

### **Truax Field/Vandenburg Heights**

Known initially as Madison Army Airfield, it was activated as an Army Air Forces base in 1942 during World War II. Reactivated by the US Air Force in 1952, Truax Air Force Base was returned to active duty during the Korean War. According to a 1960s Madison NAACP study, up to 80% of Madison's housing was closed to Blacks, making it extremely tough for Black airmen to find off-base housing. The 1955 Capehart Act, a significant piece of legislation, funded integrated family housing on or around military bases. Finished in 1963, the 161 buildings of Vandenburg Heights, 16 miles from Truax, were constructed along curvilinear streets and designed to house 170 airmen and 110 officers. The airmen lived in ranch-style duplexes with open carports. The officers lived in single-family, attached-garage houses, the largest of which are on Harmon Circle.

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### **Integration of the US Armed Forces**

In 1940, pressure from the NAACP, a key civil rights advocate, led President Roosevelt to proclaim Negroes would serve in the armed forces in proportion to their population's percentage. Like the nation overall, Truax's African American enlistment was capped at 10%. Black airmen were not given the same opportunities as white airmen. Despite the success of the Tuskegee airmen during World War II, work assignments for Blacks were almost entirely limited to support and service positions. Additional NAACP pressure led President Truman to issue Executive Order 9981 in 1948, ordering the desegregation of the US Armed Forces, with each branch responding differently. In 1947, the United States Air Force was established as a separate military branch. By 1952, it had become the first to desegregate completely. The US Army followed suit in 1954.

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