FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tampa Bay Receives Abilene Trophy for Second Consecutive Year

TAMPA, FL, November 10, 2026 – The Tampa Bay community has been awarded the prestigious Abilene Trophy for the second consecutive year, achieving a historic distinction as the only community to receive the award in consecutive years. The recognition highlights the region's exceptional collaboration and longstanding commitment to supporting MacDill Air Force Base, its mission and the military community.

The Abilene Military Affairs Council (MAC), in conjunction with the Air Mobility Command (AMC) Office of Public Affairs and the Air Force Reserve Command (AFRC) Office of Public Affairs, announced the award at the Airlift/Tanker Association Annual Conference in Orlando, Florida, on November 7, 2026.

The South Tampa Chamber, in partnership with the Tampa Bay Chamber, Tampa Bay Defense Alliance, MacDill Support Council and MacDill Air Force Base, was selected to receive this year's award. The trophy was presented by Paul Beale and Sam Nichols, Air Mobility Command Civic Leaders from Abilene, Texas.

"For over eighty-six years, the broad-based communities in the greater Tampa area have delivered continuous support to meet the needs of Wing and Area Military families. Their consistent and innovative collaboration demonstrates an outstanding commitment to MacDill Air Force Base, its mission, their Airmen and families," said Nichols.

Beale added, "Their package focused on a collaborative partnership of individuals and organizations who ensure MacDill, its people and its infrastructure have the essentials to thrive. Abilene is proud to recognize the ongoing support and commitment they have for MacDill Air Force Base."

"To receive the Abilene Trophy for the second consecutive year is an extraordinary honor for the Tampa Bay community," said Kelly Flannery, President and CEO of the South Tampa Chamber. "It reflects the strength of our longstanding partnership with MacDill Air Force Base and the unwavering commitment of businesses, organizations and community leaders across our region. Supporting MacDill is more than a responsibility. It is part of who we are, and we are proud to stand behind the installation, its mission and those who serve our nation."

“Receiving the Abilene Trophy for a second consecutive year is a historic achievement and a powerful reflection of Tampa Bay’s unwavering commitment to our military community,” said Bob Rohrlack, President and CEO of the Tampa Bay Chamber.

“MacDill Air Force Base is vital to our national security and our region’s commerce strength. This recognition demonstrates what is possible when our business community, civic leaders and military partners work together with a shared purpose. We are proud to stand alongside our regional partners in supporting the service members and families who call Tampa Bay home, while ensuring MacDill remains positioned for mission success for generations to come.”

"The Tampa Bay Defense Alliance is humbled to partner with so many wonderful partners across the Tampa Bay region who support Tampa's military mission, its military service members, our veterans and their families. Earning the Abilene Trophy for a second year in a row reflects the passion and devotion our partners bring to caring for Tampa's military community. Our members are honored to be a small part of that community," said Maj Gen (ret) Larry Martin, President, Tampa Bay Defense Alliance.

"This recognition is especially meaningful because it reflects what makes Tampa Bay exceptional: our ability to come together across organizations, industries and sectors with a shared commitment to MacDill Air Force Base," said Rebekah Nault, Vice Chair of the MacDill Support Council. "Winning the Abilene Trophy for a second consecutive year is a powerful testament to the strength of that collaboration and what we can accomplish when our community works together to support the installation, its mission and those who serve."

“Winning the Abilene Trophy for the second consecutive year is a powerful reflection of what makes Tampa Bay truly extraordinary: a community united by an unwavering commitment to those who serve our nation,” said Col. Kevin Eley, Commander of the 6th Air Refueling Wing. “The strength of Team MacDill extends far beyond our gates, and this recognition honors the incredible people of Tampa Bay whose patriotism, generosity and steadfast support inspire us every day to serve with excellence.”

In conjunction with AMC and AFRC, the Abilene MAC administers the annual competition for the Abilene Trophy among communities supporting a local AMC or AFRC base or unit. Communities submit nomination packages each year, and a selection committee chooses the top package before the Airlift/Tanker Association Annual Conference.

Prior to 1999, Abilene won the Strategic Air Command and Air Combat Command Community Support Awards so often that the awards were subsequently retired. In January 1999, the Air Mobility Command and the Abilene MAC co-created the AMC Community Support Award, now known as the Abilene Trophy.

About the Abilene Military Affairs Council
The Abilene Military Affairs Council is a public-private partnership of the Chamber of Commerce, Development Corporation of Abilene, individuals and businesses. Through its 300 members, MAC advocates for the expansion and preservation of missions at Dyess Air Force Base and supports the needs of military members and their families. For more information on the Abilene Military Affairs Council, visit abilenechamber.com.

About the South Tampa Chamber
Founded in 1926, the South Tampa Chamber is a business organization dedicated to connecting businesses, enhancing commerce and enriching the South Tampa community. Representing more than 700 businesses, organizations and community leaders, the Chamber serves as a forum for networking, business development, advocacy and community engagement. Its vision is to make South Tampa the best place to live, work and play.

About the Tampa Bay Chamber
The Tampa Bay Chamber is a not-for-profit business membership organization representing approximately 1,400 member companies and more than 9,800 employees across the region. Accredited and recognized by business, government, education and community leaders, the Chamber serves as the leading advocate for the business community in the Tampa Bay area

About the Tampa Bay Defense Alliance
The Tampa Bay Defense Alliance (TBDA) was formed in 2012 to champion Tampa's defense community by connecting local civilians to military members in the region. Representing an eight-county radius covering Hillsborough, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk, Sarasota, Manatee, Hernando and Citrus, TBDA collaborates and cooperates with our community partners on issues of importance to our region's defense and military communities.

About the MacDill Support Council
The MacDill Support Council is dedicated to supporting MacDill Air Force Base, advancing mission readiness and strengthening the relationship between the installation and the Tampa Bay community. Through public-private partnerships, community engagement and strategic collaboration, the Council works to support service members, promote the installation's mission and ensure a strong partnership between MacDill and the community it serves.

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