

United States Military History



Air Force



U.S. Air Force

Birthday
18
September
1947

United States Air Force

The Air Force is one of the major components of the United States armed forces, with primary responsibility for air warfare, aid defense and the development of military space research. The Air Force also provides air services in coordination with the other military branches.

Pre - Air Force

On August 1, 1907, the U.S. Army Signal Corps formed an Aeronautical Division. At the beginning they were only interested in balloons and dirigibles.

The Army had already used manned balloons for aerial observation during the Civil War and the Spanish-American War.

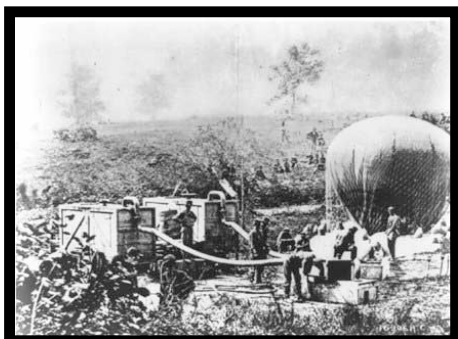


Civil War

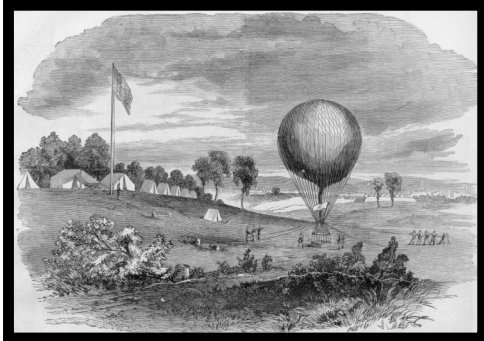
Balloons used for aerial observation

Civil War

Balloons used for aerial observation



Civil War Balloons used for aerial observation



Pre - Air Force

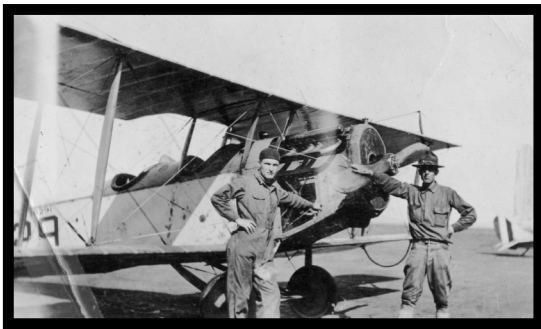
On July 18, 1914, the Army established the Aviation Section of the Signal Corps to improve its flying capabilities.

A few weeks later, Europe plunged into World War I.

The United States entered the war in April 1917.

Pre - Air Force

The United States was unable to catch up to the European nations in aviation technology. By the time of the armistice in November 1918, the American industry had turned out 11,754 aircraft (mostly JN-4 Jenny).



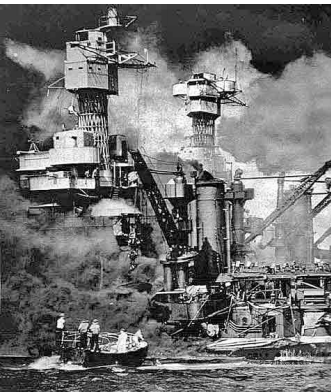
JN-4 Jenny

Pre - Air Force

While the outcome of World War I was decided primarily by ground operations and a maritime blockade of Germany, air power had shown its potential.

The Air Corps Act of 1926 change the name to the Air Corps.

On June 20, 1941, the Department of War, created the Army Air Force (AAF) as its aviation element and made it co-equal to the Army Ground Force.



Bombing Of Pearl Harbor

7 December 1941

Pre - Air Force

Expansion of the AAF accelerated after the surprise Japanese attack on Hawaii in December 7, 1941.

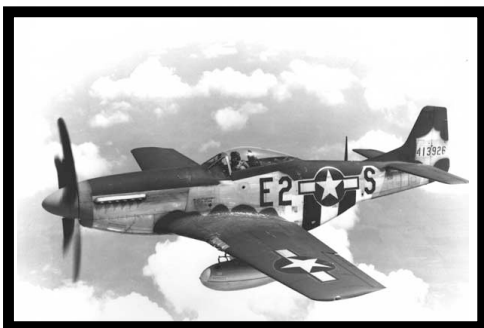
The Army Air Force began mobilization of the nation's aviation industry and deployment of the largest air armada of all time.

The AAF's inventory included training, transport, pursuit, attack, reconnaissance, and bomber aircrafts.

C-47 Skytrain



P-51 Mustang



B-17 Flying Fortress



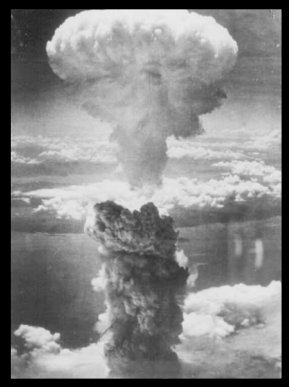
B-29 Superfortress



Pre - Air Force

By the end of the war, the AAF aircraft dominated the skies over both Germany and Japan.

Air power did not win the war by itself but did make possible the Allies' total victory over the Axis power - in August 1945, two B-29s dropped atomic bombs on Japan



**Atomic Bomb
dropped on
Hiroshima, Japan**

6 August 1945

B-29 (Enola Gray) landing after dropping Atomic Bomb



United States Air Force

Based on the AAF's wartime achievements and future potential, the United States Air Force won its independence as a full partner with the Army and Navy on 18 September 1947.

The role of the new USAF in breaking the Soviet blockade of Berlin in 1948 demonstrated the value of air capabilities in this new "Cold War" with the Soviet Union.

United States Air Force

Korean War

The Soviet-backed invasion of South Korea by communist North Korea in June 1950 drew the United States and the United Nations into a 3 year conflict.

The Air Force used new JET fighters, such as the F-86 Sabre, to establish air superiority over the Korean peninsula.

F-86 Sabre



United States Air Force

Korean War

Along with Navy and Marine, the USAF helped protect United Nations ground forces with close air support and the disruption of enemy reinforcements and supplies.

The war ended in 1953 after an armistice with China and North Korea. The Air Force kept a large number of units stationed in the Pacific to help contain communism.

Korean Armistice Agreement - 23 October 1951



United States Air Force

Cold War

The hydrogen bomb and long range rockets accelerated the arms race between the superpowers in the 1950s. The Air Force's Strategic Air Command (SAC) became an important instrument of American defense strategy.

United States Air Force

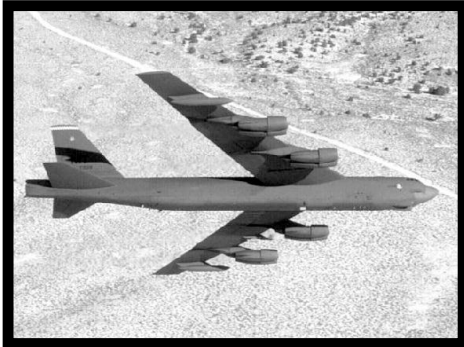
Cold War

SACs arsenal of bombers (B-52 Stratofortress) was joined in the 1960s by the intercontinental ballistic missiles (Titan and Minuteman)

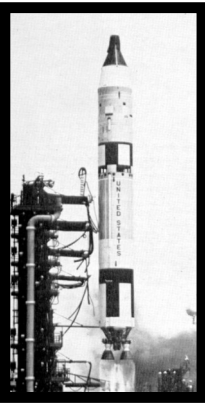
Together with the Navy's missile-launching submarines, they form America's nuclear deterrent "triad"

With the launch vehicles and orbital satellites, the Air Force mission expanded into space.

B-52 Stratofortress



**United States
Air Force**



**Intercontinental
Ballistic
Missile
“Titan”**

**United States
Air Force**

**Intercontinental
Ballistic
Missile
“Minuteman”**



United States Air Force

Vietnam War

In 1964 the United States began a full-scale military operations on the side of South Vietnam. Air power was restricted for political reasons and a peace treaty was signed in January 1973. US forces were no longer available in 1975 when North Vietnam launched a successful invasion of the South.

F-4 Phantom



F-105 Thunderchief



SAC B-52



United States Air Force

In the 1970s the USAF continued to modernized its aircraft and missiles while continuing its role in space.

The Air Force developed new weapons systems like the A-10 Thunderbolt II, F-15 Eagle, F-16 Fighting Falcon, E-3 Sentry and M-X Peacekeeper.

A-10 Thunderbolt



F-15 Eagle

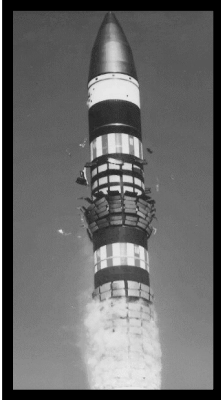


F-16 Fighting Falcon



E-3 Sentry





**M-X
Peacekeeper**

United States Air Force

With its large fleet of aerial refueling tankers and long range transports, the Air Force expanded its world wide airlift capabilities.

In the 1980s, the USAF continued to expand its weapon systems. The progress the United States was making in new technologies, such as "stealthy" aircrafts and space-based systems, helped break up the Soviet Union.

United States Air Force

After Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in August 1990, the Air Force helped win one of the most lop-sided battlefield victories in military history.

Aircraft, such as the F-117 Nighthawk, delivered an arsenal of precision-guided munitions.

Air power allowed ground forces to liberate Kuwait.

F-117 Nighthawk



United States Air Force

Global War on Terrorism

On September 11, 2001, following the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the Air Force began flying protective combat air patrol over major American cities.

The Air Force continues to fly these protective missions when there are major events that draw large crowds.

Combat Air Patrol over the United States



United States Air Force

Global War on Terrorism

In October 2001 the Air Force began bombing targets in Afghanistan as part of the U.S. response to the terrorist attacks of September 11.

The air strikes allowed U.S. Special Operation Forces and the Afghan tribesmen to attack and destroy the enemy forces.

United States Air Force

Global War on Terrorism

The United States continued to demonstrate air superiority during the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Air Force pilots flew thousands of sorties during the war. The air campaign involved the use of B-2, B-1, B-52 and F-117 bombers, fighter aircraft, cruise missiles, and precision-guided bombs.

B-1



B-2



B-52



F-117



United States Air Force

The future of the United States Air Force looks bright - technology advances in aircraft, missiles, and smart bomb will keep the Air Force the world's only global Air and Space Force.

F-35 Joint Fighter



