



**U.S. Customs and  
Border Protection**  
*Office of Public Affairs*

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# Press Release

## **CBP COMMISSIONER, OKLAHOMA STATE OFFICIALS BREAK GROUND FOR NEW TRAINING CENTER**

**OKLAHOMA CITY** – This morning, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Commissioner W. Ralph Basham, CBP Air and Marine Assistant Commissioner Michael C. Kostelnik, Oklahoma Governor Brad Henry, and Congressman Ernest Istook officially broke ground for a new air-training center at the Will Rogers World Airport in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

The \$20 million contract for construction of a permanent hangar facility to support the National Air Training Center – Oklahoma City (NATC-OKC) flight training and maintenance operations was awarded to the Korte Construction Company of St. Louis, MO. The 67,500 square foot facility will be located at Will Rogers World Airport and is scheduled to open in October 2007.

“I am very enthusiastic about this development,” said Commissioner Basham. “The expansion of this facility will improve CBP A&M by enhancing standardization of pilot training and flight operations.”

The new hangar facility fulfills an ambition when the original Customs National Aviation Center (CNAC) was established in 1987. To perform its critical mission, CNAC was initially assigned a fleet of seven aircraft, consisting of two Cessna Citation (C-550) interceptors, two Beechcraft KingAir (C-12) airplanes, a Cessna (C-210) surveillance airplane, and two new Astar (AS-350) surveillance helicopters. A temporary facility was established at Wiley Post Airport to support flight operations and associated maintenance. Staff members developed numerous courses of instruction that focused primarily on airborne tactics and safety and began training aircrew personnel from around the country. Through a rigorous standardization effort including regular field office audits, CNAC helped promote increased safety, effectiveness and efficiency throughout the program.

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On October 1, 2005, CBP Air and Marine Operations merged with elements from the Border Patrol to form U.S. Customs and Border Protection's Office of Air and Marine, the world's largest law enforcement air force with over 500 pilots and 250 aircraft, including the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). As a result of the merger, OCNAC was renamed the NATC - OKC. With this merger, not only did the number of equipment and personnel assigned to NATC increase, the mission requirements and associated training requirement increased as well.

"Investing in development projects for pilot training like NATC-OKC, Oklahoma and the entire country will reap benefits far greater than the money spent to build this new facility. When government and industry join forces to ensure the security of our country, the possibilities for new developments are endless," Governor Brad Henry said.

"I'm proud to have worked on this long-term project to provide the funding as a part of Congress' duty to protect our borders," said Congressman Earnest Istook (R-OK). "It's good to see it underway."

Upon completion, the new facility will be capable of housing additional aircraft and personnel necessary to meet projected increases in CBP Air and Marine training and standardization requirements.

CBP Office of Air and Marine mission is to protect the American people and critical infrastructure by using an integrated and coordinated air and marine force to detect, interdict, and prevent acts of terrorism arising from unlawful movement of people, illegal drugs and other contraband moving toward or crossing the borders of the United States.

**-CBP-**

*U.S. Customs and Border Protection is the unified border agency within the Department of Homeland Security charged with the management, control, and protection of our Nation's borders at and between the official ports of entry. CBP is charged with keeping terrorists and terrorist weapons out of the country while enforcing hundreds of U.S. laws.*