was the Western World's first production airplane capable of flying faster than the speed of sound in level flight (760 mph). The YF-100 prototype first flew on May 25, 1953 at Edwards AFB, California. F-100 production ended in 1959 with 2,294 built, of which 1,274 were F -100Ds. In addition to the thin, highly swept wing and tail, the F-100 design incorporated other features that answered the problems of achieving supersonic flight. Heat-resisting titanium was used extensively throughout the plane. A low-drag, ultra-streamlined fuselage and canopy with a single, thin-lipped air intake duct helped make supersonic speed possible. Replaced with newer fighter types by the 1970s, the Super Sabre continued to serve for two more decades as an unmanned target drone.

This F-100D (AF Ser. 55-3678) served primarily with the 49th Fighter Bomber Wing and the 20th and 48th Tactical Fighter Wings. It is dedicated to Vietnam War POW and Medal of Honor recipient Col. George "Bud" Day.

Length: 54 ft. 2 in.	**Max Speed: 926.6 mph**
Height: 16 ft. 2 in.	**Max Wt.: 38,048 lbs.**
Wing Span: 38 ft. 10 in.	**Max Range: 1970.5 miles**

WRIGHT FLYER MEMORIAL

Directly south of the Richter Memorial and on the opposite side of Chennault Circle is a large metal sculpture representing a near life-sized replica of the Wright 1909 Military Flyer, the first U.S. military aircraft. Constructed primarily of stainless steel, the replica weighs about two tons. Funded by the City of Montgomery and fabricated by sculptor-artist Larry Godwin of Brundidge, Alabama, it was created in celebration of the USAF's 38th birthday and the 75th anniversary of powered flight. Since then, Godwin has erected similar sculptures at several other U.S. locations, including Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio.

This memorial was dedicated on September 18, 1985 during a ceremony hosted by then-AU commander Lieutenant General Thomas Richards. The official party included an astronaut, a Wright Brothers niece, and the grandson of the man who persuaded the Wrights in February 1910 to open a flight school—the first of its kind in the United States—on land now enclosed by Maxwell AFB.

The figure at the controls represents Orville Wright, who made the first heavier-than-air flight in Alabama near this site on March 26, 1910. Orville has been the object of many AU student-pranksters over the last quarter-century, including some who have even managed to dress him in a T-Shirt bearing their unit emblem. Thus far, however, Orville has never said so much as a single word about their irreverence. After all, he is an *airman*. (The statistics are for the Wright 1909 Military Flyer.)

Length: 21 ft. 1 in.	**Max Speed: 42 mph**
Height: 9 ft. 0 in.	**Max Wt.: 745 lbs.**
Wing Span: 40 ft. 4 in.	**Max Range: 20 miles**

NORTH AMERICAN B-25J MITCHELL

Directly south of the Wright Flyer Memorial is a B-25 Mitchell medium bomber, examples of which served with the U.S. Army Air Forces (USAAF) in every theater of WWII. Named after airpower advocate Brigadier General Wm. 'Billy' Mitchell, the prototype B-25 made its maiden flight on 19 August, 1940. The B-25's ruggedness, maneuverability and ease of maintenance in the field made it a well-liked warplane. It was produced in great numbers, but flown most notably by the famous "Doolittle Raiders," who launched from a U.S. Navy aircraft carrier to attack military targets in Imperial Japan just 18 weeks after Pearl Harbor. Wartime U.S. allies, including Great Britain and Russia, also flew the B-25, and it served in the USAF well into the 1950s as a navigation trainer and VIP transport.

This B-25J (AAF Ser. 44-30649) is marked as an aircraft flown by the 321st Bomb Group while serving in the Mediterranean Theater during WWII. The aircraft bears the name of Col. Robert Knapp, wartime commander of the 321st and reported to be the oldest pilot then flying combat missions in the USAAF. As a lieutenant, Knapp had made the first airmail flight between New Orleans and Montgomery in 1925; after the war he became a USAF Brigadier General before retiring in his hometown of Auburn, Alabama.

Length: 51 ft. 11 in.	**Max Speed: 275 mph**
Height: 15 ft. 9 in.	**Max Wt: 21,000 lbs.**
Wing Span: 67 ft. 7 in.	**Max Range: 1,275 miles**

NORTH AMERICAN F-86A SABRE

To the east of the Wright Flyer Memorial is a North American F-86A Sabre. Soon after making its first flight on May 20, 1948, the prototype set a new world speed record of 670.9 mph, and the first two operational F-86As were delivered to the USAF on February 15, 1949. By the end of the Korean War in mid-1953, F-86 Sabres had shot down 792 MiGs with a loss of only 76 aircraft—a victory ratio of over ten to one. More than 5,500 Sabre day-fighters were built in the United States and Canada, and F-86 variants were also used by the air forces of 20 other nations, including West Germany, Japan, Spain, Britain, and Australia. Altogether there were about 6,200 F-86 Sabres built in the US before production ceased in December 1956.

The F-86A on display (AF Ser. 49-1301) was delivered in May 1951 and served thereafter in various USAF and ANG units until it was dropped from the active inventory in September 1960. It has been painted in the personal markings of then-Lt. Charles G. Cleveland while he was assigned to the 334th Fighter Interceptor Squadron during the Korean War. Lieutenant General Cleveland was the Air University commander from August 1981 until his retirement from active duty in August 1984.

Length: 37 ft. 6 in.	**Max Speed: 685 mph**
Height: 14 ft 8 in.	**Max Wt.: 13,791 lbs.**
Wing Span: 37 ft. 1 in.	**Max Range: 1,200 miles**

BOEING B-52D STATOFORTRESS

The B-52 first became operational in 1955, and it has since become the longest-serving military aircraft in U.S. history. Affectionately nicknamed the "BUFF" (for Big Ugly Fat Fellow) by its crews, the B-52 has a long, slender fuselage that is nearly rectangular in shape when viewed from the front. Its massive wings are shoulder-mounted and swept back at an angle of 35 degrees, and its weight rests on four two-wheeled bogies that can angle into the wind for landings or takeoffs. The B-52D dropped 'iron' bombs in Vietnam; later versions carried 'smart' bombs and stealthy missiles into combat. In Operation Desert Storm, BUFFs mounted over 1,600 missions; between January 17 and February 28, 1991, they dropped 25,700 tons of munitions on enemy targets in Kuwait and Iraq. Today, the last-serving B-52s continue to fly combat support missions over Iraq and Afghanistan.

This aircraft (AF Ser. 55-0057) flew over 300 combat missions during the Vietnam War, including six sorties over Hanoi and Haiphong during the Linebacker II operations of December 1972. Initially assigned to the 42nd Bomb Wing at Loring AFB, Maine, it logged over 14,000 flying hours during its 27-year career—ending its service with a final flight to Maxwell AFB on October 11, 1983.

Length: 156 ft. 6 in.	**Max Speed: 638 mph**
Height: 48 ft. 3 in.	**Max Wt: 450,000 lbs**
Wing Span: 185 ft	**Max Range: 6,338 statute miles**

SIKORSKY MH-53M PAVE LOW

The MH-53 is a variant of the HH-53 'Super Jolly Green Giant' air rescue helicopter, which was developed in turn from the U.S. Navy's CH-53 'Sea Stallion' heavy lift helicopter. The MH-53 has been optimized for long-range infiltration, exfiltration and resupply of special operations forces in darkness or marginal flying conditions. In 1979-80, under its Pave Low III program, the USAF modified over 40 of these helicopters to include the latest in sensor technologies, navigation systems and terrain-following radar; under Pave Low IV, many of them were upgraded yet again in the late 1990s to include new defensive avionics and other improvements. The resulting aircraft weapon system was designated as the MH-53M.

This MH-53M (AF Ser. 69-5785) was delivered in 1970; thereafter, it served in Southeast Asia, where it was credited with recovering at least three aircrew in 1971-72. In 1975, it evacuated U.S. personnel from Phnom Penh, Cambodia, and it participated in the *S.S. Mayaguez* rescue mission. In 1989, it flew missions in Panama during Operation Just Cause, and in 1991 it flew combat sorties in Kuwait and Iraq during Operation Desert Storm. The aircraft is painted in the markings of the 20th Special Operations Squadron; while assigned to that unit, it flew missions in Iraq and Afghanistan until it was retired (along with the other remaining MH-53Ms) in late 2008.

Length: 88 ft.	**Max Speed: 196 mph**
Height: 25 ft.	**Max Wt.: 46,000 lbs.**
Wing Span: 72 ft.	**Max Range: 600 miles**

NORTHROP T-38A TALON

The T-38A is the USAF's standard advanced jet trainer. First flown in April 1959, more than 1,140 T-38s were built before production ceased in 1970. The T-38A became fully operational in March 1961, and for the next 30 years it was flown by every pilot who completed USAF undergraduate pilot training. Today the USAF's Air Education and Training Command (AETC) continues to be the principle operator of the T-38, with about 450 aircraft in service. The T-38 is also flown by 'aggressor' instructors in USAF and Navy air combat tactics training units, by NASA astronauts, and by faculty and students at the U.S. Naval Test Pilot School.

The T-38A on display (AF Ser. 59-1601) was delivered to the USAF in October 1960. It served with the AF Flight Test Center at Edwards AFB, California, for the next decade, and then with another government agency for an additional year before being retired in 1972. It is painted in the standard colors of an advanced jet trainer aircraft currently serving in AETC.

Length: 46 ft. 4.5 in.	**Max Speed: 858 mph**
Height: 12 ft. 10.5 in.	**Max Wt.: 1,820 lbs.**
Wing Span: 25 ft. 3 in.	**Max Range: 1,140 miles**

VULTEE BT-15 VALIANT

Designed in 1939, the Valiant became the principle basic trainer flown by student pilots in both the USAAF and US Navy (as the SNV) during WWII. It was also flown by many foreign students sent to the U.S. for flight training by America's Allies. Instruction in the Valiant included formation flying, instrument flying and aerobatics; graduates then went on for advanced training in more powerful aircraft. The Valiant was built in several versions, including the BT-13 and the BT-15. The two 'BTs' differed mainly in that their engines were made by different manufacturers, but they shared the same flying characteristics: their aircrews called them "Vultee Vibrators" for their tendency to rattle and shake as they approached stalling airspeeds.

The BT-15 on display (AAF Ser. 42-41303) was delivered in December 1942 and spent almost all of its military service life assigned to an AAF Basic Pilot School at Enid Army Airfield, Oklahoma. It is painted in standard AAF Training Command colors and bears the markings of a typical BT-15 assigned to Gunter Field during WWII.

Length: 28 ft. 10 in.	**Max Speed: 180 mph**
Height: 11 ft. 6 in.	**Max Wt.: 4,496 lb.**
Wing Span: 42 ft. 0 in.	**Max Range: 725 miles**

DOUGLAS C-47B SKYTRAIN

The C-47 Skytrain evolved from the famous Douglas DC-3 commercial airliner, which made its first flight in December 1935. The first Skytrain was produced in 1941, and by war's end over 10,000 had been delivered; it was called the R4D in U.S. Navy service and the Dakota by the British. Derivative military versions of the basic DC-3 design were also built in both Russia and Japan. U.S. military upgrades included more powerful engines, the removal of airline seating in favor of utility seats, a stronger rear fuselage and floor, and the addition of large loading doors. C-47s operated around the world in WWII and well after in many nations' air forces. The USAF continued to use the C-47 even into the mid-1960s, and during the Vietnam War a small number were converted to AC-47 gunships. Armed with multiple side-firing machine guns, these variants were used in South Vietnam to defend friendly forces 'in contact' with attacking insurgents.

This C-47B (AAF Ser. 43-49127) is marked to resemble 'Spooky 71,' an AC-47 gunship assigned to the 14th Air Commando Wing when it served in Southeast Asia. It was aboard that aircraft on February 24, 1969 that a cargo loadmaster, Airman John Levitow, performed an act of heroism which saved the crew and resulted in his receiving the Medal of Honor—one of only two awarded to a USAF enlisted member during the Vietnam War.

Length: 25 ft. 9 in.	**Max Speed: 230 mph**
Height: 7 ft 6 in.	**Max Wt.: 25,200 lbs.**
Wing Span: 36 ft. 0 in.	**Max Range: 2,125 statute miles**

CESSNA T-41A "MESCALERO"

The Cessna T-41 was derived from a standard Cessna Model 172 light aviation aircraft. Between 1965 and 1969 the USAF purchased 211 T-41As "off the shelf" for the preliminary flight screening of pilot candidates; another 52 T-41Cs were obtained in 1968-69 for use by the Air Force Academy. The T-41 also saw service in the U.S. Army, and large numbers were exported to friendly nations under the Military Assistance Program.

This T-41A aircraft (AF Ser. 67-14977) was built in the spring of 1967 at Cessna's factory in Wichita, Kansas. Accepted by the USAF on 2 June 1968, and initially assigned to the 3515th Pilot Training Wing (later redesignated as the 19th Flying Training Wing), then an Air Training Command organization assigned to Craig AFB, Selma, Alabama. In April 1973, it was transferred to the USAF Officer Training School (OTS) at Lackland AFB, San Antonio, Texas, where it remained until August 1991, when it was reassigned to Lackland's 12th Flying Training Wing. Two years later, it was handed over to the Aero Club at Maxwell AFB, Montgomery, Alabama. For the next twelve years, club members flew it for pleasure, and to gain experience in the air. It was declared surplus in August 2005 and removed from the USAF inventory in January 2007. It was installed on Maxwell AFB's OTS campus 25 Oct 2010 as a visual symbol of the School's heritage.

Length: 26 ft 11 in	**Max Speed: 139 mph**
Height: 8 ft 10 in	**Max Wt.: 2,300 lbs**
Wing Span: 35 ft 8 in	**Max Range: 720 miles**

MODEL M923A2P1 GUN TRUCK

The post-invasion phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom put some USAF ground personnel in circumstances not encountered since the Vietnam War, including the need to protect supply convoys against insurgent attacks. By late 2003 it had become apparent that convoys needed more firepower for self-protection. They also needed more blast-resistant vehicles to reduce the effects of the enemy's weapons, especially improvised explosive devices (IEDs). USAF security forces and Army logistics personnel did some improvising of their own, and this resulted in the gun truck–an army transport vehicle equipped with heavy machine gun positions and locally-fabricated 'hillbilly' armor plating installed around the cab and under the truck bed. Gun truck crews typically consisted of a driver, two machine gunners, and a noncommissioned officer -commander.

This vehicle was built for the US Army by HARSCO Corp. and delivered in October 1990. After its conversion, the truck was provided to the USAF's 1058th Air Expeditionary Force Truck Company and stationed at Forward Operating Base Speicher in Tikrit, Iraq. It survived many patrols and multiple engagements, but had to be written off in 2005 after being severely damaged by an IED explosion. Restored and put on display in 2007, it honors the USAF ground personnel who have served in Southwest Asia.

Length: 26 ft.	**Max Speed: 55 mph**
Height: 13 ft.	**Wt.: 26,040 lbs.**
Width: 8 ft.	**Max Range: 200 miles**

FREQUENTLY ASKED AIR PARK QUESTIONS

Who owns the airplanes in the Maxwell-Gunter Air Park?

All of the aircraft in the Maxwell-Gunter Air Park are on long-term loan from the National Museum of the United States Air Force, located in Dayton, Ohio. The 42nd Air Base Wing, Maxwell's host organization, is responsible for their upkeep.

Are any of the airplanes still flyable?

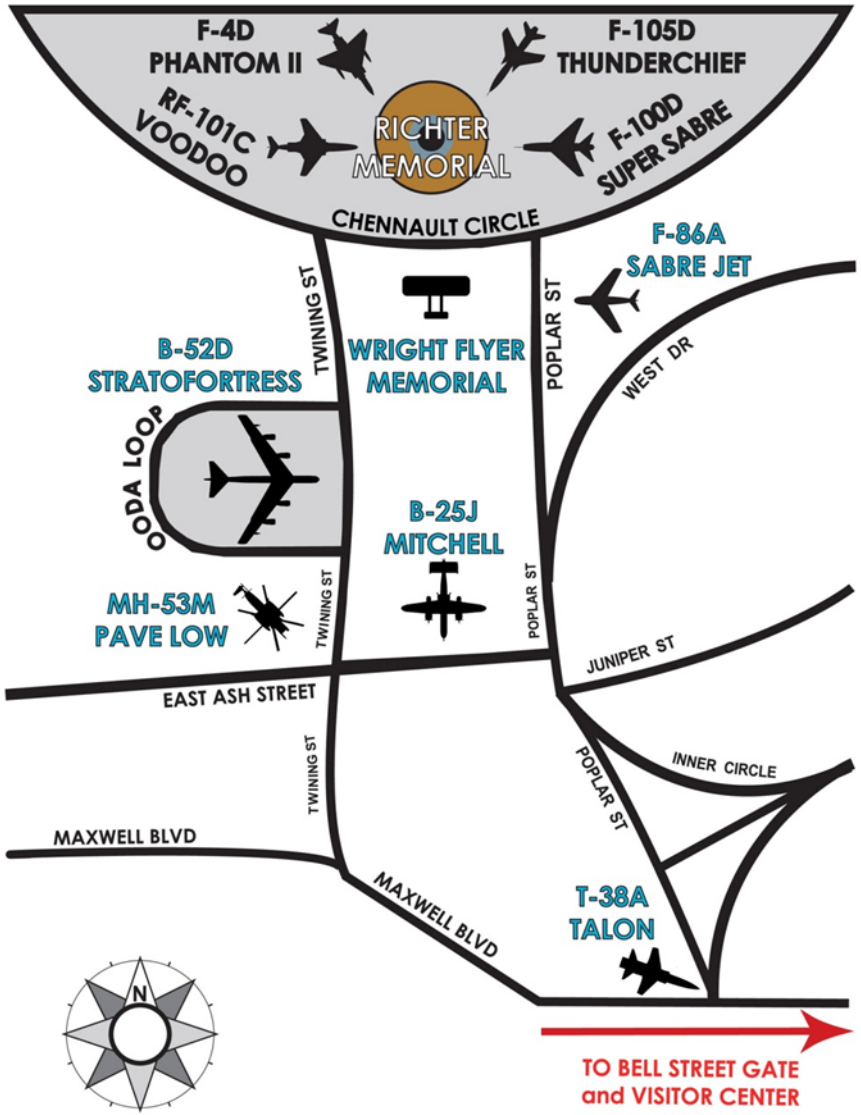
No. Each aircraft undergoes a multi-step process called "demilitarization" before it can be put on outdoor display. This process includes the removal of engines, armament, and any internal equipment or fluids that might pose a safety or hazardous waste risk. Cockpit instruments and other radiation sources are also removed, and all intakes, vents and access panels are blocked or sealed to keep birds and vermin from using the airplane as a nesting ground. Finally, the airplane is mounted on stands to immobilize it against gusty winds; this sometimes also requires internal reinforcement.

Why are the planes painted in glossy colors? Aren't they supposed to be camouflaged?

Many of the Air Park aircraft were painted in non-reflective camouflage colors when they were on active service, but long-term outdoor display imposes the need for paints that are durable and environmentally safe; their glossy finishes are a necessary compromise between appearance and cost.

How can non-military people get on base to see the Air Park? May the aircraft be photographed?

Permission to visit the Maxwell-Gunter Air Park can be requested through the AU Office of History (334-953-5262). Visitors are free to photograph the Air Park displays, but they may not touch or climb upon them.



Designed and produced by the Air University Office of History
Dr. Silvano Wueschner, Deputy Director
30 May 2009