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## 'Star' takes place of honor at Dyess

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DYESS AIR FORCE BASE, Texas (ACCNS) -- After almost 18 years of military service, the first operational B-1 bomber to be delivered to the Air Force made its final flight here recently.

The "Star of Abilene," first delivered to the Air Force during a ceremony at Dyess AFB, in June 1985, has been the flagship of the Dyess fleet ever since. Since then, the aircraft, tail number 83-0065, has flown more than 900 sorties and nearly 3,750 hours.

"This is a bittersweet day," said Lt. Col. Jeffery Beene, the 7th Operations Group deputy commander. "It's hard to see a part of aviation history such as the 'Star of Abilene' retire. But the retirement of the older bombers in order to modify the newer ones is necessary in order to create a more lethal bomber force. And it's important for our younger pilots to be able to fly the best of the best."

Colonel Beene was one of the first B-1 pilots to fly the "Star" and was part of the last crew to fly it.

"It seems like just yesterday I was flying this plane as a first lieutenant (in 1986)," he said. "And now here I am, almost 17 years later as a lieutenant colonel flying her for the last time. She will be missed."

Tech. Sgt. Brett Foreman, the 7th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron head crew chief for the "Star", said he's also sad to see the plane retire.

"You'll never meet a crew chief who doesn't take pride in their aircraft," Sergeant Foreman said. "Over the last year and a half that I've worked on (the "Star"), we've had our ups and downs -- she can be temperamental at times -- but all-in-all, it's been a great experience. She is the first B-1 I've ever crewed, so I learned a lot."

The retirement of the "Star of Abilene" is part of the B-1 consolidation program announced by Air



The "Star of Abilene," the Air Force's first operational B-1 bomber is parked on the flightline at Dyess Air Force Base, Texas, after its final flight. The aircraft will be permanently displayed near Dyess' main gate. (Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Matthew Rosine)

**Note: Click on image for higher-resolution copy.**

Force officials in June 2001, said Capt. Dave Honchul, chief of 7th BW Public Affairs.

The plan calls for the B-1 fleet to be reduced by more than 30 aircraft and consolidates them to Dyess and Ellsworth AFB, S.D. Air Force officials decided to retire all of the 1983 models and some of the 1984 models. The force will consist of a standardized fleet because the remaining planes are later-production models and have the lowest flying hours. "The Star of Abilene" was the last of the 1983 models to retire.

Retired planes either go to the Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Center at Davis-Monthan AFB, Ariz., or they are sent to various bases for static displays. The "Star" will be displayed in the Dyess Linear Air Park later this year.

"Several bases and museums have B-1s displayed in them now, but Dyess will be the first base to have meaning behind its B-1 display," said Doc Warner, the air park superintendent. "The 'Star of Abilene' is an important piece of Dyess history, and as such, it is only befitting that it remain here for Dyess and Abilene citizens to appreciate and admire for years to come."

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