

## **NAS Moffett Field**

### **~ A short history ~**

In 1931, Mountain View and Sunnyvale acquired a 1,000 acre (4 km<sup>2</sup>) parcel of land bordering San Francisco Bay, then "sold" the parcel for \$1 to the US Government as a home base for the Navy airship *USS Macon*.

The location proved to be ideal for an airport. Through a quirk of geography, the area is often clear while the rest of the San Francisco Bay is covered in fog. This is due to a gap in the Coast Range to the west which funnels the prevailing winds into the area, dispersing the fog.

The base, originally named **Airbase Sunnyvale CAL**, was accepted by the U.S. Navy on February 12, 1931 and dedicated **NAS Sunnyvale** on April 12, 1933. After the death of Rear Admiral William A. Moffett in the loss of the *USS Akron* on April 4, 1933, the Naval Air Station's airfield was named **Moffett Field** on September 1, 1933.

After the ditching of the *USS Macon* on February 12, 1935, and until August 1942, Moffett Field was under control of the U.S. Army Air Corps. Throughout this period, the airbase housed the 19<sup>th</sup> Airship Squadron, the 82<sup>nd</sup> Observation Squadron, and the 20<sup>th</sup> and 35<sup>th</sup> Pursuit Groups. Moffett Field was also Headquarters West Coast Army Air Corps Training Center and the Air Corps Basic Flying School

Moffett Field was chosen as the site for the research laboratory of the newly-formed National Advisory Committee on Aeronautics on September 22, 1939

At the beginning of World War II, the Navy re-assumed control of the airfield, renaming the base as Naval Air Station Moffett Field. From the end of World War II until its closure in 1994, NAS Moffett Field saw several generations of fighter and attack aircraft, transport aircraft and land-based anti-submarine warfare aircraft. Until the demise of the Soviet Union and for some time thereafter, daily anti-submarine sorties flew from NAS Moffett Field to patrol along the Pacific coastline.

More detailed information on each period can be accessed via the links below:

- ➔ **[USS MACON ERA:](#)** Airbase Sunnyvale was constructed specifically for the rigid airship *USS Macon*, which arrived in October, 1933.
- ➔ **[ARMY AIR CORPS ERA:](#)** Following the loss of the *Macon* in 1935, the base was turned over to the U.S. Army Air Corps for use as a cadet and pilot training base.
- ➔ **[WORLD WAR II ERA:](#)** With the onset of World War II, the US Navy re-acquired the base in 1942 for U.S. Navy Blimp training and operations under Fleet Airship Wing Three, as well as a home port for PV-1 *Ventura* and PV-2 *Harpoon* Patrol and Bombing (VPB) Squadrons. Moffett Field was also home to several Utility Squadrons (VJ-7A, VJ-14, VJ-17, VJ-19, VU-2, VU-17 and VU-18) during the war years.
- ➔ **[COLD WAR ERA:](#)**

- **NAVY FIGHTER AND ATTACK SQUADRONS:** At the end of the war, the base became the U.S. Navy's west coast Master Fighter and Attack Base through the late 1950's.
- **TRANSPORT COMMANDS:** Moffett Field was also home to Headquarters, Naval Air Transport Service (NATS) and Naval Air Transport Wing-Pacific (NATWINGPAC), and those squadrons (VR-3, VR-44, VR-5, VR-7, VR-8, and VR-22) flying R5D (C-54), R6D (C-118), R7V (C-121), and various versions of C-130s, through 1967. It was also the home for the only two R6O/R6V Lockheed Constitutions ever made and were flown by VR-4 and later by VR-5.
- **ANTI-SUBMARINE and MARITIME PATROL COMMANDS:** With the increased threat of "non-allied" ballistic-missile submarines, in 1963 the base became home to Headquarters, Patrol Wings Pacific, Fleet Air Wing Eight, Patrol Wing Ten, and those squadrons flying the various P-3 ASW aircraft (VP-9, VP-19, VP-31, VP-40, VP-46, VP-47, VP-48, VP-50, VP-91, and VP-MAU-Pacific). These commands flew missions throughout the Pacific and Indian Ocean Theatres until the base closure in 1994. Naval Reserve commands, including VR-55 flying their C-130s remained until 1999, when all U.S. Navy presence ceased.
- **CURRENT ERA:** Moffett Federal Airfield still supports the California Air National Guard (129<sup>th</sup> Air Rescue Wing flying their HH-60 helicopters and MC-130s), and the U. S. Army Reserve 7<sup>th</sup> Psychological Operations Group.