

MILITARY AVIATION IN ILLINOIS

Illinois supports national military operations across the state and is home to three Air National Guard bases located at state airports: Scott Air Force Base at MidAmerica St. Louis Airport (BLV), Peoria Air National Guard Base at Peoria International Airport (PIA), and Springfield Air National Guard Base at Abraham Lincoln Capital Airport (SPI). Examples of Illinois airports supporting the country's military efforts are described below.

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE AT SCOTT AIR FORCE BASE

Located in Belleville at MidAmerica St. Louis Airport (BLV), this Air Force Base provides aeromedical evacuations, flies C-21 operational support aircraft, and operates air refueling missions. The Base has 15,000 people on-site, including active duty, family members, government civilians, contractors, Air National Guard, and Air Force Reserves. Scott Air Force Base is the largest employer in Southwest Illinois, providing over \$3 billion into the local economy.¹



UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

The United States Coast Guard (USCG) Ninth District has an air station at Waukegan Regional Airport (UGN). The Ninth District covers the five Great Lakes, the Saint Lawrence Seaway and over 6,700 miles of shoreline and 1,500 miles of international borders with Canada. The Ninth District Unit at Waukegan Regional Airport (UGN) is a detachment of the Unit located in Traverse City, Michigan. Together these two units are responsible for search and rescue, maritime safety and security, environmental protection, maritime law enforcement, and aiding navigation and icebreaking. The Ninth District Unit operates seasonally to provide increased search and rescue capabilities and quicker response times during summer months. Coast Guard personnel and one rescue helicopter stand at the ready at UGN. In 2019, the Ninth District Unit successfully rescued two people from Lake Michigan after they were separated from their vessel.



¹ "Scott Air Force Base In-Depth Overview." *Military Installations*. <https://installations.militaryonesource.mil/in-depth-overview/scott-air-force-base>



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ILLINOIS NATIONAL GUARD

The Illinois National Guard plays a major role in military operations in Illinois. The Illinois National Guard responds to international, national, and local emergencies. For example, following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the Illinois National Guard supported military operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, and locations across the world.

Specific to Illinois airports, the Peoria Air National Guard is based at the Peoria International Airport (PIA) and supports global air transportation of equipment and supplies during peace-times and war-times. Additionally, the Springfield Air National Guard Base, located at the Abraham Lincoln Capital Airport (SPI) is responsible for Command and Control efforts including assisting ground force commanders in control of regional airspace while directing joint service aircraft in planning, requesting, coordinating, and controlling close air operations, intelligence gathering, and airlifts. Combined, there are over 900 military personnel employed at the Peoria International Airport (PIA) and Abraham Lincoln Capital Airport (SPI) bases.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF O'HARE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Illinois' support of military operations dates back to World War II when Chicago O'Hare International Airport (ORD) was used to manufacture and produce the Douglas Aircraft Company's C-54 Skymasters after the U.S. War Production Board purchased land in Cook County, Illinois to support wartime efforts. The manufacturing facility at Chicago O'Hare International Airport (ORD) was also used to store experimental airplanes, including captured enemy aircraft.

The production of military aircraft discontinued after the war and the facility was transferred to the City of Chicago. Following the discontinuation, the site became the Chicago O'Hare International Airport (ORD) in 1949 and opened to commercial air traffic in 1955. Since its opening in 1955, Chicago O'Hare International Airport (ORD) continues to be a hub for national and international travel. In 1962 the airport was named the "World's Busiest Airport" and more recently, the airport set a record for annual passengers with over 84.6 million enplanements in 2019.

SUMMARY

Illinois airports support a variety of air, land, and water military operations during peace and war times. The military relies on the state's airport facilities and locations to efficiently respond to missions and conduct operations that span the region, country, and globe. Illinois airport's military support spans decades. Prior to World War II, Illinois airports served as war time manufacturing facilities.

