

THE FIRST 60 YEARS

THE AIR FORCE, 1947 to 2007



DECEMBER 2006



The Air Force Association

The Air Force Association (AFA) and its affiliate Aerospace Education Foundation (AEF) consolidated in 2006 to blend the two organizations into one with an incredible amount of value added to our programs and for members and prospective members.

The mission of AFA has always been to **EDUCATE** the public about the critical role of aerospace power in the defense of our nation, to **ADVOCATE** aerospace power and a strong national defense, and to **SUPPORT** the United States Air Force and the Air Force family. The new AFA will still maintain this mission but will include a much stronger focus on education, specifically the importance of science and math for the future of our country's national defense, and providing scholarship support for our Air Force family. Through this, we will support our airmen and their families as well as the many who are touched by our education outreach programs.

The consolidation of our two organizations allows AFA to become a 501(c)(3) charitable educational organization, in which all donations are tax deductible. With your help we will be able to expand our programs and their impact on those who participate in them. We need your support and ongoing financial commitment to realize our potential.

AFA disseminates information through *Air Force Magazine*, *Air Force Magazine Online*, the Eaker Institute, public outreach, and national conferences and symposia. Learn more about AFA by visiting us on the Web at www.AFA.org.

Cover Image: Cartoonist Milton Caniff drew this cover, showing World War II pilot Steve Canyon talking with an F-15 pilot, especially for Air Force Magazine's September 1972 issue commemorating USAF's silver anniversary.

About the Author: After 20 years of service in the US Air Force, John T. Correll joined the staff of Air Force Magazine, journal of the Air Force Association, in 1982. He was editor in chief from 1984 to 2002. He continues to study and write about national defense and air and space power.

© 2006 Air Force Association

Published by the Air Force Association
1501 Lee Highway
Arlington VA 22209-1198
Tel: (703) 247-5839
Fax: (703) 247-5853

Produced by the staff of *Air Force Magazine*
Design by Darcy Harris

THE FIRST 60 YEARS

THE AIR FORCE, 1947 to 2007



By John T. Correll

December 2006

AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION

THE FIRST 60 YEARS

THE AIR FORCE, 1947 TO 2007

Table of Contents

THE FIRST SIX DECADES	6
• <i>In the Beginning: 1947-49</i>	6
<i>Photochart: The Early Leaders</i>	
• <i>The Jet Age: 1950-59</i>	14
• <i>Cold War—and Vietnam, Too: 1960-69</i>	18
• <i>Total Force; Volunteer Force; Hollow Force: 1970-79</i>	20
• <i>Recovery: 1980-89</i>	22
• <i>Redefinition: 1990-2006</i>	24
“THERE I WAS . . .”	26
<i>History in cartoons by Bob Stevens.</i>	
SECRETARIES & CHIEFS	30
<i>Secretaries of the Air Force • USAF Chiefs of Staff • Chief Master Sergeants of the Air Force • USAF officers who were Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff</i>	
AIR FORCE RECIPIENTS OF THE MEDAL OF HONOR	34
• <i>Korean War</i>	34
• <i>Vietnam War</i>	35
MILESTONES FROM THE FIRST 60 YEARS	38
<i>Intercontinental Bomber • Matchup in MiG Alley • The Stratotanker • Classic Interceptor • Return of the Air Commandos • The MiG Sweep • Jolly Green Giant • Air Force Astronauts • ICBMs and Deterrence • The Airlift That Saved Israel • Showdown in Europe • Eyes and Ears in Air and Space • Opening Night in the Gulf • Stealth in the Balkans • Unmanned and Unafraid</i>	
THE DATA FILE	54
<i>Active duty force strength, 1950-2002 • Military pay charts 1947 • Five Decades of USAF Resource Allocation • The Rated Force Goes Down • US Army Air Forces aircraft inventory June 30, 1947 • Halfway Through: The Force at 30 Years</i>	

IN THE BEGINNING

1947-1949



1

IN SEPTEMBER 2006, THE US AIR FORCE BEGAN ITS 60TH YEAR AS A SEPARATE MILITARY SERVICE. THESE PAGES ARE A LOOK BACK, AT BOTH IMPORTANT EVENTS AND SOME THAT WERE OF LESS IMPORTANCE BUT PART OF THE MEMORIES ACCUMULATED ALONG THE WAY.



2

NG:

The Air Force gained independence from the Army in the National Defense Act of 1947, primarily as a result of the Army Air Forces' performance in World War II. The official Air Force birthday is celebrated as Sept. 18, when Stuart Symington was sworn in as the first Secretary. Eight days later, Gen. Carl A. Spaatz became the first Chief of Staff.

The new Air Force was a pale shadow of the wartime Army Air Forces. Personnel numbers, the aircraft fleet, and the budget had fallen vastly in the postwar demobilization, but the force did not lack for purpose. In the atomic age, airpower had become the nation's first line of defense. The prominence of the newly formed Air Force caused friction with the older services, especially the Navy, which wanted the strategic power projection mission for itself. (See "Intercontinental Bomber" in "Milestones From the First 60 Years.")

The USAF fleet included such superb aircraft as the B-29 and the P-51, left over from World War II, and the B-36, then in development. However, the day of propeller combat aircraft was almost over. The B-45 bomber and the F-80 fighter led the way toward a jet combat force, which would soon see action in Korea.

The Cold War had begun, and the Air Force met the first direct challenge from the Soviet Union in the Berlin Airlift of 1948-49, when 227,264 cargo flights finally broke the ground blockade of the beleaguered city.

Becoming a separate service took time. Except for the insignia, uniforms were the same as the Army's until 1949, and two years passed before the transfer of functions to the new Air Force was completed.



3

1—The Air Force began with strong leadership: Stuart Symington as the first Secretary and Gen. Carl Spaatz as first Chief of Staff.

2—In 1948, the Air Force took delivery of its first jet bomber, the B-45 Tornado. This light bomber later became the first Air Force aircraft to carry a tactical nuclear bomb.

3—After heavy snowfalls in the winter of 1949, thousands of cattle were stranded and starving in parts of Nevada and Utah. In Operation Haylift, the Air Force dropped feed to snowbound cattle and supplies to isolated ranches.

4—The Air Force's first operational jet bomber, the P-80 Shooting Star, made its first flight in 1944 but was not used in combat in World War II. It became the F-80 in 1948 when the designation was changed from P (for "pursuit") to F (for "fighter"). The F-80 won the first jet-vs.-jet engagement, shooting down a MiG-15 in Korea. A two-seat variant, the T-33, served for many years as an Air Force trainer and utility aircraft.



4

1



1—These upended P-40s were among the tens of thousands of Army Air Forces aircraft put in salvage yards after World War II. Some combat airplanes were kept in storage and later used in Vietnam, but most ended their careers as scrap.

2—Air Force Capt. Chuck Yeager became the first man to fly faster than the speed of sound on Oct. 14, 1947. He reached a speed of Mach 1.06 (700 mph) in the Bell X-1, which he had named Glamorous Glennis in honor of his wife.

2



WHAT WE WORE

The new Air Force did not get its own uniform right away. One reason was that Congress would not approve the funding. Finally, in February 1949, airmen at Barksdale AFB, La., became the first to receive the official issue blue uniform. It was shade 84 blue serge and it came with silver buttons. At first, airmen had to dye their brown Army shoes black to go with it.

For everyday wear, there were short sleeve khakis, called “505s” after their shade of tan. They tended to wilt without massive amounts of starch. In that era before camouflage battle dress uniforms (BDUs), the main utility uniform was olive green fatigues. Air Force women had several distinctive uniforms, one of the best being a blue-and-white seersucker for summer wear.

In the 1950s, an alternate dress uniform, the shade 193 “silver tan” was enormously popular, but for unknown reasons, it was phased out in the 1960s. The “Ike jacket” was abolished, too. Some airmen said its demise was because it did not look good on fat generals.

The 1960s brought several improvements, including 1505 khakis to replace the 505s, with better material and less need for starch. The blue uniform, which has undergone several revisions over the years, took on a darker shade of blue and the bulging “Captain Kangaroo” pockets were eliminated.

In 1978, khaki uniforms—supposedly the last vestige of the old Army look—were phased out and replaced with a light blue/dark blue combination for everyday wear.

One of the odder events in the history of the uniform was in 1991, when Gen. Merrill A. McPeak eliminated the epaulettes and pin-on rank for the blue uniform, the wearer’s grade to be indicated by Navy-style stripes on the cuffs. When McPeak retired, the Air Force went back to the traditional blue uniform.



1—The founding father of the Air Force was H.H. “Hap” Arnold, the wartime leader of the AAF who had retired in 1946. In 1949, Arnold was given the permanent rank of General of the Air Force, the one and only five star general the Air Force has ever had.

2—In February 1949, an Air Force B-50 bomber, Lucky Lady II, took off from its base in Texas, remained airborne for almost four days, and made the first nonstop flight around the world before landing in Texas at the base from which it had taken off. This was an early demonstration of the Air Force’s global reach.

3—In 1948, when the Berlin Airlift began in response to the Soviet ground blockade of the city, the rubble left from World War II bombing was still prevalent. But to these children, playing amid the ruins, the procession of Air Force airplanes no longer meant bombs and destruction but food and supplies, from coal to toys and candy.



OFF WE GO

In 1937, the Army Air Corps wanted an official song but had no funding for such a project. *Liberty Magazine* was persuaded, in 1938, to sponsor a contest and award \$1,000 to the winner. Among those submitting entries was Irving Berlin. His songs did not win, but later found a place in a Broadway musical.

The winner, by unanimous decision of the judges, was Robert Crawford, a pilot and a singer whose song began, “Off we go, into the wild blue yonder.” It was officially introduced at the Cleveland Air Races in 1939. Audiences loved it, and so did the Air Corps. However, the Air Corps still had no money for a song, so it was produced and copyrighted commercially. Thus, the Air Force today does not own its “official” song, although composer Crawford granted the service performance rights in perpetuity.

An amendment was required in 1947, changing the booming last line, “Nothing’ll stop the Army Air Corps!” to say “the US Air Force” instead. The title of the song, originally, “What Do You Think of the Air Corps Now?” was also changed to “The Air Force Song.”



THE EARLY LEADERS: A PHOTOCHART

Before (January 1947) and after (October 1947) establishment of the Air Force as a separate service

January 1947

THE AIR STAFF



Commanding General
Gen. Carl A. Spaatz



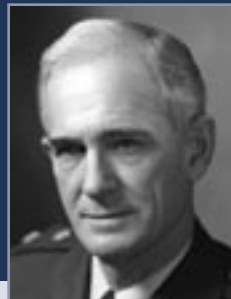
Deputy Commanding General and Chief of Air Staff
Lt. Gen. Ira C. Eaker



Deputy Chief of Air Staff, Administration
Maj. Gen. Charles C. Chauncey



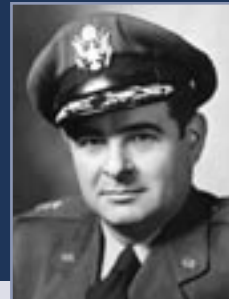
Deputy Chief of Air Staff, Research and Development
Maj. Gen. Curtis E. LeMay



Air Board
Maj. Gen. Hugh J. Knerr



Air Inspector
Maj. Gen. Junius W. Jones



Air Comptroller
Brig. Gen. Edwin W. Rawlings



Director of Information
Brig. Gen. Emmett O'Donnell Jr.

ASSISTANT CHIEFS OF AIR STAFF



Asst. Chief of Air Staff 1
Maj. Gen. Fred L. Anderson



Asst. Chief of Air Staff 2
Maj. Gen. George C. McDonald



Asst. Chief of Air Staff 3
Maj. Gen. Earle E. Partridge



Asst. Chief of Air Staff 4
Maj. Gen. Edward M. Powers



Asst. Chief of Air Staff 5
Maj. Gen. Otto P. Weyland

MAJOR COMMANDS

Air Defense Command

Mitchel Field, N.Y.



Commander
Lt. Gen. George E. Stratemeyer

- 1st Air Force**
Maj. Gen. Robert W. Douglass Jr.
Ft. Slocum, N.Y.
- 2nd Air Force**
Maj. Gen. Frederick W. Evans
Ft. Crook, Neb.
- 4th Air Force**
Maj. Gen. Willis H. Hale
Hamilton Field, Calif.
- 10th Air Force**
Maj. Gen. Howard M. Turner
Brooks Field, Texas
- 11th Air Force**
Maj. Gen. Thomas J. Hanley Jr.
Olmsted Field, Pa.
- 14th Air Force**
Brig. Gen. Leo A. Walton
Orlando, Fla.

Strategic Air Command

Bolling Field, D.C.



Commander
Gen. George C. Kenney

- 8th Air Force**
Maj. Gen. Clement McMullen
Fort Worth, Tex.
- 15th Air Force**
Maj. Gen. Charles F. Born
Colorado Springs, Colo.
- 20th Air Force**
Maj. Gen. Francis H. Griswold
Andersen Field, Guam
- 311th Reconnaissance Wing**
Brig. Gen. Donald R. Hutchinson
MacDill Field, Fla.

Tactical Air Command

Langley Field, Va.

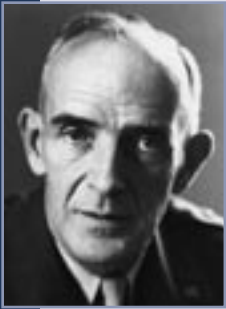


Commander
Maj. Gen. Elwood R. Quesada

- 9th Air Force**
Maj. Gen. Paul L. Williams
Biggs Field, Tex.
- 12th Air Force**
Maj. Gen. William D. Old
March Field, Calif.

Air Transport Command

Washington



Commander
Maj. Gen. Robert M. Webster

- Airways and Air Communications Service**
Maj. Gen. Harold M. McClelland
Washington
- Flight Service**
Col. Nicholas E. Powell
Washington
- Air Rescue Service**
Col. Wallace S. Ford
Morrison Field, Fla.
- Weather Service**
Col. Donald N. Yates
Washington
- Aero Chart Service**
Lt. Col. Albert G. Foote
Washington

Air Training Command

Barksdale Field, La.



Commander
Lt. Gen. John K. Cannon

- Air Technical Training Command**
Maj. Gen. William E. Kepner
Scott Field, Ill.
- Flying Training Command**
Maj. Gen. James P. Hodges
Randolph Field, Tex.

Air Proving Ground Command

Orlando, Fla.



Commander
Brig. Gen. Carl A. Brandt

Air Materiel Command

Wright Field, Ohio



Commander
Lt. Gen. Nathan F. Twining

- AAF Technical Base**
Col. Joseph T. Morris
Wright Field, Ohio
- Atlantic Air Materiel District**
Brig. Gen. Clifford C. Nutt
Newark, N.J.
- Pacific Air Materiel District**
Col. George G. Lundberg
Alameda, Calif.
- Middletown Air Materiel Area**
Col. D.R. Stinson
Middletown, Pa.
- Mobile Air Materiel Area**
Brig. Gen. Charles E. Thomas
Mobile, Ala.
- Ogden Air Materiel Area**
Col. Ray G. Harris
Ogden, Utah
- Oklahoma City Air Materiel Area**
Brig. Gen. Fred S. Borum
Oklahoma City
- Rome Air Materiel Area**
Col. Benjamin G. Weir
Rome, N.Y.
- Sacramento Air Materiel Area**
Col. Arthur W. Vanaman
Sacramento, Calif.
- San Antonio Air Materiel Area**
Brig. Gen. George H. Beverley
San Antonio
- San Bernardino Air Materiel Area**
Brig. Gen. Harold A. Bartron
San Bernardino, Calif.
- Spokane Air Materiel Area**
Col. Frank D. Hackett
Spokane, Wash.
- Warner Robins Air Materiel Area**
Col. Robert V. Ignacio
Macon, Ga.
- 803rd Specialized Depot**
Col. P.L. Jacobs
Park Ridge, Ill.

Air University

Maxwell Field, Ala.



Commander
Maj. Gen. Muir S. Fairchild

- Air Tactical School**
Brig. Gen. Joseph Smith
Tyndall Field, Fla.
- Air Command and Staff School**
Brig. Gen. Earl W. Barnes
Maxwell Field, Ala.
- Air War College**
Maj. Gen. Orvil A. Anderson
Maxwell Field, Ala.
- AAF Institute of Technology**
Vacant
Wright Field, Ohio
- School of Aviation Medicine**
Col. Harry G. Armstrong
Randolph Field, Tex.
- Special Staff School**
Col. William B. Wright Jr.
Craig Field, Ala.

October 1947

OFFICE OF SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE



Secretary of the Air Force
Stuart Symington



Undersecretary of the Air Force
Arthur S. Barrows



Asst. Secretary of the Air Force
Cornelius V. Whitney



Asst. Secretary of the Air Force
Eugene M. Zuckert

THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE AIR STAFF



Chief of Staff
Gen. Carl A. Spaatz



Vice Chief of Staff
Gen. Hoyt S. Vandenberg



Asst. Vice Chief of Staff
Brig. Gen. William F. McKee



Air Board
Maj. Gen. Hugh J. Knerr



Secretary of Air Staff
Brig. Gen. Bryant L. Boatner



Air Inspector
Maj. Gen. Junius W. Jones

DEPUTY CHIEFS OF STAFF



Deputy Chief of Staff,
Personnel & Administration
Lt. Gen. Idwal H. Edwards

Director of Personnel
Brig. Gen. John E. Upston

Director of Administrative
Services
Brig. Gen. Edwin B. Lyon



Deputy Chief of Staff,
Materiel
Lt. Gen. Howard A. Craig

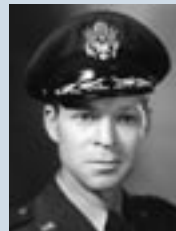
Director of Special Weapons
Group
Maj. Gen. William E. Kepner

Director of Supply and
Services
Brig. Gen. Lyman P. Whitten

Director of Air Installations
Brig. Gen. Robert Kauch

Director of Procurement and
Industrial Planning
Brig. Gen. Frederick M.
Hopkins Jr.

Director of Research and
Development
Maj. Gen. Laurence C. Craigie



Deputy Chief of Staff,
Operations
Lt. Gen. Lauris Norstad

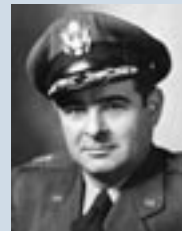
Director of Guided Missiles
Group
Brig. Gen. William L.
Richardson

Director of Air
Communications Group
Brig. Gen. Francis L.
Ankenbrandt

Director of Training and
Requirements
Maj. Gen. Earle E. Partridge

Director of Plans and
Operations
Maj. Gen. Otto P. Weyland

Director of Intelligence
Maj. Gen. George C.
McDonald



Air Comptroller
Lt. Gen. Edwin W. Rawlings

Director of Statistical Central
Col. Chester W. Cecil Jr.

Director of Program Analysis
Col. Prescott M. Spicer

Director of Budget and Fiscal
Matters
Col. Robert S. Macrum

Director of Cost Control Group
Lt. Col. Walter I. Miller

MAJOR COMMANDS

Air Defense Command

Mitchel Field, N.Y.



Commander
Lt. Gen. George E. Stratemeyer

Air Materiel Command

Wright Field, Ohio



Commander
Gen. Joseph T. McNarney

Air Transport Command

Washington



Commander
Maj. Gen. Robert W. Harper

Air University

Maxwell Field, Ala.



Commander
Maj. Gen. Muir S. Fairchild

Bolling Field Command

Bolling Field, D.C.



Commander
Brig. Gen. Burton M. Hovey

Strategic Air Command

Bolling Field, D.C.



Commander
Gen. George C. Kenney

Tactical Air Command

Langley Field, Va.



Commander
Lt. Gen. Elwood R. Quesada

Air Proving Ground Command

Orlando, Fla.



Commander
Brig. Gen. Carl A. Brandt

Air Training Command

Barksdale Field, La.



Commander
Lt. Gen. John K. Cannon

7th Air Force

Hickam Field, Hawaii



Commander
Maj. Gen. Ralph H. Wooten

Alaskan Air Command

Elmendorf Field, Alaska



Commander
Maj. Gen. Joseph H. Atkinson

Caribbean Air Command

Albrook Field, Panama



Commander
Maj. Gen. Hubert R. Harmon

Far East Air Forces

Nagoya, Japan



Commander
Lt. Gen. Ennis C. Whitehead

US Air Forces in Europe

Lindsey AS, West Germany



Commander
Lt. Gen. Curtis E. LeMay

THE JET AGE: 1950-1959



1



3

Illusions of postwar peace came to a definite end when the Soviet Union, already generating unrest in Europe, obtained the atomic bomb and Red China emerged as a second major Communist power. US rearmament was accelerated when North Korean forces crossed the 38th parallel to begin the Korean War.

The new Air Force performed with distinction in Korea. (See “Matchup in MiG Alley” in “Milestones From the First 60 Years.”) Air Force strength, which had bottomed out at 305,827 in 1947, peaked at 977,593 in 1953.

Air defense was reborn and the tactical forces were equipped with new aircraft, but the dominant element in the Air Force—and in the defense program—was Strategic Air Command, whose long-range bombers were the centerpiece of the US strategy of Massive Retaliation. By the end of the decade, the Air Force had fully entered the jet age, with SAC’s B-47 and B-52 bombers and the tactical air forces flying an impressive lineup of jet fighters and interceptors.

The threat and the character of the Cold War took on a new dimension with the development of the intercontinental ballistic missile. In 1957, the Soviet Union launched the world’s first ICBM and then used the same kind of rocket to put its Sputnik satellite into orbit. This set off fears of a “missile gap,” but if a gap existed, the United States caught up quickly. The Air Force’s Atlas was operational by 1959, and Titan and Minuteman soon followed.

In an advancement on a different front, the Air Force obtained its first computer, a vacuum tube Univac 1, in February 1952.



2

4

1—The F-100 was the Air Force's first operational supersonic aircraft and the first of the "Century series" fighters. It first flew in 1953 and was employed in a variety of combat roles in the Vietnam War.

2—When MiG fighters surged out of Manchuria to attack UN ground forces and bomber formations, USAF airmen met them in "MiG Alley," which ran along the Yalu in far northwestern Korea. There, F-86 Sabres shot down 10 MiGs for every one of their own lost.

3—The Strategic Air Command power lineup in the 1950s included the B-47 bomber, operational in 1953, and the B-52, which reached initial operational capability in 1955. The KC-135 jet tanker joined the force in 1957. SAC was so dominant that the other commands claimed that the Air Force had been "SACumcised."

4—Not all new aircraft of the 1950s were jets. The C-130 turboprop, introduced in 1956, went on to become one of the classic aircraft of all time. It was basically an in-theater airlifter, but its ruggedness and versatility led to its use as a gunship, as a command and control aircraft, and in numerous other roles.

5—In basic training at Lackland AFB, Tex., airmen learned a new way to count: Hup, Toop, Threep, Forp. (It was spelled that way in the drill manual.) There's no telling why this marching flight is wearing bush jackets—a uniform item that was universally detested—in the hot Texas sun.

6—"Sabre Dance" from the Air Force art collection features an F-86 in Korea flown by Col. James K. Johnson, an ace with 10 victories. (Painting by Harley Copic)

7—An additional duty once familiar to all airmen, KP or Kitchen Police, often included peeling potatoes. KP duty was abolished in the 1970s as part of the effort to make life in the all-volunteer force more appealing to recruits.

5

6



7



THE AIR FORCE ACADEMY



Almost 600 sites in 45 states were considered before Colorado Springs was selected as the location for the Air Force Academy. The first class entered in 1955, but for the first three years, the campus was refurbished World War II barracks at Lowry Air Force Base near Denver. The cadet wing moved into its permanent home at the new academy in 1958, and the first class graduated there in 1959.

Since then, more than 35,000 cadets have graduated. Of those commissioned in the Air Force, about 51 percent are still on active duty. The first class with women entered in 1976 and graduated in 1980.

The academy covers 18,500 acres and is the largest of any of the service academies. Approximately a million people a year visit the academy. The most visited attraction is the 17-spired Cadet Chapel. It was the subject of controversy when first built but is now considered an outstanding example of American architecture.

The class of 1959—the first to graduate—chose the falcon as the mascot of the cadet wing. No particular species was designated, so any falcon is eligible to serve. Cadet falconers train and handle the falcons, which fly at sports events and on other occasions.

1



THE THUNDERBIRDS

The Thunderbirds, the Air Force's aerial demonstration team, were activated at Luke AFB, Ariz., in June 1953 and moved to their current home at Nellis AFB, Nev., in 1956. The first public exhibition was at Frontier Days in Cheyenne, Wyo., in 1953. Perhaps the largest crowd to ever watch a Thunderbirds show was 2.25 million, who saw the performance at Coney Island, N.Y., in 1987.

The Thunderbird tradition has been to fly front-line jet fighters. They began with two variants of the F-84 and three years later, traded up to the supersonic F-100. The briefest tenure for a Thunderbirds airplane was in 1964, when the F-105 fighter-bomber flew for only six shows. After an accident and some other problems, the Thunderbirds went back to the F-100 for another four years. In response to the energy crisis of the 1970s, the team flew the fuel-efficient T-38 supersonic trainer from 1974 to 1981.

During a practice session in January 1982, the entire four-ship diamond formation crashed, killing all four pilots. The 1982 show season was canceled. When the Thunderbirds returned in 1983, it was in the F-16 Fighting Falcon. The Thunderbird aircraft have been as follows:

- 1953-54: F-84G Thunderjet
- 1954-56: F-84F Thunderstreak
- 1956-63: F-100C Super Sabre
- 1964 (six shows only): F-105B Thunderchief
- 1964-68: F-100D Super Sabre
- 1969-73: F-4E Phantom II
- 1974-81: T-38 Talon
- 1983-91: F-16A Fighting Falcon
- 1992-Present: F-16C Fighting Falcon



2



1—Benjamin O. Davis Jr., wartime leader of the Tuskegee Airmen, became the Air Force's first black general in October 1954. He retired as a lieutenant general in 1970, but was subsequently promoted to four-star rank in 1998.

2—The first successful test flight of USAF's Snark, a winged cruise missile that looked like a fighter, was Oct. 13, 1957—six weeks ahead of the first successful Atlas intercontinental ballistic missile flight. Thus, Snark was technically the first US intercontinental missile.

3—A highlight of AFA's 1957 National Convention in Washington, D.C., was this "anniversary portrait," featuring a group of men and women who represented a cross section of American history. The uniforms are 193 "silver tans," which were discontinued in the 1960s.

4—From Air Force Magazine's July 1957 cover, are 17 drawings by Milton Caniff, creator of "Terry and the Pirates" and "Steve Canyon," who based many of his characters on real people. From top, left to right: Poteet Canyon (based on Nancy O'Neal); Dude Hennick (Frank Higgs); Col. Flip Corkin (Philip Cochran); Lt. Upton Bucket (Bill Mauldin); Col. Vince Casey (C.D. Vincent); Civil Air Patrol Cadet Scooter McGruder (Margaret Kennefick); Allee McDean (Alice McDermott); Maj. Gen. Claire Chennault (himself); Steve Canyon ("a composite"); Gen. Joseph W. Stilwell (himself); Lt. Taffy Tucker (Bernice Taylor); Miss Lace (Dorothy Partington); Maj. Luke Adew (William Lookadoo); Col. Soup Davey (David F. McCallister); Lt. Peter Pipper "the Piper" (John F. Kennedy); Brig. Gen. P. G. "Shanty" Town (also C.D. Vincent); and Miss Mizzou (Marilyn Monroe).

5—The cover for Air Force Magazine's "Korean War Scrapbook" issue in July 1996 featured 1st Lt. John M. Lowery, an F-86 pilot, and a Korean visitor, Kim Ho-Yong, at the 4th Fighter Interceptor Wing in 1953. Magazine archives produced a second shot in the series, in which the two tried on each other's hats.

3



THE SUPERGRADES

In the early days of the Air Force, there were seven enlisted grades, with master sergeant (E-7) as the highest. Like the other services, the Air Force had a problem known as "grade suppression." The average enlisted member made E-7 by the 12th year of service and could progress no further. In many cases, a master sergeant supervised several other master sergeants.

In 1958, two new enlisted grades, the "supergrades," were created. The Air Force decided to name them senior master sergeant (E-8) and chief master sergeant (E-9). Two percent of the force could be promoted to E-8 and one percent to E-9.

The first Air Force promotions to E-8 were in September 1958, and the first to E-9 were in December 1959. Insignia for the new grades were created by adding one stripe pointing upward for E-8s and two stripes upward for E-9s.

E-9 chevrons did not change until the 1990s, when new stripes had one pointing upward for a master sergeant, two for a senior master sergeant, and three for a chief.

(The manpower authorizations for the new grades had to come from somewhere, which led to the end of warrant officer grades, which had occupied a middle ground between NCOs and commissioned officers on the rank tables. The grade authorizations thus saved were applied to the new enlisted supergrades. No more warrant officers were appointed, but it would be another 21 years before the last warrant officer retired.)

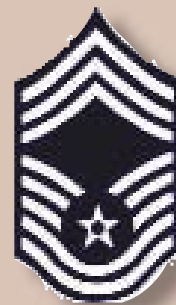
4



5



*Old Chief Master Sergeant Stripes
1959-97*



*New Chief Master Sergeant Stripes
1999-Present*

COLD WAR—and VIETNAM, Too 1960-1969

In October 1962, an Air Force SR-71 discovered Russian missile sites in Cuba. The Cuban Missile Crisis lasted for 14 days, until the Russians, faced with US determination and superior strategic power, decided to withdraw their missiles. It was regarded as High Noon in the Cold War. However, the confrontation had a long way to go. Both sides improved their forces in the 1960s, but by the end of the decade, the Soviets had achieved parity and the United States had decided to settle for strategic equivalence.

ICBMs came into their own. By 1964, the number of US ICBMs on alert had pulled even with the number of bombers on alert. Some people concluded—in error, it turned out—that the bomber was obsolete.

Despite the intensifying of the Cold War, the decade was marked by a revival of interest in conventional forces and flexible response. Tactical fighter wings, which had dwindled to a total of 16 in 1961, were projected to increase by 50 percent.

It was the decade the Vietnam War began for the United States. For the Vietnamese, it had been going on for a long time. In Southeast Asia, the Air Force was engaged in four different campaigns: an “in-country” war in South Vietnam, an air war (“Rolling Thunder”) in North Vietnam, interdiction of the Ho Chi Minh Trail in the Laotian panhandle (“Steel Tiger”), and a secret war to support the Laotian government in northern Laos (“Barrel Roll”). The Vietnam experience shaped the Air Force for many years to come.

Among other significant developments of the 1960s, the Air Force began operation of the C-141 and C-5 airlifters. Along with aerial refueling, they gave the United States an unique capability for global reach.



PROJECT BLUE BOOK

"Flying saucers" came to public attention in June 1947 when a private pilot reported nine discs in flight near Mount Rainier in Washington state. Soon thereafter, the Air Force began investigating "unidentified flying objects" and continued to do so for the next 22 years.

The program was initially called "Project Sign," then "Project Grudge," and finally "Project Blue Book." A director of Project Blue Book is credited with coining the term "unidentified flying objects."

By the time the Air Force ended Project Blue Book in 1969, a total of 12,618 UFO sightings had been reported, with 701 remaining "unidentified." However, Blue Book reached three conclusions:

- No indication of a threat to national security from UFOs.
- No evidence of technology beyond the range of modern scientific knowledge.
- No evidence that any of the objects sighted were of extraterrestrial origin.

UFOlogists accused the Air Force of engaging in a cover-up and keeping the evidence stashed in a secret "Blue Room" at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio.



4

1—The F-105 Thunderchief—the "Thud", the "Lead Sled"—flew 75 percent of the strikes and took high losses in "Rolling Thunder," the three-year air war against North Vietnam. The campaign was hampered by political control from Washington, frequent stops and starts, and rules of engagement that undercut effectiveness. It was a war we didn't win, but one in which US forces performed with honor, courage, dedication, and capability.

2—In June 1959, Air Force Magazine, journal of the Air Force Association, added Space Digest to its name. The cover, as on this October 1959 issue, carried the double name, Air Force and Space Digest, until January 1971. The next month, the magazine switched back to its original name.

3—There had been little public attention paid to American POWs in Vietnam until Air Force Magazine's cover story in October 1969, which ignited national concern. It was reprinted in condensed form as the lead article in Reader's Digest in November 1969, was read on the floor of Congress, and inserted into the Congressional Record six times. From then on, national commitment to the POWs never wavered.

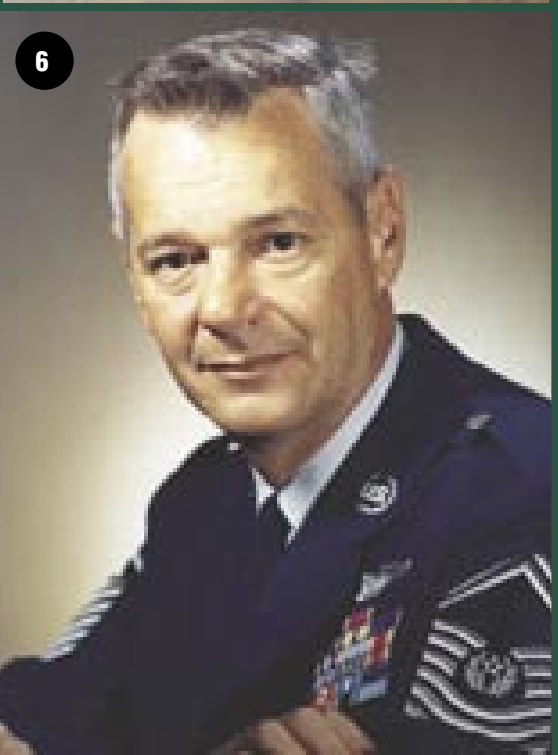
4—Gen. Bernard A. Schriever was the architect and driving force behind the US ballistic missile program from the earliest days. He served as commander of Air Force Systems Command from 1959 until his retirement in 1966. During his remarkable career, he saw the US missile force grow from primitive beginnings to a powerful arsenal of Minuteman missiles.

5—The Air Force took first deliveries of the F-38 Talon supersonic trainer in 1961. This elegant-looking aircraft proved both versatile and capable. In 1962, it set four international time-to-climb records. It was an excellent trainer but it was also aerobatic enough to fly with the Thunderbirds for seven years. It is still in use as the Air Force's top line undergraduate trainer.

6—The first Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, from April 1967 to July 1969, was Paul W. Airey, a World War II veteran who had spent much of his career as a first sergeant. At end of his term as CMSAF, Airey returned to Tyndall AFB, Fla., for one year because he wanted to complete 30 years of service. He is the only CMSAF so far to accept a follow-on assignment.



5



6

TOTAL FORCE; VOLUNT HOLLOW FORCE 1970-1979

Two big decisions in the early 1980s changed the character and composition of the force. In 1970, the Pentagon announced a “Total Force concept” in which the capabilities of the National Guard and Reserve were incorporated, along with those of active forces, in all aspects of planning and budgeting. In 1973, the concept was upgraded to the Total Force policy. Twenty-five years later, 35 percent of the Air Force’s military strength would be in the Guard and Reserve.

In 1973, the military draft was zeroed out and we moved to an All-Volunteer Force. The Air Force had not taken draftees, but much of its recruiting success had been draft-induced. Airmen joined the Air Force to avoid being drafted into the Army. From 1973 on, the Air Force had to attract and retain true volunteers.

The Cold War continued. The United States pursued a policy of “detente” with the Soviet Union, seeking “essential equivalence” rather than strategic superiority. The Soviets moved steadily ahead in military capability.

The F-15 and F-16, which would be the workhorses of the fighter fleet for years to come, joined the Air Force during the decade. So did the A-10 close air support aircraft and the E-3 Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) command and control aircraft.

The Vietnam War ended for the United States with the signing of the cease-fire in January 1973. US forces withdrew and the POWs came home.

The decade that began with the Total Force and the Volunteer Force ended with the scandal known as the “Hollow Force.” One budget cut followed another, leading to severe problems in readiness and retention. Airplanes stood idle on the ramp for want of parts. Air Force retention of mid-career veterans fell from 75 percent to 59 percent. It was a difficult time.

THE WAF

During World War II, some 400,000 women served in the armed forces, but that was a wartime exception. Other than nurses, women could not join the regular forces in peacetime.

That changed in 1948, with the Women’s Armed Services Integration Act, which gave women permanent status in the military. However, there were restrictions. The number of women was limited to two percent of the force. Only one woman in each service could hold the grade of colonel (or Navy captain). There were duty and assignment restrictions.

Women in the Air Force were never a separate corps, but for 30 years following 1948, they were referred to by all as “WAF” or “the WAF.” The one colonel was Director of the WAF, but that was a misnomer. She was assigned to the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel in the Pentagon and directed only her own small staff.

The two percent ceiling was not a problem for the WAF. The Air Force could not or did not recruit that many women. The number of non-medical women in the Air Force hit an all time low at 5,450 in 1965.

A change of law in 1967 lifted many of the restrictions. The two percent ceiling was abolished and so were the promotion caps. In 1969, Air Force ROTC opened to women, and in 1971, the Air Force promoted Jeanne M. Holm to brigadier general. More career fields and duty assignments opened to women. The first women cadets entered the Air Force Academy in 1976, and eventually flying training and combat flying were opened to women as well.

The term “WAF,” once in everyday use, faded away. In 1976, the office of the Director of the WAF was discontinued as no longer necessary. Today, women account for 19.5 percent of the Air Force’s active duty strength and have no unique terminology that would set them apart.



EER FORCE;

RED FLAG



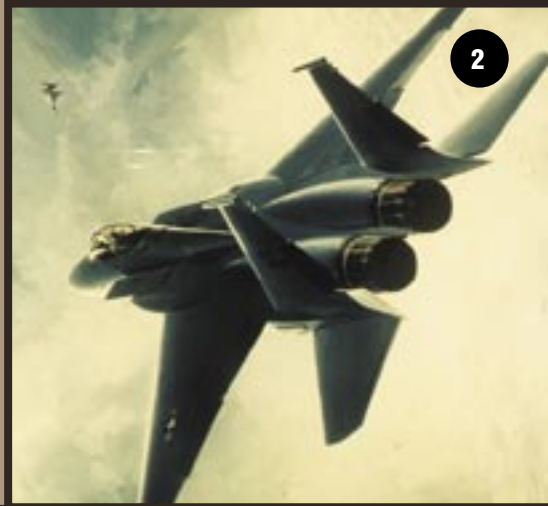
1

1—Jeanne Holm was the first woman general officer in Air Force history, promoted to brigadier general in July 1971. She enlisted in the Army in World War II, serving as a truck driver. Recalled to active duty during the Berlin Airlift, she was commissioned in the newly created Air Force. She was the first woman in any service to be promoted to major general (in 1973).

2—"Air Superiority Blue," the classic image of the F-15, was painted for the Air Force art collection by Keith Ferris. The original of the painting hangs in the headquarters of Air Combat Command.

3—The A-10, the first Air Force airplane specifically designed for close air support of ground forces, reached IOC in 1977. The A-10 struggled for prestige in an Air Force that flew the F-15 and F-16, but it was still performing well in Afghanistan and Iraq and is expected to be around into the 2020s.

4—Daniel "Chappie" James, Jr., combat leader in the Vietnam War, was the first black officer in the US armed forces to achieve four-star rank. He was promoted to general in 1975 and served as commander in chief of Aerospace Defense Command and North American Aerospace Defense Command.



2



3



Red Flag grew out of the Air Force loss rate in Vietnam. During the Korean War, the exchange ratio against enemy MiGs was 10-to-1 in USAF's favor. In the Spring of 1972 in Southeast Asia, the ratio fell to less than 1-to-1.

A leading reason was that Air Force combat training was not realistic. Airmen did not train against aircraft that looked and flew like MiGs, and a concern for safety curbed the realism of the training. In most cases, USAF pilots, unaccustomed to watching for smaller, more agile MiGs, never saw the airplane that shot them down. It was further found that most losses occurred during a pilot's first 10 combat missions, before he had gained experience.

The solution was Red Flag, a highly realistic training exercise, first conducted at Nellis AFB, Nev., in November 1975. Pilots flew against Red Flag's "aggressor" aircraft, T-38 Talons and F-5E Tigers that resembled MiGs and flew with MiG-style tactics. At Red Flag, a pilot could log his first 10 combat missions in a controlled environment.

The catch was that some safety rules had to be eased to make the training sufficiently realistic. The Air Force bit the bullet and, indeed, for the first two years, the accident rate was high, with eight aircraft being lost. After that, the Red Flag accident rate was about the same as the overall Air Force rate.

Red Flag became the most famous air combat training program in the world, and the operational benefits were universally recognized. Returning from a combat mission over Iraq in the Gulf War of 1991, an Air Force pilot was heard to exclaim, "It was almost as intense as Red Flag."



4

THE REVEALING OF STEALTH

At a Pentagon news briefing in August 1980, Secretary of Defense Harold Brown announced “a major technological advance of great military significance.” It was called “stealth” and it enabled aircraft to evade detection by radar and interception by air defense systems.



Also taking part in the briefing was William J. Perry, the undersecretary of defense for research and engineering, the chief architect of the stealth program, and a future Secretary of Defense. In a moment of excess, Perry said stealth made an airplane “invisible to radar.”

It was later explained that Perry’s “invisible” was “a figure of speech.” Stealth greatly reduced an airplane’s radar signature, but did not quite make it invisible. However, stealth was plenty good to elude the radars and defense systems of the day.

At the news briefing, Brown acknowledged that a stealth bomber was in development. What he did not say was that there was also a stealth fighter, and that it was almost ready to fly. In total secrecy,



a Lockheed company pilot made the first flight in the F-117A at the Tonopah test range in Nevada in June 1981.

More big disclosures came within weeks of each other in 1988. On Nov. 10, the Pentagon revealed the existence of the F-117A fighter to the public for the first time. The aircraft had been operational since 1983. On Nov. 22, the Air Force and Northrop rolled out the stealth bomber, the B-2, at Palmdale, Calif. The surprise was that the B-2 was a flying wing, with a strong family resemblance to the Northrop YB-49, which had been tested in 1947 and canceled as an impractical design.

The F-117A made its combat debut in Operation Just Cause in Panama in December 1989



and performed in legendary fashion in the Gulf War of 1991. The B-2, maligned by critics as a flawed development and a Cold War relic, achieved stardom in the air war over Serbia in 1999. (See “Opening Night in the Gulf” and “Stealth in the Balkans” in “Milestones From the First 60 Years.”)

RECOVERY: 1980-1989



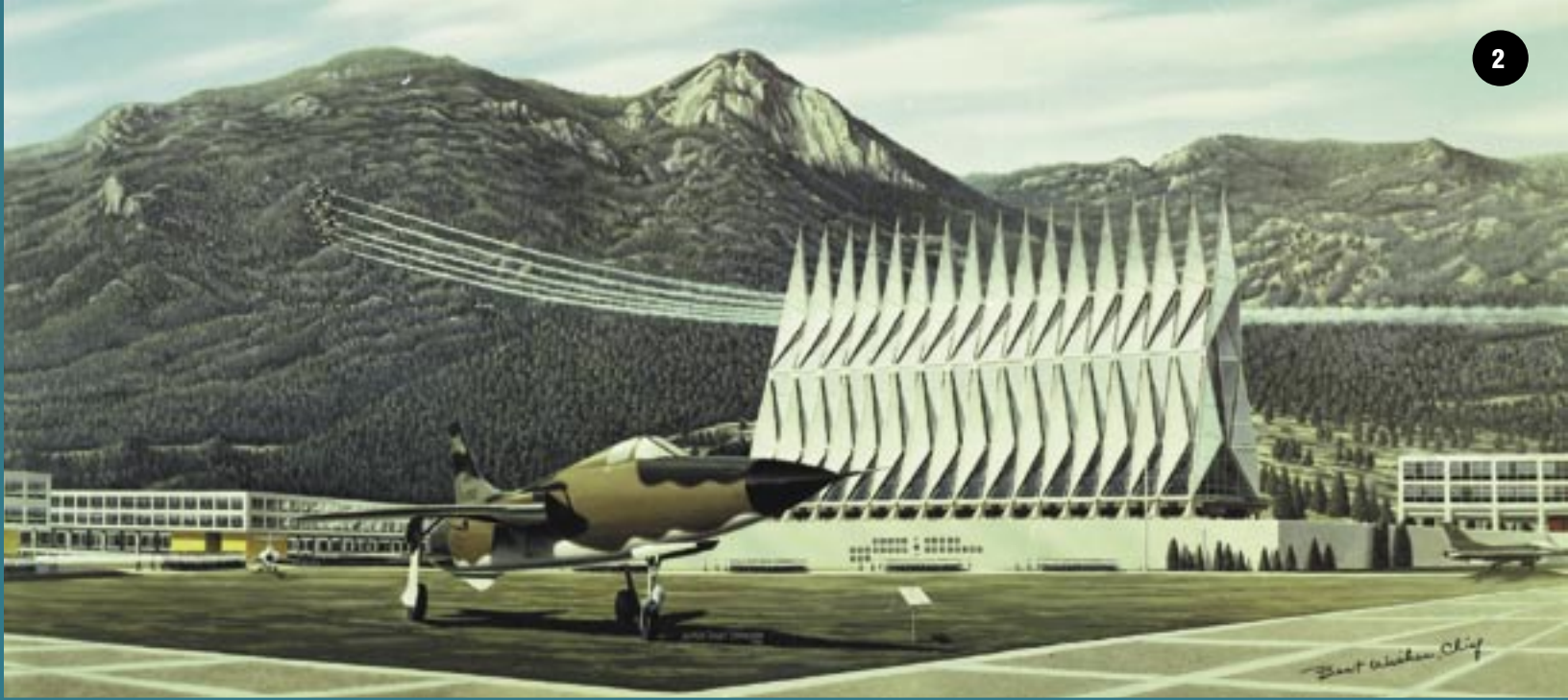
President Reagan’s first priority on taking office in 1981 was to “rearm America” and repair the conditions of the Hollow Force. He requested—and got—major increases in the defense budget. He revoked detente and the idea of settling for strategic parity and moved to challenge Soviet military power. He reinstated the B-1 bomber, which had been canceled, and gave full support to fielding the MX Peacekeeper ICBM. The “Star Wars” Strategic Defense Initiative put special pressure on the Russians.

Before the decade was out, the Air Force had fielded not only the B-1 and Peacekeeper but had also introduced two stealthy aircraft, the F-117A fighter and the B-2 bomber.

The Soviet Union was beginning to totter, but real reductions to the military force did not come until the late 1980s, when the collapse was under way. The Air Force and the United States faced continued challenges, especially in Europe. (See “Showdown in Europe” in “Milestones From the First 60 Years.”)

The Air Force was active on other fronts as well. In April 1986, Operation El Dorado Canyon demonstrated the long reach of the force. USAF F-111s took off from RAF Lakenheath in England, were refueled in the air six times by KC-10 tankers, maintained complete radio silence, and were joined by Navy A-6s in a retaliatory raid against Libya in response to state-sponsored terrorism.

The budget cutting began anew in 1986, pushed by the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings deficit reduction act. From then on, the defense budget would be cut—after inflation—for 13 years in a row before bottoming out.



SPACE



The Air Force took a strong and early interest in space. In the 1950s, Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Thomas D. White predicted the employment of “manned space vehicles as combat weapons.” In 1959, the Air Force declared that “aerospace

is an operationally indivisible medium.”

However, USAF programs such as the proposed Dyna-Soar space plane and the Manned Orbiting Laboratory were canceled and NASA took the lead on manned space flight activity. The Air Force concentrated on space launch and the operation of satellites.

In the early days, Air Force Systems Command took the lead in the USAF space effort, so there was considerable emphasis on research and development. To provide a more operational focus, Air Force Space Command was established in 1982. In 1988, the Air Force announced that it regarded space as a mission, not just a place.

During the Cold War and the regional conflicts that followed, Air Force contributions from and through space included missile warning, surveillance, communications, command and control, and much more.

Although the Air Force has long provided about 90 percent of the people, resources, and infrastructure for the military space program, the space mission has never been assigned exclusively to the Air Force because of objections from the other services. The closest it has come was in 2001, when the Secretary of the Air Force was designated as the Department of Defense’s executive agent for space.

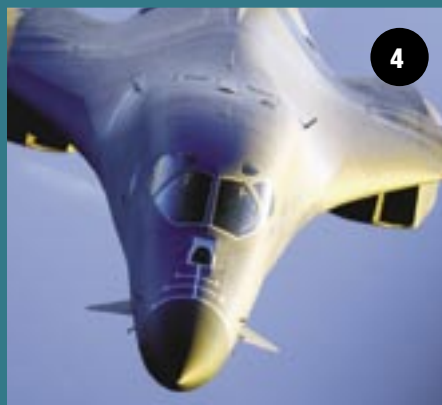
1—This 1984 publication honored the men who had served up to that time as Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force: (left to right) Paul W. Airey, Donald L. Harlow, Richard D. Kisling, Thomas N. Barnes, Robert D. Gaylor, James M. McCoy, Arthur L. Andrews, and Sam E. Parish. The Chiefs was produced by Air Force Magazine, published by the Aerospace Education Foundation, and presented by the Enlisted Council of the Air Force Association.

2—“Thunderbirds Flyby at the Air Force Academy,” painted for the Air Force art collection by Alfred Johnson, captures the spectacular F-16s and a panoramic view of the academy chapel.

3—The E-3 Airborne Warning and Control System—once billed by the critics as an airplane without a mission—achieved yet another recognition of success in 1982 when NATO began operating its own fleet of E-3s.

4—The Reagan Administration brought back the B-1 bomber, which had been canceled by the Carter Administration. The B-1B achieved initial operational capability at Dyess AFB, Tex., in 1986. Although the B-1 was designed for the strategic nuclear mission, it was still demonstrating its flexibility 20 years later in Afghanistan where it was particularly effective in close air support of ground troops.

5—When the F-15 Eagle was in development, the mantra of the air-to-air zealots was, “Not a pound for air to ground!” Boy, were they wrong. In 1988, the Air Force took first deliveries of the F-15E Strike Eagle, a two-seat variant configured for deep interdiction missions. It was operational in 1989, in time to take part in the first Gulf War, where it was a standout success.



REDEFINITION

1990-2006



BEYOND THE ARNOLD WINGS

In 1998, the Air Force felt the need for a new symbol to replace the so-called “Hap Arnold wings,” which had served unofficially in that capacity since World War II. Designers, working with historians, came up with a proposed replacement two years later.

Airmen then serving in the Air Force liked the new symbol, but some older veterans, who had been young when the Arnold wings were new, didn't. Surveys taken as the new symbol came into use found increasing acceptance, and it was officially adopted in 2004.

The Arnold wings had articulated, bird-like feathers atop a five-pointed star. The basic shape and design elements are seen in the new symbol, although more streamlined and abstract. The upper part has stylized wings that also represent the stripes of the enlisted force. They are divided into six sections, representing the Air Force's core competencies: air and space superiority, global attack, rapid global mobility, precision engagement, information superiority, and agile combat support.

The lower part has a sphere and three diamonds. When the upper and lower sections are joined, a star emerges. The sphere in the center represents the globe. The symbol can also be seen as an eagle or as a medal representing valor and service.

The Arnold wings live on, in a way, in the Air Force Association's “wee wings”, which are based on the Arnold wings with a few additions and modifications. AFA briefly considered modernizing the wee wings in the 1980s but dropped the idea when members took strong exception.



The Air Force and the Cold War began together in the late 1940s. The Air Force was the bulwark of US strategic deterrent power in the 40-year confrontation with the Soviet Union. When the Cold War ended, the question arose: What will the Air Force and the other services do for a mission?

The answer was not long in coming. In 1991, the United States fought a war it had not anticipated in the Persian Gulf. Airpower played the prominent role. The Gulf War opened with a 38-day air campaign that left the Iraqi forces reeling, requiring only a four-day ground force effort, supported by airpower, to finish the job. Operations Southern Watch and Northern Watch patrolled no-fly zones over Iraq through the 1990s.

In 1995, NATO intervention in the civil war in Yugoslavia featured airpower in Operation Deliberate Force, which brought the Serbs to peace negotiations within a few weeks. Operation Allied Force in the Balkans in 1999 was completely airpower. No ground forces were engaged.

The force's operational tempo was higher than it had been in the Cold War, and almost 50 percent of the active duty fighter forces were continuously deployed overseas.

Since Sept. 11, 2001, the Air Force's focus has been on the global war on terrorism. Air Force fighters immediately took up air defense patrols of American cities, and the first offensive against the terrorist strongholds and sanctuaries in Afghanistan was led by airpower. The commitment continues in Iraq and elsewhere.

In 1990, the Air Force introduced the concept of “Global Reach, Global Power.” It was meant to describe the capabilities that airpower has come to offer, but it also sums up the role and contribution of the Air Force in its first 60 years and sets the direction as the youngest of the military services moves into the future.



3



4

1—In June 1992, the Air Force deactivated SAC, TAC, and MAC. Bomber, fighter, attack, reconnaissance, and electronic combat/warfare aircraft, and ICBMs were regrouped under Air Combat Command. Most airlifter and tanker aircraft regrouped under Air Mobility Command.

2—The Air Force's third stealth aircraft, the F-22A Raptor, first flew in 1997. Since then, the pattern has been a familiar one as the F-22 has been assaulted by critics in the news media and elsewhere and as budget cuts have steadily reduced the number of F-22s the Air Force will eventually have.

3—On the November 2001 cover of Air Force Magazine, an F-16 from the Vermont Air National Guard flies Combat Air Patrol over New York City, where smoke rises from the World Trade Center area after the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

4—Active duty and Air National Guard F-15s and F-16s fly over the burning oil fields of Kuwait in Operation Desert Storm. Airpower smashed Iraqi forces, disrupted Iraqi command and control, and destroyed Iraq's ability to mount further aggression.

5—When cutting the force after the Cold War, the Air Force found itself with a surplus of pilots. Pilot training numbers were reduced sharply, and about 1,000 pilots already trained were "banked" in non-flying jobs. Soon, the pilot surplus turned into a shortage and then into an emergency. Pilot training was resumed, and the Air Force offered large cash bonuses to pilots willing to stay beyond their service commitments. The force is still recovering from its correction of the surplus.



5

EXPEDITIONARY FORCE



Even in the early days when Capt. Benjamin D. Foulois and a squadron of Curtiss JN-3s helped Gen. John J. Pershing chase Pancho Villa through the Mexican countryside, the Air Force had an expeditionary tradition.

Until lately, however, the Air Force was, for the most part, a garrison force, operating from established bases in the United States and overseas. That changed in the 1990s, when Air Force leaders recognized that contingency deployments were no longer unusual events. Consequently, the Air Force organized itself into Air and Space Expeditionary Forces (AEFs) and notified airmen to expect deployments to be a way of life.

By 1995, Air Force personnel strength was down by 50 percent overseas, but the number of Air Force people on temporary duty overseas was up nearly fourfold since the fall of the Berlin Wall. One contingency deployment followed another, and the unpredictability was causing havoc for the airmen who had to pick up and go on short notice.

The AEFs, originally called Aerospace Expeditionary Forces, were invented to provide some stability and predictability. The Air Force grouped its power projection and support forces into 10 "buckets of capability," each called an AEF.

The concept evolved from its October 1999 implementation to today's 20-month rotational cycles, with two of the AEFs on notice and vulnerable for deployment for a period of 120 days. Airmen in the other eight AEFs would not expect to be deployed during that period unless all hell broke loose. The deployments were still there, but airmen now had a better idea when they were coming and could plan for them.

Gen. John P. Jumper, former Air Force Chief of Staff, is regarded as the father of the AEFs, having pushed the concept forward when he was commander of 9th Air Force, the USAF component of US Central Command.

The Air Force said in 2004 that the demands for deployable forces had not diminished and that the requirements for airmen on rotational duty abroad was about three times higher than before the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001.



Bob Stevens*

"There I Was..."

From January 1964 to December 1993, the final page of AFA's Air Force Magazine was home base for Bob Stevens and "There I Was." Here is Bob's USAF anniversary page from 1972, followed by selections from his other great pages over the years.



WE STILL WEAR 'PINKS and GREENS' (PLUS a 50-MISSION HAT OR TWO)



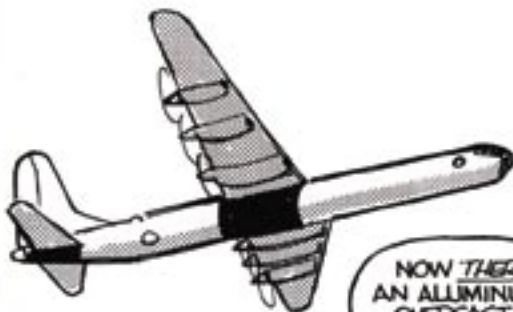
OUR HOTTEST FIGHTER IS THE P-80. IN JUNE AN XP-80R SET A BLAZING RECORD of 623 mph!

LET'S LOOK BACK 25 YEARS TO THE YEAR THE U.S.A.F. WAS BORN. WE CAN'T APPRECIATE THE PRESENT-AND THE PROGRESS THAT'S BEEN MADE-UNLESS WE LOOK BACKWARDS ONCE IN A WHILE.

THIS WAS THE FORCE-THE STATE OF THE ART; THE WAY THINGS WERE BACK IN 1947 WHEN IT ALL BEGAN.



OF MORE THAN 500 AAF TRAINING BASES IN WWII- ONLY 3 ARE ACTIVE.

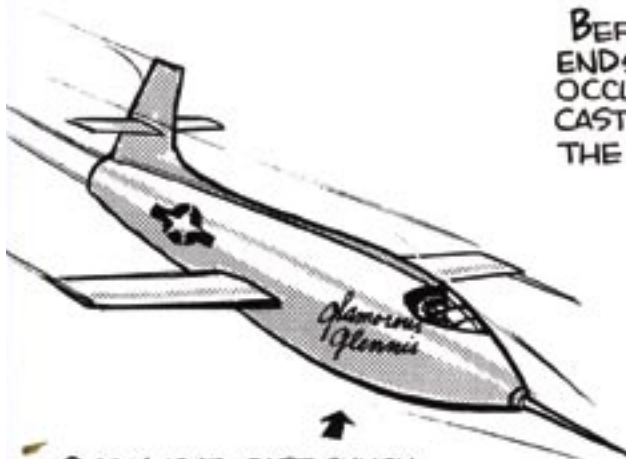


NOW THERE'S AN ALUMINUM OVERCAST!

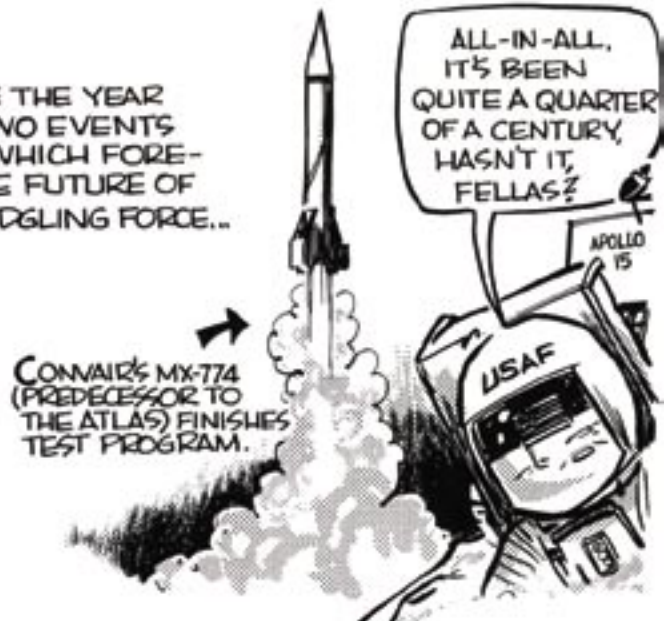
THE B-36A FLEW TO WRIGHT-PAT... ALL 278,000 LBS OF HER!

1947

BEFORE THE YEAR ENDS, TWO EVENTS OCCUR WHICH FORECAST THE FUTURE OF THE FLEDGLING FORCE...



OCT. 14 1947; CAPT. CHUCK YEAGER 'ROCKETS' FASTER THAN SOUND IN THE BELL X-1!



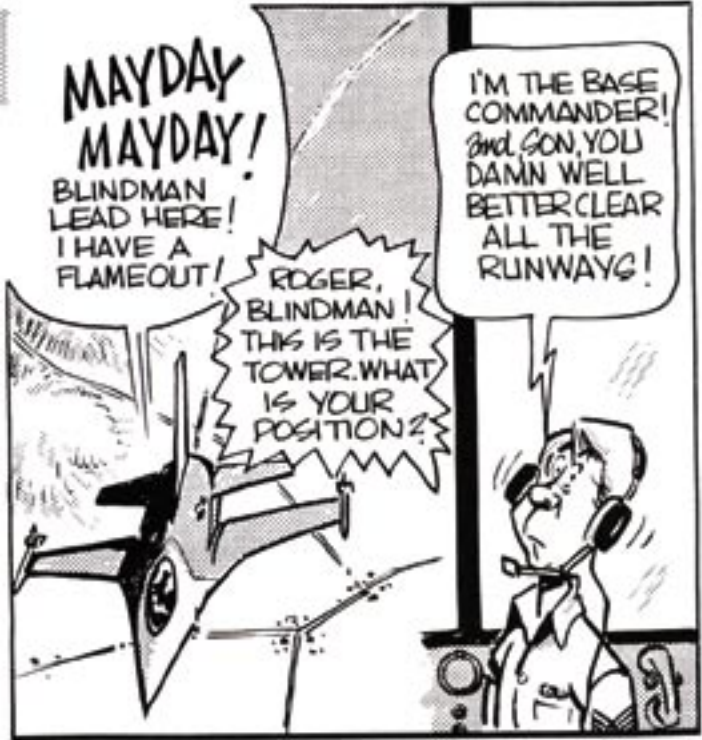
CONQUEST'S MX-774 (PREDECESSOR TO THE ATLAS) FINISHES TEST PROGRAM.



FIRST DOT (DAY OF TRAINING) INCLUDES THE "CLIPPER CUT" IN 90 SECONDS.



Basic Training (June 1984)

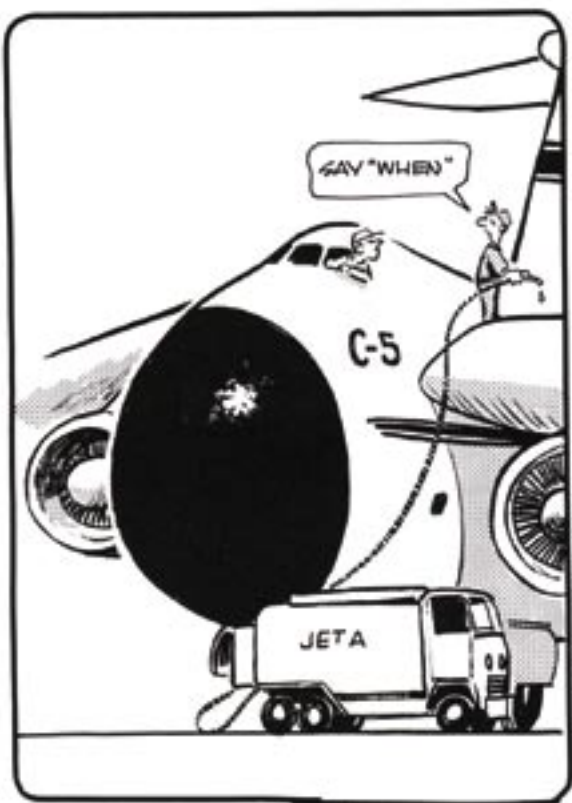


Landing Priority (January 1984)

THIS BEHEMOTH NEVER DROPPED A BOMB IN ANGER, 3rd. AFTER ALL, THAT'S THE REASON WE HAD 'EM!



B-36 Overhead (April 1988)



Filing Up (June 1983)

IT-WAS-BOUND-TO-HAPPEN-DEPT. :



Generation Gap (December 1970)

• TRYING TO HIT THE JOHN IN THE BACK OF A GOONEY-BIRD IN ROUGH AIR ?



THEN THERE WAS THE NEWLY-MINTED 2ND LT. - NAVIGATOR TYPE - WHO SHOWED UP AT BASE OPERATIONS FULLY OUTFITTED FOR A SCHEDULED FLIGHT-



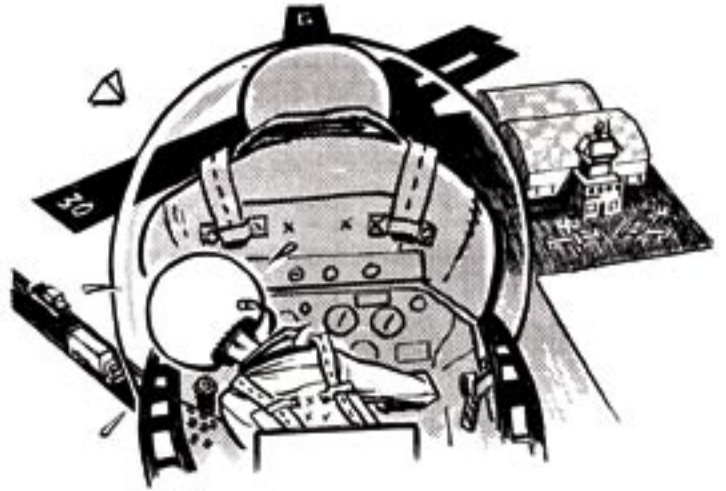
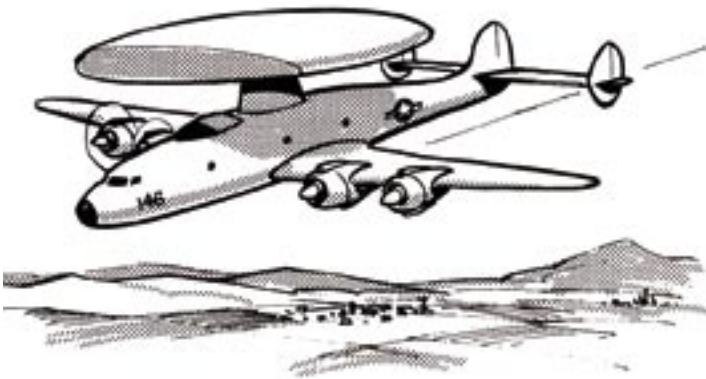
* INSPECT and REPAIR AS NECESSARY

Gotta Go (October 1969)

Oh, *That* Iran (November 1973)



146, THIS IS CHASE 1,
THAT HUMP-BACKED
TURKEY LOOKS LIKE
IT'S BEIN' ATTACKED
BY A FLYIN' SAUCER!



...YOUR VIEW FROM THE REAR SEAT
ON FINAL WITH A STUDENT PILOT
UP FRONT?

UFO Visit (April 1981)

Visibility Limited (September 1974)

THEN THERE'S THE V.I.P. WHO SAID:



I SUPPOSE THIS
MEANS WE'LL BE
LATE IN GETTING
TO SELFRIDGE!

Mishap Enroute (January 1972)



SECRETARIE OF THE UNITED STATES

SECRETARIES OF THE AIR FORCE



Stuart Symington
September 1947-April 1950



Thomas K. Finletter
April 1950-January 1953



Harold E. Talbott
February 1953-August 1955



Donald A. Quarles
August 1955-April 1957



James H. Douglas Jr.
May 1957-December 1959



James W. Plummer
November 1975-January 1976 (acting)



Thomas C. Reed
January 1976-April 1977



John C. Stetson
April 1977-May 1979



Hans Mark*
May 1979-February 1981



Verne Orr
February 1981-November 1985



Michael B. Donley
January 1993-July 1993 (acting)



Gen. Merrill A. McPeak
July 1993-August 1993 (acting)



Sheila E. Windall
August 1993-October 1997



F. Whitten Peters*
November 1997-January 2001



Lawrence J. Delaney
January 2001-June 2001 (acting)

S & CHIEFS

AIR FORCE SINCE 1947



Dudley C. Sharp
December 1959-January 1961



Eugene M. Zuckert
January 1961-September 1965



Harold Brown
October 1965-February 1969



Robert C. Seamans Jr.
February 1969-May 1973



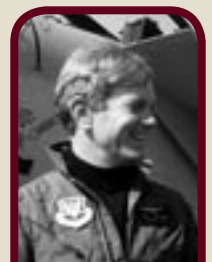
John L. McLucas*
May 1973-November 1975



Russell A. Rourke
December 1985-April 1986



Edward C. Aldridge Jr.*
April 1986-December 1988



James F. McGovern
December 1988-April 1989 (acting)



John J. Welch Jr.
April 1989-May 1989 (acting)



Donald B. Rice
May 1989-January 1993



James G. Roche
June 2001-January 2005



Peter B. Teets
January 2005-March 2005 (acting)



Michael L. Dominguez
March 2005-July 2005 (acting)



Preston M. Geren
July 2005-November 2005 (acting)



Michael W. Wynne
November 2005-present

**Served initial part of tour as acting Secretary*

CHIEFS OF STAFF, US AIR FORCE



Gen. Carl A. Spaatz
September 1947-April 1948



Gen. Hoyt S. Vandenberg
April 1948-June 1953



Gen. Nathan F. Twining
June 1953-June 1957



Gen. Thomas D. White
July 1957-June 1961



Gen. Curtis E. LeMay
June 1961-January 1965



Gen. John P. McConnell
February 1965-July 1969



Gen. John D. Ryan
August 1969-July 1973



Gen. George S. Brown
August 1973-June 1974



Gen. David C. Jones
July 1974-June 1978



Gen. Lew Allen Jr.
July 1978-June 1982



Gen. Charles A. Gabriel
July 1982-June 1986



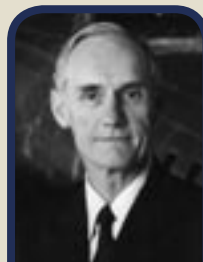
Gen. Larry D. Welch
July 1986-June 1990



Gen. Michael J. Dugan
July 1990-September 1990



Gen. John Michael Loh
September 1990-October 1990 (acting)



Gen. Merrill A. McPeak
October 1990-October 1994



Gen. Ronald R. Fogleman
October 1994-September 1997



Gen. Ralph E. Eberhart
September 1997-October 1997 (acting)



Gen. Michael E. Ryan
October 1997-September 2001



Gen. John P. Jumper
September 2001-September 2005



Gen. T. Michael Moseley
September 2005-present

CHIEF MASTER SERGEANTS OF THE AIR FORCE

USAF OFFICERS WHO WERE CHAIRMEN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF



CMSAF Paul W. Airey
April 1967-July 1969



CMSAF Donald L. Harlow
August 1969-September 1971



CMSAF Richard D. Kisling
October 1971-September 1973



Gen. Nathan F. Twining
August 1957-September 1960



Gen. George S. Brown
July 1974-June 1978



CMSAF Thomas N. Barnes
October 1973-July 1977



CMSAF Robert D. Gaylor
August 1977-July 1979



CMSAF James M. McCoy
August 1979-July 1981



Gen. David C. Jones
June 1978-June 1982



Gen. Richard B. Myers
October 2001-September 2005



CMSAF Arthur L. Andrews
August 1981-July 1983



CMSAF Sam E. Parish
August 1983-June 1986



CMSAF James C. Binnicker
July 1986-July 1990



CMSAF Gary R. Pfingston
August 1990-October 1994



CMSAF David J. Campanale
October 1994-November 1996



CMSAF Eric W. Benken
November 1996-July 1999

SECRETARIES OF THE AIR FORCE WHO LATER SERVED AS SECRETARY OF DEFENSE



CMSAF Frederick J. Finch
July 1999-July 2002



CMSAF Gerald R. Murray
July 2002-June 2006



CMSAF Rodney J. McKinley
June 2006-present



Harold Brown
January 1977-January 1981

Air Force Recipients of the MEDAL OF HONOR Since 1947

Korean War



MAJ. GEORGE A. DAVIS JR.

On Feb. 10, 1952, F-86 pilot Davis intercepted a force of 12 MiG-15s that were about to attack USAF fighter bombers working targets near the Manchurian border. Disregarding the danger, Davis attacked the MiGs repeatedly, shooting down three of them and completely disrupting the threat to the US aircraft. Davis took a direct hit and crashed into a mountain near the Yalu.

MOH awarded posthumously, May 14, 1954.



MAJ. CHARLES J. LORING JR.

On Nov. 22, 1952, Loring led a flight on F-80s on a close air support strike against guns firing on UN ground troops near Sniper Ridge in North Korea. His aircraft was hit repeatedly by ground fire, but instead of pulling out, Loring dived directly into the enemy gun positions, destroying them at the cost of his own life.

MOH awarded posthumously, May 5, 1954.



MAJ. LOUIS J. SEBILLE

On Aug. 5, 1950, Sebille led a formation of F-51s against North Korean troops advancing on Pusan. His aircraft was damaged during the attack, with coolant streaming from the engine. Discounting the chance he might be able to reach safety, Sebille turned back to the attack and flew into the enemy force, his aircraft exploding in a huge ball of fire.

MOH awarded posthumously, Aug. 24, 1951.



CAPT. JOHN S. WALMSLEY JR.

On Sept. 14, 1951, B-26 pilot Walmsley was flying an experimental searchlight mission against a rail line in North Korea. At great risk to himself, he made continued passes through intense ground fire to illuminate the target, a train, for strike aircraft. His persistence guaranteed the destruction of an important target, but he was shot down and crashed into a mountain.

MOH awarded posthumously, Jan. 12, 1954.

Vietnam War

CAPT. STEVEN L. BENNETT

On June 29, 1972, OV-10 pilot Bennett was supporting a South Vietnamese ground unit when his aircraft was hit by a SA-7 missile. Unable to eject because his backseater's parachute was shredded, Bennett elected to ditch his aircraft in the Tonkin Gulf, although he knew no OV-10 pilot had ever survived a ditching. The aircraft flipped over, nose down in the water. The backseater lived, but Bennett was trapped and sank with the aircraft.

MOH awarded posthumously, Aug. 8, 1974.



MAJ. GEORGE E. DAY

Badly injured after his Misty FAC 100-F was shot down over North Vietnam Aug. 26, 1967, Day was captured and tortured. He escaped and reached the Demilitarized Zone. He tried to signal US aircraft, but was ambushed, recaptured, and imprisoned in Hanoi, where he continued to offer maximum resistance to his captors until released in 1973.

MOH awarded March 4, 1976.



CAPT. MERYLN H. DETHLEFSEN

On March 10, 1967, four F-105 Wild Weasels led a strike force against the heavily defended Thai Nguyen iron works near Hanoi. The Weasel leader was shot down and a second Weasel departed with battle damage. Despite severe damage to his own aircraft, Dethlefsen led the remaining two Weasels in pass after pass to take out the SAMs.

MOH awarded Feb. 1, 1968.



MAJ. BERNARD F. FISHER

On March 10, 1966, Fisher and Maj. Dafford W. "Jump" Myers were flying Air Commando A-1Es in support of Special Forces under attack in the A Chau Valley of Vietnam. Myers was shot down and landed in flames on the airfield. Fisher ran the gauntlet of enemy artillery that ringed the valley, landed, taxied through burning debris, picked up Myers, and flew out with 19 bullet holes in his airplane.

MOH awarded Jan. 19, 1967.



1ST LT. JAMES P. FLEMING

On Nov. 26, 1968, five UH-1 Hueys—three of them transports and two armed as gunships—responded to an emergency call for help from Green Berets in the South Vietnamese highlands. One gunship was shot down. Fleming, supported by the remaining gunship and flying a helicopter never designed for rescue work, went in through heavy ground fire and brought out the soldiers without a single casualty.

MOH awarded May 14, 1970.





LT. COL. JOE M. JACKSON

On May 12, 1968, three combat controllers were left behind as airlifters evacuated 1,500 soldiers from a camp in South Vietnam. The enemy was closing in, and one rescue attempt had failed. Jackson put his C-123 into a wrenching, high-speed, full-flaps dive, landed amid smoke and explosions, and brought the stranded airmen out through heavy mortar fire.

MOH awarded Jan. 16, 1969.



COL. WILLIAM A. JONES III

On Sept. 1, 1968, to find a pilot down in North Vietnam, Jones took heavy battle damage when he attacked guns that were blocking the rescue attempt. His aircraft was badly shot up, the cockpit canopy blown away, and Jones was severely burned. Unable to use his radio, he declined to bail out and returned to base where he refused medical care until he reported the exact position of the downed pilot, who was subsequently rescued.

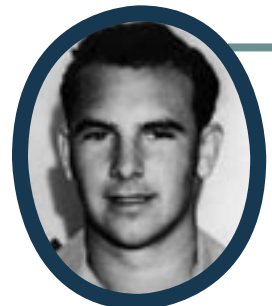
MOH awarded Aug. 6, 1970.



A1C JOHN L. LEVITOW

On Feb. 24, 1969, Levitow was loadmaster on an AC-47, suppressing a mortar attack on Long Binh Army Base. A mortar shell riddled the fuselage with shrapnel. Levitow and another airman dropping magnesium illumination flares from the open cargo door were knocked down. A live flare fell inside the airplane, spewing toxic smoke, and was seconds away from exploding. Levitow threw himself on the flare, crawled to the door, and tossed it outside, where it exploded. Levitow lived, but he had more than 40 shrapnel wounds.

MOH awarded May 14, 1970.



A1C WILLIAM H. PITSENBARGER

On April 11, 1966, Pitsenbarger, a pararescue jumper, descended from an HH-43 helicopter into the jungle near Bien Hoa to help US soldiers wounded in an intense firefight. As casualties increased, he passed up a chance to get out. He exposed himself to enemy fire at least three times, distributing ammunition and pulling soldiers to safer positions before he was killed.

MOH awarded posthumously, Dec. 8, 2000.

CAPT. LANCE P. SIJAN

Sijan was severely injured Nov. 9, 1967, when his F-4C was blown out of the air on a night mission over Laos. He parachuted into trees on a mountain slope. Despite his injuries and lack of any real food, he evaded capture for more than six weeks. Caught, he escaped again, but was recaptured and tortured. While a POW, he contracted pneumonia and died.

MOH awarded posthumously, March 4, 1976.



MAJ. LEO K. THORSNESS

On one incredible mission, April 19, 1967, F-105 leader Thorsness destroyed two SAM sites, shot down a MiG-17, refueled, escorted the search for a downed aircrew, and attacked four MiG-17s, drawing them away from the location of the crew on the ground. *MOH awarded Oct. 15, 1973* — after Thorsness, shot down on a subsequent mission, returned from almost six years as a POW.



CAPT. HILLIARD A. WILBANKS

On Feb. 24, 1967, Wilbanks in an unarmed O-1, flying a forward air control mission in support of South Vietnamese Rangers, discovered a Viet Cong battalion waiting in ambush. He dived on them three times, shooting out his side window with an M-16 rifle, diverting the attack and drawing the VC fire toward himself. He was severely wounded, crashed, and died before the rescue team could get him home.

MOH awarded posthumously, Jan. 24, 1968.



CAPT. GERALD O. YOUNG

On Nov. 9, 1967— with two helicopters already lost in a rescue operation in Laos—Young managed to land, but his HH-3E was shot down on takeoff and burst into flames. Young pulled one survivor from the wreckage and hid him. Realizing the enemy intended to use them as bait to draw in another helicopter, Young led the pursuers on a 17-hour chase through the brush before rescuers got him out.

MOH awarded May 14, 1968.



MILESTONES FROM THE FIRST 60 YEARS





B-36

Intercontinental Bomber

In the early years of the Cold War, the pre-eminent weapon was the heavy bomber. It was the only means of delivering nuclear weapons, which were central to US defense strategy. The bomber—and the Air Force—had become the nation's first line of defense.

The B-29 was the best of the heavy bombers left over from World War II, but it had limited range. The solution was the B-36, the first bomber able to fly for intercontinental distances. It could cover nearly all of the target complexes in the Soviet Union from bases in North America.

It was an enormous airplane, the largest bomber ever built, popularly known as the “Magnesium Overcast.” The B-29 looked small beside it, and the B-36's wingspan was almost 50 percent longer than that of its successor, the B-52. A group commander compared the B-36 experience to “sitting on your front porch and flying your house around.”

The B-36 was powered by six piston engines and four turbojets (“six turning

and four burning”). The propellers, 19 feet in diameter, had to be geared down to turn slower than the engines to keep the propeller tips from going supersonic.

The Navy, accustomed to dominating the defense budget, orchestrated a no-holds-barred propaganda campaign against the B-36 in an attempt to seize the strategic power projection mission for a proposed Navy supercarrier. The attack failed, partly because of the weakness of the Navy's argument and partly because of the underhanded tactics with which the campaign was waged.

The B-36D—the model that added the turbojets—had a top speed of 435 mph, a ceiling of 50,000 feet, and a range of 12,000 miles. More than a third of the B-36s produced were reconnaissance models, designated RB-36s, and were a mainstay of early aerial photoreconnaissance.

Until the Air Force fielded all-jet bombers in the 1950s, the B-36 was the primary platform for delivery of the atomic bomb. The big airplane was never used in combat.

USAF received the first operational B-36. June 26, 1948.

F-86



Matchup in MiG Alley

The Korean War began in June 1950 when the North Korean Army surged southward across the 38th parallel. A counteroffensive by UN forces, supported by airpower, drove the enemy back across the border in September. The initiative shifted again in November, when communist China sent 260,000 combat troops into the war and Russian MiG-15s with Chinese markings appeared south of the Yalu River. The North Koreans and Chinese pushed the UN forces into retreat.

The MiGs took a punishing toll on B-29 bombers and other US aircraft. American F-51 and F-80C fighters were outclassed, although an F-80 did shoot down a MiG-15 in November in history's first all-jet aerial combat.

MiG dominance came to an abrupt end with the arrival of the swept-wing US F-86 Sabre. The F-86s ran their first fighter sweep along the Yalu in the area known as "MiG Alley" on Dec. 17, 1950, shooting down the first of many MiG-15s that would fall to their guns.

It was a matchup of two classic airplanes. The MiG-15 could climb faster and fly higher, but the Sabre was more maneuverable, better in the dive, and a better gun platform. The MiG had heavier ordnance, 23 mm and 37 mm cannons, but fired too slowly for maximum effect against fast-moving jets. The F-86 had six .50 caliber machine guns and packed many more rounds of ammunition. Toward the end of the war, F model Sabres were equipped with 20 mm cannons.

The F-86s soon established air superiority, allowing UN strike aircraft and ground forces to destroy much of the North Korean invasion force. By end of the war in 1953, the F-86s had run up a 10-to-one victory ratio, shooting down 792 MiGs while losing only 78 Sabres. It was learned later that some of the MiGs in Korea had been flown by Russian pilots, but the Sabre pilots were better. The F-86 was a great fighter, but its success in Korea was largely attributable to the quality of its pilots.

F-86s conducted their first sweep along the Yalu. Dec. 17, 1950.

KC-135



The Stratotanker

Early aviators understood the advantage of refueling their airplanes in the air, but the technology of the day did not permit them to go beyond experiments and demonstrations. In 1921, stunt pilot Wesley May leapt from the wing of a Lincoln Standard biplane to the wing skid of a Curtiss Jenny with a five-gallon gasoline can strapped to his back. In 1929, *Question Mark*, a Fokker C-2, stayed aloft for more than six days, refueled from a weighted hose dropped through the floor of a C-1 biplane.

In 1949, an Air Force B-50 bomber, *Lucky Lady II*, took off from its home base in Texas, flew nonstop around the world, refueled in flight from a KB-29, and landed again at its home base. Aerial refueling reached its maturity with another variant of the B-29, the KC-97, introduced in 1950.

The tanker that took the Air Force the distance in the Cold War—and that is still in use today—was the KC-135, which became operational in 1957. Both the

KC-135 and the Boeing 707 airliner were developed from the Boeing “Dash 80” prototype, one of the most successful airframes of all time.

The KC-135 uses the “flying boom” method of refueling. The fuel is conveyed by a long boom, extended from the rear of the aircraft and operated by a “boomer,” who steers it into position to a receptacle on the aircraft to be refueled. KC-97s and KC-10s also used the flying boom. Navy aircraft use the “probe and drogue” method in which the pilot flies the aircraft into a basket trailed by the tanker.

During the Cold War years, mission No. 1 for Air Force tankers was to refuel strategic bombers. Nevertheless, Strategic Air Command tankers flew daily sorties in support of fighter aircraft in Vietnam and in Gulf War I.

Today, 50 years after it entered service, the KC-135 remains the cornerstone of the Air Force’s capability for air mobility.

USAF received the first production model KC-135 tanker. June 28, 1957.

F-106



Classic Interceptor

Air Defense Command was created in 1946 but was then disestablished in the budget cuts that followed World War II. It was restored to its full former status in the 1950s after the Russians fielded long-range bombers and thermonuclear weapons.

Aircrews sat alert in improvised interceptors—F-89s, F-94s, and F-86Ds—variants of subsonic fighter aircraft. In the absence of a defensive radar network—the Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line would not be finished until 1957—Ground Observer Corps volunteers maintained a round-the-clock skywatch.

The Air Force urgently needed a supersonic all-weather interceptor. An all-out development program called the “1954 Interceptor” led to the F-102 Delta Dagger. It was supersonic, but just barely, with a top speed of 810 mph, or about Mach 1.1. Its range was 1,000 miles.

The F-102A, the “Deuce,” entered service with ADC in 1956. Although it was regarded as an interim interceptor, the Air Force eventually fielded more than 25

squadrons. Other aircraft, notably the F-104 and the F-101, were brought in to augment the interceptor force.

The ultimate interceptor was the F-106 Delta Dart, which joined the force in 1959. It evolved from the F-102, but the differences were so extensive that its original designation, F-102B, was scrapped. The “Six” could hit 1,525 mph and had a range of 1,500 miles. Teamed up with the computer-controlled Semiautomatic Ground Environment (SAGE) system of command and control centers, the F-106 was superb.

Although the F-106 is acknowledged as the classic interceptor, only 340 were built, far fewer than the number of F-102s. Soviet ICBMs had replaced nuclear bombers as the main strategic threat. The F-106 was the best interceptor in the fleet until the F-15 began replacing it in the 1970s, but even then, the Six continued to find work almost to the end of the Cold War. The final alert tour for the F-106 was with the New Jersey Air National Guard on July 7, 1988.

The F-106 became operational with Air Defense Command. Oct. 31, 1959.



Return of the Air Commandos

In 1961, President Kennedy directed the US armed forces to develop counterinsurgency capabilities. This was partly a response to guerilla conflicts in Southeast Asia and partly because the Soviet Union had declared its intention to support “Wars of National Liberation.”

The Air Force activated a “Jungle Jim” combat crew training squadron at Hurlburt Field, Fla., resuming the tradition of the 1st Air Commando Group in Burma in World War II. In Operation Farmgate, Hurlburt sent a detachment to Bien Hoa, South Vietnam, ostensibly to train the South Vietnamese. Counterinsurgency evolved into low intensity conflict, and the Farmgate contingent folded into the 1st Air Commando Squadron.

Air commandos—later called special operations forces—played a strong role in the Vietnam War. They flew propeller-driven airplanes from small airstrips and out of the way places in close air support, rescue, resupply, and other missions. They trained and worked with indigenous forces. Their gunships and

light bombers interdicted enemy lines of communication. Some air commando traditions, such as bush hats, spread to other kinds of forces as well, although the rest of the force was not always comfortable with the air commandos and their unconventional ways of doing things.

The air commandos flew a rich mixture of vintage airplanes, such as T-28 and A-1 fighters and A-26 bombers, whose slower speeds allowed long loiter time and great accuracy, especially in areas where enemy air defenses were thin. Operating from forward bases in Thailand, they were especially effective in the “secret war” in Laos and in air strikes on the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

Light air commando transports such as the C-123 worked remote airstrips where larger airplanes could not go. The AC-47, AC-119, and AC-130 gunships were among the most lethal strike aircraft of the war.

Of the 13 Air Force Medals of Honor awarded in the Vietnam War, five went to airmen from the air commandos and USAF special operations forces.

1st Air Commando Squadron was activated at Bien Hoa, South Vietnam. June 17, 1963.

McDonnell photo via Robert F. Dorr

F-4



US Air Force photo via Robert F. Dorr



The MiG Sweep

In the fall of 1966, MiG interceptors stepped up their attacks on F-105 fighter-bombers headed for targets in North Vietnam. When the MiGs bounced them, the Thuds, loaded down with bombs and flying at low level, were forced to jettison their ordnance prematurely. That accomplished, the MiGs typically withdrew and returned to their home bases, secure in the knowledge that US aircraft were forbidden to strike them there.

Seventh Air Force in Saigon ordered a fighter sweep over North Vietnam to curtail the MiG attacks and assigned Col. Robin Olds and the 8th Tactical Fighter Wing "Wolfpack" at Ubon AB, Thailand, to lead the charge.

The MiG sweep, dubbed Operation Bolo, was to be a classic deception. The MiGs would be induced to attack, expecting bomb-laden F-105s but finding instead F-4 Phantoms configured for aerial combat. The F-4 was the best fighter in Southeast Asia. It could handle anything in the North Vietnamese lineup, including the MiG-21. (The North Vietnamese inventory included 15 MiG-21s and 96 older MiGs.)

On Jan. 2, 1967, the Bolo task force entered North Vietnam, imitating F-105 routes, speeds, altitudes, and radio chatter. For the first time, the F-4s employed electronic countermeasures (ECM) pods, previously used only by F-105s. To the watching North Vietnamese, it appeared to be a regular Thud strike flight, open to attack.

The deception worked and went off almost exactly as planned. When the MiGs bore down on them, the F-4s dropped their guise and engaged with Sidewinder and Sparrow missiles. In a 12-minute high-speed battle, the Wolfpack shot down seven MiG-21s, almost half the total number that North Vietnam had. They would have gotten more, except for the bad weather. Some of the MiGs escaped into the overcast, and the cloud cover made it impossible for the F-4s to block the MiGs from getting back to their bases where they were safe from further attack.

No US aircraft were lost in the MiG Sweep.

The Wolfpack shot down seven MiGs in 12 minutes. Jan. 2, 1967.



HH-3

Jolly Green Giant

One of the great success stories of the Vietnam War was combat search and rescue. Chances were good that a pilot shot down behind enemy lines would be picked up and brought out.

Air Rescue Service—later Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service—was credited with saving 2,511 aircrew members and 1,372 others during the war. Of the aircrew rescues, 739 were in Laos, 176 were in North Vietnam, and 1,596 were in South Vietnam. That record was all the more impressive because the Air Force entered the Vietnam War with extremely limited rescue capability.

Initially, rescue detachments used the HH-43F Huskie, a utility helicopter universally known as “Pedro,” designed for fire and crash work around air bases. It was slow, unarmed, and had a short operating range. Nevertheless, Pedro accounted for more saves than any other rescue helicopter in the war.

The HH-3E, most famous of the rescue helicopters and called the “Jolly Green

Giant” because of its green and brown camouflage, arrived in 1965. The Jolly Green was built for missions deep in North Vietnam. It had a range of 736 miles, could be refueled in flight, and could carry up to 15 wounded in litters. It had two 7.62 mm machine guns to aid in its own defense.

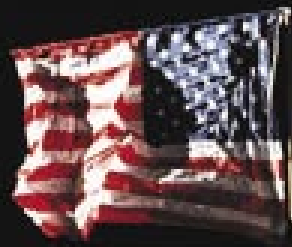
The ultimate rescue helicopter in Vietnam was the HH-53C Super Jolly, almost twice the size of the HH-3, faster, better armed, and with longer range and able to carry more people. It entered service in 1967. The other services also flew some rescue missions, as did the CIA’s proprietary airline, Air America.

The conspicuous heroes of ARRS were the pararescue jumpers, or PJs, airmen trained not only in rescue but also in survival skills, hand-to-hand combat, and as medics. They went down on jungle penetrators attached to long cables to bring out the wounded. PJs received more decorations for bravery than any other airmen in the war.

First HH-3Es in Southeast Asia arrived at Udorn. Nov. 10, 1965.

Aldrin on the Moon

NASA photo



X-15
NASA photo



Gus Grissom
NASA photo

Air Force Astronauts

The Air Force took an early interest in manned spaceflight, joining with NASA in the development and testing of the X-15 rocket plane that flew to the edge of space. The Air Force also pursued such programs as the X-20 "Dyna-Soar" space plane and the Manned Orbiting Laboratory.

Under the eventual division of responsibilities, the Air Force concentrated on space launch and operation of satellites while NASA led in manned spaceflight. In the beginning, however, the astronauts were military test pilots, and three of the seven Project Mercury astronauts were Air Force officers.

- Capt. Virgil I. "Gus" Grissom was the first Air Force astronaut in space aboard Liberty Bell 7, July 21, 1961.
- Air Force Maj. Edward H. White II was the first American to walk in space, June 4, 1965.
- On Gemini 6, Dec. 15, 1965, Air Force Maj. Thomas P. Stafford and Navy Capt. Walter Schirra made the first rendezvous in space, with the already orbiting Gemini 7.

- Apollo 11 commander Neil A. Armstrong and Air Force Col. Edwin E. "Buzz" Aldrin were the first to walk on the moon, July 20, 1969.
- Air Force Lt. Col. Guion S. Bluford Jr. was the first African-American astronaut in space, Aug. 30, 1983.
- Air Force Lt. Col. Eileen M. Collins was the first woman to pilot a US spacecraft (in 1995) and the first woman to command a space shuttle, July 23-27, 1999.

Military pilots who have flown in space are awarded astronaut wings by their services. Also eligible are pilots who have flown aircraft to altitudes greater than 50 miles, which qualified five Air Force X-15 pilots for astronaut wings.

Transition to the space shuttle opened the astronaut program to non-pilots, although pilots still tend to be favored, even for non-pilot jobs. Of the current 108 astronauts, 67 are military and 41 are civilian. Twenty-three of them are from the Air Force and one is from the Air Force Reserve. Sixty-seven former astronauts were Air Force officers.

Armstrong and Aldrin walked on the moon. July 20, 1969.

Minuteman III



ICBMs and Deterrence

The intercontinental ballistic missile fundamentally changed the threat and character of the Cold War. It could travel thousands of miles and deliver a warhead on target in minutes. There was no defense against it. From the early 1960s on, it was the key weapon in the nuclear arsenals of both the Soviet Union and the United States.

By 1962, the Air Force had fielded three operational ICBMs, the liquid-fuel Atlas and Titan and the solid-fuel Minuteman I. In 1964, the number of ICBMs on alert in Strategic Air Command pulled even with the number of bombers on alert, then moved ahead and stayed ahead.

The centerpiece of the US missile fleet was Minuteman III, which carried three independently targetable warheads. The first squadron achieved operational status at Minot AFB, N.D., in December 1970.

The Soviet Union built its ICBM force relentlessly and by the 1970s had achieved a dominant position that put even Minuteman III at risk. The United States, bound

by political constraints, did not seek to overcome the Soviet advantage, relying instead on the diversity of its strategic triad—bombers and land- and sea-based ballistic missiles—to confound Soviet targeting options. (For example, if the Soviets attacked Minuteman with their ICBMs, the only weapons that could do the job, the US bomber force had enough warning to launch a counterstrike. Flight time of the Soviet sea-based missiles was short enough to catch a significant number of bombers, but that gave warning time to the ICBMs.)

The United States did not field a new ICBM until 1986, near the end of the Cold War, when it deployed 50 Peacekeepers in converted Minuteman silos as a temporary measure. The last of the Peacekeepers was deactivated in 2005.

Today, as during the Cold War, the United States relies on Minuteman III, the only ICBM still in service. Of the currently 500 operational missiles, 150 are armed with a single warhead each, and the other 350 carry up to three each.

Minuteman III went operational. Dec. 30, 1970.



The Airlift That Saved Israel

The United States is unique among the nations of the world in that its air mobility forces enable it to rapidly project power on a global scale. More than once, these forces have made it possible to gain strategic objectives by nonlethal military means.

The Berlin Airlift in 1948-49 resupplied the beleaguered city by air for 15 months and broke the blockade imposed on surface vehicles by the Soviet Union. US airlifters flew three-fourths of the missions.

Dramatic results were similarly achieved by a larger airlift conducted over greater distances in 1973. The Arab states of the Middle East, massively equipped and supplied by the Soviet Union, attacked Israel on Yom Kippur, the holiest of Jewish religious holidays. Israel, sustaining huge losses in equipment and ammunition, was soon at the brink of defeat.

The United States agreed to resupply Israel in an operation called "Nickel Grass." The task was made more difficult because US allies in Europe, fearing Arab reprisals, would not give Military Airlift Command permission to land or

overfly their territory. The only exception was Portugal, which permitted use of Lajes Air Base for midway staging.

On Oct. 14, 1973, the first American C-5 landed at Lod International Airport in Tel Aviv. Other airlifters followed, bringing tanks, helicopters, aircraft components, ammunition, and war materiel of all kinds. From various US bases, it was an average of 3,297 miles to Lajes, where fresh crews took over for the remaining 3,163 miles into Lod.

C-141 airlifters flew 421 of the Nickel Grass missions and C-5s flew 145. However, the larger C-5s delivered 48 percent of the tonnage and all of the outside cargo. It was, among other things, vindication for the C-5, which had been unfairly tagged by critics and commentators as a bad airplane.

Replenished, the Israelis resumed a high rate of fire, threw their reserves into the fight, and rolled the Arab forces back. The Yom Kippur War ended shortly thereafter in a cease-fire. *Reader's Digest* called Operation Nickel Grass "The Airlift That Saved Israel."

Operation Nickel Grass. Oct. 14-Nov. 14, 1973.



Showdown in Europe

In 1977, when detente was supposedly in full bloom, the Soviet Union began deploying mobile SS-20 intermediate-range missiles in Europe. The new missiles posed two kinds of danger. The nuclear warheads could reach all the capitals of NATO Europe within five minutes, and because the SS-20s were targeted on Europe alone, they separated the defense of Europe from the defense of the United States. The Europeans feared that this might “decouple” NATO from the extended deterrence of the US strategic nuclear arsenal.

The Soviets refused to withdraw the SS-20s, which carried three independently targeted nuclear warheads and had a range of 2,700 miles, and they rejected the “zero option,” a US proposal that both sides forego medium-range missiles worldwide. In 1982, NATO began the counterdeployment of US intermediate-range missiles, the Army Pershing II missile and the Air Force’s Ground Launched Cruise Missile. The European peace movement, which had not objected to the SS-20s, arose in full cry to protest the presence of the US missiles.

The Pershing II, based in West Germany, had a range of 650 miles. GLCM, more numerous and with a range of 1,500 miles, was first based at RAF Greenham Common in Great Britain, then in Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, and West Germany. GLCM was towed about the countryside on a trailer that carried four missiles.

GLCM was a modified version of the Navy’s Tomahawk sea-launched cruise missile. After it blasted out of the launch tube, its wings and control fins snapped into place. It overflew friendly territory at high altitude, dropped down to 50 feet as it approached the target, and homed in with its terrain-following guidance system.

NATO’s firmness in countering the deployment of the SS-20s led eventually to the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty in 1987, which eliminated all nuclear missiles with ranges of 300 miles to 3,400 miles—which is what NATO and the United States had wanted in the first place.

USAF photo/TSgt. Michael Haggerty

SR-71



Eyes and Ears in Air and Space

The SR-71, the fastest airplane ever built, could literally outrun a speeding bullet. It entered Air Force service in 1966, a product of the legendary Lockheed Skunk Works, which had earlier developed the SR-71's predecessor, the U-2.

The SR-71's mission was high-altitude reconnaissance in hostile airspace, a role at which it was unsurpassed. It could operate at a speed of Mach 3.3 at an altitude of more than 16 miles. As the SR-71 sped along, its titanium skin heated up to 1,000 degrees Fahrenheit. The heat expanded the airplane to nine inches longer than it was when on the ground.

The aircraft was popularly known as the Blackbird, but those who flew and maintained it called it "Habu," after Okinawa's hooded viper it was said to resemble. There was another anomaly about its name: It originally was to be the RS-71, but in announcing its existence, President Johnson called it the SR-71, and the official designation was adjusted to fit the transposition.

Reconnaissance satellites did not completely replace the SR-71 or the U-2 (which also continued flying in an upgraded mode). The capability to respond quickly to changing requirements kept the Blackbird busy. When the Air Force retired it from the fleet in 1990, it was because of cost, not a decrease in demand for its services.

One of the retired SR-71s was flown from California to Washington, D.C., on March 6, 1990 for transfer to the National Air and Space Museum. Along the way, it set a speed record, averaging 2,124 mph. This aircraft is now on display at the museum's Udvar-Hazy Center adjacent to Dulles International Airport in Northern Virginia.

At the insistence of Congress, the Air Force brought the SR-71 back into limited service in 1995. It began flying missions in 1997 but was retired again, permanently this time, in 1999.

SR-71 averaged 2,124 mph from Los Angeles to Washington. March 6, 1990.

F-117



Opening Night in the Gulf

In the early morning hours of Jan. 17, 1991, hundreds of coalition aircraft streaked across the Iraqi border and struck targets all over Iraq. By daybreak, Iraq's command and control network no longer existed. Within days, the Iraqi Air Force, once the world's sixth largest, was out of business.

Operation Desert Storm introduced "parallel warfare," in which the enemy is hit everywhere at once, making it virtually impossible for him to adjust, adapt, or mount a counteroffensive. In Gulf War I, the coalition attacked 150 separate targets the first day. The Iraqi armed forces never recovered from the initial blow.

The coalition put more than 650 aircraft into the operation the first night. Of these, 530 were from the US Air Force. In addition, US naval vessels launched 116 Tomahawk cruise missiles against Iraqi strong points. Among the aircraft in prominent roles on opening night were one of the Air Force's oldest and one of the newest.

US airmen in Saudi Arabia were monitoring the live television report from

Baghdad. At 3:11 a.m., shortly after H-Hour, they saw CNN suddenly go off the air. They knew that the F-117s had knocked out the telecommunications center that was the core of Iraqi command and control.

The F-117A Nighthawk, the world's first operational stealth aircraft, had made a brief appearance in Operation Just Cause in Panama in 1989, but it was the first Gulf War that showcased its capabilities. The F-117 flew more than a third of the bombing runs on the first day. It was the only aircraft to strike targets in downtown Baghdad. Only 36 Nighthawks were deployed, but they accounted for more than 40 percent of the strategic targets attacked in the war.

The B-52 bomber, in its fifth decade of service, was another standout. On opening night, B-52s took off from Barksdale AFB, La., and conducted attacks in Iraq, flying 35 hours before landing again at Barksdale. They delivered 32 percent of the bomb tonnage of the war, and B-52s were the aircraft that the enemy forces feared most.

Operation Desert Storm began. Jan. 17, 1991.

USAF photo/MSgt. Val Gempis

B-2



Stealth in the Balkans

Few airplanes in history have been subjected to the kind of abuse and ridicule that was focused on the B-2 bomber. Critics attacked it as a flawed development, as too costly, and as a Cold War relic. News media reports suggested that the B-2's stealth coating would melt in the rain. The program was cut from 132 aircraft to 21 and even that number was challenged.

The critics fell silent, however, when the B-2 made its combat debut in Operation Allied Force, the air war over Serbia in 1999. B-2s from Whiteman AFB, Mo., struck in Yugoslavia night after night, 30-hour round trip missions in all kinds of weather.

- Each B-2 sortie struck 16 different targets, a task that would have required thousands of B-17s in World War II.
- The B-2s achieved an accuracy rate of 84 percent, meaning they destroyed or damaged more than 80 percent of the targets on the first pass.

- During the campaign, not a single B-2 mission started late and only one airplane aborted with an in-flight mechanical problem. It landed, was repaired, and was ready to go again in 15 minutes.
- A single B-2 destroyed two airfields on the same mission.
- Most of the bombs dropped by the B-2s were bull's eyes, and the rest fell only a short distance beyond.

The weapon employed by the B-2 was amazingly inexpensive. It was the Joint Direct Attack Munition, which consisted of a low-cost tail kit—in effect, a bolt-on tail section—that converted an unguided gravity bomb into a smart weapon. Keying on a signal from a Global Positioning System satellite in space, the B-2s were able to aim precisely at targets, even if they were obscured by clouds.

B-2s flew less than one percent of the total sorties in Operation Allied Force, but accounted for more than half of all the targets struck.

B-2 flew its first combat mission. March 24, 1999.



Predator

USAF photo/TSgt. Rob Jensen

Unmanned and Unafraid

It looked like a novelty at first: a little airplane with no windscreen, a big hump in front, a pusher propeller in back, 27 feet long, a cruising speed of 85 mph, and flown by remote control.

However, it soon became clear that the unmanned MQ-1 Predator was a serious combat aircraft. By the time it reached initial operational capability in 2005, it had already taken part in three conflicts. Its services are in high demand wherever US forces are deployed for military operations.

Predator made its debut in Bosnia in 1995 as a reconnaissance drone. It was not used extensively, but the results were impressive. It also flew in Operation Allied Force in Kosovo in 1999.

In Afghanistan in 2001, Predator came into its own. Earlier that year, the Air Force hung lightweight Hellfire-C laser guided missiles under the wings of the little drone, which then made three successful attacks on a tank target at the Nellis Air Force Base range in Nevada. Its primary mission was changed to

interdiction and armed reconnaissance. It has been successfully used to attack targets in Afghanistan, Yemen, and Iraq.

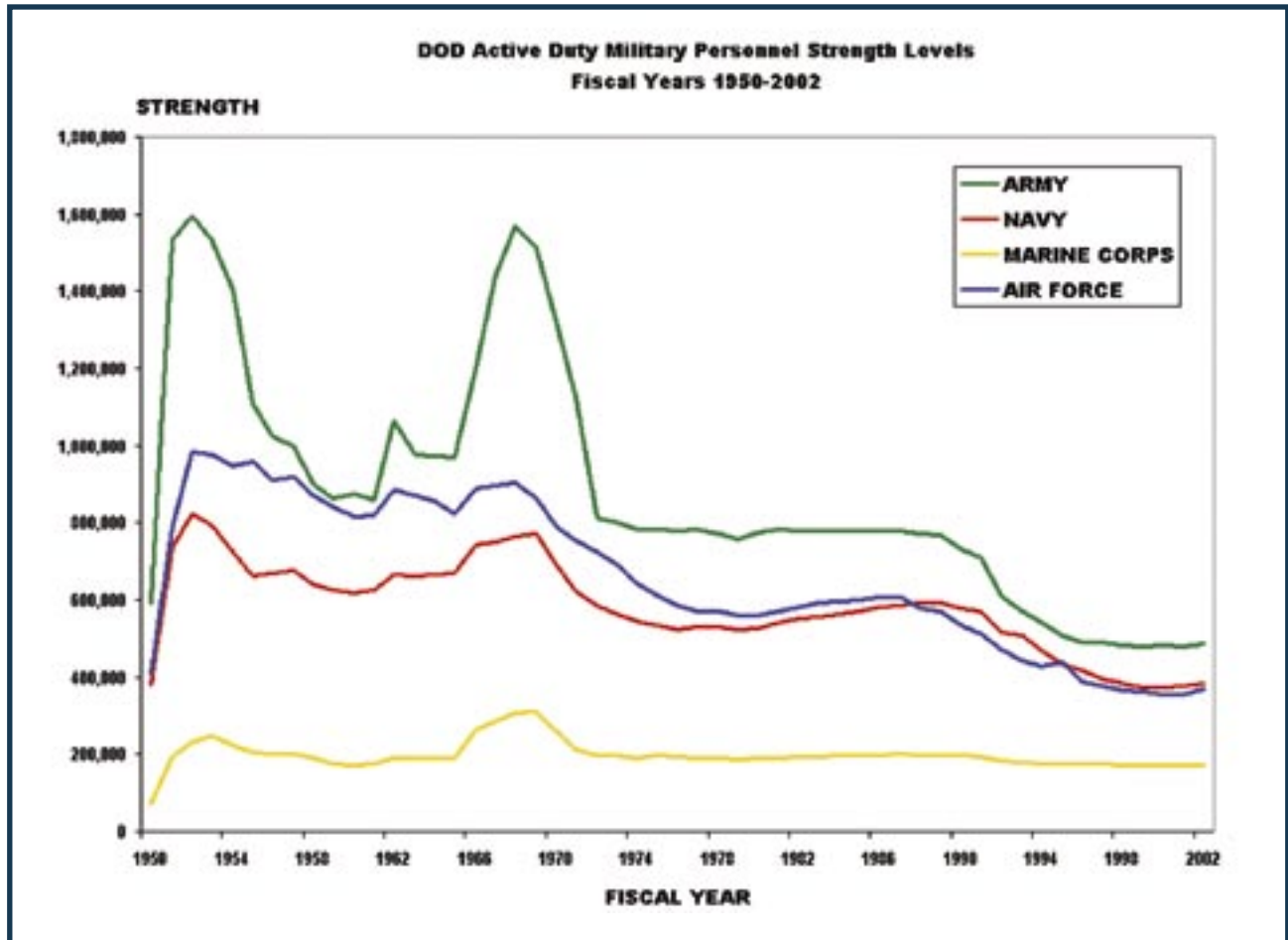
Predator is flown by rated pilots in control stations on the ground. They fly Predator via data link and by means of a stick, pedals, throttle, and keyboard. When on patrol orbit, the aircraft normally uses a preprogrammed flight path, but the pilot can retake command at any time.

Predator also has a big brother, USAF's Global Hawk, a long-endurance reconnaissance aircraft about the size of a business jet. In 2001, it flew nonstop, unrefueled, and unpiloted, from California to a precision landing in Australia.

Unmanned aircraft like Predator and Global Hawk have three big advantages: They don't get tired, they don't get bored, and they are fearless. In the 2001 defense bill, Congress said that within 10 years, one-third of all US deep-strike aircraft will be unmanned. If so, Predator will have served with distinction as the pioneer.

Predator officially reached initial operational capability. March 25, 2005.

THE DATA FILE



The post-World War II strength of the armed services peaked during the Korean War. There was an uptick for the Vietnam War, but the size of the forces has been declining ever since. The Air Force is now smaller than the Army and Navy and its end strength is projected to diminish further.

Source: DOD

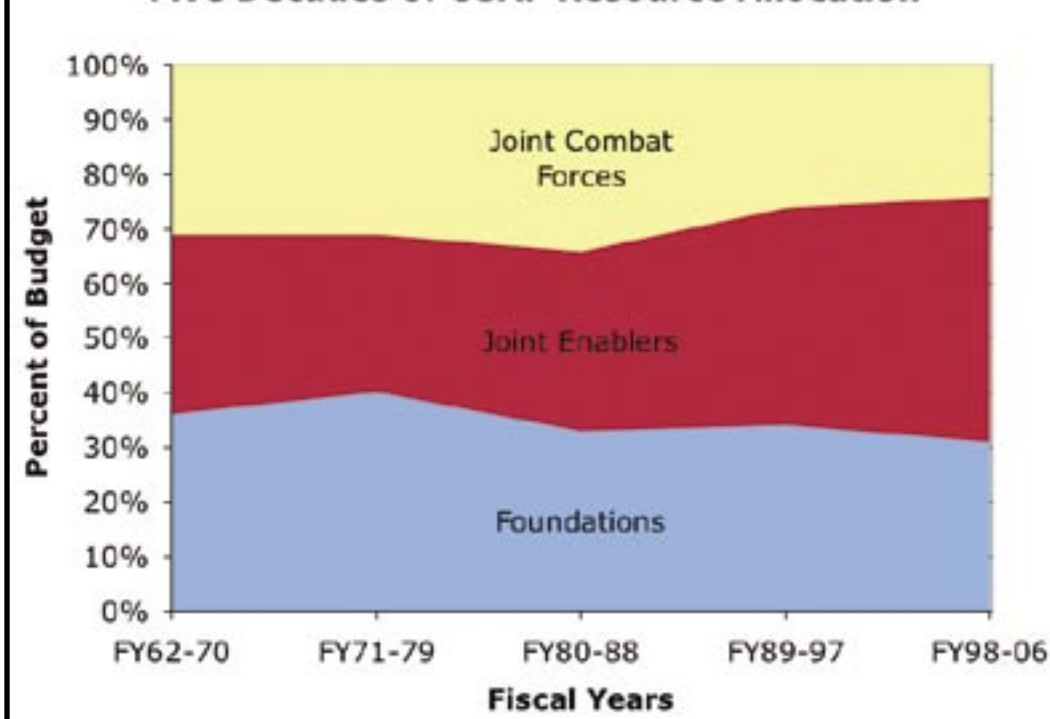
USAF MONTHLY OFFICER BASE PAY, 1947

Grade	<3 years	3 years	6 years	9 years	12 years	15 years	18 years	21 years	24 years	27 years	30 years
O-8, 9, 10	\$733.33	\$733.33	\$733.33	\$733.33	\$733.33	\$733.33	\$733.33	\$733.33	\$733.33	\$733.33	\$733.33
O-7	550.00	550.00	550.00	550.00	550.00	550.00	550.00	550.00	550.00	550.00	550.00
O-6	366.67	385.00	403.33	421.67	440.00	458.33	476.67	495.00	513.33	531.67	550.00
O-5	320.83	336.88	352.92	368.98	385.00	401.04	417.08	433.13	449.17	465.21	550.00
O-4	275.00	288.75	302.50	316.25	330.00	343.75	357.50	371.25	449.17	465.21	481.25
O-3	230.00	241.50	253.00	264.50	276.00	287.50	357.50	371.25	385.00	398.75	412.50
O-2	200.00	210.00	220.00	230.00	240.00	250.00	299.00	310.00	322.00	333.50	345.00
O-1	180.00	189.00	220.00	230.00	240.00	250.00	260.00	270.00	280.00	290.00	300.00

USAF MONTHLY ENLISTED BASE PAY, 1947

Grade	<3 years	3 years	6 years	9 years	12 years	15 years	18 years	21 years	24 years	27 years	30 years
MSgt.	\$165.00	173.25	181.50	189.75	198.00	206.25	214.50	222.75	231.00	239.25	247.50
TSgt.	135.00	141.75	148.50	155.25	162.00	168.75	175.50	182.25	189.00	195.75	202.50
SSgt.	115.00	120.75	126.50	132.25	138.00	143.75	149.50	155.25	161.00	166.75	172.50
Cpl.	90.00	94.50	99.00	103.50	108.00	112.50	117.00	121.50	126.00	130.50	135.00
PFC	80.00	84.00	88.00	92.00	96.00	100.00	104.00	108.00	112.00	116.00	120.00
Pvt.	75.00	78.75	82.50	86.25	90.00	93.75	97.50	101.25	105.00	108.75	112.50

Five Decades of USAF Resource Allocation



Joint Combat Forces: fighters, bombers, special operations, ICBMs, and munitions.

Joint Enablers: airlifters, tankers, air breathing C2ISR, and space C2ISR.

Foundations: base operating, headquarters, and other support; environmental programs; maintenance; test and training; health care.

The Air Force spends less of its total budget on combat forces than it once did—down from 31 percent of total obligational authority in 1962 to 24 percent today. The budget share for “foundations” (support functions, such as training, maintenance, base operating support, health care, etc.) is also down, from 36 percent to 31 percent. The increase in force allocation has been for “enablers” to support the joint force—airlift, refueling, and C4ISR (command, control, communications, computers, and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance)—up from 33 percent to 45 percent.

Source: USAF Strategic Planning Directorate

THE RATED FORCE GOES DOWN

Year	Active Duty Aircraft	Total Air Force Officers	Pilots		Navigators		Rated Officers	
			Number of Pilots	Percent of Total Officers	Number of Navs	Percent of Total Officers	Number of Rated Officers	Percent of Total Officers
1944	78,757	342,914	132,477	38.63	24,991	7.29	157,468	45.92
1956	24,949	141,296	56,847	40.23	n/a		n/a	
1978	7,121	95,242	20,029	21.03	9,550	10.03	29,579	31.06
1986	7,245	109,048	22,283	20.43	9,291	8.52	31,574	28.95
2000	6,205	69,023	11,800	17.09	4,437	6.43	16,237	23.52

The number of Air Force aircraft and the number of officers with aeronautical ratings—pilots and navigators—has been declining for years. During World War II, almost 46 percent of the officers wore wings. By the turn of the century, it was about 24 percent. In the 1950s, pilots accounted for more than 40 percent of the officer force. By 2000, they were 17 percent.

US ARMY AIR FORCES AIRCRAFT INVENTORY, JUNE 30, 1947

Type	Number
Very heavy bombers	2,983
Heavy bombers	657
Medium bombers	1,474
Light bombers	1678
Fighters	6,427
Reconnaissance	636
Transports	3,796
Trainers	6,047
Liaison aircraft	1,390
Total	25,088

The number of aircraft in 1947 is large compared with today, when the Air Force fleet consists of about 6,000 aircraft, but it was a precipitous drop from June 1945, when the Army Air Forces had 68,400 aircraft.

HALFWAY THROUGH: THE FORCE AT 30 YEARS, THEN & NOW

Personnel Strength		
	FY 1977	FY 2005
Active Duty	570,000	353,696
Civilian Employees	255,000	164,165
Ready Reserve (Including Air National Guard)	204,000	230,982

Source: Air Force Magazine Almanac issues, 1978, 2006

AIR FORCE SQUADRONS BY MISSION TYPE

	FY 1977	FY 2005
Active Duty		
Bombers	25	9
Air Refueling	34	16
Fighter	76	43
Reconnaissance	9	10
Theater Airlift	15	6
Long Range Airlift	17	13
ICBM/IRBM	26	10
Total Active Duty Squadrons	202	107
Air National Guard (flying)	91	101
Air Force Reserve (flying)	53	68
Grand Total	346	276

Source: Air Force Magazine Almanac issues, 1978, 2006

