

Nuclear Weapons Center to Stand Up in March

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Kirtland Air Force Base *Nucleus*
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Nuclear Weapons Directorate Kirtland will become the home of Air Force Materiel Command's newest organization, the Nuclear Weapons Center, on March 31.

"The base has been at the heart of nuclear activities for over 60 years, so it is no surprise that the NWC would find a home here," said Col. Greg Foraker, director of the Nuclear Weapons Directorate. Kirtland has a rich nuclear history beginning in 1942 with the establishment of the Manhattan Engineering District's Armed Forces Special Weapons Command at Sandia Base.

The Air Force's Special Weapons Center served as the host unit in the 1960s and 1970s, and the Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center to stand up in March Weapons Laboratory became the focus of nuclear activity through the early 1990s. Numerous nuclear activities remain today, such as AFMC's Nuclear Weapons Directorate, the Department of Energy's Sandia National Laboratories, the Nuclear Weapon Counterproliferation Agency and a number of other "nuclear" oriented organizations.

"Kirtland is the natural place to locate the newest member of the nuclear community, the Nuclear Weapons Center," said Colonel Foraker, "We have the history here and already have the important players and experts in place."

Why a Nuclear Weapons Center?

"Several recent Air Force reviews of how nuclear business is conducted within the Air Force revealed that the community could be improved with a re-focusing of nuclear weapons system management and funding," In Focus: Nuclear Weapons Center said Col. Terrence Feehan, 377th Air Base Wing commander.

AFMC took the challenge and initiated action in January 2005 to create a "nuclear" focused organization within the command.

After numerous meetings with involved agencies, extensive planning and lots of staff work, Gen. T. Michael Moseley, Air Force chief of staff, approved establishing a Nuclear Weapons Center here on Feb. 3.

The NWC initially includes the Cruise Missile Group at Tinker AFB, Okla., the 896th Munitions Squadron at Nellis AFB, Nev., the Nuclear Weapons Directorate here and the 377th ABW. The NWC will comprise two wings, the 377th ABW, the host organization directly responsible for Kirtland AFB and over 100 associate units based here and the 498th Armament Systems Wing, responsible for nuclear weapon system management.

The 498th ARSW will include the Cruise Missile Group at Tinker and the Nuclear Weapons Directorate and 377th Maintenance Group here at Kirtland. These units will be redesignated as the 498th Missile Sustainment Group, 498th Nuclear Systems Group and 498th Munitions Maintenance Group, respectively.

The 498th ARSW is responsible for the entire scope of nuclear weapons system support functions to include sustainment, modernization and acquisition support activities for the DOD.

“Team Kirtland looks forward to this new partnership with the Nuclear Weapons Center,” Colonel Feehan said. “It is an opportunity for the Air Force to expand its role here within the nuclear weapons business and to continue its leadership through this critical national and world capability.”

(Terry Walker contributed to this article.)

Nuclear Weapons Center mission:

To ensure safe, secure, and reliable nuclear weapons to support the National Command Structure and the Air Force warfighter.

The NWC vision:

To be the Air Force’s Center of Excellence for all nuclear weapons system activities. Initial NWC responsibilities include:

- Air Force’s nuclear weapons system advocate,
- Air Force Nuclear Certification Program management,
- Air Force nuclear weapons logistics management,
- nuclear weapons system support equipment / trainers management and
- independent nuclear weapons system engineering analysis, assessment support.