

Eglin designated Historic Aerospace Site

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[Mona Moore](#) Daily News

EGLIN AFB — The American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA) has designated the base as a Historic Aerospace Site. The organization is the world's largest technical society dedicated to the global aerospace profession. The institute has more than 200 members in its Northwest Florida section.

Gerry Harbaugh, the treasurer and past chairman of the local section, said Eglin Air Force Base's recognition meant a lot to him. "To me, it kind of exemplifies what the local section is about and what Eglin is about," Harbaugh said. "I've worked at Eglin for many, many years. I've always been proud of the work we do here."

The Northwest Florida section devotes much of its efforts to school projects, such as sponsoring competitions and mentoring students. "We can encourage the next generation of engineers and scientists, get them interested," Harbaugh said.

Eglin is only the second Florida site to be designated since the institute established the Historic Aerospace Sites Program in January 2000. The program was developed to preserve and share accomplishments made in the aerospace profession.

In addition to Eglin, other sites recognized by the institute's History Technical Committee include Cape Canaveral Air Station; the NASA Ames Research Center at Moffet Field, Calif.; Vandenberg Air Force Base in Lompoc, Calif.; the site of the first balloon launch in Annonay, France; and Tranquility Base on the moon.

The Northwest Florida section submitted an application packet that outlined Eglin's contributions to the profession. "Eglin has a rich history dating back to the Doolittle Raiders and it has a long history of operations," Harbaugh said.

Established in 1935 as the Valparaiso Bombing and Gunnery Base, the base supported the Army Air Corps, the predecessor to the Air Force, as its primary facility for training new pilots in bombing and gunnery tactics. Eglin also served as a test facility for aircraft, aircraft armaments, air-delivered munitions and other aircraft systems. The base was renamed Eglin Field in 1937 in honor of Air Corps aviator Lt. Col. Frederick I. Eglin, who trained pilots during World War I and who recently had died in an airplane accident,

After Congress created the Air Force as a separate service, the base continued training pilots and testing aircraft and armaments. In 1957, the Air Force combined the Air Proving Ground Command and the Air Force Armament Center to create the Air Proving Ground Center at Eglin, which led to the establishment of the Eglin Gulf Test Range. That allowed part of the airspace over the Gulf of Mexico to be used for safer testing of new air-delivered weapons than was possible on the older land-based range.

Eglin's personnel now are involved in state-of-the-art munitions and personnel training, expanding the combat support capabilities of not only the Air Force but the Department of Defense and the aerospace industry.