



AIR FORCE TECHNICAL APPLICATIONS CENTER

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24/7 treaty monitoring center ready for contingency ops

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PATRICK AIR FORCE BASE, Fla. – Much like the famous words inscribed on the exterior of the New York City Post Office, neither rain nor snow nor heat nor gloom of night will keep the Air Force Technical Applications Center from the swift completion of its appointed rounds.

Recently, the nuclear treaty monitoring center here transferred its Contingency of Operations (COOP) and the Alternate U.S. National Data Center location from San Antonio, Texas to Millington, Tenn. For the past five years, AFTAC's alternate site was located at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, in close proximity to 25th Air Force, AFTAC's Numbered Air Force. In December 2015, the space occupied by the COOP team was reclaimed by 25th AF, so AFTAC needed to find another site for its alternate operations site.



Over the course of the project, AFTAC assembled a team of subject matter experts specializing in security, mission operations, facility management, information technology, civil engineering, communications, and planning to execute the AFTAC commander's intent: find and establish a new site for contingency operations.

The team developed criteria that addressed 17 key factors based on current mission needs and potential for future growth. After visiting potential bases and locations throughout the U.S. to determine which site presented itself with the best and most viable options, AFTAC leadership decided to partner with Naval Support Activity Mid-South in Millington, Tenn. NSA Mid-South serves as the U.S. Navy's Human Resources Center of Excellence, and is home to Navy Personnel Command, Navy Recruiting Command, the Navy Manpower Analysis Center and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Finance and Logistics national centers.

NSA Mid-South is also home to the Joint Reserve Intelligence Center-Memphis, which provides training and facility support to all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces in various fields including cryptology, information operations, networks, signals intelligence and space operations to meet Total Force Information Warfare Community requirements. Nestled in the small farming town of Millington with a civilian population of just over 10,000, NSA Mid-South is home to a secure, 24-7 facility with a full complement of network and information technology connectivity, and employs more than 6,500 officers, enlisted, civilian and full-time contract personnel.

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2-2-2 COOP

AFTAC, the Department of Defense's sole nuclear treaty monitoring center, is tasked with providing uninterrupted access to nuclear event detection data to provide to national decision-makers at the highest level in the U.S. government. The center also operates the U.S. NDC, the nation's arm of the International Monitoring System that supports the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization to limit nuclear testing and proliferation worldwide. Some of the monitoring center's work falls into the classified realm and requires additional protection that a standard office building cannot provide.

"The facility in Tennessee presented the best long-term solution to our COOP relocation," said Mark Smith, program analyst and relocation project manager assigned to AFTAC's Plans and Programs Directorate. "The center offers more than 31,000 square feet of dedicated space in a secure facility, and the Navy has been exceedingly accommodating to our unique needs and requirements."

Smith said the space also provides AFTAC with the ability to expand its operations in the future if needed.



"Millington offers our leadership the unique opportunity to create a fully operational alternate operations center if needed in the event Patrick AFB should become inhabitable due to a natural or man-made disaster," said Smith. "Our new location, which we've dubbed as 'AFTAC Mid-South,' presents possibilities never before available to AFTAC, and our leadership is already exploring several future operational capability options for our squadrons."

On March 1, 2017, the two services signed a 25-year host-tenant real estate agreement giving AFTAC a stable and secure location for its contingency operations through 2042, and on April 11, 2017, contractors broke ground to renovate more than 8,500 square feet of the available 31,000 square foot workspace.

"Ours is a 24/7/365 no-fail mission," said Col. Greg Sawyer, AFTAC vice commander, "and as such, we need to ensure we are prepared for any contingency that may alter how we do business. We are the only organization whose mission is to operate and maintain the Air Force's largest sensor network to detect disturbances underground, underwater, in the atmosphere or in space and determine if the event is nuclear in nature."

Anytime an organization is forced to relocate, it poses significant logistical hurdles that place heavy demands its employees. In 2017, AFTAC was forced to deploy to its alternate facility in Texas when Hurricane Irma threatened Florida's Space Coast. It was doubly challenging for AFTAC's 1,000+ member workforce – not only did center personnel have to juggle the prospect of a Category 3 storm heading its way, they were also in the middle of analyzing a confirmed North Korean nuclear test four days earlier.

Navy Capt. Michael S. Wathen, commanding officer of NSA Mid-South, expressed his thoughts about the new tenant on his installation.

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3-3-3 COOP

“We are happy to add the Air Force and AFTAC to our Mid-South team,” said Wathen. “We are looking forward to providing the support they needs as a COOP location and a lasting Air Force partnership on the installation.

The treaty monitoring center’s senior leader also expressed his gratitude for the amount of work that went into such a complex project.

“The COOP team accomplished this transfer two years ahead of schedule and right at budget,” said Col. Steven M. Gorski, AFTAC commander. “It is a rare event that we have the chance to open a new operating location, and I am exceptionally proud of the effort everyone put forth to make this happen. The project took significant planning, and AFTAC personnel rose to the occasion.”

Gorski added, “I want to reassure our customers that regardless of what obstacles or conditions are thrown at us, a team of experts here at AFTAC will be on watch for what the National Security Strategy has declared the greatest threat to our nation – the use of weapons of mass destruction against the United States or our allies. This project should serve as an example of what we can accomplish when we work together as a team.”

The move cost approximately \$3.9 million, which included facility/infrastructure modifications, IT/communications installation, equipment procurement, security upgrades and various TDY expenses.

“There were countless moving parts and dozens of people who made this concept come to fruition,” said Smith. “As the project manager for this undertaking, we are grateful to 25th Air Force, especially the men and women of the 625th Air Communications Squadron, for assisting with sustaining the alternate national data center since 2013. They were not only integral in sustaining our COOP location, but they also played a key role in helping AFTAC Mid-South secure the necessary authorities to make this a reality. Kudos to all the folks at NSA Mid-South for their partnership and willingness to go above and beyond every step of the way. I also want to extend my personal thanks to my AFTAC co-workers who put in innumerable hours of hard work on this project. It’s great to be a part of such a phenomenal team of dedicated professionals.”

