

BROOKS AIR FORCE BASE, BUILDING NO. 150
(Brooks Air Force Base, Professional Building)
2510 Kennedy Circle
San Antonio
Bexar County
Texas

HABS TX-3521-F
HABS TX-3521-F

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
SOUTHWEST SYSTEM SUPPORT OFFICE
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
PO Box 728
Santa Fe, New Mexico

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
BROOKS AIR FORCE BASE, BUILDING 150
(BROOKS AIR FORCE BASE, PROFESSIONAL BUILDING)

HABS No. TX-3521-F

Location: 2510 Kennedy Circle
San Antonio
Bexar County
Texas

~~USGS Southton, Texas Quadrangle (7.5')~~

~~Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 14,553065,3246643~~

Google Earth Lat/Long 29.347619, -98.454305

Present Owner: Brooks Development Authority (BDA)

Present Occupant: Air Force 311th Human Systems Wing

Present Use: Administrative offices

Significance: Building 150 (Professional Building) served as the headquarters and administrative facility for the U.S. Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine (USAFSAM) complex at Brooks Air Force Base (AFB). The building provided offices for the Commandant and senior USAFSAM scientists including Dr. Hubertus Strughold, the Father of Aerospace Medicine. Serving as headquarters for USAFSAM, Building 150 was a vital component of USAFSAM's groundbreaking work in space research, as well as in clinical and military applications.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date(s) of erection: 1961-62
2. Architect: Smith, Hinchman, & Grylls Associates, Inc.
3. Original and subsequent owners: Air Force
4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Unknown
5. Original plans and construction: Original plans are on file with BDA, 8030 Challenger Drive, Brooks City-Base, Texas.
6. Alterations and additions: Building 150 has suffered some minor alterations to interior finishes and spatial arrangements, but maintains its historic integrity.

B. Historical Context:

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Building 150 was among six buildings erected during the second phase of construction (1961-64) at USAFSAM, Brooks AFB. The multiple-building complex represented the base's expanding role and mission as one of the largest aerospace medical research centers in the world. With research and development goals ranging from space to warfare, USAFSAM has played a central role in the mission of the Air Force as well as NASA. Though the USAFSAM campus was constructed in 1959, the history of Brooks AFB has involved multiple missions beginning with the training of Army pilots in World War I to reserve flight training during the Cold War.

Establishment of Brooks Field and Early Aviation Training, 1917-31

Established on an 873-acre tract of land in San Antonio, Texas, in November 1917, Kelly Field No. 5 grew out of the increasing wartime need for cadets and trainers. In February 1918, the airfield was officially renamed Brooks Field in honor of Cadet Sidney Johnson Brooks, Jr., a San Antonio native who died in a plane crash at Kelly Field No. 2 in 1917. The new commander of Brooks Field, Major Henry Conger Pratt, oversaw the installation's mission of preparing up to 5,000 airmen for wartime service in Europe. In addition, Brooks trained flight officers as teachers of a new British training regimen known as the Gosport System, which utilized innovative controls and speaking tubes to improve communication between instructors and cadets while in the air. The use of the Gosport system at Brooks Field convinced the War Department in October 1918, to incorporate the experimental system at Brooks Field into all Army airfields.¹

In May 1919 the Observation School at Camp Ben Wise in San Antonio, which trained cadets in the use of aerial observation, moved to Brooks Field. As one of five national balloon observation schools, Brooks Field provided surveillance along the U.S.-Mexico border utilizing the 16th Airship Company and the 4th and 5th Balloon companies. The balloon and airship program at Brooks Field, despite the initial investment of manpower and expense, proved to be a short-lived experiment for the San Antonio region. Several accidents involving explosions forced the school to close in 1922.²

The decision to remove the Balloon and Airship Observation School was part of a 1920 Army Reorganization Bill which stipulated that all flight training for the country would be centered in San Antonio air fields, including Brooks Field. By June 1922, Brooks Field was classified as the only Primary Flying School in the country as a result of the consolidation of two former flying schools in California and Florida. From 1922-31, Brooks Field earned the reputation of being one of the premier aviation training sites in the country and was responsible for developing the young Army Air Service at a crucial period of its growth.

The system established in 1922 required all military aviators to begin their basic flying training at Brooks Field, with the graduating class moving on to the Air Service Advanced Flying School at Kelly Field. The graduating classes at Brooks later formed the basic structure of the Air Corps for decades to come. The school graduated numerous important aviators including Charles Lindbergh, Frank M. Hawks, Nathan Twining, Jimmy Doolittle, and Barney Giles. Instructors at Brooks were among the most experienced and talented aviators in the country, including Claire Chennault of the famed "Flying Tigers," Russell Maughan and Elwood Quesada.³

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In addition to its celebrated graduates and instructors, Brooks Field was also the site of important advances in aviation. In April and September 1929 Brooks Field held public demonstrations of one of the earliest paratroop warfare experiments. In 1930, Colonel William C. Ocker devised a device allowing pilots to fly “blind” with the use of instruments inside the cockpit.⁴

School of Aviation Medicine (SAM), 1926-31

In 1926, SAM was relocated from Mitchell Field, New York to Brooks Field in an effort to improve pilot performance and to learn firsthand from pilots about the medical factors affecting flight. From 1926-31, flight surgeons at SAM generally acted as physicians first and teachers second; their main responsibility was to direct physical examinations to determine the condition of cadets for flying.

In 1931, SAM and the Primary Flying School moved to the newly created Randolph Field in San Antonio, Texas, ending Brooks Field’s important aviation training mission. In the 1930s, Brooks was designated a center for observation training and housed several observation squadrons. Escalating tensions in Europe led to the establishment of an Air Corps Advanced Flying School in early 1941, which focused on training pilots in observation skills using single-engine aircraft. Because of lessons learned early in World War II, the Army Air Corps reassessed the importance of aerial observation, placing greater importance upon bombing and pursuit aircraft training. As a result, in 1943, Brooks Field began a training program for the new B-25 bomber, which greatly aided the war effort. Brooks Field became Brooks AFB in 1948 and assumed a new postwar mission as a reserve flight training center which it maintained until 1960 when all flight activities ceased.⁵

SAM: the Space Program to Vietnam, 1959-69

In 1959, SAM, now known as the School of Aerospace Medicine (SAM) was reassigned to Brooks AFB as part of a new Air Force mission to consolidate its aviation and space medicine efforts at one base. From 1959-69, Brooks AFB, as part of the Aerospace Medical Division (AMD), played a key role in providing NASA and the Air Force with innovative and important space medicine research, ensuring the success of the country’s efforts in space exploration. Research at Brooks AFB utilized a range of laboratories and research facilities to perform experiments ranging from altitude and pressure experiments to space food nutritional studies. In addition to direct contributions to NASA’s Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo programs, Brooks focused much of its space medicine efforts on the Air Force’s military space program, the Manned Orbiting Laboratory (MOL). By the mid-1960s, researchers and physicians at Brooks AFB increasingly became involved in the Vietnam War, forcing SAM and AMD to manage dual missions of space and warfare.

The USAFSAM Campus

In 1952, with its intention to relocate the crowded facilities at Randolph AFB to Brooks AFB, the Air Force required a new master plan accommodating the new “Aeromedical Center.” Early in the planning stages, officers of the Air Force Headquarters in Washington, D.C., had a clear notion of the type of facility they wanted, distinguishing it from other Air Force installations: “Consideration should be given to permanence and preeminence of this facility as an academic institution . . . The quality of construction should be comparable to that of the leading medical institutions in the United States.”⁶ In designing the

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master plan for such an institution, officers of the Headquarters of the Air Force made an unqualified recommendation for the St. Paul, Minnesota firm of Ellerbe & Company, which already had two years experience with an earlier Brooks AFB master plan:

The Ellerbe Company, because of the design over the past twenty-five years of the varied and highly specialized diagnostic research and hospital facilities for the Mayo Clinic at Rochester, Minnesota, is considered eminently qualified to continue this project.⁷

As early as 1952, the Air Force had foreseen the need to divide construction of the new USAFSAM facilities into at least two phases. An "Analysis of General Master Plan, Brooks Air Force Base, Texas" notes that once the first segment of building was complete, the aeromedical program activities would be able to continue without disruption while additional facilities are added. Older structures, including World War I and II temporary buildings, were used to augment the first five buildings while waiting for completion of the complex. In 1956, Colonel Frese, Commander of the Air University at Maxwell AFB, Alabama, suggested that the USAFSAM complex might ultimately be augmented by 50 percent more buildings than were stipulated for the first building phase. In April 1958, a memo produced by the Ad Hoc Committee on Aeromedical Expansion (presumably made up of scientists and department heads from the Randolph AFB School of Aviation Medicine) noted facilities already in the planning stages for the second phase of construction. These included a clinical and experimental research dental building, a library, biometrics and records repository building, a vivarium, and a primate testing, holding and breeding facility. Committee members were urged to identify any special facilities they would need for their work. By June 1959 the Air Force completed a document titled "Construction Project Justification Data," outlining proposed requirements and purposes for a number of new buildings. Of seven proposed structures, six were built.

Design work on the second phase of building began soon after the first five buildings were occupied by USAFSAM during the summer of 1959. The six buildings (including Building 150) constructed during the second construction phase, from 1961-64, were designed by the firm of Smith, Hinchman & Grylls of Detroit, Michigan. No records of contracts between the firm and the Air Force have been located, and indeed, Smith, Hinchman & Grylls may have been yet another subcontractor to Ellerbe & Company, which was still involved with base-wide planning for Brooks AFB. Smith, Hinchman & Grylls (today known as SHG Incorporated) was founded in 1853 by architect Sheldon Smith, and is Michigan's oldest architectural firm. Prior to their involvement in the USAFSAM project, the firm had designed numerous prominent buildings in downtown Detroit, including the Penobscot Building (1928), the forty-floor Guardian Building (1929), and the J.L. Hudson Company Department Store (1948). In 1952, the firm built three major buildings for the University of Michigan campus at Ann Arbor: Mason Hall, Haven Hall, and Angell Hall Auditorium. Smith, Hinchman & Grylls' work at Brooks AFB may have been a major point of departure for the firm, which later became well-known for laboratory designs, including the Los Alamos National Laboratories in New Mexico, the Naval Air Warfare Center Advanced Systems Integration Laboratory in Maryland, and numerous university laboratory facilities.

The buildings designed by Smith, Hinchman & Grylls for the second phase of construction at USAFSAM include: Building 140 (Biosystems Research Laboratory); Building 150 (Professional Building); Building 155 (Research Library); Building 170 (Bioastronautics and Biodynamics Laboratory); Building 175 (Bionucleonics Laboratory); and Building 185 (Vivarium Support facility). All the buildings conform

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with the precedent set by C.H. Page & Son, using steel construction with brick veneer and extruded aluminum fenestration in the International Style.

Building 150

Building 150 was constructed in 1963 and served as the headquarters and administrative facility for the USAFSAM complex. Upon the school's arrival at Brooks in 1959, administrative and professional offices were temporarily housed in Building 125, which prevented researchers from using valuable laboratory space. Air Force planners intended to include a professional and administrative building in the second phase of construction providing offices for researchers and scientists. The first floor of Building 150 consisted of computer rooms, repositories for ophthalmology, clinical consultation, audiograms, electroencephalograms, and electrocardiograms, as well as work rooms for physicians. The second floor contained offices for numerous department chiefs as well as a medical intelligence library and conference room. According to a 1959 Air Force project planning document, Building 150 was designed to house "the Commandant, senior professional consultant, advisory staff, aeromedical center staff, supporting personnel and principal administrative staff."⁸

One principal scientist associated with Building 150 was Dr. Hubertus Strughold, who occupied an office on the northwest corner of the second floor. Dr. Strughold, known as the Father of Aerospace Medicine for his early pioneering work at Randolph AFB, served as a senior scientist while at Brooks and continued to promote aerospace medicine in the academic and scientific world.

Building 150 continues to serve as a headquarters and administrative facility for USAFSAM. It currently houses the headquarters for the 311th Human Systems Wing.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Building 150 was designed in the International Style as the focal point of the USAFSAM campus. The architect utilized red brick and extruded aluminum fenestration to unify the building with the five existing USAFSAM buildings, but added vertical window openings with porcelain enamel metal spandrels to differentiate the second phase of building at the campus. The building's north facade, facing the flagpole and circular lawn of Kennedy Circle, creates a strong formal approach to the USAFSAM campus, although the entry on the building's south facade is the more commonly used.
2. Condition of fabric: Building 150 is in good condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: Building 150 has a rectangular plan, and two floors with a partial basement. Overall dimensions are 356'-6" x 69'-6".

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2. Foundation: The foundation is concrete pier and beam with a continuous concrete perimeter wall. Piers are spaced 20'-6" east-west and 22'-6" north-south. The foundation wall is set back 1'-6" from the main facade, thus giving the building a floating appearance. This is a distinctive feature of Smith, Hinchman, and Grylls-designed buildings at Brooks AFB.
3. Walls: Exterior walls are of face brick veneer with 4" (nominal) structural clay tile backing. Wall thickness is 10-1/4".
4. Structural system, framing:
 - First floor: The first floor is concrete slab with one-way concrete joists.
 - Second floor and roof: Steel wide-flange beams and steel open-web bar joists, supported by 8" steel wide-flange columns concealed within walls.
5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads:
 - The primary entry porch on north facade consists of a concrete slab and front-approach open-riser concrete steps, recessed under the main building' roof overhang. This entry porch measures 18'-9-1/2" x 11'-1-1/2".
 - Secondary entry porches are on the south, east, and west facades.
 - The south facade porch is concrete with side-approach open-riser concrete steps, with no covering. It does not appear to be original construction.
6. Chimneys: None.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors:
 - North: The north entry consists of a pair of aluminum-and-glass doors incorporated into an aluminum-frame curtain wall system. The north entry doors were replaced and the entry relocated in a 1996 renovation.

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- East: There is a single secondary-type entry on the east facade consisting of a flush, hollow metal door atop a side entry-stair and entry porch.
- South: The south entry consists of a pair of aluminum-and-glass doors incorporated into aluminum frame curtain wall system.
- West: There is a single secondary-type entry on the west facade consisting of a flush, hollow metal door atop a side entry-stair and entry porch.

b. Windows and shutters:

- North: An aluminum-frame curtain wall with glazed panels extends the height of the north facade at the lobby area. Tall, narrow, windows with plate-glass panels and porcelain-enamel metal spandrels are spaced at regular intervals across the facade.
- East: There are no windows on the east facade.
- South: An aluminum-frame curtain wall extends the height of the facade lobby area. To the west of the lobby there is a 39'-0" wide curtain wall with plate glass and spandrel glass panels on the south facade. Tall, narrow, windows with plate-glass panels and porcelain-enamel metal spandrels are spaced at regular intervals across the remainder of the facade.
- West: There are no windows on the west facade.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Flat with built-up roofing.
- b. Cornice, eaves: The roof terminates in a cant strip with sheet metal gravel stop.
- c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: There are no rooftop structures.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. First floor: The long, rectangular floor plan of Building 150 is divided into east and west wings, with a central lobby corridor.

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- Lobbies: Although the north entry, in the eastern half of the building, is on the monumental approach to the building, the south entry was more commonly used and wider. The two-level lobby at the south entry measures 39'-5-½" wide, and opens to an atrium of the same width. The depth of the lobby plus atrium is 52'-1-¾". At the right of the lobby, a set of double doors marking the change from the west wing to the east wing opens to a reception area and long north-south oriented lobby. This lobby extends to the north entry.
 - East wing: The east wing contains central open spaces originally used as a records repository. Much of this space has now been subdivided for office use. The east wing also contains groups of offices and a central utility core containing a stairwell and toilets.
 - West wing: The west wing is dominated by a series of undivided spaces originally used for computer equipment and maintenance, and a block of offices in the northeast corner. Many of the historic undivided spaces have been partitioned for current uses.
- b. Second floor:
- East wing: The second floor of the east wing is divided into three longitudinal areas by two double-loaded corridors. The north and south areas are composed of rows of offices, while the central one acts as a utility core, with a stairwell, large mechanical room, and toilets.
 - West wing: Like the east wing, the west wing is divided into three longitudinal areas by a pair of corridors. The north and south areas consist of rows of offices, while the central one contains a stairwell at the west end, toilets, and a mechanical equipment room. The southeast corner is empty, serving as the second level of the lobby atrium.
2. Stairways: Building 150 has three stairways. Enclosed 180-degree return stairs are located at the extreme east and west ends of the building, and an open half-turn stair with landings adjoins the lobby in the east wing.
3. Flooring: Modern carpet now covers most historic finishes. Other floor finishes include glazed ceramic tile in toilets; vinyl tile in kitchens, coffee bars, file rooms, and storage rooms; and exposed concrete in utility closets.
4. Wall and ceiling finishes:
- a. Walls: The typical wall finish is plaster on metal lath, with glazed ceramic tile in toilets.

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b. Ceiling: The typical ceiling has 2' x 4' suspended acoustical tiles. Other ceiling materials include applied adhesive acoustical tiles, suspended gypsum board in toilets, suspended plaster at the main entry porch, and unfinished, exposed structure in mechanical rooms.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: Typical interior doors are solid-core wood flush doors set in aluminum frames.

b. Windows: There are no interior windows.

6. Decorative features and trim: None.

7. Hardware: Standard manufactured commercial-grade hardware, with a brushed-chrome finish.

8. Mechanical Equipment:

a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: Building 150 is equipped with central heating and air conditioning.

b. Lighting: Recessed 2' x 4' fluorescent troffers are typical.

c. Plumbing: Building 150 contains a total of eight toilets. Other plumbing fixtures include mop sinks, kitchen sinks, and drinking fountains.

- First floor: The east wing contains a men's toilet with five water closets with flush valves, three wall-mounted urinals, and five lavatories. The adjoining women's toilet has four water closets with flush valves, and four lavatories. In the west wing there are two individual toilet rooms at the extreme west side of the building, each containing a single water closet and lavatory.

- Second Floor: The east wing contains a men's toilet with three water closets equipped with flush valves, two urinals, and three lavatories. The adjoining women's toilet has four water closets with flush valves and four lavatories. The west wing contains the same arrangement.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: Building 150 sits isolated within Kennedy Circle on the southern edge of a wide semi-circular lawn that is the focal point of the USAFSAM campus. A walkway, on axis with the building entry, leads to a flagpole to the north, and then diverges into two walkways that extend to parking lots along Kennedy Circle. The principal facade faces north.

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2. Historic landscape design: Same as existing.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Original architectural drawings: Original plans for Building 150 are on file with BDA, 8030 Challenger Drive, Brooks City-Base, Texas.
- B. Early views: Some early views of Building 150 and surrounding buildings are available in the archives of the Edward H. White, II Museum of Aerospace Medicine at Hangar 9, Brooks City-Base, Texas, and the Austin History Center, Austin Texas.
- C. Interviews: N/A
- D. NOTES

¹ Martha Freeman, "Appendix L: Historic Context: Brooks Air Force Base, An American Flying Field, 1917-1946." in *Brooks Air Force Base – Historic Preservation Plan* by D.E. Peter, M.B. Cliff, J. Freeman and K.L. Kane. Geo-Marine, Inc., Plano, Texas, L-3.

² Brooks Air Force Base, *The First Seventy-Five Years*, (n.p., 1992).

³ Brooks Air Force Base, *Commemorative Program, Pride in the Past, Faith in the Future – Brooks Air Force Base, 1917-1992*, (San Antonio Press, 1992), p. 9.

⁴ Freeman, "Historic Context," L-23.

⁵ *Commemorative Program*, 1992.

⁶ Department of the Air Force, HQ, Washington DC to Chief of Engineers, Department of the Army, (June 5, 1952), Edward H. White II Museum of Aerospace Medicine in Hangar 9 at Brooks City-Base.

⁷ Department of the Air Force HQ to Chief of Engineers, Department of the Army, Revision of "Advance Planning FY53" Document. Various Minor Changes, (June 12, 1952), Edward H. White II Memorial Museum Complex, Hangar 9, Brooks City-Base, Texas.

⁸ Department of the Air Force, "Department of the Air Force, Construction Project Justification Data, June 19, 1959," Edward H. White II Memorial Museum Complex, Hangar 9, Brooks City-Base, Texas, p. 6.

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Brooks Air Force Base, *The First Seventy-Five Years*. N.p., 1992. Edward H. White II Memorial Museum Complex, Hangar 9, Brooks Air Force Base, Texas.

“Department of the Air Force HQ, Washington DC to Chief of Engineers, Department of the Army.” June 5, 1952. Edward H. White II Museum of Aerospace Medicine in Hangar 9 at Brooks City-Base.

“Department of the Air Force HQ to Chief of Engineers, Department of the Army, Revision of ‘Advance Planning FY53’ Document. Various Minor Changes.” June 12, 1952. Edward H. White II Museum of Aerospace Medicine in Hangar 9 at Brooks City-Base

Department of the Air Force, “Department of the Air Force, Construction Project Justification Data,” June 19, 1959. Edward H. White II Museum of Aerospace Medicine in Hangar 9 at Brooks City-Base

2. Secondary and published sources:

Freeman, Martha. “Appendix L: Historic Context: Brooks Air Force Base, An American Flying Field, 1917-46.” Geo-Marine, Inc., Plano, Texas, 1995.

E. Likely sources not yet investigated: The archives at the Edward H. White II Museum of Aerospace Medicine in Hangar 9 at Brooks City-Base contain a wealth of documentation that merits further exploration.

F. Supplemental Materials:

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AFB	Air Force Base
AFRL	Air Force Research Laboratory
AMC	Aerospace Medical Center
AMD	Aerospace Medical Division
AMRL	Aerospace Medical Research Laboratory
ARL	Aeromedical Research Laboratory
BDA	Brooks Development Authority
BHF	Brooks Heritage Foundation
BRAC	Base Realignment and Closure

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DOD	Department of Defense
HSD	Human Systems Division
ICBM	Intercontinental Ballistic Missile
MISS	Man in Space Soonest
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
MOL	Manned Orbiting Laboratory
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NPS	National Park Service
SACS	San Antonio Conservation Society
SAM	School of Aviation (Aerospace) Medicine
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office
USAFSAM	U.S. Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine
WAC	Womens Air Corps

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

- A. Federal Agency:
Air Force
311th Human Systems Wing
Brooks City-Base
San Antonio, Texas.
- B. Project Causing Adverse Effect: The Brooks City-Base project is a cooperative partnership between the Air Force and the non-federal community in which the physical assets of the former Brooks AFB have been transferred from the Air Force to BDA, a local municipality under Texas statute. Under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, as amended, and its enabling regulations 36 CFR 800, the transfer of Federal property is an adverse effect that must be mitigated via a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the lead federal agency, the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and other consulting parties invited to participate in the consultation

In consultation with the Texas SHPO, the Air Force determined that seventeen buildings at Brooks City-Base were eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. The Air Force developed an MOA in consultation with the Texas SHPO, City of San Antonio and BDA to mitigate the adverse impact that transfer would have on the seventeen historic properties at the former Brooks AFB. The MOA was also signed by two concurring parties, the San Antonio Conservation Society (SACS) and the Brooks Heritage Foundation (BHF). The MOA stipulated multiple measures, including preparation of a Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) Level II documentation report. The Air Force, through the 311th Human Systems Wing, hired Earth Tech, Inc. to oversee the preparation of HABS documentation. Under contract to Earth Tech, HHM Inc. of Austin, Texas, gathered historical and architectural information and prepared a historic context and the HABS forms.

The following individuals contributed to this report:

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