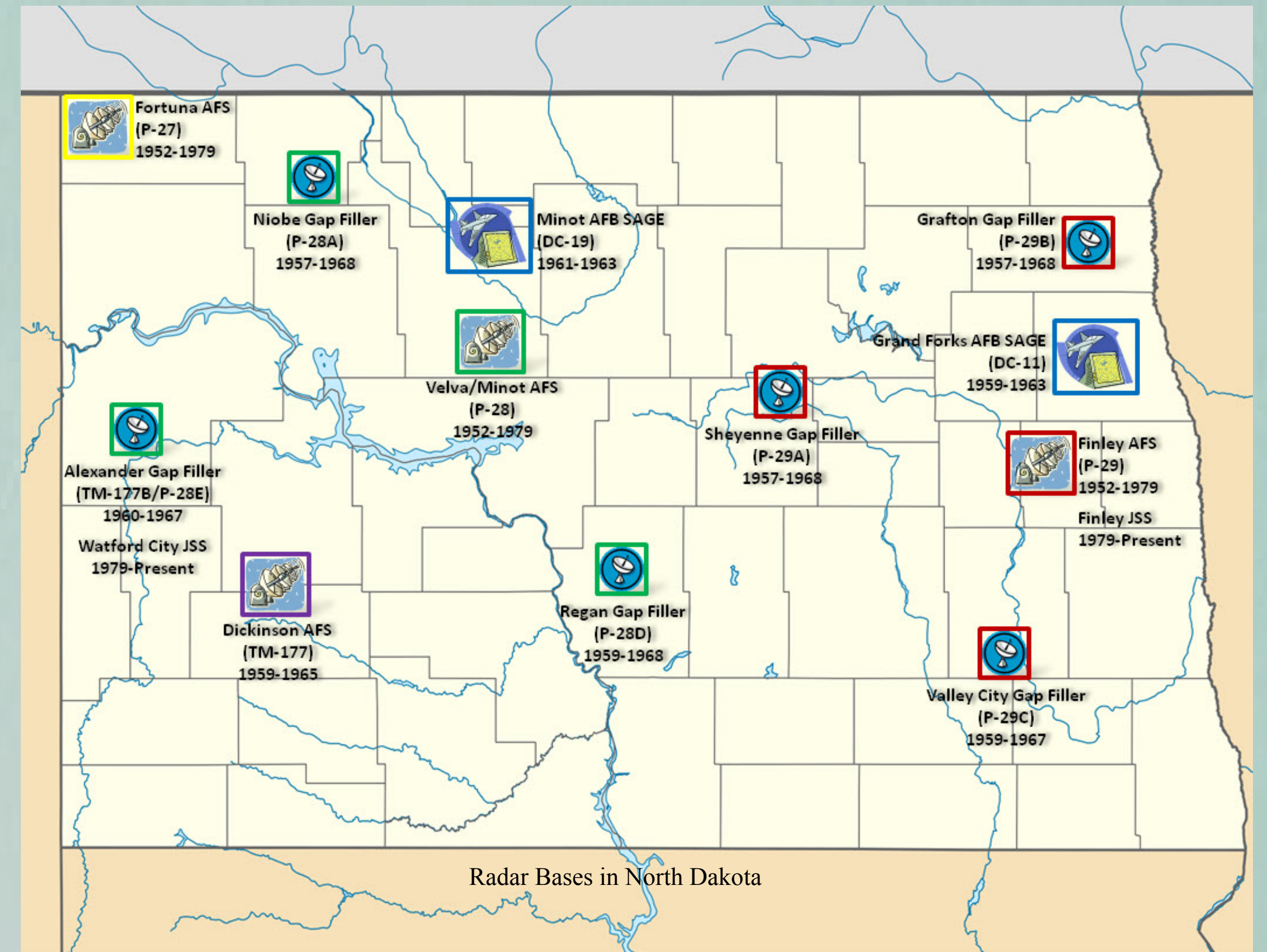


# Finley Air Base



## North Dakota's Vigilant Eye

In 1948, when the Air Defense Command (ADC) proposed a “permanent network” of radar installations that would include 75 radar stations and 10 control centers, it was clear that many of those would be built in North Dakota. Indeed, by 1952, three radar stations of the “permanent network” were operational in North Dakota at Finley, Minot and Fortuna Air Force Stations.

However, even with the completion of that permanent network, experts still argued that our air defenses were insufficient. So, in 1953, defense officials developed an automated command and control system (SAGE) and began construction on gap-filler radar stations (closing the gaps of larger systems). They also proposed additional air bases for pursuit aircraft.

North Dakota benefited from these improvements. In 1957, Grand Forks and Minot Air Force Bases were constructed for pursuit aircraft. A year later those bases were also SAGE directional centers. Then, in 1958, North Dakota became home to six gap-filler stations.

However, with the increasing development of nuclear missiles, strategists shifted emphasis from air defenses to nuclear deterrence. The military increasingly closed radar stations or turned them over to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). By 1968, all gap filler stations were closed. Air defenses continued to diminish through the 1970s. Finally, in 1980, the command originally known as ADC was deactivated.

Today, three radar installations remain in North Dakota. The FAA operates two of those stations at Finley and Watford City. The Air Force operates the third near Cavalier. strategy. In 1959, Congress began to cut funding for gap-filler stations and the SAGE