

# Future is bright for Keesler, South Mississippi

## Base in midst of largest housing construction project in Air Force history

By Brig. Gen. Paul Capasso  
81st Training Wing commander



When Hurricane Katrina made her unwelcomed visit into Mississippi Gulf Coast 20 months ago, Keesler Air Force Base and our South Mississippi neighbors suffered tremendously in the wake of the storm.

Despite the damage we suffered, almost overnight, the base became a center of activity for the massive relief and recovery operations mounted along the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Our Airmen mobilized on the spot, clearing debris, distributing aid and taking care of those victims of the storm who were unable to take care of themselves.

"Getting back to normal" has been our battle cry ever since the hurricane. Our commitment of putting our base, our mission and our community back to normal has been unprecedented. It has been a story of heroes, men and women of Team Keesler and hundreds of contractors and volunteers who have come together to make a difference in the lives of others.

As you look around, it is hard to tell that Keesler suffered \$950 million in damages from Katrina. We have just completed year one of a four-year recovery effort and the magnificent fruits of everyone's hard work, dedication, and courage can be seen everywhere you look. Recovery efforts are in full swing and we are transforming the way we work, live, and play. The return of our training mission has surpassed all expectations.

In 2006, we graduated over 26,000 students – a remarkable story by all accounts. The Air Force's second largest hospital, the Keesler Medical Center, is once again bringing patient care to new heights. Primary care began a month after the storm, while in-patient care and a new pharmacy returned on the anniversary of Katrina.

New services are being brought on daily. We will see the return of the Graduate Medical Education program in July of this year under a new partnership with the University of Mississippi and new internships with the University of Southern Mississippi.



The "Spirit of Biloxi" was named in ceremonies held Sept. 20, 2006 for the community where many of the 403rd Wing's Citizen Airmen make their home. The aircraft is a "stretched" version of the venerable C-130, the Air Force's workhorse airlifter. The new C-130J-30 is packed with aviation technology improving the safety and situational awareness of the Reserve crews who fly humanitarian, medical evacuation and transport taskings in addition to many other types of missions. The "Spirit of Biloxi" is assigned to the 403rd Wing's 815th Airlift Squadron at Keesler, where more than 1,400 Reservists serve.

In September 2006, we signed a contract to build 1,067 new homes on Keesler. This military construction project is the largest contract of its kind in the history of the United States Air Force.

We are just not replacing homes, but building new communities as we replace the 1950s infrastructure, roads, and utilities in our housing areas. Design efforts are on-going and we will see our first homes in the fall of 2007.

In the near term, you will see the grand opening of the temporary base exchange, the base marina, the base gas station/shoppette, followed by the Keesler golf course in the fall. This year will also see major construction projects begin with the rebuilding of the base exchange and commissary complexes, and the new Bay Breeze Events Center.

Not only have the men and women of Team Keesler brought the base back to life, they have donated over 65,000 volunteer hours in the rebuilding of our communities outside the gate. These efforts equate to more than \$1.5 million of labor to help those in need and who require assistance in returning their life back to normal.

Despite the rebuilding process, Team Keesler continues to support our nation's call to duty and our Air Force's highest priority to win the war on terror. Our Airmen have continued to deploy since the storm to ensure the sanctity of our nation's freedoms. Their love of our country is above reproach and their valor is unquestioned.

When all is said and done, we will build a better Keesler, one that will serve our country well into this new century. When you look back over the 65 years of Keesler history, it's safe to say the last year may have been the base's finest hour.

There's nothing that can stand in the way of hard work and determination. Our accomplishments to date have not only shown our strength and determination, but celebrate the promise you represent of even greater accomplishments in the days and months ahead.

The future is bright for the Mississippi Gulf Coast and the men and women of Keesler Air Force Base are proud to be part of the team.

### Keesler Air Force Base Fiscal Year 2006 Economic Impact Analysis



MANPOWER	PAYROLL
7,591 Military	\$ 87,374,202
3,632 Civilian	\$ 161,465,126
11,223 Keesler Employees Total Payroll	\$ 248,839,328
Purchasing - Local Vendors/Contractors (Construction, Services, Healthcare, etc.)	\$ 277,570,048
14,816 Secondary Jobs Created (Keesler Dollars Spent In Local Economy)	\$ 114,102,901
<b>TOTAL KEESLER DOLLARS</b>	<b>\$ 640,412,276</b>
<b>ECONOMIC IMPACT FY 2006:</b> (Using Standard Economic Multiplier*)	<b>\$ 1,104,113,644</b>
Military Retiree Payroll (9,204 members within 50 mile radius)	\$ 176,597,000
Appraised Value of Volunteer Hours: (57,600 Total Volunteer Hours Recorded)	\$ 1,104,192**
<b>Keesler's Total Economic Impact FY 2006:</b>	<b>\$ 1,281,814,836</b> <b>(\$1.3 Billion)</b>



\*Standard Economic Multiplier: An accepted principal where initial dollars expended are re-spent again and again, creating jobs and income for businesses and other workers. A multiplier is used to determine the greater economic impact of Keesler's expenditures. \*\*Standard average rate for non-agricultural wages, Source: U.S. Dept of Labor.