



U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Rachelle Blake

March flooding has damaged many buildings on the southern half of Offutt Air Force Base. Recovery operations are underway and clean up has begun.

Secretary of the Air Force:

We will rebuild Offutt

By Tech. Sgt. Rachelle Blake
55th Wing Public Affairs

OFFUTT AIR FORCE BASE, Neb. — Secretary of the Air Force Heather Wilson met with Team Offutt leadership and various elected officials March 22 to discuss rebuilding efforts for the base following recent flooding.

Just a week earlier, the base began taking on water that eventually covered one-third of the installation.

"We have assistance flying in from all over the United States to assist in the assessment of the damage and to begin reconstruction," Wilson said. "The United States Air Force will rebuild Offutt Air Force Base."

"We will work with the Nebraska Congressional delegation to secure supplemental funds to be able to recover from the damage and make this base even better than it was."

During her visit she commended base leadership for their preparatory efforts.

"There were no injuries, no loss of life on this base," Wilson said. "All the aircraft were either flown out or moved to high ground. A lot of the ground equipment was saved because they called in everybody in an all-hands effort."

They also shared with her the amount of pride they felt in their teammates.

"If you could have been here one week

ago, you would have seen the American spirit of resiliency alive and well," said Col. Michael Manion, 55th Wing commander.

"When the call came out for all hands on deck to do everything we could to defend this base against the rising water, there was nothing but positive attitudes, strong backs, strong shoulders, as we fought the water and now we are in the recovery mode and we are going to put this base back together. Every day we are getting a little bit better."

Wilson also took the time to meet with a handful of the many men and women who took part in the preparation efforts.

"One of them, who was a National Guardsman, spent 10 hours filling sand bags," Wilson said.

"Another one was the wife of an Airman who worked at the Bennie Davis Maintenance Facility," she continued. "He called his wife and said 'the water is coming up across the parking lot.'"

"She called her folks in Iowa to come stay with the kids and she went in and started taking things from people's offices and trying to get them up higher and tried to protect all of the heritage."

Among those she spoke to, one in particular, Bruce McCauley, 55th Civil Engineer Squadron deputy director, really stuck out to her.

"[He] said something I just had to write down," Wilson said. "[He] said, 'Mother Nature can't beat the 55th Wing.'"



U.S. Air Force photo by Charles Haymond

Secretary of the Air Force Heather Wilson talks to 55th Wing leadership as Rep. Don Bacon looks on during her visit to Offutt Air Force Base March 22. Team Offutt is in the recovery phases from an historic flood which began to creep onto the installation March 15.

Offutt takes precautions with fuel storage area

55th Wing Public Affairs



U.S. Air Force photo by Delanie Stafford

Environmental restoration employees deploy a containment boom from a boat March 18 on Offutt Air Force Base. One-third of the installation was flooded and the boom was a precautionary measure for possible fuel leaks.

OFFUTT AIR FORCE BASE, Neb. — Out of an abundance of caution, Offutt Air Force Base officials have taken precautionary measures to mitigate potential fuel leaks from storage units on-base.

There is no evidence of a ruptured tank or a fuel line leak at this time.

After reviewing aerial photos of the areas of the installation affected by flooding, base officials identified a sheen on top of the flood water near the fuel storage area. More than 3,700 feet of boom was deployed to ensure any possible fuel leak was contained.

Closer examination, by boat, at the site, leads base officials to suspect the sheen is actually caused by residual fuel from submerged equipment. Again, there is no evidence of a ruptured tank or a fuel line leak.

"Thanks to the continued cooperation between federal, state and local officials, appropriate containment actions were completed in a timely manner," said Col. Michael Manion, 55th Wing commander.

"We have been able to prevent damage to the environment and have ensured all agency notifications have been completed."

At this point, one of the base's older storage tanks has collapsed, but was empty and no longer in service.

"We are continuing to monitor the area with support from members of the EPA Region 7 emergency response team," Manion said. "There is no threat to personnel at this time and we are committed to ensuring compliance with all environmental procedures moving forward."

Additionally, officials have been and continue to test the base's drinking water and it remains safe to drink.