

OverviewLangley

Langley Air Force Base is a [United States Air Force](#) base located adjacent to [Hampton](#) and [Newport News, Virginia](#). It was one of [thirty-two Air Service training camps](#) established after the entry of the United States into [World War I](#) in April 1917.

On 1 October 2010, Langley Air Force Base was joined with [Fort Eustis](#) to become [Joint Base Langley–Eustis](#). The base was established in accordance with congressional legislation implementing the recommendations of the 2005 [Base Realignment and Closure Commission](#). The legislation ordered the consolidation of the two facilities which were nearby, but separate military installations, into a single [joint base](#), one of 12 formed in the United States as a result of the law.



The Air Force mission at Langley is to sustain the ability for fast global deployment and air superiority for the United States or allied armed forces. The base is one of the oldest facilities of the Air Force, having been established on 30 December 1916, prior to America's entry to [World War I](#) by the [Aviation Section, U.S. Signal Corps](#), named for aviation pioneer [Samuel Pierpont Langley](#). It was used during World War I as a flying field, balloon station, observers' school, photography school, experimental engineering department, and for aerial coast defense. It is situated on 3,152 acres of land between the cities of Hampton (south), [NASA](#) (west), and the northwest and southwest branches of the [Back River](#). "AirPower over Hampton Roads" is a recurring airshow held at Langley in the spring. Many demonstrations take place, including the [F-22 Raptor](#) Demonstration, [Aerobatics](#), and [parachute](#) demos.

Because of the possibility of crashes of the F-22s and other aircraft stationed at the base, the City of Hampton has partnered with the Commonwealth of Virginia and United States Air Force to purchase privately owned property within the Clear Zone and Accident Potential Zones, without using eminent domain, to create a safety buffer zone around the base.

History

Langley Field was named after [Samuel Pierpont Langley](#), an aerodynamic pioneer and a former Secretary of the [Smithsonian Institution](#). Langley began aerodynamic experiments in 1887 and formed a basis for practical pioneer aviation. He built and saw the first steam model airplane in 1896 and the first gasoline model in 1903. Both planes were believed to be capable of flight. He also built the first man-carrying gasoline airplane in 1903, which failed to fly on its first attempt and broke apart and crashed on its second. It was, after major modification eleven years later, flown "successfully" by Glenn Curtiss for a little over 3 seconds, traveling 150 feet through the air in 1914. Langley Field was the first Air Service base built especially for air power, is the oldest continually active air force base in the world and is the oldest airfield in Virginia.

Origins

In 1916, the National Advisory Council for Aeronautics (NACA), predecessor to NASA, established the need for a joint airfield and proving ground for Army, Navy and NACA aircraft. NACA determined that the site must be near water for over-water flying, be flat and relatively

clear for expansion and the landing and take-off of aircraft, and near an Army post. The Army appointed a board of officers who searched for a location. The officers sometimes posed as hunters and fishermen to avoid potential land speculation which would arise if the government's interest in purchasing land was revealed. Fifteen locations were scouted before a site near Hampton in [Elizabeth City County](#) was selected.



1 Langley Field in 1920

In 1917, the new proving ground was designated Langley Field for one of America's early air pioneers, [Samuel Pierpont Langley](#). Langley had first made tests with his manned heavier-than-air craft, launched from a houseboat catapult, in 1903. His first attempts failed and he died in 1906, shortly before a rebuilt version of his craft soared into the sky.^[7] Training units assigned to Langley Field:^[8]

- 5th Aviation School Squadron, June 1917

Re-designated as 119th Aero Squadron, September 1917; Detachment No. 11, Air Service, Aircraft Production, July 1918-May 1919

- 83d Aero Squadron (II), March 1918

Re-designated as Squadron "A", July–November 1918

- 126th Aero Squadron (II) (Service), April 1918

Re-designated as Squadron "B", July–November 1918

- 127th Aero Squadron (II) (Service), April 1918

Re-designated as Squadron "C", July–November 1918

- Flying School Detachment (Consolidation of Squadrons A-C), November 1918-November 1919

Several buildings had been constructed on the field by late 1918. Aircraft on the ramp at that time included the [Curtiss JN-4](#) "Jenny", used by Langley's School of Aerial Photography, and the [de Havilland DH.4](#) bomber, both used during World War I. Although short-lived, hydrogen-filled [dirigibles](#) played an important role in Langley's early history and a portion of the base is still referred to as the LTA (lighter-than-air) area.

Inter-war years

In the early 1920s, Langley became the site where a new air power concept was tried and proven. Brig. Gen. [Billy Mitchell](#) led bombing runs from Langley by the [1st Provisional Air Brigade](#) over captured German warships anchored off the coast of Virginia and North Carolina. These first successful tests set the precedent for the airplane's new role of strategic bombardment.

[YB-17 Flying Fortress](#) bomber crew receiving instructions at Langley, May 1942. Throughout the 1930s Langley Field occupied a principal position in the Army's efforts to strengthen the offensive

and defensive posture of its air arm. The small grassy field became a major airfield of the [United States Army Air Corps](#), and many of the brick buildings of today were constructed at that time.

World War II

At the outbreak of World War II Langley took on a new mission, to develop special detector equipment used in antisubmarine warfare. Langley units played a vital role in the sinking of enemy submarines off the United States coast during the war. The field was also used for training purposes.

Cold War

On 25 May 1946 the headquarters of the newly formed [Tactical Air Command](#) were established at Langley. The command's mission was to organize, train, equip and maintain combat-ready forces capable of rapid deployment to meet the challenges of peacetime air sovereignty and wartime air defense. The arrival of Tactical Air Command and jet aircraft marked the beginning of a new era in the history of the field, and in January 1948 Langley Field officially became **Langley Air Force Base**. In January 1976 the [1st Tactical Fighter Wing](#) was transferred to Langley from [MacDill Air Force Base](#), Florida with the mission of maintaining combat capability for rapid global deployment to conduct air superiority operations. To accomplish this mission, the 1st TFW was the first USAF operational wing to be equipped with the [F-15 Eagle](#).

Post Cold War

On 1 June 1992, Langley became the headquarters of the newly formed [Air Combat Command](#), as Tactical Air Command was inactivated as part of the Air Force's restructuring. On 15 December 2005, the [1st Fighter Wing](#)'s 27th Fighter Squadron became the Air Force's first operational F-22 fighter squadron. The wing's complement of 40 F-22s, in the 27th and 94th FS reached Full Operational Capability on 12 December 2007.

Langley Air Force Base was severely damaged by flooding due to the storm surge from [Hurricane Isabel](#) in September 2003 and again during the [November 2009 Mid-Atlantic nor'easter](#). Hurricane Isabel damages to Langley Air Force Base were approximately \$147 million. The damages associated with the 2009 nor'easter were approximately \$43 million.^[7]

Resilience measures taken since 2003 include raising low-lying critical infrastructure, mandating a minimum elevation for new construction, construction of a 6 mile long sea wall and a groundwater pumping station. The site of Langley Air Force base, with an average elevation of 3 feet, has seen 14 inches of sea level rise since 1930.¹



Major units like the 94th Fighter Squadron F-22As approaching Langley Air Force Base To accomplish their mission, the support unit men and women of the 633d Air Base Wing at Langley are housed in the Mission Support Groups and Medical Group and support several tenant units.^[11]

- The [1st Fighter Wing](#) is composed of the [1st Operations Group](#) and the 1st Maintenance Group, which work together to maintain Joint Base Langley–Eustis's F-22 Raptors.

Reference: Wikipedia, [Langley Air Force Base](#)