

The United States Air Force First Seventy-Five Years

USAF Chronology of Air and Space Events 1947-2022



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Updated by David Bragg, Dr. Christopher Koontz, and Dr. Robert Oliver

Air Force Historical Support Division



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON DC 20330-1000

SEP 16 2022

Airmen –

Seventy-five years ago, having defeated two major global powers in a world war and facing a looming confrontation with a third, our nation established the Department of the Air Force and the United States Air Force. In less than four decades, human-powered flight had matured from a curiosity to an undeniable strategic advantage. Our Nation needed military professionals dedicated to securing the high ground, and we answered that call.

Today, I am honored to serve alongside you as we celebrate our 75th anniversary and reflect on the contributions of the Airmen who have defended our nation. We are now two services, but we remain true to our common roots, even as new generations lead us forward. From Cold War competition to current operations in the skies above the Pacific and Eastern Europe, we have accelerated to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world. We have stayed ahead of our pacing challenges through continuous innovation of our systems, operational concepts, and tactics. While we can never repay the sacrifices of our Airmen and their families, we have worked to ensure they have the resources they need to thrive. Empowered Airmen—past and present—have been indispensable teammates and a competitive edge for joint and coalition forces.

We will always be there to provide the airpower that defends our homeland, deters or defeats our adversaries, reassures our partners and allies, and helps our diplomacy proceed from a position of strength. Thank you for all you do to fly, fight, and win!

One Team, One Fight!

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Frank Kendall", is positioned above the printed name.

Frank Kendall
Secretary of the Air Force



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF STAFF
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON DC 20330

Leaders-

This book tells the story of the first 75 years of the United States Air Force, it is also a celebration of the spirit of Airmen. Even though the Air Force we know today didn't start until 1947, it is important to remember that the underpinning for our success lies within the founding principles of the early pioneers of airpower.

By 1947, air-minded servicemembers had earned their place in the American defense architecture becoming a separate branch of the United States Armed Forces. On 26 July 1947, President Harry S. Truman signed the National Security Act, which created a Department of the Air Force. This act became effective on 18 September 1947, establishing the U.S. Air Force as an independent service. We now celebrate the first 75 years of the U.S. Air Force's rich history.

As Chief of Staff of the world's greatest Air Force, I am pleased to share these representative accomplishments of the U.S. Air Force's first 75 years of service to our Nation. As I witness the Air Force in action daily, the continued ingenuity, perseverance, and innovative energy of Airmen never ceases to amaze me. I am honored and proud to recognize the awe-inspiring spirit of Airmen who are - the United States Air Force.

...Fly, Fight, and Win...Airpower Anytime, Anywhere...

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Charles Q. Brown, Jr." with a stylized flourish at the end.

Charles Q. Brown, Jr.
General, USAF
Chief of Staff

Introduction & Acknowledgements

The starting point for this 75th Anniversary of the U.S. Air Force is the Air Force History and Museums Program book, *One Hundred Ten Years of Flight, USAF Chronology of Significant Air and Space Events 1903-2012*, updated by Daniel L. Haulman, Priscilla D. Jones and Robert D. Oliver. That book was an update of a previous Air Force History and Museums Program 100-year chronology. Another source used to fill in some gaps was *Chronology, American Aerospace Events*, by Harold "Phil" Myers, Chief Historian at the Air Force Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Agency (now the 16th Air Force). Dr. Chris Koontz and Dr. Bob Oliver, Air Force Historical Support Division, contributed chronology updates and photos for the 2013-2022.

The intent going into this project was to pick a few events for each of the 75 years that were important to the historical context of the Air Force and representative of the overall effort of Airmen. Over 40 years of working with the Air Force has allowed me to witness many of these events first-hand, and those experiences helped with selection of events that readers can personally relate to - events that present a picture of what the Air Force is, by way of how the Air Force conducts itself daily.

A note of appreciation goes to the worldwide network of Air Force Public Affairs professionals. Many of the photos in this book are the result of their efforts and web presence. Thanks to the Defense Visual Information Distribution Service (DVIDS) for helping make military photo collections accessible. The National Museum of the United States Air Force continues to provide public accessible factual information and photos that tell the story of Airmen that built the Air Force and Airmen that keep it going.

Dave Bragg
Director, AFHSD

Early in the 20th century, “air-minded” members of the Army promoted the idea of a separate air force, especially after WWI. The idea did not gain traction with the overall military establishment until WWII. Superior performance and vast contributions by the Army Air Forces in WWII definitively proved the value of maintaining a force that could control the air. On 26 July 1947, President Harry S. Truman signed the National Security Act, which created a Department of the Air Force equal to the Department of the Army and the Department of the Navy; a National Military Establishment under the Secretary of Defense; and an Air National Guard as a reserve component of the Air Force.



*W. Stuart Symington, the first Secretary of the Air Force, and
Gen. Carl A. Spaatz, the first USAF Chief of Staff, in 1947
Carl A. Spaatz, the first USAF chief of staff, in 1947.*

1947



VC-54C Skymaster is the first aircraft purpose-built to fly the President of the United States. Officially named The Flying White House, but better known by its unofficial nickname, Sacred Cow, a reference to the high security surrounding the aircraft and its special status.

On 26 July, President Truman signed the National Security Act of 1947 on board the Sacred Cow. This act, which became effective on 18 September 1947, established the U.S. Air Force as an independent service, making the Sacred Cow the “birthplace” of the U.S. Air Force.

This aircraft can currently be seen at the National Museum of the United States Air Force, Dayton Ohio, as part of the Presidential Aircraft Collection.

1947



Bell X-1 in flight

Capt. Yeager with Bell X-1 named Glamorous Glennis in honor of his wife, also the name on his WWII aircraft.



14 October: Capt. Charles E. “Chuck” Yeager made the first faster-than-sound flight at Muroc Air Base, California, in a rocket-powered USAF research plane - the rocket powered Bell X-1 - and won the Mackay Trophy for the most meritorious flight of the year.

1947

26 July: President Truman issued Executive Order 9981 that called for equal treatment within the military services without regard to race, color, religion, or national origin. Of all the services, the Air Force was in the best position to respond to President Truman's call because the Air Force had already been studying solutions to the problem of improving military efficiency. The objection of some Air Force leaders was met firmly by the new Secretary of the Air Force, W. Stuart Symington. Symington told the Air Force generals he expected no one to impede integration, and those who didn't agree with the policy should resign. Over the next few years, under his guidance the Air Force broke up black units and became the first service to complete integration.

1 Lt. Daniel (Chappie) James, Jr., (seated) Assistant Operations Officer of the 617th Bombardment Squadron (Medium) and S/Sgt. Joseph R. Lawson, Chief Clerk, Operations. The 617 BS was designated a "colored" B-25 squadron at the end of WWII and inactivated in 1947. Chappie James later became the first black 4 star general in the USAF.



The first Women in the Air Force (WAF) recruit was Ester Blake, who enlisted 8 July 1948, in the first minute of the first day that regular Air Force duty was authorized for women.

1948

German children in West Berlin wave to an Air Force transport aircraft as it comes in to land at Tempelhof Airport during the Berlin Airlift.



On **26 June**, in response to a blockade instituted by the Soviet Union on 24 June of rail and road lines between the U.S., British, and French occupation zones of western Germany and their occupation sectors in western Berlin, the Allies launched the Berlin Airlift. Called Operation VITTLES by the United States and Operation PLANE FARE by the British, the airlift delivered enough coal and food to sustain the city indefinitely and became the largest humanitarian airlift in history.

The airlift carried a total of 2,324,510 tons of cargo into Berlin with coal representing approximately 1,500,000 tons, followed by more than 500,000 tons of food.

1948



After severe blizzards hit eight western states on 3 January 1949, the Air Force, to include Air Reserve and Air National Guard units, began Operation HAYRIDE. Eighteen snowstorms in 27 days had hit the Rocky Mountain and upper Great Plains states December 1948 through January 1949, causing temperatures to drop as low as 40 degrees below zero and block roads, railways, and ranges with so much snow that hundreds of thousands of sheep and cattle were threatened with starvation. By 15 March, more than 200 airplanes had airlifted 4,778 tons of hay, rations, clothing, blankets, milk, coal, emergency equipment, and medical supplies to citizens in eight states.



(top) Airmen loading hay onto a C-47 at the Casper Army Base.

(lower) C-119 dropping bales of hay to hungry cattle.

1949

8 April: Air Force Letter 35-46 stated that a new Air Force blue winter uniform (shade #84) for men was available for purchase and immediate use. Distribution of the blue uniforms would be made when stocks were available and general issue to Airmen was expected to occur by 1 September 1950.



The varied uniforms in this photograph illustrate the USAF in transition during the Korean War. Some wear the old uniform of the U.S. Army Air Forces while others wear newly issued USAF blues, or a combination of both.

An interesting result of this uniform change was the nickname “brown-shoe Air Force.” The Army uniform had brown shoes, so brown-shoe referred to people who had served in the Army Air Forces.

1 July: As the Air Force became a separate service in 1947, some support functions, such as medical care, remained an Army responsibility for the next two years. Major General Malcolm C. Grow convinced Army and Air Force leadership, as well as President Truman that the Air Force needed its own medical service. The Air Force established the USAF Medical Service on 1 July 1949, headed by Major General Malcolm C. Grow, the first surgeon general of the Air Force.



Major General Malcolm C. Grow

5 December: Upon the U.S. detection of the first Soviet atomic explosion, the Air Force diverted \$50 million from other projects to begin construction of radar sites in Alaska and other areas of the United States.

1949

25 June: North Korean Communist forces invaded South Korea. North Korean fighter aircraft attacked nearby Kimpo Airfield, destroying a USAF C-54 on the ground. The United Nations Security Council passed a resolution calling for the evacuation of North Korean forces from South Korea, and Fifth Air Force prepared to airlift U.S. citizens from Seoul, the South Korean Capital.

Authorized by a United Nations security Council resolution, President Harry S. Truman ordered the Air Force to enter the Korean conflict on 27 June. A F-82 Twin Mustang pilot, First Lieutenant William G. Hudson, earned the first aerial victory credit of the Korean War when he shot down a North Korean Yak-11 that was attacking a South Korean airfield near Seoul. Five other USAF pilots also shot down enemy airplanes.

The Far East Air Forces launched the first USAF air strikes of the Korean War on 28 June, by sending no fewer than 20 B-26s of the 3d Bombardment Group to bomb the Musan railroad yards near the 38th parallel and road traffic between Seoul and the North Korean border. North Korean forces occupied Seoul, the South Korean capital, and nearby Kimpo Airfield at the time.

The U. S. Air Force conducted the first strategic air attacks of the Korean War on 6 July, sending nine B-29 Superfortresses to bomb the Rising Sun oil refinery at Wosan and a chemical plant at Hungnam in North Korea.



17 December: First time an F-86 encountered North Korean MiG-15 in combat - Lieutenant Colonel Bruce H. Hinton scored a victory.

(left) F-86 Sabres, the premier USAF fighter jet of the Korean War, with 51st Fighter Interceptor Wing markings being readied for combat.

1950



Medal of Honor

5 August 1950



Major Louis J. Seville's F-51 Mustang aircraft was severely damaged by antiaircraft fire during an attack on enemy ground forces. Although fully cognizant of the short period he could remain airborne, he deliberately ignored the possibility of survival and determined to inflict maximum damage upon the enemy, he again exposed himself to intense ground fire and crashed his fighter into an enemy position. For this action, Major Seville earned the first Medal of Honor awarded to a member of the United States Air Force and the first awarded to an Airman in the Korean Conflict.

20 December: Operation CHRISTMAS KIDLIFT, aircraft of the 61st Troop Carrier Group airlifted more than 1,000 endangered South Korean orphans from Kimpo Airfield to Cheju-do, an island off the South Korean coast.

As Chinese troops approached Seoul, capital of South Korea, Air Force Chaplain Lt. Col Russell Blaisdell was concerned over the safety of his South Korean orphans. As plans were made to evacuate the orphans by ship, they were moved to the port at Inchon, but the ship was delayed. Chaplain Blaisdell coordinated with Col. T.C. Rogers, Fifth AF Chief of Operations and Lt. Gen William Tunner, Commander of Combat Cargo Command to provide 12 C-54 aircraft to transport the children. Chaplain Blaisdell then commandeered six cargo trucks along the docks to carry the orphans to Kimpo Air Field where the aircraft were waiting to transport the orphans and their caretakers to safety.



Capt. Mary Spivak, a flight nurse with the 501st Medical Air Evacuation Squadron hands out candy to orphans during Operation Christmas Kidlift.

1950

Helicopters for Medical Evacuation

13-16 February: More than 100 transport aircraft from the 315th Air Division (Combat Cargo) dropped supplies day and night to members of the U.S. 23d Regimental Combat Team and a French battalion that Chinese troops had surrounded temporarily at Chipyeong-ni in central Korea.

H-5 helicopters of the 3d Air Rescue Squadron delivered medical supplies and evacuated wounded despite a blinding snowstorm.



An Air Force H-5G fitted with two stretchers prepares to evacuate a wounded soldier, July 1951.

24 March: The Far East Air Forces used an H-19 helicopter for the first time for the air evacuation of wounded troops in Korea. The H-19 was larger, more powerful, and longer ranged than the H-5 helicopter already in use.



H-19 Chickasaw became a workhorse helicopter during the Korean War, first flown in 1949.

1951

20 May: Captain James Jabara, an F-86 Sabre pilot of the 334th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron, became the world's first jet-to-jet ace, shooting down his fifth and sixth MiGs in the Korean War. He was ordered back to the U.S. for a publicity tour. At his own request, he returned to Korea in January 1953. By June, he had shot down nine more MiG-15s, giving him a total of 15 air-to-air jet victories during the Korean War. Jabara was also credited with 1.5 victories over Europe during World War II.

When asked why he wanted to return to the dangers of Korea, he said: "I don't want to sound corny, or like a hero, or a flag-waver, or war monger. But, I think there is something we have to fight back at, or it will destroy us. It's something that used to fly Messerschmitts over Europe, and flies MiGs over Korea. Call it Fascism, Nazism or Communism, it's something that can't live with freedom. My children, and your children, will not be allowed to grow up in peace if it grows stronger...I just want to clobber a few more MiGs in Korea - before they clobber all of us - in Wichita."



*Capt. James Jabara
with F-86 Sabre Jet*



Medal of Honor

14 September 1951

Captain John S. Walmsley, Jr., lost his life illuminating an enemy supply train while piloting a searchlight-equipped B-26 Invader in Korea.

After stopping the train with bombs, Capt. Walmsley, selflessly exposing himself to vicious enemy antiaircraft fire, repeatedly passed over it to guide other aircraft to the target. His aircraft was hit and crashed into surrounding mountains.



1951

10 February: The Air Force acquired its first general-purpose, high-speed digital computer, a vacuum-tube-based Univac I, for use at the Pentagon.

The Univac I took up most of a room, weighed in at over 16,000 pounds, and used more than 5,000 vacuum tubes. Overall it had far less computing power than modern cell phones.



Medal of Honor

10 February 1952

Leading a flight of three F-86 Sabre jets on a combat air patrol mission near the Manchurian border, Major George A. Davis, Jr., engaged 12 enemy MiG-15 jet fighters in aerial combat. After shooting down two enemy aircraft and completely disrupting the enemy formation, permitting the friendly fighter-bombers to successfully complete their interdiction mission, Major Davis himself was shot down and killed.



1952

10 April: The YB-52, prototype of the eight-jet engine Stratofortress and first all-jet intercontinental heavy bomber, flew for the first time.

23-24 June: Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps aircraft in coordinated attacks virtually destroyed the hydroelectric power plants in North Korea. The two-day operation, involving over 1,200 sorties, was the largest single air effort since World War II.

16-17 July: With the help of aerial refueling, 58 F-84 Thunderjets of the 31st Fighter Escort Wing completed the first mass flight of jet fighters across the Pacific Ocean. Departing from Turner Air Force Base, Georgia, on 4 July, the aircraft island hopped, Oahu, Midway, Wake, Eniwetok, Guam and Iwo Jima, ending up at Yokota Air Base, Japan.



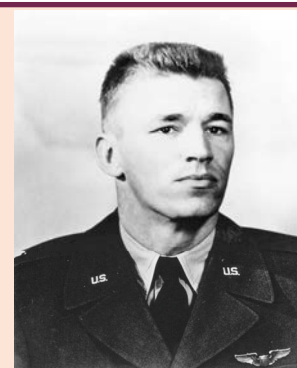
On 13 August, Air Force officials approved the full scale production of the Boeing B-52 Stratofortress. Built to carry nuclear weapons for Cold War deterrence.



Medal of Honor

22 November 1952

While leading a flight of four F-80 Shooting Star fighters in divebombing enemy gun positions, Major Charles J. Loring's aircraft was hit by ground fire as he verified the gun positions and rolled into his dive-bomb run. Hit again and again as he pressed the attack, he deliberately altered his course, crashing into and destroying the active gun emplacements.



1952

8 February: The American Medical Association recognized aviation medicine as a medical specialty, the first one to evolve from military practice and research.

18 May: Captain Joseph C. McConnell, Jr. shot down his 16th enemy aircraft in Korea, to become the top ace of the war.

8 June: At Luke Air Force Base, Arizona, the USAF Thunderbirds, officially designated the 3600th Air Demonstration Flight, performed for the first time.



*USAF Thunderbirds
flying
F-84G Thunderjets*

1953

27 June: Captain Ralph S. Parr, Jr., scored the last aerial victory of the Korean War by shooting down an IL-2 on the day of the armistice.

6 August: Operation BIG SWITCH began. C-124, C-54, C-46 and C-47 transports airlifted more than 800 former prisoners of war from Korea to the United States, by way of Japan, after an armistice that ended the Korean War. The operation ran through October.

(right) One of the first POWs to return to Japan in Operation BIG SWITCH was SSGT. Robert M. Wilkins (center). He is shown arriving in Japan after the 4-and-a-half hour flight from Korea, August 1953.



11 September: The sidewinder infrared-guided air-to-air missile made its first successful interception, sending an F-6F drone down in flames. The missile revolutionized aerial combat, offering pilots a method other than gunfire for shooting down enemy aircraft.



(left) Supersonic, heat-seeking, air-to-air AIM-9 Sidewinder missile launched by fighter aircraft.

1953

21 June: The Air Force directed its Air Research and Development Command to create the Western Development Division under Brigadier General Bernard A. Schriever, to oversee acceleration of the Atlas intercontinental ballistic missile program.



The first generation of U.S. intercontinental ballistic missiles included the Atlas



1 April: President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed into law a bill creating the Air Force Academy.

24 June: Secretary of the Air Force Harold E. Talbott announced that the permanent location of the Air Force Academy would be a 15,000-acre track of land six miles north of Colorado Springs, Colorado. The selection commission appointed by Secretary Talbott had traveled 21,000 miles while considering 580 sites. Members of the commission included Charles Lindbergh, General Carl Spaatz, and Lieutenant General Hubert R. Harmon who would later become the academy's first superintendent.

1954

26 June: Operation WOUNDED WARRIOR began. At the conclusion of fighting in what had been French Indochina, the 315th Air Division and the Military Air Transport Service airlifted more than 500 wounded French soldiers from Vietnam via Japan and the United States to France and Algeria. The operation concluded 17 July.

27 October: Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., became the first black general officer in the Air Force. During WWII he served as commander of the 99th Fighter Squadron and later the 332d Fighter Group, the “Tuskegee Airmen,” the first fighter squadron and fighter group made up of black pilots.



*332d Fighter Group
emblem from WWII*



*Colonel Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., in front of a P-51
of the 332d Fighter Group.*

1954

26 February: George Smith, a North American Aviation test pilot, ejected from an F-100 Super Sabre traveling at Mach 1.05, becoming the first person to survive ejection from an aircraft flying at supersonic speed.

29 June: The Boeing Aircraft Company delivered the first B-52 Stratofortress to enter USAF operational service, to the 93d Bombardment Wing at Castle Air Force Base, California. The B-52 became - and continues to be - an important part of the Air Force's strategic bomber inventory.



The Boeing B-52 eight-engine bomber, designed to drop nuclear weapons from high altitude, was used as a conventional bomber in Vietnam, Southwest Asia, and is still a major force in 2022.

1955

11 July: The Air Force Academy admitted its first class, 306 cadets, at Lowry Air Force Base, Colorado, a temporary location until facilities were available at the Colorado Springs location in 1958.



*The first United States Air Force Academy class being sworn in at
Lowry Air Force Base in Denver, Colorado*

20 August: Colonel Horace A. Hanes established a new speed record of 822.135 miles per hour, flying an F-100 Super Sabre over the Mojave Desert.

1955

17 January: The Defense Department revealed the existence of SAGE (semiautomatic ground environment) - an automated, computer enhanced electronic air-defense warning system. Its radar transmitted data rapidly via telephone lines to direction/combat centers where large computers process the information for interceptor aircraft.

26 October: First flight of the XXH-40 Bell helicopter, later redesignated the UH-1 Iroquois, became one of the most widely used helicopters in the Vietnam War.



Rare color photograph of the XXH-40 Bell helicopter hovering.



A USAF Bell HH-1B Huey helicopter hovering over water during search and rescue training.

The initial Army operational designation was HU-1, which led to the common unofficial nickname of “Huey.” All U.S. armed services adopted the model as did several other countries, and it was redesignated in 1962 as the UH-1 under a tri-service agreement.



Medivac UH-1 photo, the 903d Aeromedical Evacuation Flight. Thousands of wounded service members were evacuated by the Huey during the Vietnam War.

1956

9 December: The 463d Troop Carrier Wing received the first Air Force C-130 Hercules tactical-airlift aircraft. This four-engine turboprop airlifter had an unrefueled range of over 2,500 miles, could carry outsized cargo of almost 50,000 pounds or up to 92 troops, and could take off and land within about 3,600 feet. The C-130 remains one of the most versatile aircraft in the Air Force inventory to this day.



Early C-130 Hercules, affectionately known as the Herk or Herky Bird.

11 December: Operation SAFE HAVEN began. By 30 June 1957, cargo aircraft of the Military Air Transport Service had airlifted more than 10,000 Hungarian refugees from West Germany to asylum in the United States. The refugees had fled their country when Soviet troops crushed an anticommunist rebellion there.

1956

18 January: Commanded by Major General Archie J. Old, Jr., three B-52 Stratofortresses completed the first around-the-world nonstop flight by jet aircraft. The bombers covered the 24,325 mile distance in 45 hours and 19 minutes, flying an average speed of 534 miles per hour.

11 June: The first U-2 high-altitude, long range reconnaissance aircraft was delivered to the 408th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing at Laughlin Air Force Base, Texas. The U-2 could fly 10 hour missions at exceptionally high altitudes at a top speed of 600 miles per hour.



Lt. Col. Tony Bevacqua poses next to the wings of an original U-2 Dragon Lady during the late 1950s. Colonel Bevacqua was one of the first U-2 pilots in the Air Force.

1957



KC-135 air refueling F-105s during the Vietnam War. Tankers became a necessity for fighter-bombers trying to reach enemy targets in North Vietnam.

28 June: Game Changer—The first KC-135 Stratotanker arrived at the 93d Air Refueling Squadron, Castle Air Force Base, California. The jet tanker could cruise at the same speed as jet bombers while refueling, drastically reducing the time for in-flight refueling missions.

1 July: The first intercontinental ballistic missile wing, the 704th Strategic Missile Wing, activated at Cooke (later Vandenberg) Air Force Base, California.

15 August: General Nathan F. Twining became the first USAF officer to serve as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

4 October: The Soviet Union used an intercontinental ballistic missile booster to launch *Sputnik I*, the world's first artificial space satellite, into Earth orbit.

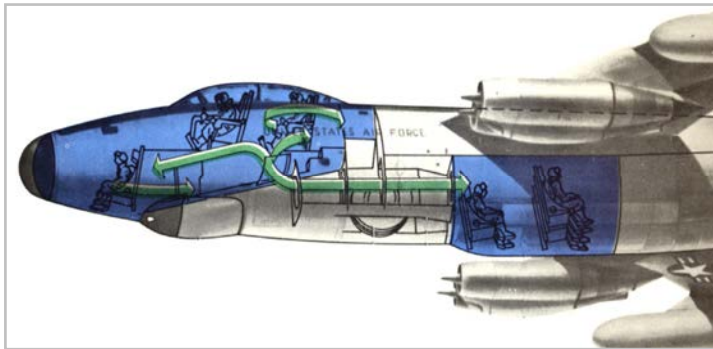
1957

15 January: The Air Force activated the 475th Air Defense Missile Wing to train Bomarc missile units. The Bomarc was an unmanned, supersonic antiaircraft missile capable of intercepting and destroying targets at ranges between 250 and 450 nautical miles.

1 February: Francis E. Warren Air Force Base, Wyoming, became the first intercontinental ballistic missile base of Strategic Air Command.

27 February: Missile director William M. Holaday approved the Minuteman Project, a program for building 5,000-mile-range solid-fuel ballistic missiles to be launched from underground installations.

28 April: After an in-flight explosion, the pilot and navigator of a 341st Bombardment Wing B-47 ejected successfully. While attempting to egress, the copilot, 1st Lieutenant James E. Obenauf, noticed another crew member unconscious and incapable of escape. Instead of ejecting, Lieutenant Obenauf remained on the crippled and burning aircraft, piloting it from the backseat position to a safe landing at Dyess Air Force Base, Texas. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his heroism.



The standard B-47 carried a crew of three, with the pilot, co-pilot and navigator in a pressurized section of the nose. Some variants, the RB-47H for example, carried additional crew members.



To leave the ground, a fully laden B-47, Stratojet required the additional thrust from takeoff rockets in the rear fuselage. Early B-47s carried these rocket units internally, while later Stratojets jettisoned them after takeoff.

1958

14 July: President Dwight D. Eisenhower launched Operation BLUE BAT to restore order in Lebanon after civil unrest threatened to overthrow its government. During the operation, the Air Force airlifted troops to Beirut after U.S. Marines had landed by sea to secure its airport. The intervention resulted in political negotiations that produced years of peace in the region.

3-9 September: Responding to Chinese Communist threats to the Taiwan Strait, a Tactical Air Command composite air strike force (including F-100 Super Sabre, F-101 Voodoo, B-57 Canberra, and C-130 Hercules aircraft) deployed to the Far East as part of Operation X-RAY TANGO.

In the mid-1950s Tactical Air Command developed a mobile strike capability for rapidly moving its units from the United States to any area of the world where a “brush-fire” was threatened. Named the “Composite Air Strike Force” (CASF), it was made up of fighters for delivering both conventional and nuclear weapons, transports for airlifting men and equipment, tankers for mid-air refueling, and reconnaissance aircraft. The CASF was designed to augment combat-ready units already assigned to the Air Forces in Europe, Pacific and Alaskan areas of responsibility.

From 1958 through 1965 the CASF was used effectively in reaction to crises in Lebanon, Taiwan, Congo, Cuba and the Dominican Republic.



11 October: The Air Force launched the *Pioneer I* lunar probe vehicle, which attained a height of approximately 80,000 miles before falling back to Earth on 13 October.

18 December: The Air Force placed in orbit the first artificial communications satellite, a Project Score relay vehicle integral with the four-ton Atlas launcher. The next day, the satellite broadcast a taped recording of President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s Christmas message—the first time a human voice had been heard from space.

1958

The Cold War and space race continued to heat up in 1959. Fidel Castro gained control of Cuba. Nikita Khrushchev, USSR leader, visited the USA and gave President Eisenhower replica pennants that Luna 2 had left on the lunar surface just days before the visit.

6 February: The Air Force successfully launched the first Titan I intercontinental ballistic missile. With a range of 5,500 nautical miles, the two-stage liquid-fueled missile was to be deployed in underground silos and raised to the surface before launch.

12 February: Strategic Air Command retired its last B-36 Peacemaker, thus becoming an all-jet bomber force.

28 February: The Air Force successfully launched the Discoverer I satellite into polar orbit from Vandenberg Air Force Base, California. A polar orbit allows a satellite to fly over all surface points because of the Earth's rotation.

6 April: The National Aeronautics and Space Administration announced the selection of seven pilots from the U.S. armed services as astronauts for Project Mercury. Among them were three USAF Captains: L. Gordon Cooper, Jr., Virgil I. "Gus" Grissom, and Donald K. "Deke" Slayton.



A Hound Dog missile, designed during the Cold War to be fired from the B-52 bomber

23 April: The GAM-77 (AGM-28) Hound Dog supersonic missile, designed to deliver a nuclear warhead over a distance of several hundred miles, was test-fired for the first time at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida.

7 August: *Explorer 6*, a U.S. satellite, transmitted the first television pictures from outer space. The first intercontinental relay of a voice message by satellite also took place, with the voice of Major Robert G. Mathis, USAF.

9 August: After firing an Atlas intercontinental ballistic missile from Vandenberg Air Force Base, California, Strategic Air Command declared the Atlas system operational and by year's end the Atlas became the first nuclear equipped ballistic missile to be placed on alert status.

1959

3 June: The Air Force Academy graduated its first class. Of the 207 graduates, 205 were commissioned as regular USAF officers.

Fall of 1959: The first three African American cadets were admitted into the Air Force Academy, Charles V. Bush of Washington DC, Isaac S. Payne IV of Portland Oregon, and Roger B. Sims of Brooklyn New York.



(left) Cadets Roger Sims and Isaac Payne taking a moment

(right) Cadet Charles Bush steps out the door of his room

(below left) Construction of the Air Force Academy Cadet Chapel



28 August: Construction began on the Air force Academy Cadet Chapel. The chapel was designed by Walter A. Netsch, Jr. General Contractor Robert E. McKee of Santa Fe, New Mexico built the chapel for \$3.5 million, from 1959-1963. The chapel's 17 spires reach 150 feet and can be seen for miles.

1959

1 May: Francis Gary Powers, a Central Intelligence Agency U-2 pilot, was shot down over Sverdlovsk in the Soviet Union. Captured and put on trial for espionage, he was later exchanged for a Soviet agent captured by the United States.

23 May: The Air Force began one of its largest humanitarian airlifts to relieve the victims of a series of earthquakes in Chile. Within a month, cargo aircraft had delivered more than 1,000 tons of relief equipment and supplies from bases in the United States, some 4,500 miles away from the stricken region. The airlift was called Operation AMIGOS.

8 July: Operation NEW TAPE began after chaos threatened the newly independent Democratic Republic of the Congo in Africa. After evacuating U.S. citizens by air and delivering food, the Air Force began transporting United Nations troops from all over the world to the country. The airlifts continued for four years.



Typical cargo aircraft of the era was the Douglas C-124 Globemaster II, nicknamed “Old Shakey” featured “clamshell” doors up front to facilitate cargo handling.

(Photo is the National Museum of the USAF’s C-124)

1960

1 August: The 43d Bombardment Wing at Carswell Air Force Base, Texas, accepted the first operational B-58 Hustler medium bomber. The B-58 was the first U.S. supersonic bomber capable of carrying a nuclear payload, the delta-wing aircraft could fly twice the speed of sound and could be refueled in flight.

*Icon of the Cold War
B-58 Hustler
The pod is a shell used for
streamlining and protection
of nuclear ordnance at high
speeds*



30 August: With six Atlas missiles ready to launch, the 564th Strategic Missile Squadron at Francis E. Warren Air Force Base, Wyoming, became the first fully operational intercontinental ballistic missile squadron.

21 September: In a ceremony at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada, Tactical Air Command accepted the first Republic F-105D Thunderchief, an all-weather fighter able to carry a nuclear weapon. Within a few years the F-105 would play a big role as a fighter-bomber in Vietnam War.



Nellis Air Force Base F-105

1960

1 February: The ballistic missile early warning system site at Thule, Greenland, became operational. Subsequently, other sites became operational at Clear, Alaska, and Fylingdales in the United Kingdom. Operated by the North American Air Defense Command, the system could provide the United States warning of an impending Soviet missile attack in time to respond.

1 February: The Minuteman intercontinental ballistic missile was launched for the first time at Cape Canaveral, Florida, in a major test. Under full guidance, it traveled 4,600 miles to its target area. The solid-fueled Minuteman could be stored more easily and fired more quickly than the liquid-fueled Atlas and Titan intercontinental ballistic missiles.



The Minuteman intercontinental ballistic missile was conceived in the late 1950s and deployed in silos during the 1960s.

3 February: As part of a project called “LOOKING GLASS,” Strategic Air Command began flying EC-135s (nicknamed the “Doomsday Plane”) to provide a 24-hour-a-day airborne command post for the president and secretary of defense in case enemy attack wiped out land-based command and control sites that controlled strategic bombers and intercontinental ballistic missiles.

1961

14 April: At Hurlburt Field, Florida, the Air Force activated the 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron to perform operations against guerrillas (nicknamed “Jungle Jim”)—its first special-operations unit since the Korean War.

15 November: The 2d Advanced Echelon, Thirteenth Air Force, activated in Saigon, Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam), marking the official entry of the Air Force into the Vietnam War. In an operation called FARM GATE, a detachment of the 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron began deployment to South Vietnam with special-operations aircraft.

The initial cadre of 156 Airman made up the first 179-day temporary duty, supporting four RB-26s, four SC-47s, and eight T-28s. The unit provided a variety of special operations duties, to include operation of an air control facility dropping psyops leaflets.



*(above) USAF C-47 dropping leaflets in Southeast Asia.
(right) This leaflet encouraged communist forces to question their cause: it says “Is now the time to return home to your family? Which scenery would you choose?”*



1961



Four-ship formation on a defoliation spray run.

By the beginning of 1962, the USAF test project called RANCH HAND was underway, an effort to evaluate whether jungle aerial spraying could destroy foliage. Six spray equipped C-123s from Tactical Air Command made up the initial project. Actual spray operations began 13 January 1962.

2 February: AC-123 Provider aircraft crashed in South Vietnam while spraying defoliant during Operation RANCH HAND, marking the first USAF aircraft loss in South Vietnam.

(right) Members of Ranch Hand 1964/1965, at a time when the program had only four C-123s. The aircraft to the right is the NMUSAF C-123, Patch-es, named for the nearly 600 patched holes from groundfire. Note the purple bulls-eye painted on the aircraft nose, which showed the Ranch Hand crews' sense of humor.

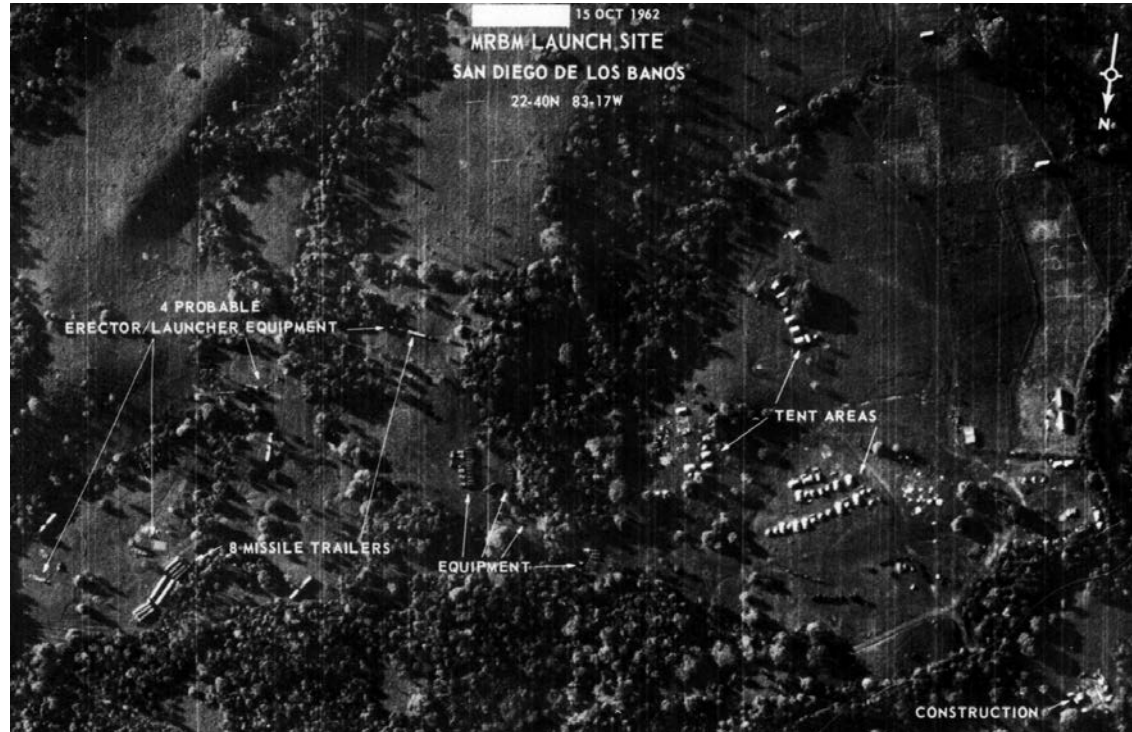


1962

17 July: Major Robert M. White piloted the X-15-1 hypersonic experimental aircraft to a world-record altitude of 58.7 miles, its initial design altitude. Maximum speed was 3,784 miles per hour.

14-15 October: the Cuban missile crisis began when Major Richard S. Heyser and Major Rudolf Anderson, Jr., conducting U-2 reconnaissance flights over Cuba, proved that Soviet missile sites were under construction there.

(right) Soviet SS-4 missile installations in Cuba photographed from a U-2 on 14 Oct 1962. This was the second set of missiles identified.



(left) Major Rudolf Anderson Jr., 27 Oct 1962, his 4080th Strategic Wing U-2 reconnaissance aircraft was shot down over Cuba. Lost with his aircraft, Major Anderson was posthumously award the Air Force Cross.

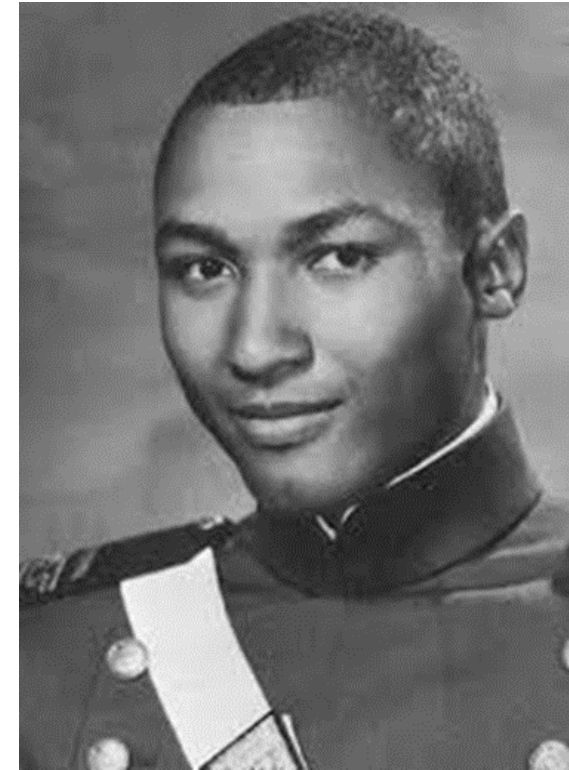
18 October: Eight Air Force Reserve troop-carrier wings and six aerial-port squadrons were mobilized during the Cuban missile crisis, to facilitate the U.S. show of force and blockade of Cuba.

20 November: President John F. Kennedy announced that a blockade of Cuba was over because all Soviet missiles had been removed.

1962

On **5 June 1963**, 499 cadets graduated from the U.S. Air Force Academy, to include the first three African Americans admitted in 1959, Charles V. Bush being the first African American to graduate. President John F. Kennedy was the graduation speaker and commissions were presented by General Curtis E. LeMay. Also of note, Ron Fogleman (USAF Chief of Staff in 1994) was a member of the Class of 1963.

Right - Charles V. Bush, first African American to graduate from the U.S. Air Force Academy, Class of 1963. He entered the Academy in the fall of 1959, along with two other African American cadets, Roger B. Sims and Isaac S. Payne IV. They were the first three African Americans to be admitted into the Academy and the first three to graduate.



16 October: At Cape Canaveral, Florida, the Air Force inaugurated a space-based nuclear-detection system by launching twin satellites to assume circular 7,000-mile-high orbits on opposite sides of Earth. The 475-pound, 20-sided satellites, known as Project Vela Hotel or Project 823, could detect nuclear explosions anywhere on Earth.

22 November: President John F. Kennedy was assassinated.

29 November: A week after the assassination of President Kennedy, President Lyndon B. Johnson issued an executive order changing the name of Cape Canaveral, Florida, to Cape Kennedy and redesignating space facilities there as the John F. Kennedy Space Center.

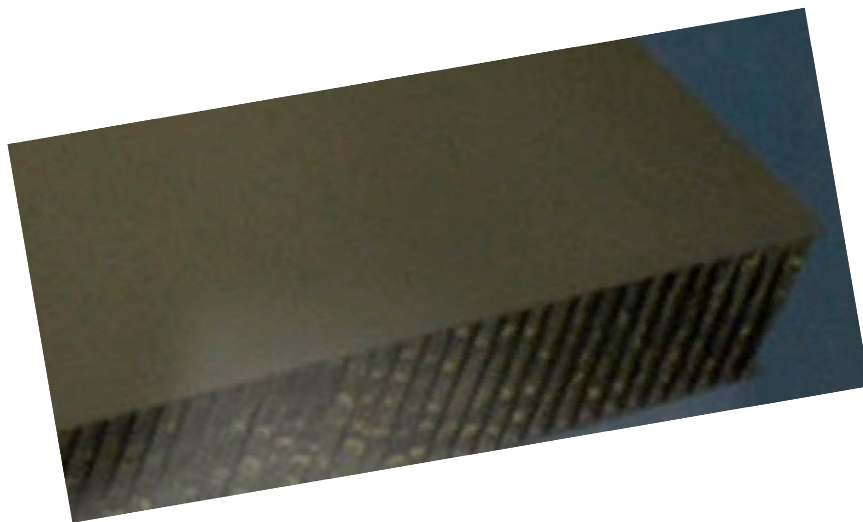
10 December: Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara assigned development of the Manned Orbiting Laboratory to the Air Force.

20 July: The six crew members of C-47, *Extol Pink* evacuated wounded Vietnamese at night under heavy fire. For their heroism, Captain Warren P. Tomsett, Captain John R. Ordemann, Captain Donald R. Mack, Technical Sergeant Edsol P. Inlow, Staff Sergeant Jack E. Morgan, and Staff Sergeant Frank C. Barrett earned the Mackay Trophy.

1963

21April: The number of intercontinental ballistic missiles equaled the number of bombers on Strategic Air Command ground alert for the first time. Afterwards, the number of missiles surpassed the number of bombers in the nuclear-deterrent force.

21 September: At Palmdale, California, North American Aviation's B-70A Valkyrie flew for the first time, with company pilot Alvin White and USAF Colonel Joseph Cotton at the controls. The huge delta-wing aircraft was a strategic bomber that could fly up to three times the speed of sound and at altitudes above 70,000 feet, but advances in enemy surface-to-air-missile technology prevented its production beyond the prototype stage. Although the B-70 never went into production, technology used in its design was used in future Air Force aircraft development.



A significant technological contribution of the XB-70 program was the first widespread use of stainless steel in a honeycomb panel structure. Honeycomb added a strong but lightweight element to aircraft structure.

1964

7 August: U.S. Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin resolution which authorized the president to use all measures necessary, including military force to assist South Vietnam. Air Force involvement in the Vietnam War escalated to a new level.

15 December: Flying an FC-47, Captain Jack Harvey and his crew conducted the first gunship mission in Vietnam. The FC-47, later called the AC-47, carried in its cargo bay a set of side-firing Gatling guns to strafe ground targets.



AC-47 crew underneath the side firing mini-guns of their aircraft. A typical Spooky crew included the aircraft commander, pilot, navigator, flight engineer, loadmaster and two gunners.



Even with escalation of War in Vietnam, the Air Force continued to provide worldwide humanitarian relief:

28 March: After a massive earthquake in the area of Anchorage, Alaska, the United States launched Operation HELPING HAND. By 17 April, USAF cargo aircraft, including C-124s, C-123s, C-130s, and C-97s had delivered 1,850 tons of relief equipment and supplies.

17 November: Operation DRAGON ROUGE began. C-130 Hercules aircrews of the 464th Troop Carrier Wing carried paratroopers from Belgium to rescue 1,400 hostages from captivity in Zaire, the former Belgian Congo. They airlifted the refugees from there to France.

22 December: Operation BIGLIFT began. By 22 January, 1965, USAF cargo aircraft delivered more than 1,500 tons of food, clothing, bedding, fuel, hay, grain, vehicles, pipe, medical supplies, and mail to flood victims in California and Oregon.

1964



1 January: The Air Force's first SR-71 Blackbird unit, the 4200th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing, activated at Beale Air Force Base, California. The SR-71 could attain a speed of more than Mach 3 and altitudes beyond 70,000 feet.

(left) The Lockheed SR-71 Blackbird, the world's fastest and highest-flying production aircraft, first flew in 1964.

8 February: The U.S. Air Force performed its first retaliatory air strike in North Vietnam. A North American F-100 Super Sabre flew cover for attacking South Vietnamese fighter aircraft, suppressing ground fire in the target area.

24 February: Operation ROLLING THUNDER, a frequently interrupted bombing campaign began, and lasted until the end of October 1968.

February: Thirty B-52s, supported by 38 KC-135 tankers, deployed from the continental United States to Guam, to carry out ARC LIGHT bombing missions in Southeast Asia.

18 February 1965: B-57s and F-100s attacked Vietcong targets near An Khe in the first USAF jet raids against enemy troop concentrations in South Vietnam.

2 March: Lieutenant Hayden J. Lockhart became the first USAF prisoner of war in Vietnam after his F-100 was shot down in a raid over North Vietnam. He evaded the enemy for a week before he was captured and remained a prisoner until 12 February 1973.

18 June: Strategic Air Command B-52s flew for first time in the Vietnam conflict when 28 Stratofortresses from Guam bombed Vietcong targets near Saigon. This was the first time B-52s had dropped bombs in war.

1965

10 July: Scoring the first USAF aerial victories in Southeast Asia, two F-4C aircrews (Captain Thomas S. Roberts with Captain Ronald C. Anderson and Captain Kenneth E. Holcombe with Captain Arthur C. Clark) of the 45th Tactical Fighter Squadron each shot down one Communist MiG-17 jet fighter over North Vietnam.



Originally designed for the Navy, the F-4 Phantom served the Air Force as the leading fighter in Vietnam.

4 April: North Vietnamese MiG-17s shot down two F-105s during attack on Thanh Hoa bridge, representing the first USAF Southeast Asia losses in air-to-air combat.

1 November: Colonel Jeanne M. Holm became director of Women in the Air Force, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, Personnel. Policies affecting women were updated during her tenure and opportunities for Air Force women expanded.



Major General Jeanne M. Holm. She was the first Air Force woman appointed to brigadier general in 1971 and the first woman promoted to major general in any service in 1973.

1965

1 January: Military Air Transport Service was redesignated Military Airlift Command. At the same time, Eastern Air Transport Force and Western Air Transport Force were redesignated Twenty-First Air Force and Twenty-Second Air Force, respectively.



22 January: The Air Force completed Operation BLUE LIGHT, history's largest airlift of troops and equipment into a combat zone to date. Since December 1965, more than 4,600 tons of equipment and over 3,000 troops of the Army's 3d Infantry Brigade had flown from Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii, to Pleiku, South Vietnam.

6 April: The USAF and Army signed an agreement on aircraft use. The Army relinquished intratheater, fixed-wing airlift operations and gave the USAF all CV-2 Caribous and CV-7 Buffalos. They were redesignated the C-7A Caribou and C-8A Buffalo, respectively. In return, the USAF agreed to not use rotary-wing aircraft for intratheater movements, fire support, or supply of Army forces. (Note: The C-8 Buffalo is similar to the C-7 except it is powered by turbo-prop rather than reciprocating engine.)

The C-7A Caribou was a twin-engine, short takeoff and landing (STOL) utility transport built by De Havilland Aircraft of Canada, Ltd. It was used primarily for tactical airlift missions from short, unimproved airstrips in forward battle areas. It could carry either 32 passengers, 26 fully equipped paratroops, 20 litter patients, or more than three tons of equipment. For the Caribou, "800 feet is an airport."



The C-7 was used to move people, supplies including all types of fuel, munitions, fresh water, clothing, food varying from conventional American steak and chicken to live pigs, chickens, ducks, cows, or eels for the ARVN troops, and sadly, bodies.

The Caribou was a workhorse that went from sunrise to sunset every day, operating in the heat, humidity, dust, and mud from the low-lying Vietnamese Mekong Delta to the towering mountain regions of the central highlands. During their peak activity (1968-69), in one year C-7 aircraft flew 181,682 sorties (123,345 flying hours), carrying 1,325,280 passengers, and 218,386,000 lbs. of cargo. Most of the destination airstrips of the C-7 in the 1971 time period were along the borders of Laos and Cambodia with South Vietnam and were firebases or Special Forces out-posts.

1966



Medal of Honor

11 March 1966

Major Bernad F. Fisher, flying an A-1E Skyraider was diverted from a routine mission to Ashau, where a Special Forces camp was being overrun by over 2,000 North Vietnamese troops. Major



Dafford W. Myers' A-1E was hit and crash landed on the airstrip, where he ran to seek refuge. Major Fisher made a perilous landing on the steel planking runway, which was torn up and littered with debris. He taxied under fire, and stopped as the downed pilot dashed from hiding and climbed aboard Major Fisher's A1-E. Major Fisher took off to safety despite many hits on his aircraft by small arms fire.



Medal of Honor

11 April 1966

A1C William H. Pitsenbarger sacrificed his life to save nine others. As a pararescueman, he voluntarily organized and coordinated rescue efforts at the scene, evacuating American casualties from a



dense jungle area. When the last of the wounded had been assisted, the hovering rescue helicopter was hit by enemy fire and forced to leave for an emergency landing. A1C Pitsenbarger volunteered to stay behind to tend the wounded amid heavy mortar and sniper fire. He continually exposed himself to intense automatic fire while collecting weapons for use by remaining defenders. Even after he'd been incapacitated by his wounds, A1C Pitsenbarger continued directing defensive efforts.

1966



Medal of Honor

24 February 1967

Flying an unarmed and unarmored O-1 Bird Dog aircraft near Di Linh, South Vietnam, forward air controller Captian Hilliard A. Wilbanks, attacked a large body of Vietcong, who had ambushed a numer-

ically inferior force of South Vietnamese rangers. Repeatedly flying over the enemy force, Captain Wilbanks used smoke rockets and a rifle to draw the fire of the enemy force and interrupt its advance. On his third pass, he was severely wounded and crashed in the battle area. He sacrificed his life to protect the withdrawing rangers.



Medal of Honor

10 March 1967

Captain Merlyn H. Dethlefsen, with three other F-105 Thunderchiefs, flew a mission against the steel works at Thai Nguyen, 50 miles north of Hanoi.

They were to attack the surface-to-air missile complex and other ground defenses ahead of an approaching strike force of fighter-bombers. On the first pass one F-105 was shot down and one forced to withdraw. Capt. Dethlefsen continued the attack and his F-105 was seriously damaged. Nonetheless, he made repeated strikes with his wing man against the defense positions even after they became obscured with smoke and dust from bombs dropped by the fighter bombers. Evading a second MiG, Capt. Dethlefsen, diving through obscuring haze, his aircraft damaged by flak, located and effectively destroyed the two missile sites.



1967



Medal of Honor

19 April 1967

Major Leo K. Thorsness earned the Medal of Honor for protecting a mission to rescue downed airmen in North Vietnamese territory. Flying an F-105 Thunderchief critically low on fuel, Major Thorsness shot down one MiG-

17, damaged another, and drove off three more. Despite his urgent need for fuel, Major Thorsness elected to recover at a forward operating base, allowing another aircraft in emergency condition to refuel from an aerial tanker. Shortly after this incident, Thorsness was shot down, captured, and held prisoner until his release on 4 March, 1973.

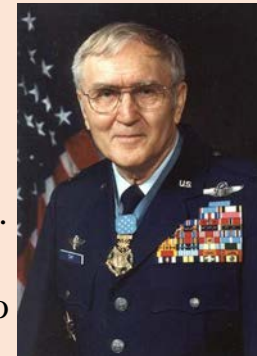


Medal of Honor

26 August 1967

The North Vietnamese captured Major George E. (Bud) Day, after shooting down his F-100 Super Sabre aircraft. Severely wounded, he was taken to a prison camp for interrogation and torture. De-

spite his crippling injuries, Major Day escaped and evaded the enemy for two weeks. He had crossed the demilitarized zone and come within two miles of a Marine Corps base when he was shot and recaptured. Back in prison and in poor health, he continued to resist his captors until he was released in 1973.



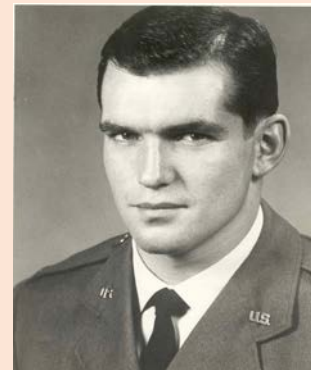
1967



Medal of Honor

9 November 1967

Captain Lance P. Sijan, ejected from his F-4C Phantom over North Vietnam and although seriously wounded, successfully evaded capture for more than six weeks.



The enemy finally captured him, but the severely weakened and injured pilot managed to escape. Recaptured and tortured, he contracted pneumonia and died in captivity. Up to the time of his death, he still talked of escape. Captain Sijan is the first Air Force Academy graduate to receive the Medal of Honor.



Medal of Honor

9 November 1967

After flying into an area where two rescue helicopters had already been lost, enemy gunners shot down an HH-3E helicopter piloted by Captain



Gerald O. Young, during efforts to rescue an Army reconnaissance team near Khe Sanh, Republic of Vietnam. Captain Young survived the upside down crash, and although badly burned, he aided another wounded crewman. Later, he attempted to divert hostile forces from the crash site. Refusing rescue because of proximity to enemy forces, he successfully evaded capture for 17 hours before finally being evacuated.

1967

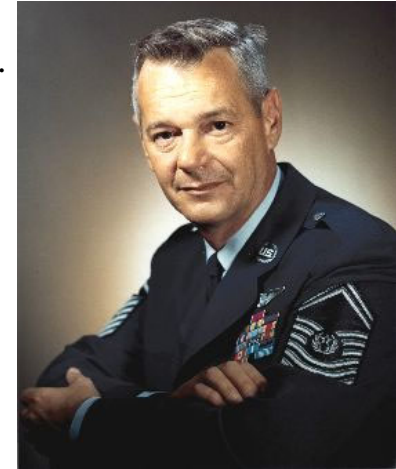
2 January: In Operation BOLO, F-4 Phantom pilots of the 8th Tactical Fighter Wing shot down seven MiG-21s over the Red River Valley, North Vietnam. Colonel Robin Olds, 8th Tactical Fighter Wing commander, shot down a MiG-21, to become the only USAF ace with aerial victories in both WWII and Vietnam.

3 April: Paul W. Airey became the first Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force. As the highest-ranking enlisted member, he advised USAF leadership on enlisted issues.



Major General Foulois

25 April: Major General Benjamin D. Foulois died. November 1909 to April 1911, Lieutenant Foulois was the only pilot in the heavier-than-air division of the U.S. Army. In charge of the Army's first aircraft, he taught himself to fly. Much early aircraft development and flying unit organization can be attributed to Foulois. He was also one of the early crusaders for a separate air arm.



*1st Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force,
Chief Airey*



Major Robert Lawrence Jr.

8 December: Major Robert Lawrence, Jr., died in a tragic plane crash. Major Lawrence was America's first African-American Astronaut. He was part of the military space program in the 1960s, but before he could fly in space he died in an F-104 Starfighter crash at Edwards Air Force Base, California.

Although he never made it into space, he pioneered the way for future black astronauts.

1967



Medal of Honor

11 March 1968

Chief Master Sergeant Richard L. Etchberger was crew chief of a radar team manning a top secret Lima Site 85 when the base was overrun by enemy ground forces. Despite having little combat training, Chief



Etchberger held off the enemy while simultaneously directing air strikes into the area and calling for air rescue. He left his safe position and braved enemy fire to place three wounded technicians in helicopter slings. With his remaining crew safely aboard, Etchberger finally climbed into the rescue sling, but was tragically hit by enemy ground fire, fatally wounding him.



Medal of Honor

12 May 1968

Lieutenant Colonel Joe M. Jackson landed his C-123 Provider aircraft at a special forces camp being overrun by the enemy. Earlier rescue attempts for a three man team that had been inad-



vertently left behind had failed. Lt. Col Jackson rapidly descended from 9,000 feet, making an assault landing under heavy enemy fire. After he stopped, a rocket fell in front of the transport, a dud, bounced harmlessly off the nose of the aircraft without exploding. After the team was secured, he took off under a mortar barrage and intense automatic weapons fire. Upon landing at Da Nang the crew found that not a single bullet had touched their aircraft during the entire flight.

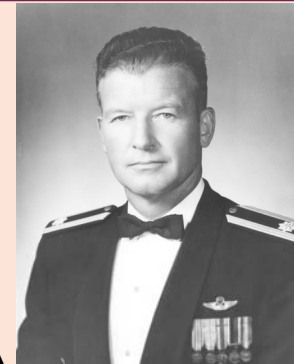
1968



Medal of Honor

1 September 1968

Serving as the on-scene commander during the attempted rescue of a downed American pilot, Lieutenant Colonel William A. Jones III, repeatedly flew his A



-1H Skyraider aircraft over enemy gun emplacements, sustaining heavy damage and severe burns. Discovering that his radio transmitters were inoperative, Col Jones refused to egress his crippled aircraft and, in extreme pain, chose to fly back to base, where he reported the downed pilot's location. He insisted on passing the vital information before receiving medical treatment. The downed pilot was rescued later that day.



Medal of Honor

26 November 1968

Piloting a UH-1F helicopter, First Lieutenant James P. Fleming, already low on fuel, twice exposed his aircraft to intense hostile fire while rescuing a special



forces reconnaissance patrol. His transport helicopter, one left of three, returned safely to Duc Co, arriving with nearly empty fuel tanks.

1968

29 February: Colonel Jeanne M. Holm, Director of Women in the Air Force, and Colonel Helen O-Day, assigned to the Office of the Air Force Chief of Staff, became the first USAF women promoted to the permanent rank of colonel under the public law that removed restrictions on promoting women to higher ranks in all the armed services.

1968: Ruth Alice Lucas became the first female African American Air Force Colonel. She enlisted in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) in 1942. She said in an Ebony Magazine interview, "Most people don't realize that among all the servicemen who enter the military annually, about 45,000 of them read below the fifth-grade level, and more than 30 percent of these men are black...Right now if I have any aim, it's just to reach these men, to interest them in education and to motivate them to continue on." Throughout her Air Force career, she was instrumental in organizing and implementing education and counseling programs.



Colonel Ruth Alice Lucas

1968



Medal of Honor

24 February 1969

An enemy mortal shell struck an AC-47 gunship on which A1C John L. Levitow served as loadmaster during a night mission in support of a South Vietnamese army post. Alt-

hough seriously wounded and stunned, Airman Levitow flung himself on a smoking magnesium flare that was rolling in the cargo compartment, dragged it to an open cargo door, and threw it out of the aircraft. Almost immediately the flare ignited. Levitow became the fourth enlisted Airman awarded the Medal of Honor.

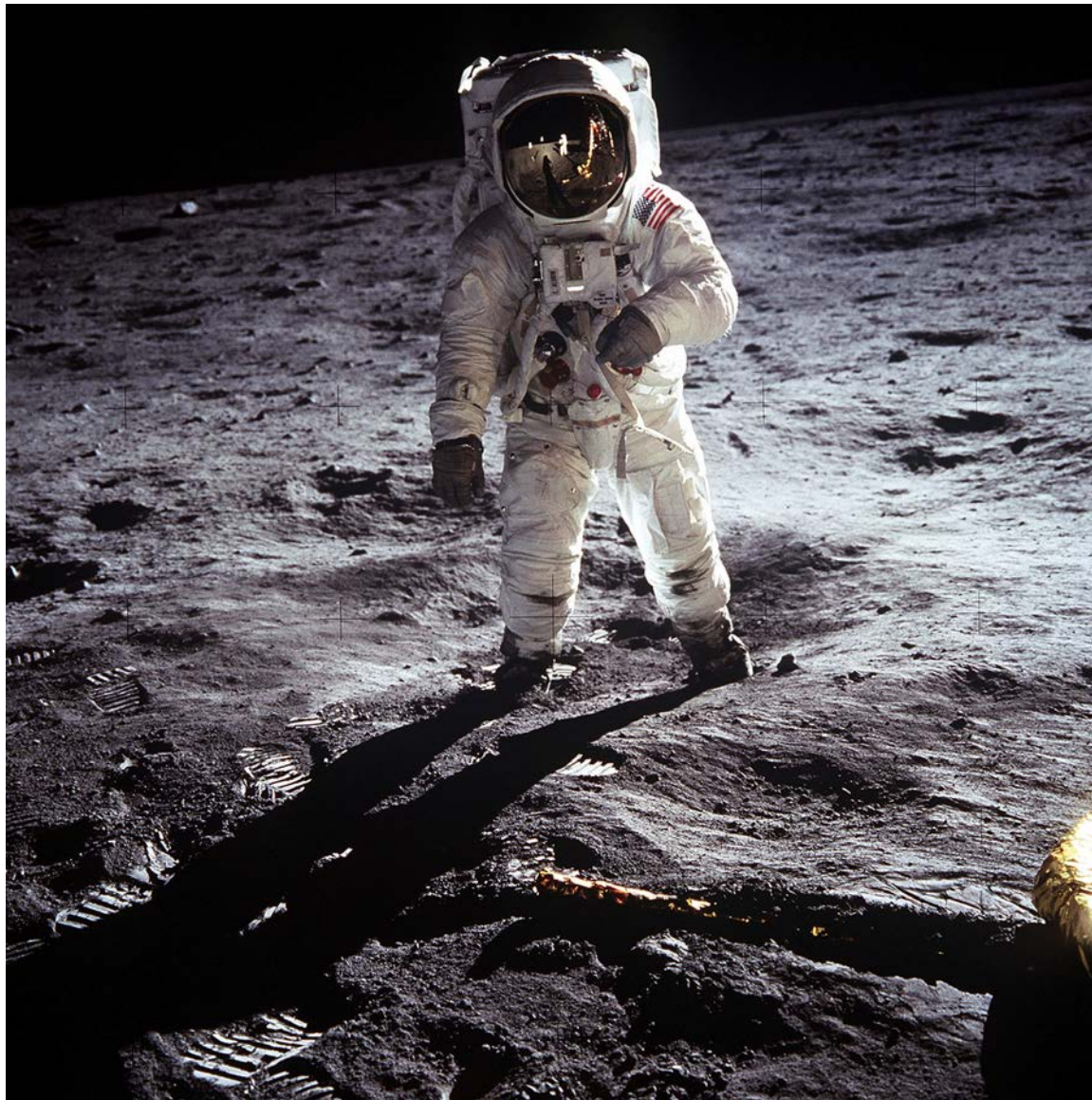


8 July: C-141 Starlifters airlifted the first of 25,000 troops withdrawn from Southeast Asia under President Richard M. Nixon's Vietnamization policy, flying them from Vietnam to McChord Air Force Base, Washington.

5-7 December: The Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service coordinated one of the longest search and rescue missions during the war. Over the course of 51 hours, the search and rescue task force flew 336 sorties searching for a downed F-4C "Boxer 22" that had gone down in Laos. The pilot was never recovered but First Lieutenant Woodrow Bergeron, Jr., the navigator, was rescued.

31 December: During the year, Strategic Air Command accomplished the most air refuelings for any year during the war: 138,164. The aircraft flew approximately 28m,000 sorties and transferred around 1.4 billion pounds of fuel.

1969



20 July: Four days after launching from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida and a few hours after the landing of the lunar module, *Apollo 11* crew members Neil Armstrong, a civilian, and Colonel Edwin E. Aldrin, Jr., USAF, became the first men to walk on the Moon. At the same time, Lieutenant Colonel Michael Collins, USAF, orbited the Moon in the mission's command module.

This NASA photo shows Astronaut, Colonel Edwin E. "Buzz" Aldrin (USAF) walking on the surface of the Moon

19 August: The Air Force began airlifting relief equipment and supplies to southern Mississippi to relieve the victims of Hurricane Camille, the strongest hurricane ever to hit the United States to date. By 16 September, the Air Force had airlifted more than 5,900 tons of relief cargo, flying at least six kinds of transport aircraft.

1969

5 July: The Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps expanded to include women after test programs at Ohio State, Drake, East Carolina, and Auburn Universities proved successful.

2 June 1970: U.S. Air Forces Southern Command personnel and aircraft from Howard Air Force Base and Albrook Air Force Base, Canal Zone, and C-130s from Lockbourne Air Force Base, Ohio, began disaster-relief operations for victims of a devastating earthquake in Peru that killed 70,000 and left 800,000 homeless. In 31 days, crews airlifted 1.5 million pounds of supplies and equipment and 2,827 passengers: they also made 501 medical evacuations—all while operating under practically bare-base conditions, 1,500 miles from their home base.

6 June: General Jack J. Catton, commander of Military Airlift Command, accepted delivery of the first C-5 Galaxy for operational use in the Air Force. At the time, the C-5 was the largest operational airplane in the world.



C-5 Galaxy in original White and Gray paint scheme.

27 September-28 October: USAF transports participated in Operation FIG HILL, carrying 200 medical personnel, two mobile military hospitals, and more than 186 tons of medical equipment and supplies, water-purification equipment, food, tents and vehicles to Jordan after its military forces clashed with Palestinian Liberation Organization forces residing in the country.

18 November-16 December: C-141 and C-130 cargo aircraft airlifted more than 140 tons of relief equipment and supplies from the United States and from U.S. bases in the Far East to East Pakistan after a cyclone flooded the country. Some of the flights covered almost 10,000 miles.

1970

22 January: The USAF began transfer to the VNAF control of the military Tactical Air Control System in South Vietnam.

27 January: The first increment of a 64-man Air Training Command mobile training team is deployed to Vietnam to assist in the establishment of 17 basic maintenance training courses. The courses form the foundation of training to support further expansion of the Vietnamese Air Force capabilities.

10 April: Air Training Command completed shipment of 872 trainers to Southeast Asia under Project Pacer Bravo in support of the South Vietnamese Air Force improvement and modernization program.

31 July: The first class of Vietnamese students under the Vietnamization Program completed the Undergraduate Pilot Training course at Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi.

12 October: President Richard Nixon announced that the U.S. would withdraw 40,000 troops from South Vietnam by 1 December 1970.



MC-130E and 6 helicopters in formation, in commemoration of Son Tay Rescue Attempt

21 November: A special task force of Air Force and Army volunteers attempted to rescue American servicemen from the Son Tay Prisoner of War Camp, 20 miles west of Hanoi. Brigadier General Leroy J. Manor, USAF commanded the operation, while Colonel Arthur D. Simons, Army, led the search-and-rescue team. Unfortunately, the prisoners had been moved elsewhere. Although the raid rescued no prisoners, it did cause North Vietnam to gather POWs in fewer locations to prevent similar raids, making POW communication and organization easier. Also, POW morale absolutely soared.

31 December: During the year, Strategic Air Command refueling operations in Southeast Asia declined to the lowest level in five years. The KC-135s flew approximately 19,540 sorties and transferred 888.2 million pounds of fuel, and by this time only forty-eight refuelers were in the Western Pacific.

1970

17 March: Jane Leslie Holley became the first woman commissioned through the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps program.

16 July: Jeanne M. Holm, Director of Women of the Air Force, was promoted to brigadier general, becoming the first woman general in the Air Force.

6 August: Captain Marcelite J. Harris—became the First female aircraft maintenance officer. Most Air force aircraft maintenance jobs were not open to females until the early 1970s. Captain Harris became an aircraft maintenance officer with the 49th Tactical Fighter squadron, Korat Royal Thai Air Force Base, Thailand. She became the first female Deputy Commander for Maintenance (DCM) in 1986 at Keesler Air Force Base, MS.



*Major General Marcelite J. Harris
Director of Maintenance, Deputy Chief of Staff, Logistics,
HQ USAF, Washington, DC. (1995)*

1971

February: The USAF launched Operation LOUISVILLE SLUGGER which destroyed 5 surface-to-air missile sites, 15 surface-to-air missile transporters, and 15 vehicles in the Ban Karai, North Vietnam area. The Air Force also began extensive use of laser-guided bombs to destroy enemy gun emplacements, tanks, and vehicles.

8 February: Operation LAM SON 719, South Vietnamese forces invaded Laos. Although ground U.S. ground forces were prohibited from going into Laos, the Air force supported this operation with interdiction, reconnaissance, supply and rescue missions. The USAF also provided large, high-explosive (up to 15,000 pounds) “daisy cutter” bombs to create landing zones for helicopters.



Bomb Live Unit-82/B (BLU-82/B)
This bomb would clear a landing zone of about 260 feet in diameter.
Delivered by C-130 with normal parachute cargo extraction systems.
(This BLU 82 is on display at the NMUSAF)

1971

June 1972: Lucius Theus was appointed Special Assistant for Social Actions, Directorate of Personnel Plans, Deputy Chief of Staff, Personnel, HQ U.S. Air Force. In the late 1960s and early 1970s race riots occurred in all the services. The boiling point in the Air Force was the Travis Air Force Base riot on 25 May 1971. In response to the racial tensions in the military, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird established a Department of Defense interservice task force on Education in Race Relations. The task force was chaired by Colonel Lucius Theus, an African American USAF officer. Recommendations of the task force led to establishment of the Defense Race Relations Institute and a Department of Defense-wide education program in race relations.



Major General Lucius Theus

1972



Medal of Honor

29 June 1972

While on an artillery adjustment mission for U.S. naval vessels, forward air controller Captain Steven L. Bennett, and his observer received an urgent call for assistance. A small



south Vietnamese unit was about to be attacked by a much larger enemy force. Capt. Bennett decided to strafe the advancing enemy. After the OV-10 Bronco's fifth attack, they sustained crippling damage from a surface-to-air missile and the observer's parachute was shredded. Captain Bennett, knowing that the observer could not bail out, ditched the OV-10 in the Gulf of Tonkin. Capt. Bennett, trapped in his smashed cockpit, sank with the plane. His body was recovered the next day, but his observer survived.

17 February: Air Force One, a VC-137 Stratoliner aircraft of the 89th Military Airlift Wing, carried President and Mrs. Richard M. Nixon on their historic trip to China.

29-30 March: More than 200,000 North Vietnamese launch the Easter Invasion of South Vietnam. Restrictions on U.S. air power are lifted, which leads to Operation LINEBACKER, the bombing of southern North Vietnam, beginning 10 May.

28 August: Captain Richard S. "Steve" Ritchie, with his weapons system officer Captain Charles B. DeBellevue earned his fifth and sixth aerial victories, becoming the leading ace of the Vietnam War.

23 October: Linebacker I, B-52 operations against North Vietnam are curtailed.

18-29 December: After the North Vietnamese terminated peace negotiations in Paris, President Richard M. Nixon directed the resumption of full-scale bombing and mining in North Vietnam, LINEBACKER II, an effort to force them back to the peace table. (there was a 24-hour pause for Christmas)

30 December: President Nixon order a halt to the LINEBACKER II bombing and announces that peace talks will resume in Paris on 8 January 1973.

1972

8 January: Captain Paul D. Howman and First Lieutenant Lawrence W. Kullman, flying an F-4D Phantom, scored the last aerial victory of the Vietnam War when they shot down a MiG southwest of Hanoi, North Vietnam, with a radar-guided AIM-7 missile.

27 January: In Paris, North Vietnam and the United States signed an “Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace to Vietnam.” The cease-fire was set to begin on 29 January.

12 February: Military Airlift Command aircraft and crews initiated Operation HOMECOMING, flying the first 590 released American prisoners of war from Hanoi, North Vietnam to Clark Air Base in the Philippines. The operation concluded on 9 April.



American POWs leaving Hanoi on a C-141.

When the aircraft left the ground, they knew they were really free.

28 March: The last USAF aircraft departed South Vietnam.

15 July: An A-7D Corsair II of the 354th Tactical Fighter Wing, based in Thailand, flew the last combat mission of the Southeast Asian War.

1973

1 October: Chief Master Sergeant Thomas N. Barnes became the first African American Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force (CMSAF). The CMSAF is senior enlisted advisor to the Air Force Chief of Staff and Secretary of the Air Force.

Chief Barnes said, “I’d like to be remembered as a role model for people who believe they can’t get there, It was an honor to have been chosen [as CMSAF] on the basis of my qualifications, as opposed to my race or my gender.”



15 May: Operation AUTHENTIC ASSISTANCE began. In six months, USAF aircraft airlifted 9,250 tons of food, seed grain, medical supplies, and vehicles to and within the African countries of Mali, Chad, and Mauritania to relieve the victims of drought and famine.

20 August: The United States began an airlift of 2,400 tons of relief equipment and supplies to Pakistan for the victims of flooding. The airlift involved the resources of Military Airlift Command, Tactical Air Command, and the Air Force Reserve.

1973

16 - 19 January: The 48th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron evacuated 93 people from flooded areas near Pinehurst, Idaho.

5 February: Lieutenant Colonel James G. Rider, lightweight fighter program test director, became the first USAF pilot to fly the F-16.

26 February: The A-10A prototype fired its GAU-8/Avenger gun for the first time during an inflight test at Edwards Air Force Base, California.

14 July: General Carl “Tooe” Spaatz, the first CSAF, died at Walter Reed General Hospital at age 83. He was interred at the Air Force Academy.



Chief Master Sergeant Fred Archer retired from the Air Force in 1974. He was the first African American Airman to wear the highest enlisted rank. Chief Archer was a veteran of three wars; WWII, Korea and Vietnam.

1974

November 1974: Captain Lloyd W. “Fig” Newton was selected to become the first African American Thunderbirds pilot. He held several positions including narrator, slot pilot and right wingman.

He had previously flown 269 combat missions from Da Nang Air Base, South Vietnam, including 79 missions over North Vietnam.

24 March: General Newton became commander of Air Education and Training Command (AETC).



*Capt. Lloyd W. Newton with the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds
Demonstration Team - flying T-38 aircraft.*

1974

25 March: The United States organized an airlift to evacuate about 10,000 people a day from Da Nang, South Vietnam. Communist forces had completely cut land routes between this coastal provincial city and the rest of the country.

3 April: Operation BABYLIFT began with aircraft delivering supplies to Saigon carrying Vietnamese orphans to the United States on their return flights. The operation began tragically when a USAF C-5 Galaxy carrying more than 200 orphans suffered an emergency and crashed, 155 of the 330 people on board were killed. While the crash slowed the evacuation, the operation ultimately brought more than 2,600 orphans out of Vietnam.

Lt. Col. Regina Aune (USAF Ret), Aryn Lockhart, and CMSGT Ray Snedegar (USAF Ret), in Vietnam, 2015. Aune was chief medical officer, Snedegar was load-master on the ill-fated C-5, and Lockhart is one of the surviving orphans from the Operation BABYLIFT crash.



12 April: Operation EAGLE PULL, Marine Corps and USAF helicopters, escorted by USAF fighters and gunships, performed the final aerial evacuation of 287 people from Phnom Penh, capital of Cambodia, which was surrounded by advancing Communist forces. The city fell on 17 April to the Khmer Rouge.

29 April: By this date, in Operation NEW LIFE, the Air Force had evacuated by air more than 45,000 people from Saigon, South Vietnam, including some 5,600 U.S. citizens, on 201 C-141 and 174 C-130 sorties.

29 April: Operation FREQUENT WIND began. Marine Corps, Navy, and USAF helicopters took part in this final evacuation of Saigon, South Vietnam, which concluded on 30 April, when Saigon fell to enemy forces. More than 6,000 evacuees were airlifted from the capital in two days.

29 April-16 September: During Operation NEW ARRIVALS, 251 C-141 and C-130 flights, and 349 commercial flights airlifted more than 120,000 Indochinese refugees from Pacific island staging areas to the United States.

1975

1 September: Daniel “Chappie” James, Jr., became the first African American to wear four stars in any branch of the U.S. Military. He served in WWII, Korea and Vietnam Wars.

As Vice Wing Commander of the 8th Tactical fighter Wing, Ubon Royal Thai AFB, he led a flight into the legendary Bolo MiG sweep in the Vietnam War, resulting in seven MiG 21s destroyed.



As Commander of the 7272d Fighter Training Wing at Wheelus AB, Libya, Colonel James had an intense showdown with Muammar Gaddafi in 1969.

Libya, under Gaddafi closed all foreign military bases. Gaddafi’s forces attempted to push the Air Force into leaving before the deadline, and possibly gain some equipment. James stood his ground. “Their face-to-face standoff became an Air Force legend. As the final days for Wheelus approached, Qaddafi ran a column of half-tracks through the base housing area at full speed. James shut the gate to prevent further passage and met Qaddafi a few yards outside the barrier. The US commander noted that the Libyan had a fancy gun in a holster strapped to his leg. As the pair talked Qaddafi moved his hand onto the grip of the weapon. James, who had a .45 in his belt recalled ‘I told him to move his hand away. If he had pulled that gun, he never would have cleared his holster.’” Colonel James successfully removed all people and assets from Wheelus AB, overseeing closure of the base as required.

General James said “In my home, the 11th Commandment was ‘I shall not quit.’ We were not allowed to give up. After you prove that you have given 110 percent, [my father] would say, ‘Good, let’s start over’.”

1975

28 June: Joan Olsen became the first woman cadet to enter the Air Force Academy and the first woman to enter any of the three Department of Defense service academies. One hundred fifty seven women joined the Cadet Wing that day as the first women were admitted to the Air Force Academy. Ninety seven of the original female cadets completed the program and graduated on 28 May 1980.



Women cadets, part of the Air Force Academy first class to include women.

29 September: The first of two groups of 10 women pilot candidates entered undergraduate pilot training at Williams Air Force Base, Arizona—the first time since World War II that women could train to become pilots of U.S. military aircraft.

1976

9 January: The first operational F-15 Eagle, a new air-superiority fighter aircraft, arrived at the 1st Tactical Fighter Wing, Langley Air Force Base, Virginia. The F-15 was the first fighter to have a thrust greater than its weight, allowing it to accelerate while going straight up.



F-15s at Langley AFB, VA.



22 March: The first A-10 Thunderbolt was delivered to Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, for test and evaluation.

4 February-30 June: Using C-5s, C-141s, and C-130s, the Air Force airlifted 927 tons of relief equipment and supplies to Guatemala after a severe earthquake. The aircraft also transported 696 medical, engineering, and communications personnel. The effort was called Operation EARTHQUAKE.

23 May-9 June: After Typhoon Pamela hit Guam, USAF aircraft airlifted 2,652 tons of relief equipment and supplies to the island.

1976

31 January-8 February: In Operation SNO GO, C-5s, C-141s, and C-130s airlifted 1,160 tons of snow-removal equipment and 430 passengers after more than 100 inches of snow fell on western New York and Pennsylvania, paralyzing Buffalo and Pittsburgh.

23 March: Tactical Air Command's first E-3A Sentry aircraft arrived at Tinker Air Force Base, Oklahoma. The Sentry, the Air Force's first airborne warning and control system aircraft, carried a large rotating radar disk above its fuselage.

E-3 Sentry, Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS). The rotating radar dome is 30 feet in diameter and six feet thick. The radar has a range of more than 250 miles and can detect, identify, and track enemy and friendly aircraft.



27-30 March: Following the collision of two Boeing 747 airliners with a total of 643 passengers at Tenerife, Canary Islands, a United States Air Forces in Europe C-130 transported medical personnel to Tenerife and airlifted 56 crash survivors to Las Palmas, Canary Islands. A Military Airlift Command C-141 airlifted the survivors on to various locations in the United States for medical treatment.

12 October: The first class of USAF women navigators graduated, with three of the five assigned to Military Airlift Command aircrews.

1977

8-17 February: In Operation SNOW BLOW II, USAF aircraft airlifted 2,339 tons of snow-removal equipment, generators, communications gear, and more than 1,000 passengers after a severe snowstorm in southern New England.



22 February: An Atlas booster launched the first NAVSTAR Global Positioning System (GPS) satellite from Vandenberg Air Force Base, CA. A “constellation” of such satellites revolutionized navigation. Over the next seven years, the Air Force successfully launched ten developmental GPS satellites, which were controlled from Vandenberg Air Force Base.

Artist rendition of an early GPS satellite. The GPS constellation consists of a group of satellites that provide navigation data to military and civilian users all over the world.

18 August: Airman First Class Tina M. Ponzer from the 381st Strategic Missile Wing became the first female Airman to perform a Titan II alert as part of a missile launch crew.

22-29 November: Three HH-53 super Jolly Green Giant helicopters of the 55th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron airlifted 911 bodies from a mass suicide in Jonestown to Georgetown, Guyana. HC-130s refueled the helicopters as they shuttled between the sites. At Georgetown the bodies were transferred to C-141 Starlifter aircraft, which transported them to the United States.

8-9 December: As a result of political tensions and disturbances in Iran, Military Airlift Command airlifted some 900 evacuees from Tehran to bases in the United States and Germany. The airlift included 11 C-141 and C-5 missions. Some 5,700 U.S. and third-country nationals left Iran on regularly scheduled Military Airlift Command flights until Iran’s revolutionary government closed the airport in February 1979.

1978



F-16 Fighting Falcon

6 January: The 388th tactical Fighter Wing at Hill Air Force Base, Utah, received the first General Dynamics F-16 delivered to the Air Force. The F-16, the newest multirole fighter, could perform strike as well as air-superiority missions.

31 March: Major James E. McArdle, Jr., and his four-man crew in an H-3 helicopter hoisted 28 Taiwanese seaman shipwrecked in the Yellow Sea after their ship ran aground.

31 March: After a nuclear power-plant accident at Pennsylvania's Three-Mile Island on 28 March, USAF aircraft airlifted testing equipment, lead-shielding material and chemicals to the area.

31 August: The Air Force began flying relief missions to victims of Hurricanes David and Fredrick, which hit several islands in the West Indies before striking the United States. By 21 November the Air Force had delivered more than 2,900 tons of disaster-relief cargo to the Caribbean.

15-22 September: In one of the largest aerial fire-fighting operations to date, eight C-130s from the Air Force Reserve and from National Guard units in California And Wyoming flew 254 sorties to drop 732,000 gallons of fire-suppressant liquid over massive fires in southern California.

19-21 October: Two C-141 Starlifter aircraft equipped for aeromedical evacuation transported 38 severely burned U.S. Marines from Yokota Air Base, Japan to Kelly Air Force Base, Texas, following a fire that swept through the enlisted men's barracks at the Mount Fuji marine Corps base.

1979

1979: Colonel Guion S. Bluford, Jr., became an astronaut. He was the first African American Air Force officer to fly into space.

Guion “Guy” Bluford decided he wanted to be an aerospace engineer in high school. He entered the Penn State University aerospace engineering program in 1964 through the ROTC program. His interest in aircraft and flight led to a commission, pilot training, and wings in 1966. He flew with the 557th Tactical Fighter Squadron out of Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam, logging more than 140 combat missions. After Vietnam, he served in various positions and also earned his master’s degree and a doctorate in aerospace engineering from the Air Force Institute of Technology at Wright-Patterson AFB, OH. He eventually applied for the astronaut corps in 1977. Of approximately 8,000 applicants, Colonel Bluford was one of 35 selected. He went on to fly on four NASA space shuttle missions.



Colonel Bullford



*Commander's view, inside
the Space Shuttle Crew
Compartment Trainer (on
display at the NMUSAF)*

1979



24 April 1980: President James E. “Jimmy” Carter aborted Operation EAGLE CLAW, an elaborate attempt to rescue more than 100 U.S. citizens being held as hostages in Tehran since 4 November 1979. Three of eight special-operations helicopters suffered mechanical problems and had to be abandoned or withdrawn. In the subsequent withdrawal operation, an RH-53 helicopter rotor blades collided with a fuel-laden EC-130, resulting in an explosion that killed eight men and destroyed both aircraft. The remaining helicopters were abandoned in the Iranian desert and everyone else evacuated the area on the EC-130s.

A number of significant lessons were learned from Operation EAGLE CLAW, which led to the establishment of the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) and its USAF component, the Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC).

*Iran Rescue Mission Memorial at Arlington National Cemetery. In honor of:
U.S. Marine Corps; Sgt John D. Harvey, CPL George N. Holmes Jr., SSgt Dewey L. Johnson. U.S. Air force; Maj Richard L. Bakke, Maj Harold L. Lewis Jr., TSgt Joel C. Mayo, Maj Lyn D. McIntosh, Capt Charles T. McMillan*

1980

18 May-5 June: Following the eruption of Mount Saint Helens in northwest Washington State, the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service, Military Airlift Command, and the 9th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing conducted humanitarian-relief efforts. During the operation, helicopter crews lifted 61 people to safety, while SR-71 aircraft conducted aerial photographic reconnaissance to assist rescue-and-recovery efforts.



Mount St. Helens erupts, 18 May 1980

1 October: Operation ELF began with the deployment of four USAF E-3A airborne warning and control system (AWACS) aircraft to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, to protect Saudi airspace during the Iran-Iraq War. Three KC-135s also deployed during the operation to provide air refueling.

3 October: Piloting an HH-3 Jolly Green Giant helicopter, Captain John J. Walters, and his crew rescued 61 passengers and crewmen from the burning Dutch luxury liner *Prinsendam* in the Pacific Ocean, hoisting and airlifting them from lifeboats to a super-tanker.

1980

January-June: Operating from Corpus Christi, Texas and Little Rock Arkansas, C-130s delivered 500 tons of arms, ammunition, helicopters, and other war material to El Salvador to help the government combat left-ist guerrillas.

11 January: The Boeing Company delivered the first USAF air-launched cruise missiles to the 416th Bombardment Wing at Griffiss Air Force Base, New York. Capable of delivering a nuclear weapon to a target 1,500 miles away, the new missiles contained a terrain-contour-matching system that allowed extremely low-altitude flight to avoid detection by enemy radar.

2 May: An airborne laser destroyed an aerial target for the first time when Airborne Laser Laboratory (ALL), a modified KC-135 aircraft armed with a carbon dioxide laser, shot down a drone over White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico.



Airborne Laser Laboratory (ALL), Part of the Air Force Research Laboratory experiments. Although airborne lasers didn't go the route of being a weapon in and of itself, i.e. zapping other flying objects out of the air, laser technology derived from the ALL continues to be part of advanced weapons and targeting systems.

1981

18 June: The F-117 Nighthawk, the world's first stealth combat aircraft, flew for the first time at Tonopah Test Range, Nevada. The first F-117 unit was the 4450th Tactical Group (renamed the 37th Tactical Fighter Wing in October 1989). After achieving initial operating capability in October 1983, the aircraft saw combat during Operation JUST CAUSE in Panama and later in the Gulf Wars.



The F-117A Nighthawk over Baghdad

3 August: USAF air-traffic controllers began to man U.S. airport facilities, replacing striking federal civilian personnel. This action allowed commercial airlines to continue service despite the illegal strike.

1981

10 June: Strategic Air Command's first all-woman KC-135 crew, assigned to the 924th Air Refueling Squadron, Castle Air Force Base, California, performed a five-hour training mission that included minair refueling of a B-52 Stratofortress aircraft.

14 June: The last Argentine forces surrendered to British troops in the Falkland Islands.

1 July: United States Air forces in Europe activated the 501st Tactical Missile Wing at Royal Air Force Greenham Common, United Kingdom. This unit was the first of six Ground-launched cruise missile wings in Europe.

21 September: A B-52 Stratofortress of the 416th bombardment Wing, Griffiss Air Force Base, New York, conducted the first operational test of an air-launched cruise missile.



Air Guided Missile, AGM-86B or Air-launched cruise missile (ALCM). A small, winged missile powered by a turbofan jet engine that propels it at sustained subsonic speeds. It can carry nuclear payloads and is able to fly complicated routes to target, using terrain contour-matching and GPS navigation.

1982

1 September: The Air Force activated Space Command (an Air Force Major Command), redesignated Air Force Space Command on 15 November 1985, following activation of the United States Space Command (a joint organization) at Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado, on 23 September 1985.



Air Force Space Command emblem

1982

30 August: Lieutenant Colonel Guion S. Bluford, USAF, became the first black astronaut to journey into space, aboard *Challenger* on the eighth space-shuttle mission.

5 September: A KC-135 Stratotanker crew led by Captain Robert J. Goodman saved an F-4E Phantom and its crew over the Pacific. The KC-135 refueled the F-4 four times and towed it with the refueling boom.

23 October-9 December: After a terrorist bomb exploded at a Marine Corps barracks in Beirut, Lebanon, Military Airlift Command and Air Force Reserve cargo and aeromedical-evacuation aircraft transported 239 dead and 95 wounded Americans to the United States and Europe for burial and medical treatment.

24 October-3 November: In Operation URGENT FURY, American military forces raided the Caribbean island of Grenada to evacuate U.S. citizens, restore democracy, and eliminate a hostile Cuban/Soviet base. Military Airlift Command and Air Force Reserve aircraft flew 496 missions to transport 11,389 passengers and 7,709 tons of cargo to Grenada. Strategic Air Command tankers, Tactical Air Command fighters, as well as Air National Guard EC-130Es, supported the operation, which accomplished its triple mission.



Floodlights illuminate the flight line as members of the 82nd Airborne Division board Air Force C-141B Starlifter aircraft for deployment to Grenada during Operation URGENT FURY

1983

28 January: The Air Force Reserves accepted its first F-16 Fighting Falcon at Hill Air Force Base, Utah.

4 February: At the Sikorsky facility in West Palm Beach, Florida, the HH-60D completed its first flight.

24 February: General Charles A. Gabriel announced the selection of the F-15E as the next dual-role combat fighter.

19 March-9 April: Operation EAGLE LIFT airlifted 1,286 passengers and 1,594 tons of cargo for the deployment of three E-3A AWACS to provide aerial surveillance for Egypt and the Sudan against threats from Libya.

20 March: The 23d Tactical Fighter Wing (Flying Tigers) received the 713th and last A-10 ordered by the USAF.

25 May: A MAC C-141 flew the body of the Unknown Soldier of the Vietnam War from Travis AFB to Andrews AFB prior to its internment at Arlington National Cemetery.

7 August: The HH-60D helicopter flew its first rescue mission to save a young couple that had been stranded above 10,000 feet in the high Sierras overnight.

4 September: At Palmdale, California, Rockwell International rolled out the first B-1B (Tail No. 82-0001) for the public. 18 October, the B-1 completed its first flight.

19-21 September: An Air Force C-141 flew to Kinshasa, Zaire, to support an Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) research project conducted by the U.S. National Institute of Health. It carried three passengers and nine tones of medical supplies and equipment.



A1C Grace Wheeler, crew chief with the 23d Aircraft Maintenance Squadron performs post-flight inspection on her Flying Tigers A-10C Thunderbolt II at Red Flag.



1984

4 February: After studying the use of women in missile crews and women being members of Titan II mixed-gender launch crews since 1978, the Strategic Air Command decided to use gender-specific (all-female) crews in Minuteman units. The first class of six female Titan II launch control officers started Minuteman qualification training at Vandenberg AFB, California in October. They started alert duty with the 351st Strategic Missile Wing at Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri in March 1986.

Missileer uniform items belonging to Captain Linda S. Aldrich, one of the first two female officers to conduct Minuteman missile alert at Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri. (on display at the Warren ICBM & Heritage Museum)



25 March: The SECAF announced changes in the combat exclusion policy to allow women to serve as forward air controllers, fly and crew various models of C-130 Hercules aircraft, and to serve at munitions storage facilities.

18 October: First flight of an F-111 aircraft, with the Mission Adaptive Wing took place at Edwards Air Force Base, California.

Throughout this book, we have included representative humanitarian type missions that the Air Force has been involved with, but that has in no way been completely inclusive. Following is a list of the major humanitarian efforts of just 1985, not including hundreds of individuals that were pulled out of the ocean by Air Force rescue crews after ship wrecks.

5 January: C-141 airlifted a Sikorski S-17 helicopter to La Paz, Bolivia, to assist in search for an Eastern Airlines aircraft crash in the Andes Mountains.

18 January: Airlifted 62 tons of cargo to Sudan to relieve the plight of Ethiopian refugees.

19 January: Typhoon Eric, airlifted 186 tons of relief support to Viti Levu Island to help over 3,000 homeless.

1985

3 February: C-141s moved 500 tents from Howard AFB to Central Argentina after a 26 January earthquake destroyed the homes of nearly 12,000 people.

5-9 March: airlifted 123 tons of food and medicine as part of famine relief to Sudan, Niger, and Mali.

15 March: C-5 delivered 1,000 rolls of plastic sheeting used to create protective shelters for victims of earthquake that ravaged the coastal and interior regions of central Chile.

5 April: airlifted 10.9 tons of fire-fighting equipment, 21,000 gallons of fire retardant, and 190 fire fighters to fight a blaze covering 700 acres in the western North Carolina mountains.

21 June: C-123 aircraft sprayed an infestation of grasshoppers in southern Idaho.

4-10 July: C-141s transported 285 fire fighters and 460 tons of flame retardant to suppress forest fires in Idaho and California. C-130 aircraft flew 200 sorties to drop the flame retardant on hot spots.

12 August-15 October: C-5 aircraft delivered 35 tons of equipment, including three helicopters to assist over 2 million flood and famine stricken victims in Western Sudan. The helicopters distributed grain to victims that were cut off from road and rail transportation.

21-30 September: USAF airlift units flew more than 360 tons of relief cargo to Mexico City following massive earthquakes there. On 23 September, the 89th Military Airlift Wing transported First Lady Nancy Reagan to Mexico City to express the nation's concern and to deliver a check for \$1 million.

11 October: C-141 flew 11 American survivors from the hijacked Italian cruise ship Achille Lauro, from Cairo, Egypt to Newark Liberty International Airport in New Jersey.

9-16 October: After 16 inches of rain in 24 hours produced floods and landslides in Puerto Rico, 361 tons of recovery supplies, to include rescue teams with dogs were airlifted.

4 November: The Air Force Rescue Coordination Center saved 47 people during flood relief operations in the Shenandoah Valley, Virginia.

12 December-20 January 1986: MAC supported recovery operations after an Arrow Air DC-8 crash after takeoff in Newfoundland. C-141s returned the remains of 248 deceased 101st Airborne Division paratroopers and eight civilians, while additional airlift missions moved surviving passengers and cargo.

1985

18-22 February: The 129th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group and the 41st Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron employed four H-3 Jolly Green Giant Helicopters, two HH-53 helicopters, and three C-130 Hercules aircraft to assist flood victims of the Russian and Yuba Rivers of northern California. The Airmen evacuated 520 flood victims, saved 33 lives, and supplied over 3,000 sandbags to Army troops at the disaster site.

14-15 April: During Operation ELDORADO CANYON, 18 F-111 aircraft, refueled by KC-10 and KC-135 tankers on a long flight from England around France and Spain, bombed terrorist targets in Libya. USAF EF-111s and Navy aircraft supported the F-111s, jamming enemy radar and attacking Libyan air defenses and other targets. The air raids forced Libya to stop sponsoring terrorism for years thereafter.



F-111F Aardvark from the 495th Tactical Fighter Squadron launching from Royal Air Force Lakenheath, England in support of Operation El Dorado Canyon.

1986

28 April-7 May: Air Weather Service units supported the efforts of the United States to track the movement of radioactive contamination from the Chernobyl nuclear-reactor accident in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. WC-130 Hercules aircraft flew air-sampling missions.



In order to fly into hurricanes to take meteorological measurements, the WC-130E has more powerful engines and greater range than the conventional C-130 transport. Photo is 2017 53d Weather Reconnaissance Squadron "Hurricane Hunters" on takeoff.

19-28: Twenty-four C-141 Starlifters and eight C-130 Hercules aircraft flew 32 missions during Operation SOUTHERN HAYLIFT, supplying some 536 tons of donated hay (more than 19,000 bales) to drought-stricken farmers in several southeastern states. The operation saved hundreds of cattle as well as the livelihoods of a great many southern livestock farmers.

23 December: Richard G. Rutan and Jeana L. Yeager completed the first nonstop unrefueled flight around the world in an experimental aircraft called Voyager. They covered 24,986.7 miles after taking off from Edwards Air Force Base, California on 14 December. Dick Rutan flew 325 combat missions in Vietnam, 105 of them as a MISTY FAC (high speed Forward Air Controller). He retired from the Air Force as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1978.

1986

24 July: In Operation EARNIST WILL, the United States began providing protection to reflagged Kuwaiti oil tankers in the Persian Gulf during the Iran-Iraq War. The Air Force provided E-3 airborne warning and control system aircraft to warn of aerial threats, C-5 and C-141 aircraft to airlift minesweeping personnel and equipment to the theater, and KC-1 and KC-135 tankers to refuel escorting Navy fighters. The operation continued until 17 November 1988.

1 October: Air Force systems Command relinquished Onizuka Air force Station, California and the Air Force Satellite Control Network, a set of worldwide remote-tracking stations, to Air Force Space Command.

25 February: Following a massive political protest in the Philippines, President Ferdinand Marcos and his entourage flew into exile, via the United States Air Force, to Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii.

31 March: McDonnell-Douglas held a formal rollout ceremony for Low-Altitude Navigation & Targeting Infrared for Night (LANTIRN) equipped F-15s. When General Bill Cheech was commander of TAC, May 1978-Dec 1984, one of his imperatives was to develop the capability of air force fighters to see at night. The LANTIRN targeting pod was the first of a line of capabilities that sprung from that vision.



*F-16 equipped with a
LANTIRN
targeting pod*

1987

5 June: The USAF picked the Boeing 747-200 to become the next Air Force One.

25 August: Colonel (Dr) Thomas J. Tredici retired from the USAF School of Aerospace Medicine at Brooks Air Force Base at the age of 65, he served in three wars and was the last remaining B-17 pilot from World War II to leave active duty.

Colonel Thomas J. Tredici



3-4 January: A New Year's Eve fire at the Dupont Plaza Hotel in Puerto Rico killed 96 guests and employees and injured 106 others. The Air Force transported 21 severely burned patients and their families to New Haven, Connecticut to the Yale Burn Center for treatment.

13-15 February: Airlifted shelter, 64 tons of tents and plastic sheeting to people left homeless by Typhoon Uma in Vanuata (formerly New Hebrides).

8-13 March: Airlifted relief to Ecuadoran Earthquakes victims.

5 December 1987-January 1988: Airlifted 34 tons of relief supplies, including rice and clothing to the Philippines and Federated States of Micronesia, victims of Typhoon Nina.

1987

1 January: Strategic Air Command changed Minuteman and Peacekeeper crew-assignment policy to permit mixed male/female crews in launch facilities.

31 July: The 177th Fighter Group retired the last three F-106 Delta Darts from the USAF's active inventory.



Photo of an F-106 from the 102d Fighter Interceptor Wing of the Massachusetts Air National Guard, Otis Air Force Base, intercepting a Soviet Tu-95 Bear bomber off the eastern U.S. coast. The F-106 served as the primary interceptor aircraft for Air Defense Command throughout the 1960s, 1970s and into the 1980s.

15-28 August: Operation POST ROAD: C-5s airlifted a 500-man UN peacekeeping force from Trenton, Ontario, to Incirlik Air Base and Baghdad, Iraq. The peacekeeping force monitored the UN-negotiated ceasefire between Iran and Iraq.

10 November: The Air Force revealed the F-117 stealth fighter to the public for the first time. Manufactured by Lockheed, the F-117 could evade most radar detection with its radical shape and radar-absorbent surface.

22 November: At Palmdale, Northrop unveiled the B-2 Stealth Bomber.

9 December: For the first time, the United States flew aircraft directly to the Soviet Union without Soviet personnel on board as observers. The flights were part of the first humanitarian airlift to the Communist country, which earlier had refused such assistance. Over the course of eight weeks, Military Airlift Command aircraft and crews delivered more than 311 tons of relief cargo to victims of an earthquake in Yerevan, Armenia.

1988

27 March: The USAF began transporting more than 1,000 tons of equipment and supplies to Alaska to help clean up a 10-million-gallon oil spill from the tanker *Exxon Valdez*.

10 June: Captain Jacquelyn S. Parker became the first woman to graduate from the Air Force Test Pilot School at Edwards Air Force Base, California.

21 September-15 November: The USAF transported 4,330 tons of relief equipment and supplies to the victims of Hurricane Hugo in the Caribbean Sea and South Carolina.

30 September: Tactical Air Command declared initial operating capability for the F-15E with the 336th Tactical Fighter Squadron at Seymour-Johnson Air Force Base, North Carolina.

4 October: Operation DEEP FREEZE - C-5B landed in Antarctica for the first time to resupply the National Science Foundation's research station at McMurdo Sound.

The first C-5B to participate in Operation DEEP FREEZE landing on the Ross Sea ice runway near McMurdo Sound Station, Antarctica.

Note: Minimum takeoff weight of a C-5 is way more than half a million pounds.



The Air Force has supported Operation DEEP FREEZE, the continuous operation of the National Science Foundation in Antarctica since 1956.

1989

30 November: Strategic Air Command opened its U-2 and TR-1 pilot training program to women.

14 December: For the first time, women assumed USAF combat-crew roles as they began to serve on C-130 and C-141 airdrop missions.

17 December-14 February 1990: Operation JUST CAUSE - USAF aircraft hit military targets, airlifted troops, evacuated wounded soldiers, delivered humanitarian relief supplies, and flew special operations missions to restore democracy in Panama. F-117 Nighthawk stealth fighter-bombers flew in combat for the first time.

By **December 1989**, the despotic leader of Panama, General Manuel Noriega had pushed the United States to the limit. He refused to yield to the legitimately elected government of Panama. In addition to that, the USA had overwhelming evidence of Noriega's involvement with drug trafficking. President George H.W. Bush authorized Operation Just Cause, to remove Noriega and restore order in Panama.



After capture, General Manuel Noriega being shown to his seat by Drug Enforcement Agency agents aboard an Air Force C-130 aircraft.

1989

22 May: The Air Force redesignated Twenty-Third Air Force as Air Force Special Operations Command.

23 August: The 89th Military Airlift Wing received the first of two Boeing VC-25A presidential transport aircraft at Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland. The VC-25A was a modified 747-200B commercial transport that replaced the VC-137C for service as *Air Force One*.



Air Force One at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, 7 March 2015. President Barack Obama landed at Maxwell to speak at the 50th anniversary of the Selma to Montgomery march for voting rights.

6 March: The SR-71 retired. The bird flying to retirement at the National Air and Space Museum in Washington DC, set four speed records getting there.

1990

2 August: Iraq invaded Kuwait and quickly occupied the entire country, provoking the Southwest Asia War.

7 August: The United States launched Operation DESERT SHIELD to defend Saudi Arabia from a possible Iraqi invasion and to liberate Kuwait. Among the first deployments was a 15-hour, 8,000-mile flight of 24 F-15C Eagles from the 71st Tactical Fighter Squadron, Langley Air Force Base, Virginia, to Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, with 12 in-flight refuelings. The aircraft arrived on 8 August.

21 August: In the first two weeks of Operation DESERT SHIELD, the Air Force deployed six fighter wings to the area, while SAC increased refueling and reconnaissance flights over the region.

22 August: President George H. W. Bush authorized a 90-day call-up of 200,000 reservists for Operation DESERT SHIELD. Eventually, more than 20,000 USAF Reservists and 12,000 Air National Guard personnel served in that operation and its successor, DESERT STORM.

18-28 September: The 436th and 438th Military Airlift Wings transported 107 pallets of tents, cots, and blankets to Jordan for the relief of some 100,000 foreign workers who had fled from Kuwait because of the Iraqi invasion.

29 December: The 169th Tactical Fighter Group was the first Air National Guard unit to deploy to the Persian Gulf region for Operation DESERT SHIELD.



Ground crews prepare F-117A aircraft of the 37th Tactical Fighter Wing on the flight line in preparation to deploy to Saudi Arabia for Operation DESERT SHIELD.

1990



F-117A aircraft at Operation DESERT SHIELD deployed location.

1990

1 May: Marcelite J. Harris is promoted to brigadier general, becoming the first Air Force African American female general.

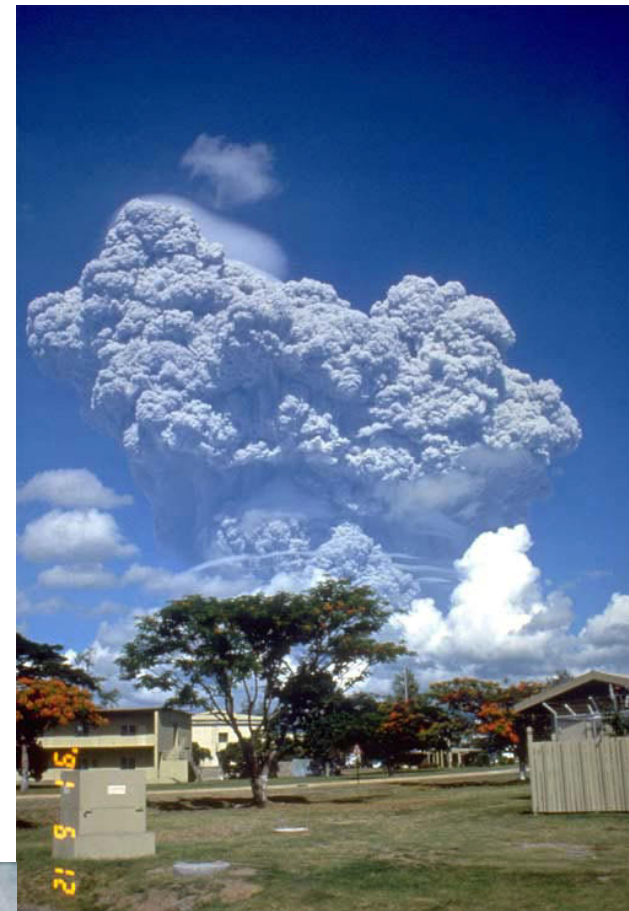
8 June-2 July: The eruption of Mount Pinatubo in the Philippines buried Clark Air Base and two other U.S. military installations with volcanic ash, forcing the Air Force to evacuate some 15,000 people to Guam and the United States. FIERY VIGIL became the largest evacuation operation since the fall of South Vietnam in 1975. Clark, Air Base in the Philippines, the oldest and largest USAF overseas base, closed permanently.

27 September: President George H. W. Bush ordered termination of Strategic Air Command's alert, initiated in October 1957, during which time crews stood ready around the clock to launch short-notice nuclear strikes. The event heralded the conclusion of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union.

17-22 December: the 436th, 438th, and 429th Military Airlift Wings flew 238 tons of food and relief supplies to Moscow and Saint Petersburg in Russia, Minsk in Byelorussia, and Yerevan in Armenia.

Air Force Art painting depicting SAC alert crew running to their B-52 for short notice launch

Klaxon Alert by Frank Sierra



Ash plumes from the volcano, Mount Pinatubo, that forced Philippine evacuations including Clark Air Force Base

1991

DESERT STORM

17 January: Operation DESERT STORM, the liberation of Kuwait from Iraqi military occupation, opened with a massive barrage of air and cruise-missile strikes against targets in Iraq and Kuwait. USAF special operations MH-53 helicopters initiated combat by leading an Army helicopter force that destroyed enemy radar sites. During the first 14 hours, aircraft from a U.S.-led coalition flew more than 1,200 combat sorties. B-52G Stratofortress crews from the 2d Bomb Wing flew from Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, to launch 35 cruise missiles against targets in Iraq and returned home, completing the longest bombing mission to date. Constituting less than 2.5 percent of all coalition aircraft, the F-117A stealth fighter-bomber successfully attacked over 31 percent of Iraqi strategic targets the first day.

28 February: Operation DESERT STORM ended at 0800 hours with a coalition declared cease-fire. During the war, coalition forces released approximately 16,000 precision-guided munitions against Iraqi forces and dropped some 210,000 unguided bombs. In 42 days of around-the-clock operations, USAF aircraft flew 59 percent of the nearly 110,000 combat sorties. U.S. aerial strength of approximately 1,990 aircraft comprised 75 percent of the total coalition air power. Extensive use of satellite technology during DESERT STORM persuaded some USAF leaders subsequently to refer to the operation as the “first space war.”



1 March-30 June: Air Force heavy lift aircraft moved more than 1,000 tons of fire-fighting equipment and 100 firemen to Kuwait City. There, the firemen battled more than 500 burning oil wells set afire by retreating Iraqi forces.

(left) F-16A Fighting Falcon, F-15C Eagle, and F-15E Strike Eagle fighter aircraft fly over burning oil fields in Kuwait during Operation DESERT STORM

1991



This information graphic was prepared by the U.S. Air Force in 2016 to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of Operation DESERT STORM

1991

10-26 February: In Operation PROVIDE HOPE I, 15 USAF wings and groups airlifted 2,274 tons of food, medical supplies, and other relief cargo to 24 cities of the Commonwealth of Independent States, which replaced the recently dissolved Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The humanitarian supplies, which came from stockpiles in Italy, the Netherlands, Germany, and the United Kingdom, relieved people suffering from a collapsed Communist economic system.

2 July: Operation PROVIDE PROMISE began, delivering food, medical supplies, and other relief cargo to Sarajevo and other communities in newly independent Bosnia-Herzegovina, which was suffering a civil war in the wake of its independence from Serbia.

25 August: A day after Hurricane Andrew smashed into southern Florida, the Air Force embarked on one of its largest domestic humanitarian-airlift operations - eventually delivering more than 21,000 tons of relief supplies and transporting more than 13,500 passengers.

*Damaged F-16 in damaged hanger at Homestead Air Force Base, Florida.
The base was devastated, all buildings damaged,
many obliterated.*



26 August: The United States launched Operation SOUTHERN WATCH to enforce United Nations sanctions against Iraq. USAF aircraft began patrolling a no-fly zone south of 32 degrees north latitude in southern Iraq to provide protection to Shiite Muslims living there and to discourage any renewed Iraqi military activity against Kuwait or Saudi Arabia.

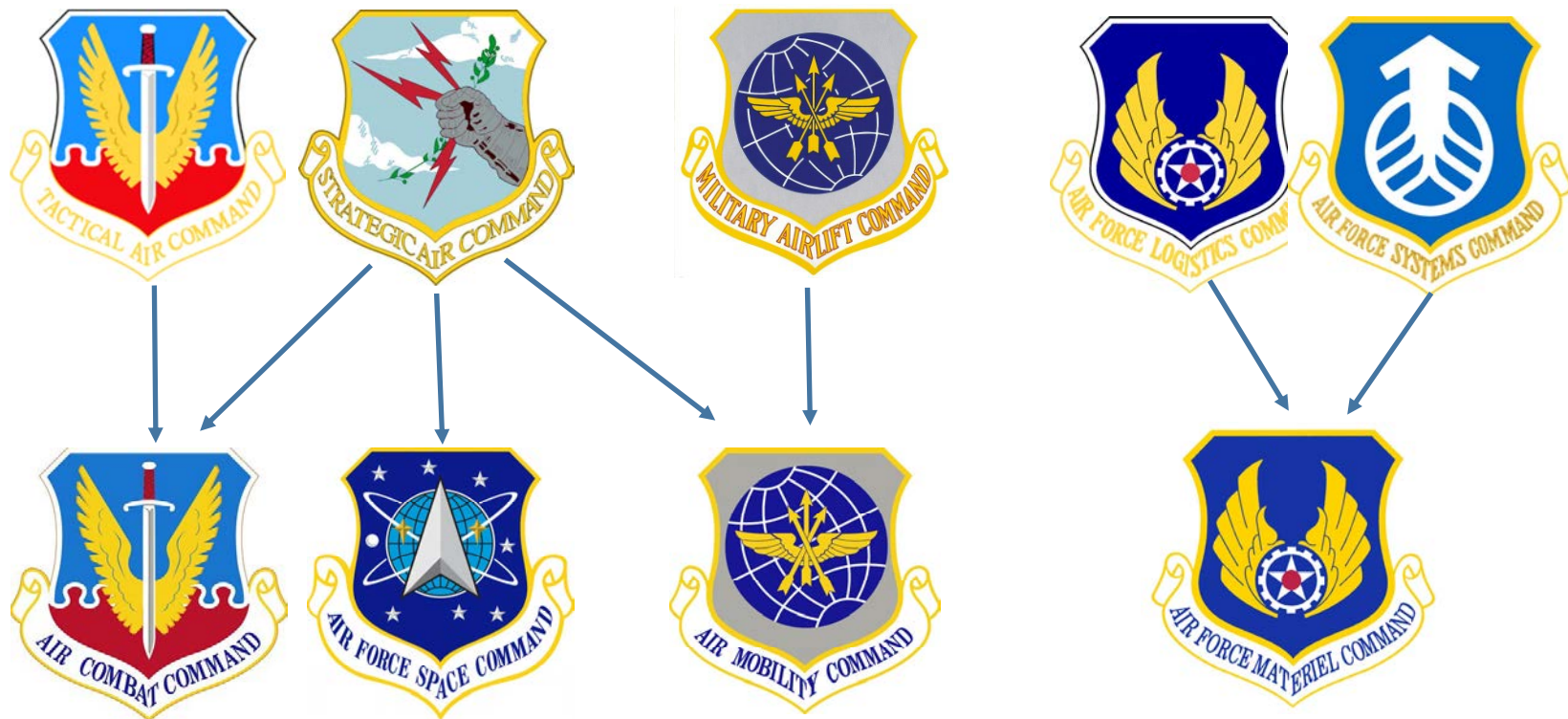
27 December: Lieutenant Colonel Gary North, 33d Fighter Squadron Commander, patrolling the southern United Nations no-fly zone in Iraq shot down an Iraqi MiG-25, scoring the first aerial victory by an F-16 Fighting Falcon. This was also the first victory using the AIM-120A advanced medium-range air-to-air missile and the first beyond visual range air-to-air victory.

1992

1 June: In a major reorganization, the Air Force inactivated Strategic Air Command, Tactical Air Command, and Military Airlift Command; it then activated Air Combat Command and Air Mobility Command. Air Combat Command received Strategic Air Command's bombers and missiles and Tactical Air Command's fighters, while Air Mobility Command inherited Military Airlift Command's transports and Strategic Air Command's tankers. Air Force Space Command assumed management responsibility for the Air Force Satellite Communications System, formerly managed by Strategic Air Command.

1 July: Continuing its reorganization, the Air Force inactivated Air Force Logistics Command and Air Force Systems Command; it then activated Air Force Materiel Command to replace them.

MAJCOMS Inactivated in 1992



New MAJCOMS Activated in 1992

*Newly activated MAJCOMS took over missions of inactivated units, per arrows.
(Note: Air Force Space Command was not a new unit, established in 1982)*

1992



13 January: Major Susan Helms, USAF, a member of the space shuttle *Endeavour* crew, became the first U.S. military woman in space.

Major General Susan Helms aboard the International Space Station (2010).

28 April: Secretary of Defense Les Aspin announced that women would be allowed to serve in combat roles, including the flying of USAF combat aircraft.

17 June: Lieutenant Colonel Patricia Fornes assumed command of the 740th Missile Squadron at Minot Air Force Base, North Dakota, becoming the first woman commander of a combat missile squadron.

6 August 1993: Dr. Sheila E. Widnall became the first woman Secretary of the Air Force and the first woman to head any of the military services.



Dr. Sheila E. Widnall, Secretary of the Air Force from 6 August 1993 to 31 October 1997.

1993

13 January: President George H. W. Bush ordered punitive air strikes against 32 Iraqi missile sites and air-defense command centers after the United States discovered an Iraqi troop foray across the newly demarcated border with Kuwait and active Iraqi surface-to-air missile sites in the no-fly zone.

12 April: The North Atlantic Treaty Organization launched DENY FLIGHT, its first combat operation, to enforce a United Nations Security Council resolution that authorized a no-fly zone over Bosnia. The U.S. Air Force provided the bulk of the resources for this operation.

14 June: The Air Force acquired its first C-17A Globemaster III transport aircraft, which was delivered to the 437th Airlift Wing at Charleston Air Force Base, South Carolina. Capable of delivering outsized cargo to a tactical environment, the Globemaster II increased the Air Force's ability to airlift to relatively small airfields, eliminating the need to shift cargo from larger to smaller transports.

*C-17A Globemaster III
Reliable and Maintainable.
170,900 lbs. max payload capacity.
This aircraft can back up on
the ground.*



17 December: The first B-2 Spirit bomber, *The Spirit of Missouri*, arrived at Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri. The B-2 essentially a flying wing, was the first “stealth” heavy bomber.



*B-2 Spirit Bomber
Stealth aircraft capable of delivering
both conventional and nuclear
munitions.*

1993

17-25 January: A major earthquake hit Los Angeles. C-5 and C-141 crews flew 270 disaster specialists and 340,000 pounds of cargo to southern California.

10 February: Lieutenant Jeannie Flynn completed training in an F-15E Eagle to become the first woman fighter pilot in the Air Force.



First Lieutenant Jeannie Flynn performing a walk around preflight inspection of an F-15E, as the first female pilot assigned to the 555th Fighter Squadron for tactical training.

1994

28 February: As part of Operation DENY FLIGHT, two F-16 Fighting Falcon pilots of the 526th Fighter Squadron shot down four Serb Jastreb-Galeb attack aircraft over Bosnia, the first combat in North Atlantic Treaty Organization history.

6 May: First Lieutenant Leslie DeAnn Crosby became the first Air Force Reserve woman fighter pilot after she graduated from an F-16 Fighting Falcon training course in Tucson, Arizona.

1 June: Major Jacqueline Parker arrived at the 174th Fighter Wing, Hancock Field, New York, to begin mission qualification training in the F-16. She was the first female F-16 pilot in the Air National Guard.

21-23 November: As part of Project SAPPHIRE, C-5s transported more than 1,300 pounds of highly enriched uranium from the former Soviet Republic of Kazakhstan to the United States to protect it from terrorists, smugglers, and unfriendly governments.

8 September: Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY/MAINTAIN DEMOCRACY. USAF airlifters and tankers began moving U.S. forces to pre-deployment locations to await President James E. Carter's order to invade Haiti. President Carter and his delegation convinced the Haitian dictator to step aside and thus avert the attack. USAF aircraft then delivered U.S. troops and equipment to Port-au Prince IAP and Cap Haitien, where they joined a multinational peacekeeping effort, Operation MAINTAIN DEMOCRACY.



*Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY/
MAINTAIN DEMOCRACY*

Air Force airlifters began moving American forces to several pre-deployed locations to await invasion orders from President Carter.

This photo shows a C-5 at Port-au-Prince, Haiti, unloading soldiers from the 10th Mountain Division.

1994

8 April: Despite being hit 12 times by small-arms fire during takeoff, a C-130 Hercules aircraft returned safely to Italy after delivering flour to Sarajevo, Bosnia, as part of Operation PROVIDE PROMISE.

2-8 June: After a surface-to-air missile downed his F-16 over Bosnia, Captain Scott O-Grady evaded capture by hostile forces for six days until he was rescued by Marine Corps helicopters.

30 August: The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) launched Operation DELIBERATE FORCE, an intensive air campaign against Serb ground targets in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Together with the Bosnian-Croatian ground offensive, the air attacks persuaded the Serbs to agree to peace terms by the end of the year.

1 November: Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, hosted the Presidents of Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia for peace talks to end war (DELIBERATE FORCE) in the former Yugoslavia. The Dayton Accord was signed in Paris, France, on 14 December 1995.



Col. Robbie Robinson, 88th ABW Commander and Gen. Henry Vicellio, AFMC Commander welcome Secretary of State Warren Christopher to Wright Patt.



The Peace Walk, a snaking sidewalk between the VOQ and the Hope Hotel at Wright-Patt, was constructed so leaders could move between the buildings with ease during the Dayton Peace accords.

8 December: Operation PROVIDE PROMISE, began with the first C-17 to land in Bosnia flew into Sarajevo with 154,000 pounds of heaters and pressed wood.

1995

January: Lieutenant Colonel Martha McSally, while deployed to Kuwait, her first A-10 flight over Iraq to enforce the no-fly zone made her the first female USAF pilot to fly in combat.

3 February: Lieutenant Colonel Eileen M. Collins, USAF, became the first woman pilot of the space shuttle.

31 March: The first woman USAF bomber pilot, Second Lieutenant Kelly Flinn, began B-52 flight training at Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana.

27 April: Air Force Space Command declared the Global Positioning System satellite constellation fully operational. The system provides accurate geographical coordinates for personnel moving on the ground, sea, or air.

29 July: Air Combat Command activated the 11th Reconnaissance Squadron at Creech AFB, NV, the first unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) unit. [Note: UAV acronym changed to remotely piloted aircraft (RPA) shortly thereafter.]



An 11th Reconnaissance Squadron MQ-1 Predator taking off while deployed to the Persian Gulf Area of Responsibility

1 September: The SR-71 returned to active service. It was retired in 1990 when strategists prematurely suggested that satellites were able to assume its mission.

14-30 September: Air Force airlifters moved more than 30 tons of medical supplies from Charleston Air Force Base, South Carolina to Hanoi, Vietnam, in the first humanitarian airlift to that country since the war ended in 1975.

28 October-18 December: In operation VIGILANT SENTINEL, the Air Force first tested the air expeditionary force concept, deploying F-16 Falcons of the 20th Fighter Wing and the 347th Wing to Bahrain to augment Southern Watch forces.

1995

9 January: After three-and-a-half years, Operation PROVIDE PROMISE officially ended. During this international operation - the longest sustained humanitarian airlift in history up to 1996 - the U.S. Air Force flew more than 4,500 sorties to deliver 62,802 metric tons of cargo to Sarajevo and other parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Altogether, aircraft from 21 nations participating in the United Nations humanitarian airlift flew nearly 13,000 sorties to deliver some 160,000 metric tones of supplies to Sarajevo.

26 March: The F-4 Phantom line retired from active service. 20 April 1996, the last F-4G Wild Weasel flew it's last operational flight from Gowen Field in Boise, Idaho to the Aircraft Maintenance and Regeneration Center (also known as the bone yard) at Davis-Monthan AFB, Arizona.



Airmen from the 86th Maintenance Squadron hoist a retired RF-4C Phantom II static display aircraft over the gate at Ramstein Air Base, Germany. The AF Heritage Program manages around 2,900 static display aircraft on loan worldwide, 185 of which are F-4 Phantoms.

1996

15 April: Interservice undergraduate navigator training became full joint as Air Force student navigators and student naval flight officers combined at Randolph AFB, Texas into a single class with a single syllabus. Later in the month, Air Force and Navy electronic warfare officer training combined at NAS Pensacola and Naval Technical Training Center at Corry Field, Florida.

5 May: Colonel Betty L. Mullis assumed command of the 940th Air Refueling Wing, becoming the first woman to command a flying wing.



25 June: Terrorists bombed the Khobar Towers near King Abdul-Aziz Air Base in Saudi Arabia, killing 19 USAF members and injuring some 300 other Americans. The Americans were participating in Operation SOUTHERN WATCH to deter Iraqi aggression against Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. As a result of the bombing, most USAF personnel in Saudi Arabia moved to remoter and more easily defended sites in the desert.

Khobar Tower housing complex in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, devastated by terrorist bomb.

2-3 September: As part of Operation DESERT STRIKE, the Air Force flew B-52 Stratofortresses to the Middle East to launch 13 cruise missiles against military targets in Iraq. This operation came in response to Iraqi troops' seizure of the city of Irbil, located in a zone protected by the United States for Kurds in northern Iraq. Tanker support made it possible for the 2d Bomb Wing B-52s to fly 13,683 miles round trip from Barksdale AFB, Louisiana on the 34-hour nonstop mission.

4 December: An F-16 Falcon soared into history above Hill AFB, Utah, by logging its five millionth hour of flying time.

1996

1 January: Operation NORTHERN WATCH replaced Operation PROVIDE COMFORT, enforcing a no-fly zone in northern Iraq above the 36th parallel of latitude.

6 January: The Air Force commissioned Abdullah Hamza Al-Mubarek, its first Muslim chaplain candidate.

19 January: A 349th Air Mobility Wing C-141 aircraft 40,000 pounds of winter clothing to Ellsworth AFB, South Dakota. From there, trucks carried the cargo to the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation at Eagle Butte, SD.

17 February: The Air Force Reserve, a field operating agency, became a major command, the Air Force Reserve Command, reflecting the growing integration of reserve and regular forces and increasing role of the Reserve in regular USAF operations.



18 February-3 March: In Operation ASSURED LIFT, the Air Force airlifted African peacekeeping forces to Liberia to restore order after a civil war there. Five C-130s from the 3d Air Expeditionary Group airlifter 1,160 peacekeepers and 452 tons of their cargo from various African countries to Liberia.

20 February: A joint vote of the Vermont's House and Senate elected Lieutenant Colonel Martha Rainville, Vermont ANG, to be its adjutant general. With a promotion to major general, she became the first woman in history of the militia and National Guard to serve as an adjutant general.

21 March: At Pensacola, Florida, Lieutenant Colonel Marcelyn A. Atwood became the first woman to command a flying training squadron and the first USAF officer to command a Navy squadron. The squadron trained both Air Force and Navy pilots.

1 April: B-2s reached initial operational capability at Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri, where six of the aircraft were initially based with the 509th Bomb Wing.

18 December 1997-14 January 1998: Air Force active, guard and reserve airlifters delivered relief supplies and equipment to Guam after Super-Typhoon Paka hit the island with winds up to 236 MPH.

30 December: Air National Guard crews airdropped 50,000 pounds of hay to cattle stranded by blizzards in southeastern New Mexico.

1997

10-14 January: In Operation RECUPERATION, C-17 aircrews from the 437th Airlift Wing at Charleston AFB, South Carolina, flew four missions to deliver snow relief supplies to eastern Canada. The Globemaster IIIs transported emergency workers and 181 tons of cargo, to include vehicles, generators, water purification equipment, field kitchens and other supplies, from Edmonton, Alberta, to Montreal, Quebec.

28 February: The RQ-4 Global Hawk flew for the first time. This new remotely piloted vehicle, designed for high-altitude, long-range, long-endurance reconnaissance missions, took off from Edwards Air Force Base, California, on a 56-minute flight. The aircraft, with a wingspan of 116 feet, was built to fly at an altitude of up to 65,000 feet and photograph an area the size of Kentucky in 24 hours.

6 March: The SECDEF approved the permanent retirement of the SR-71 Blackbird.



*(left) RQ-4 Global Hawk, remotely piloted reconnaissance aircraft.
(right) SR-71 Blackbird, reconnaissance aircraft.*

17 May: An Air Force Test Center pilot, Lieutenant Colonel Steven M. Rainey, became the first USAF pilot to fly the F-22 Raptor at Edwards AFB, California.

10 July: Colonel Teresa M. "Marne" Peterson became the first active duty woman to command an operational flying wing when she assumed leadership of the 14th Flying Training Wing at Columbus AFB, Mississippi.

1998



C-17A, “The Spirit of Berlin” delivers Keiko, a nearly 10,000 pound Orca to Iceland. The C-17 was chosen due to its ability to haul such a heavy payload, refuel in-flight, and land on short, rough airstrips. The Free Willy Keiko Foundation paid all costs associated with the flight.

9-10 September: Operation KEIKO LIFT, a 437th Air Wing C-17 aircrew from Charleston AFB, South Carolina flew Keiko, the Orca killer whale who starred in the movie *Free Willy*, on a 8,630-mile, 10-hour non-stop flight from the Oregon Coast Aquarium at Newport, Oregon, to Iceland’s Vestmannaeyjar Island. The trip was facilitated by air refueling support from Travis AFB, California and McGuire AFB, New Jersey.

22 September: The Air Force began airlifting relief supplies to the victims of Hurricane Georges. Water, generators, construction supplies, plastic sheeting, and ice from all over the United States to Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, and southern Mississippi, flying at least 150 missions.

6 November: USAF transport crews began airlifting 7.4 million pounds of relief cargo to Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and El Salvador after those countries were devastated by Hurricane Mitch, which claimed more than 10,000 lives.

9 December: President William J. Clinton awarded an honorary fourth star to General Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., the first black USAF general and leader of “Tuskegee Airmen” in World War II.

16 December: Operation DESERT FOX commenced with the launch of cruise missiles and air strikes by the United States and Great Britain against Iraqi targets after Iraq refused to allow United Nations weapons inspectors to continue their work. The four-day operation, which hit some 100 enemy sites, destroyed weapons-production facilities. The largest air campaign against Iraq since the Southwest Asia War in 1991, DESERT FOX involved the first combat use of B-1B Lancer bombers.

1998

24 March: To save ethnic Albanians living in the Serb province of Kosovo from forced eviction and genocide, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization launched Operation ALLIED FORCE against Yugoslavis. Exclusively an air campaign, ALLIED FORCE was the first combat operation against a Sovereign nation in the 50-year history of the alliance. The United States, which called its portion of the operation NOBLE ANVIL, used B-2 Spirit bombers for the first time in combat. F-15 pilots shot down two enemy MiG-29s on the first day of the conflict. On the third day of the operation, **one F-15C pilot shot down two Mig-29s in aerial combat over Yugoslavia.**

27 March: An F-117 stealth fighter was brought down by ground fire over Yugoslavia. Captain John Cherrey, an A-10 pilot, earned the Silver Star for locating the downed pilot, who was subsequently rescued by helicopter the same day. In April the USAF airlifted relief supplies for refugees from Kosovo as part of Operation SUSTAIN HOPE (SHINING HOPE), the humanitarian-airlift counterpart of Allied Force.

The first month, allied transports delivered more than 3,000 tons of food and survival supplies to refugees who had fled to camps in Albania, Macedonia, and Montenegro.

17 April: For the time, the Air Force sent the RQ-1 Predator on flights in a combat zone, to provide reconnaissance for operations. On 2 May, Serbian ground forces shot down an F-16 over Yugoslavia, the second and last USAF aircraft lost to enemy fire, an MH-60 crew rescued the pilot (Lt. Col. David Goldfein, later CSAF). Two days later an F-16CJ pilot shot down a Yugoslavia MiG-29 over Kosovo, the fifth and final USAF aerial victory during the operation.

NATO suspended the air strikes against Yugoslavia after its president agreed to withdraw Serb forces from Kosovo, their replacement with multinational peacekeeping forces, and the return of hundreds of thousands of ethnic Albanians to that province. Some claim that ALLIED FORCE was the first war in history won by air power alone.



*Colonel Jeff 'Claw' Hwang on ladder of his F-15C Eagle following his 'Fini Flight' with the Oregon ANG, Sep 2014. The two green stars reference the two MiG-29s that he shot down, as a Captain, over Kosovo on **26 March 1999**. After identifying the enemy aircraft he launched two AIM-120 missiles in rapid succession, from a distance of 16 miles, and shot down both MiGs.*

1999



A maintainer looks over a Boeing LGM-30G Minuteman III in a silo about 60 miles from Grand Forks AFB, N.D., in 1986 photo.

17 February: The first C-130J, a new transport with six-bladed propellers, advanced avionics, and shorter takeoff and landing capability, arrived at Keesler AFB, Mississippi, to serve with the 403d Wing.

27 March: A computer virus called “Melissa” swept across the Internet, destroying electronic programs and databases. Air Force systems escaped serious damage with the help of an Air Combat Command antivirus program.

23 July: Colonel Eileen M. Collins, USAF, who had been the first woman pilot of a space shuttle in 1995, became the first woman commander of a space shuttle mission on a flight of the *Columbia*.

3 September: Captain Julie Hudson of the 175th Wing (Maryland Air National Guard) qualified as the Guard’s first fully combat ready female A-10 pilot.

1 October: Aerospace Expeditionary Force 1 deployed to Southwest Asia - the first of 10 such forces to rotate availability for deployment duty. The new system allowed the Air force to respond more effectively with ready forces for operations overseas and increased morale by making deployments more predictable. The deployment integrated Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserve with active duty air forces.

6 October: The United States destroyed the first 150 Minuteman III silos in eastern North Dakota, in accordance with the terms of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty with Russia. (450 total destroyed)

1999

23 May: The first production-model T-6A Texan II aircraft arrived at Randolph Air Force Base, Texas. As a primary training aircraft, it would replace both the Air Force Cessna T-37, which had been in service for 38 years, and the Navy T-34, which had been in service for 23 years.



T-6A Texan II student pilots over Del Rio Texas.



An Air National Guard C-130 Hercules equipped with modular airborne firefighting system dropping fire retardant.

25 July-23 September: In the worst fire season in decades fire consumed over 6.5 million acres in the American West. AMC, the ANG, and the AFRC, and commercial carriers airlifted 339 short tons of cargo and 5,967 troops to augment civilian firefighters in Montana and Idaho. Guard and Reserve C-130s equipped with modular airborne fire-fighting systems flew 774 sorties to drop 970,500 gallons of fire retardant on wildfires in California, Idaho, and Montana.

2000

15 October: Crews from the 75th Airlift Squadron and the 86th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron evacuated survivors of a terrorist attack from Europe across the Atlantic Ocean to Norfolk, Virginia. The 28 victims were injured in a terrorist attack on the Navy warship USS *Cole* on 12 October, when it was docked at Aden in Yemen. The attack left six dead and a 20x40-foot hole in the ship's hull.



(above) Injured USS Cole Sailors carried aboard a C-9 Nightingale aircraft of the 86th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron at Aden, Yemen, for evacuation to Germany for treatment.



(left) Following arrival at Ramstein Air Base, Germany, injured USS Cole Sailors are carried off aircraft.

2000

24 February: Lieutenant Colonel Stayce D. Harris became the first black woman to command a USAF flying squadron, the 729th Airlift Squadron at March Air Force Base, California.

8 May: Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld designated the Air Force as executive agent for the Pentagon's space activities.

11 September: Arab terrorists hijacked four U.S. airliners, crashing two of them into the 110-story twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York and one into the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. Both towers and part of the Pentagon collapsed, and more than 3,000 people died. Heroic passengers rushed hijackers in the fourth aircraft, and it crashed in a field in Pennsylvania instead of hitting another target. The Federal Aviation Administration grounded all airliners in the United States for several days. President George W. Bush announced a war on terrorism and initiated homeland-defense efforts, including Operation NOBLE EAGLE, which involved combat air patrols within the United States.

27 September: Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld announced that President Bush had given authority to certain military commanders to order the destruction of hijacked civilian airliners.

7 October: Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) started with air strikes against terrorist and Taliban targets in Afghanistan. B-2 Spirit bombers of the 509th Bomb Wing flew round-trip from Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri, to Afghanistan on the longest bombing missions in aviation history up to that date (longest flight was 44 hours). A conglomeration of Air Force and Navy aircraft quickly came together as part of the operation.

28 November: Air Force C-17s landed in Afghanistan on an airstrip about 80 miles south of Kandahar to deliver Navy Seabees. The operation introduced U.S. ground forces into Afghanistan.



After establishing a runway and clearing air-space, combat controllers give a C-130 take off clearance and provide air traffic control during a mission in support of OEF.

2001

LeRoy W. Homer Jr., was an Air Force Academy Graduate, he went on to fly C-141 cargo aircraft. He served in Desert Shield, Desert Storm and flew humanitarian operations in Somalia. He was a Captain in the Air Force before becoming a Major in the Air Force Reserve, flying with the 445th Airlift Wing from 1995 to 2000. He signed on with United Airlines in 1995.

“On the morning of September 11th, 2001, United Airlines Flight #93 had 37 passengers including the two pilots [LeRoy Homer was First Officer], five flight attendants and the four hijackers. The pilots had received messages from United Airlines dispatch that said ‘beware of cockpit intrusion. 2 ac [aircraft] have hit the wtc [World Trade Center].’ Melodie Homer also sent a message to her husband via the cockpit computer system. When the cockpit door was breached, FAA’s air traffic control center in Cleveland could hear LeRoy Homer declaring ‘Mayday’ amid the sounds of a physical struggle in the cockpit. According to the official transcripts of the cockpit voice recorder from the flight, the hijacking took place 46 minutes after takeoff, and the plane turned toward Washington, DC. It was later determined the plane was headed for the US Capitol.”

“As the hijackers attempted to fly the aircraft, the passengers and flight crew using GTE Airfones called family, friends and found out about the other attacks. The passengers were determined to take back the plane. What they didn’t realize was the automatic pilot had been manipulated in a way that made it difficult for the hijackers to fly the Boeing 757. They are heard on the cockpit voice recorder saying ‘This does not work now,’ and then a minute later ‘Inform them, and tell him to talk to the pilot. Bring the pilot back.’ The pilots were the first to fight the terrorists, and along with the crew and passengers saved Washington, DC from an attack.”



Lieutenant Homer as a student pilot with T-38



*445th AW Operations Building
at Wright-Patterson AFB, OH,
dedicated in honor of Major
LeRoy Homer*

2001

4 March: The Air Force experienced its first two combat deaths since the Southwest Asia War of 1991.



Medal of Honor

4 March 2002

Technical Sergeant John A. Chapman, a combat controller working with a Navy SEAL team attempted landing near the top of Takur Ghar Mountain in Afghanistan. Their helicopter was slammed by an enemy rocket propelled grenade, causing Petty Officer 1st class Neil Roberts to fall



out the back. The aircraft evacuated, the team immediately restaged and went back in another helicopter, landing amidst heavy enemy fire. Upon landing, Chapman charged uphill through thigh-deep snow to confront enemy positions that rained fire onto the landing team. Completely incapacitating the first fortified enemy position, he proceeded to engage a second position. He was hit and fell, critically wounded. Facing overwhelming odds, and believing Chapman dead, the team egressed. TSgt Chapman later regained consciousness and continued to relentlessly battle the enemy alone, drawing enemy fire away from the returning team's aircraft. TSgt Chapman succumbed to his wounds.

Senior Airman Jason D. Cunningham, Pararescue (PJ)

Later in the same engagement, SRA Cunningham's helicopter was severely disabled, causing it to crash land. Under enemy fire, he remained in the burning fuselage to treat the wounded. As enemy fire increased, he moved his patients to a more secure location. When second casualty collection point was also compromised, he braved intense enemy fire and repositioned the critically wounded to a third location. Even after being mortally wounded, he continued to direct patient movement and care as long as possible. He was awarded the Air Force Cross posthumously for his selfless acts.



2002

4 February: A remotely Piloted aerial vehicle destroyed an enemy target for the first time when a remotely piloted MQ-1B Predator fired a Hellfire missile into a group of senior al Qaeda members in southeastern Afghanistan.



AGM-114 Hellfire missiles carried by MQ-1B

1 March: Brigadier General Teresa M. Peterson became the first active duty woman to command an operational flying wing when she assumed leadership of the 305th Air Mobility Wing at McGuire Air Force Base, New Jersey.

10 July: A C-5 from the 436th Airlift Wing, Dover Air Force Base, Delaware, for Kabul, Afghanistan, with 13,115 pounds of school supplies collected by children from 58 American schools.



Major Christina Hopper

2002-2003, Major Christina Hopper deployed to Kuwait, supporting Operations Southern Watch and Iraqi Freedom. As an F-16 pilot, she flew more than 50 combat missions and became the first African-American female fighter pilot to fight in a major war. Before deployment she flew combat air patrol missions in support of Operation NOBLE EAGLE, protecting the U.S. President and critical infrastructure.

“While on a combat mission during one of the worst sandstorms in recorded Iraqi history, Hopper’s aircraft was struck by lightning, disabling her hostile threat warning system. Despite possible danger, her formation continued to the target and completed the mission successfully. The bombs she dropped that night impacted a road intersection where U.S. Army forces were engaged in battle with an Iraqi Republican Guard unit. U.S. ground forces later told Hopper that when her bombs accurately hit their mark, the Iraqi Army retreated from the fight. For her service in Operation Iraqi Freedom, she was awarded the Air Medal (third oak leaf cluster), the Aerial Achievement Medal, and the Combat Action medal.”

2002

7 March: President George W. Bush issued an ultimatum giving Saddam Hussein and his sons 48 hours to leave Iraq.

19 March: Just after 2130 Eastern Standard Time (0530 local Iraq time), U.S. forces fired a barrage of about 40 Tomahawk cruise missiles into Iraq, striking three targets around Baghdad. Coalition aircraft, including the F-117 Nighthawk, flew battlefield preparation air strikes that took out air defenses, communications infrastructure, leadership targets, and other military assets. The attack began Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF), the U.S.-led, multinational coalition effort to liberate the people of Iraq and depose Saddam Hussein and his regime from power. President George W. Bush announced to the nation that early military operations had started in Iraq.



2003

1 April: Flying in support of OIF, Captain Jennifer Wilson became the first female pilot to fly a B-2 on a combat mission.

(right) A B-2 Spirit takes off for an OIF bombing mission while other aircraft from 40th AEW prepare to launch from a forward-deployed location.

(below) CAOC located at Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar, controlling a broad spectrum of air power for the U.S. Central Command Area of Responsibility.



28 April: The Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC) at Prince Sultan Air Base, Saudi Arabia, responsible for air operations in Southwest Asia, ceased operation and moved to Al Udeid air Base, Qatar. The defeat of the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein had reduced the military threat to the region. The departure of the CAOC from Prince Sultan coincided with the end of Operation SOUTHERN WATCH, the United Nations enforcement of the no-fly zone in southern Iraq. 1 May 2003: The mission of Combined Task Force Operation NORTHERN WATCH also ended.

1 May: Major combat operations were declared over, however, Iraq remained unstable. Due to lack of infrastructure and basic services for citizens, as well as ethnic and religious tensions among various groups, coalition forces found themselves facing an insurgency.

13 December: Former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein was captured in Operation RED DAWN, a joint effort by U.S. Special Operations forces. Making use of human intelligence sources, the U.S. forces tracked Saddam to a farm south of his home town of Tikrit, he was discovered hiding in a small “spider hole” on the farm.

2003



2004: Merryl Tengesdal transferred from the Navy to the USAF to join the U-2 Dragon Lady spy plane program. Within the next year she became the first African American female U-2 pilot.

Lt. Col. Merryl Tengesdal stands in front of a U-2 in her high-altitude flying gear.

27 February: OIF, the 107th Fighter Squadron, Michigan Air National Guard, deployed ten F-16Cs on an Air Expeditionary Force rotation to Iraq. Thus becoming the first F-16 unit under the Total Air Force concept to operate from Kirkuk Air Base, a former Iraqi Air Force installation.

16 April: Near Kharbut, Iraq, in near-zero visibility, two USAF HH-60G helicopters were dispatched to rescue a U.S. Army Ch-47 Chinook helicopter that had crashed in a sandstorm. The brown-out conditions left the rescue crews' infrared and night vision goggles ineffective, making navigation extremely difficult and the rescue attempt much more dangerous. In executing the rescue mission, the crews also had to navigate through multiple surface-to-air missile attacks. In the end all five Army crash survivors were located, rescued and evacuated out of the combat zone unharmed. The rescue crews, from the 41st Rescue Squadron and the 38th Rescue Squadron out of Moody Air Force Base, Georgia, were awarded the Mackay Trophy.



<Jolly Green Giant - Rescue Footprints >



2004

19 July: Then Lieutenant Colonel Martha McSally assumed command of the 354th Fighter Squadron at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, becoming the first female commander of a fighter squadron and the first woman in the Air Force to command any combat aviation squadron.



Lt. Col. Martha McSally stands with her A-10 Thunderbolt II aircraft.



16 September: The last two active-duty C-141B Starlifters assigned to the U.S. Air Force flew their final missions after a departure ceremony at McGuire Air Force Base, New Jersey. The C-141 was the first U.S.-manufactured jet aircraft designed specifically for military airlift. It was the second all-jet transport aircraft to be assigned to the Military Airlift Command, the C-135 being the first.

28 October: The 12th Reconnaissance Squadron, at Beale Air Force Base, California, received the first production Northrop Grumman RQ-4 Global Hawk remotely piloted aerial vehicle.

16 November: Air Force Secretary James G. Roche announced his resignation. Dr. Roche left the position in January 2005.

2004

12 May: The first combat-ready F/A-22 Raptor arrived at Langley Air Force Base, Virginia, assigned to the 1st Fighter Wing. Featuring stealth technology, ground attack capability, and the ability to reach Mach 1.5 without using afterburners, the Raptor was generally considered the most advanced fighter aircraft in the world.

20 June: The Air Force redesignated Indian Springs Air Force Auxiliary Field, Nevada, as Creech Air Force Base. It was the first Air Force base primarily dedicated to remotely piloted aircraft operations.

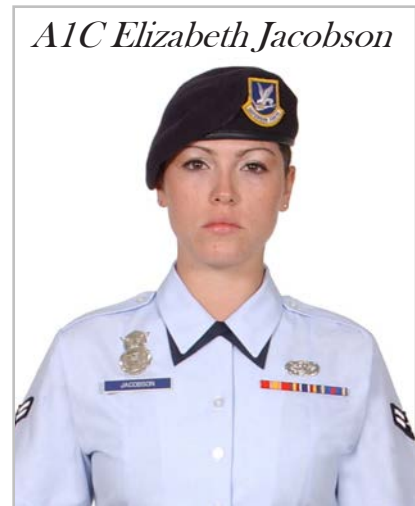
Creech Air Force Base was named in honor of General Wilbur “Bill” Creech, commander of Tactical Air Command 1978 through 1984. He started his military career as a private at the end of WWII, was commissioned and flew F-80 aircraft in the Korean War. He flew F-84 aircraft with the Thunderbirds and later was leader of the Air Forces in Europe Aerial Demonstration Team, the Skyblazers. Colonel Creech flew 177 combat missions in Vietnam. He retired after his tour as TAC Commander. Interestingly enough, one of the things General Creech is known for is the uniform two tone brown color paint that many Air Force bases today are still wearing.

10 September: The first C-130 combat mission by an all-female crew was flown from a forward-deployed location in Southwest Asia. They transported 151 Marines and their equipment. The six women were all assigned to the 43d Airlift Wing at Pope Air Force Base, North Carolina, and deployed at the time to the 737th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron, whose mission was moving troops and cargo in and out of Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Horn of Africa.

28 September: Airman First Class Elizabeth Nicole Jacobson, 17th Security Forces Squadron, Goodfellow AFB, Texas, became the first Security Forces Airman and the first female Airman killed in the line of duty in Iraq. She was providing security for a convoy in the area of Safwan, Iraq, when an improvised explosive device detonated near her vehicle.

7 October: Brigadier General Susan Y. Desjardins was named as incoming commandant of cadets at the USAF Academy. She was the first woman to hold that post.

7 December: A new Air Force mission statement added cyberspace to the combat domains of the service, along with air and space.



2005

23-29 August: Air Force personnel aboard WC-130 aircraft tracked and measured Tropical Depression Katrina's intensity and location as the storm grew into a hurricane and made landfall in Florida on 25 August, and second landfall on 29 August along the U.S. Gulf Coast, devastating New Orleans and surrounding areas.

30 August-10 October: Military and civilian services begin Katrina relief operations. U.S. Northern Command activated Joint Task Force - Katrina. First Air Force commander Major General M. Scott Mayes served as the task force's joint forces air component commander, and set up the 1st Aerospace Expeditionary Task Force - Katrina at Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida. 8,000 Air Force, Air Force Reserve, and National Guard had deployed by 7 September. AF helicopters flew 648 sorties, 599 of which were search and rescue missions that rescued 4,322 people. AF fixed-wing aircraft flew 4,095 sorties, 3,398 of which were air mobility missions. The AF evacuated 26,943 displaced persons and provided aeromedical evacuations for 2,602 patients. AF medical personnel at the New Orleans International Airport treated 16,714 patients, while transport personnel airlifted 11,450 tons of relief supplies.



2005

March 2006: First public performance as Thunderbird #3, Major Nicole Malachowski, first female pilot on the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds.

16 March: While deployed to the 379th Air Expeditionary Wing, a C-17 Globemaster III from McChord AFB dropped 32,400 pounds of humanitarian goods (food, blankets, winter survival gear, and school supplies) within 40 minutes to four locations in central and eastern Afghanistan. The mission set a record by airdropping the most cargo to multiple drop zones in the shortest amount of time in the history of US airdrop operations.

20 March: The Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) accepted its first operational CV-22 Osprey tiltrotor aircraft when Lieutenant General Michael Wooley, AFSOC commander flew the aircraft from the test wing at Edwards Air Force Base, California, to the 58th Special Operations Wing at Kirtland Air Force Base, New Mexico.



CV-22 Osprey tiltrotor aircraft, capable of vertical takeoff, landing and hover.



31 March: The Air Force activated the Nuclear Weapons Center at Kirtland Air Force Base, New Mexico. The center was part of the Air Force Materiel Command.



Major Nicole Malachowski

2006



14 October: President George W. Bush presided over a ceremony to dedicate the U.S. Air Force Memorial in Arlington, Virginia. An estimated 30,000 people attended the ceremony, which included a variety of Air Force aircraft flying by. The ceremony began a year-long commemoration of the Air Force's 60th anniversary as a separate service.

The Air Force Memorial - Located next to Arlington National Cemetery and overlooking the Pentagon.

Three stainless steel spires evoke an image of jet and space vehicle flight. The highest free-standing spire is 270 feet tall, with the entire memorial structure standing 402 feet high.

Total weight of the spires and supporting structure is approximately 6,600 tons, equaling nearly the weight of either 27 B-17s, 220 F-22s, or 18 Atlas 5 rockets. An intricate ball-in-box damping system mitigates the spire swaying effect brought on by wind.

The system contains 13 2,000 pound, 20-inch diameter lead balls that roll freely within octagonal boxes lined with synthetic damper pads.

4-23 November: In one of the largest presidential support airlifts to the date, the Air Force flew 474 airlift and air refueling sorties to transport 2,723 passengers and 2,417 short tons of cargo on behalf of President George W. Bush's official visits to Singapore, Vietnam, and Indonesia.

28 November: The Air National Guard redesignated the 163d Refueling Wing at March Air Reserve Base, California, as the 163d Reconnaissance Wing. The wing would operate the MQ-1 Predator, becoming the ANG's first Remotely Piloted Aircraft unit.

6-13 December: Operation UNITY KNIGHT, after weeks of rain in Eastern Kenya, an Air Force C-130 Hercules from the 379th Air Expeditionary Wing delivered food and supplies to 160,000 Somali refugees in the Dadaab region. The team loaded and dropped 240,000 pounds of relief supplies in five days.

2006

8 January: Air Force AC-130 gunships attacked a terror training base in a heavily forested area called Ras Kamboni in Somalia, near the Kenyan border. The gunships targeted al Qaeda terrorists who planned the 1998 attacks against the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.



1 May: The Air Force activated the 432d Fighter Wing, redesignating it the 432d Wing. The service's first remotely piloted aircraft systems wing, it took charge of rapidly expanding intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance missions.

12 June: Pararescueman (PJ) Senior Master Sergeant Ramón "CZ" Colón-López was one of the first six Airmen to receive the newly-created Combat Action Medal from USAF Chief of Staff General T. Michael Moseley during a ceremony held at the Air Force Memorial. He was also awarded the Bronze Star with Valor for his actions during the engagement.

25 September: The MQ-9 Reaper flew its first operational mission in Afghanistan for Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. The Reaper, is a larger and heavily-armed brother of the MQ-1 Predator. On 27 October, the Reaper conducted its first precision combat strike sortie against enemy combatants in Deh Rawod, Afghanistan, with a Hellfire missile.



SMS Ramón Colón-López receiving medals from CSAF Gen Moseley

29-30 August: Not good days for the Air Force. A Bent Spear incident, meaning a serious nuclear weapons incident not involving a risk of detonation, occurred, consisting of the mistaken transport of six nuclear-equipped missiles from Minot Air Force base, North Dakota, to Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, aboard a B-52 aircraft. 19 October, A high level investigation of the Bent Spear incident was completed and briefed Secretary of Defense Robert Gates.

The Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, plans, and requirement announced that several people would be relieved of their duties as a result of the investigation, including commander of the 5th Bomb Wing at Minot AFB, North Dakota; the 5th Bomb Wing's maintenance group commander; and the commander of the 2d Operations Group at Barksdale AFB, Louisiana. (More to come in 2008)

2007

2007: Two A-10 pilots awarded Distinguished Flying Cross and one awarded the Mackay Trophy. Major Keith Wolak, 74th FS - night rescue mission of a Navy Seal in Afghanistan. He cleared a helicopter landing zone while suppressing enemy attacks, and coordinated the rescue mission.

--Captain George Collings of the 510th FS - Assisted rescue forces trying to reach a downed AH-64 Apache helicopter. When rescue forces were pinned down by anti-Iraqi forces, he delivered a 500-pound laser-guided bomb inside a canal which incapacitated the enemy.

--Captain Scott Markle, 81st FW, awarded Mackay Trophy for engaging Taliban fighters who were fighting an American special forces team on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. Through multiple passes with flairs and more than 1,000 30-mm rounds, he allowed the team to escape with no casualties while destroying three enemy machine gun nests and 40 enemy combatants.

12 July: The 341st Space Wing removed the first Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile from a launch facility near Brady, Montana, to begin missile deactivation activities at Malmstrom AFB, Montana.

November: Operation MAGGIE MIGRATION, An Air force C-17 Globemaster III flew Maggie, a 25-year-old African elephant from the Alaska Zoo to the Performing Animals Welfare Society sanctuary in California.



*(left) Maggie, Alaska's only elephant, conducting crate training before being relocated.
(right) Elephant crate, with Maggie, being prepared for loading by 60th Aerial Port Squadron
Airmen*

2007

3 March: Secretary of the Air Force, Michael W. Wynne, and its vice chief of staff, General Duncan J. McNabb announced the selection of a trans-Atlantic partnership, headed by Northrop Grumman Corporation and including the parent of Europe's Airbus, as winner of the KC-X competition for development and procurement of 179 next-generation tankers for approximately \$35 billion.

12 March: Boeing filed a formal protest with the Government Accountability Office over loss of the Air Force tanker contract, charging that the Air Force was pressured by Northrop Grumman to make changes to the original proposal to accommodate its larger aircraft offer even after the proposal was submitted.

24 March: Air Force and Department of Defense officials announced that the Air Force had mistakenly shipped ICBM parts instead of helicopter batteries to Taiwan in 2006. Although the government of Taiwan had reported the mistake immediately, it took more than a year for the USAF to fully account for the shipments.

5 June: Responding to the serious nuclear incident of 2007 and other issues, Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates requested the resignations of Air Force Chief of Staff General T. Michael Moseley and Air Force Secretary Michael W. Wynne. Secretary Wynne resigned effective 20 June and General Moseley resigned effective 11 July. These developments followed a series of high-profile scandals and disagreements between Air Force leadership and Secretary Gates in the past year, during which Pentagon and congressional leadership had increasingly expressed frustration about the Air Force's top bosses, the handling of the Air Force's nuclear stewardship, and the murky acquisition process of the new tanker.

21 June: Michael B. Donley became acting Air Force Secretary (confirmed 22nd Secretary of the AF on 2 October).

12 August: General Norton A. Schwartz was sworn in as the nineteenth Chief of Staff of the Air Force.

10 September: Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates cancelled the competition for \$35 billion Air Force tanker contract. He stated, "I believe that rather than hand the next administration an incomplete and possibly contested process, we should cleanly defer this procurement to the next team."

2008

26 February: The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reposted that the Air Force had nearly doubled its use of green power during the past three months and far outstripped other agencies in using solar, wind, and other environmentally friendly sources to meet its energy needs. According to the EPA, the Air Force was the largest purchaser of green power in government and the third-largest purchaser among public- and private-sector employers nationwide.

21 April: The Air Force retired the F-117 Nighthawk after 27 years of service.

27 September: The MH-53 Pave Low's 40-year service to the U.S. Air Force ended after a final successful combat mission in Iraq. The Air Force had been gradually phasing out the heavy-lift helicopter, replacing it with the CV-22 Osprey. The Pave Low was an upgraded version of the HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giant, first brought into the Air Force in the 1960s.



Photo is the Sikorsky MH-53M Pave Low IV on display at the National Museum of the USAF. U.S. Air Force special operations forces used this helicopter to covertly enter enemy territory. Capable of operating day or night or in bad weather, these helicopters conducted long-range, low-level missions to insert, extract, and resupply special operations forces.

The aircraft on display was assigned to the 20th Expeditionary Special Operations Squadron and its last flight was a combat mission in Iraq on 28 March 2008. During its 38-year career, this helicopter participated in many important missions, including the Son Tay prison raid near Hanoi, North Vietnam, as well as Desert storm through Iraqi Freedom.

2008

5 January: A Special Assignment Airlift Mission C-32A (Boeing 757-200) transported President-elect Barack Obama and his family from Chicago, Illinois, to Washington D.C. This was the first time the Air Force had transported the newly elected President.

13 January: Air Force aircraft began transporting more than 150 tons of equipment from Rwanda to the Darfur region of Sudan in support of the United Nations-African Union peacekeeping missions.

19 January: C-17 aircrews delivered 18,000 pounds of humanitarian aid, under the Denton Amendment, to Managua International Airport, Nicaragua. Congress authorized the Denton Program to allow the Department of Defense to transport humanitarian cargo donated by charities or private donors on available military air, surface, and sea-lift platforms. The Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard conducted many of the Denton missions because they could use their training missions to deliver the humanitarian supplies. On 8 February, the 315th Airlift Wing, Charleston Air Force Base, South Carolina, delivered 15,000 pounds of shoes to Belize under the auspices of the Denton Amendment.

20 May: First Lieutenant Roslyn Schulte became the first female U.S. Air Force Academy graduate killed in combat when her vehicle was struck by an improvised explosive device near Kabul, Afghanistan.

23 June: Secretary of Defense Robert Gates approved plans for the U.S. Strategic Command to establish a subordinate U.S. Cyber Command.



7 August: The Air Force activated Global Strike Command at Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, to manage the service's nuclear mission. The command received the lineage and honors of Strategic Air Command.

18 August: the Air Force activated Twenty-Fourth Air Force at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, to oversee the service's cyber mission.

19 November: Air Force Special Operations Command officially changed from using the term "unmanned aerial system" or UAS to "remotely piloted aircraft" or RPA.



Cadet Roslyn Schulte



2009

12 January: A magnitude 7.0 earthquake struck Haiti. This natural disaster caused significant destruction, with casualties in excess of 112,000 deaths and 194,000 injuries, plus an additional 500,000 Haitians in need of humanitarian assistance. The Air Force, as part of Operation UNIFIED RESPONSE, transported humanitarian air in and medical patients, orphans, and human remains out. By 30 June 2010, 2,580 sorties had been flown, carrying 27,223 passengers and 14,083 short tons of support for Haiti operations. On 27 January, the MQ-1 Predator participated in its first humanitarian mission, supporting the earthquake relief effort.



Haitians displaced by a massive earthquake are evacuated in a C-17 Globemaster III SSgt. Joseph Ruiz, 4th AS Loadmaster, after ensuring evacuees were in hands of relief workers said,
“The look on their faces, the thanks they were giving us, shaking hands, hugging us. I didn’t realize how much we impacted their lives until I saw how relieved they were to be out of there.”

26 May: The X-51A unmanned hypersonic air vehicle made its first flight, setting a distance record for a scramjet flying under its own power.

31 August: President Barack Obama addressed the nation, announcing the end of the U.S. combat operations in Iraq.

7 October: The Air Force officially selected “Aim High...Fly-Fight-Win” as its motto.

22 December: President Barack Obama signed a bill repealing the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” Act. This overturned policies preventing homosexuals from serving openly in the U.S. military.

2010

19 March: President Barack Obama authorized the Defense Department to begin a “limited military action in Libya in support of an international effort to protect Libyan civilians.” Acting to enforce UN Security Council Resolution 1973, international forces struck at Libya in Operation ODYSSEY DAWN. The operation included establishing and maintaining a no-fly zone over the country. In addition to protecting Libyan citizens, the coalition also intended to degrade the ability of Moammar Gadhafi’s regime to resist the no-fly zone being implemented. U.S. military forces were on the leading edge of the coalition operation.

27 March: Airmen of the 28th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron at Ellsworth Air Force Base, South Dakota, in four inches of snow, glare ice and freezing fog prepared their B-1B Lancer aircraft to support Operation ODYSSEY DAWN. Less than 72 hours after getting the initial order, four B-1 bombers were launched from Ellsworth in blizzard conditions. It was the first time B-1 aircraft had ever launched from a continental U.S. location in support of combat operations. Two B-1s and their four-person crews would continue on and strike targets in Libya more than 6,000 miles away. The B1s arrived in the Libya area of operations 12 hours after take-off and the crews divvied up targets between the two BONES (nickname for B-ONE) and went in for their first strike. The aircraft recovered at a forward operating location and twenty-four hours later the second launch began. Nearly 100 targets were hit during the two-day strike.



2011

4 March: Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gaits, in a speech at the U.S. Air Force Academy, announced that the Air Force was now training more pilots for remotely piloted aircraft (RPA) than for any other weapons system. Nevertheless, demand from operational commanders for RPAs continued to out-strip supply.

2 May: President Barack Obama announced to the nation that the United States had conducted an operation that killed Osama bin Laden.

3 May: Air Combat Command grounded the entire F-22A fleet to investigate problems with the on-board oxygen generation system. On 21 September the fleet was released to resume flying operations. The final F-22 Raptor rolled off the Lockheed Martin assembly line in Marietta, Georgia on 13 December.

5 May: The Air Force accepted its first production F-35 fighter.

11 August: The Air Force announced an immediate implementation of a DoD-wide civilian hiring freeze as part of a larger force reduction initiative.

21 October: President Barack Obama announced the full withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq by year's end. On 15 December the Department of Defense announced the official end of the U.S. military mission in Iraq. The last Air Force Operation NEW DAWN flight out of Iraq took place on 17 December, with 62 Airmen and approximately 60 media on board a C-17 Globemaster III, nicknamed the "Spirit of Golden Gate," at Imam Ali Air Base.



Photo - Senior Airman Nicholas Olsen and Airman First Class Justin Smith, 407th Air Expeditionary Group, prepare the last pallet to be transported from Ali Air Base, Iraq, 18 December 2011. They are the last service members to redeploy from Iraq.

2011

15 February: The Air Force and Boeing rolled out the first re-winged A-10 Warthog in a ceremony at Hill Air Force Base, Utah. Boeing was under contract to produce 233 wing sets to replace aging original wings, which was intended to ensure service into 2040.

The first A-10 to roll out after having its wings replaced - sits at a 15 February 2012 ceremony held at Hill Air Force Base, Utah.



SRA Collan Jonas, 4th Aircraft Maintenance squadron crew chief, salutes Col Jeannie Leavitt, 4th Fighter Wing Commander as she taxis for flight.

1 June: Colonel Jeannie Leavitt became the Air Force's first female fighter wing commander when she assumed command of the 4th Fighter Wing at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, North Carolina. Colonel Leavitt is an F-15E Strike Eagle pilot with more than 2,500 hours, including 300 combat hours.

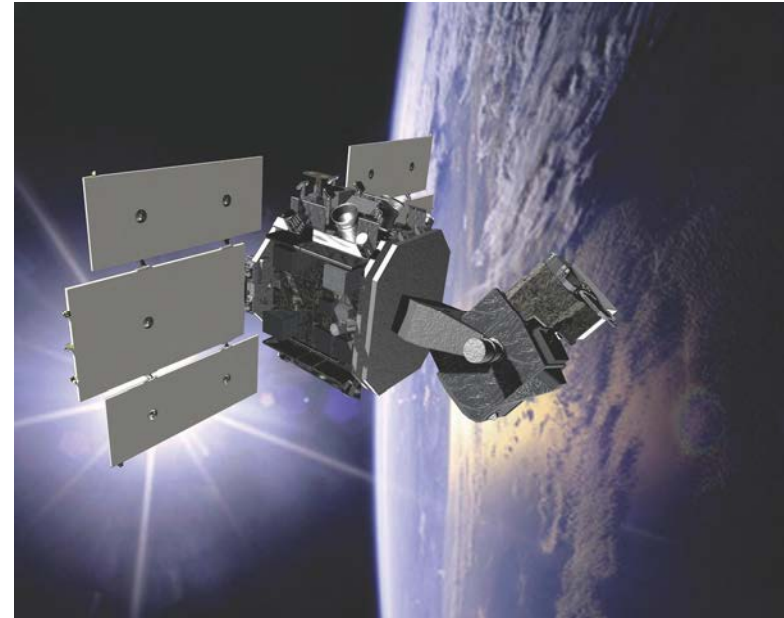
2012

4 June: The Air Force merged three San Antonio-based Field Operating Agencies into one, consolidating the Air Force Manpower Agency, Air Force Personnel Center, and Air Force Services Agency into the new Air Force Personnel Center.

5 June: General Janet C. Wolfenbarger became the Air Force's first female four star general and assumed command of Air Force Materiel Command at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio.



(left) Gen Janet Wolfenbarger, Commander AFMC



(right) SBSS Block 10 satellite image

17 August: Air Force Space Command announced that the space based surveillance (SBSS) Block 10 satellite had achieved initial operational capability. The satellite was launched in September 2010. The SBSS operates 24-hours a day, 7 days a week collecting metric and Space Object identification data for man-made orbiting objects, with a clear and unobstructed view of resident space objects orbiting Earth from its 390-mile altitude orbit.

1 October: The Air Force activated a new Field Operating Agency, the Air Force Civil Engineer Center at JBSA-Lackland, Texas, to oversee the service's civil engineering functions worldwide, merging the San Antonio-based Air Force Center for Engineering and the Environment and Air Force Real Property Agency with the Tyndall AFB, Florida-based Air Force Civil Engineer Support Agency.

2012

In **2013**: the Air Force was the smallest it had ever been. In 2013, the Air Force was 45 percent smaller than it was at its peak in the 1980s, 48 percent of its Cold War peak in 1956.

In **2013**: Airmen flew 31,049 ISR sorties and 21,785 close air support (CAS) sorties. Aircrews flew 32,000 airlift sorties delivering 201,000 short tons and 506,000 passengers. They also airdropped 10,883,000 pounds of equipment and supplies to isolated locations throughout Afghanistan. Air refuelers flew 12,319 tanker sorties offloading 723 million pounds of fuel during 53,266 aircraft refueling. Other Airmen flew 576 combat evacuation sorties accounting for 219 saves and 477 assists.

21 January: Air Force crews began providing airlift support for the French military with Operation Juniper Micron. Initial airlift missions involved transporting French soldiers and military equipment from Istres, France, to Bamako, Mali, aboard C-17 aircraft. On 11 February 2013, President Obama issued a memorandum stating he had determined that an unforeseen emergency existed that required immediate military assistance to the governments of Chad and France in their efforts to secure Mali from terrorists and violent extremists. Airmen reached a major milestone on 12 February, delivering two million pounds of cargo in support of the operation in just 23 days. By March 2013, that number reached 5.3 million pounds carried during 220 sorties. Air Force support to the operation ended in May 2013.



17 March: Air Force Space Command announced that the first Space Based Infra-red systems geosynchronous satellite (GEO-1), launched in 2011, has reached full operational status.

GEO-1 payload launched aboard a United Launch Alliance Atlas V rocket from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, Florida.



French soldiers march to a U.S. Air Force C-17 Globemaster III

2013

March 2013: Master Sergeant Delorean Sheridan, Air Force Combat Controller – Silver Star recipient for his actions in Afghanistan. “In March 2013, Sheridan was preparing for a mission with his Army Special Forces team when an Afghan National Police Officer working with the team opened fire from a machine gun at 25 feet. The teammates to Sheridan’s immediate left and right were hit. Puffs of smoke blew up around him. When he realized what was happening, his first instinct was to grab his team leader and get him out, he said. As he turned to react, Sheridan saw his team leader shot in the head at close range. At the same time, a group of about 20 insurgents fired on the team from a position outside of the base in what was a coordinated attack. To Sheridan the insider attack was like ‘having someone sneak into your house in the middle of the night.’ It provoked an instantaneous reaction. He ran toward the shooter, jumped into the turret of an armored vehicle and shot him twice with his pistol and nine times with an M4 rifle. One by one, he dragged his team leader, team sergeant and the infantry squad noncommissioned officer in charge to an area where they could be extracted by medevac. Sheridan, 33, called in six medevac flights and helped transfer his wounded personnel on what was his sixth deployment.”



(left) Combat Controller, MSgt Delorean Sheridan, in combat gear, Afghanistan.

(below) MSgt Sheridan speaking about his experience.



2013

August 2014: USAF units operating remotely piloted aircraft, F-15E, F-16 and B-1 bombers began airstrikes in support of Iraqi and friendly regional paramilitary forces against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). In 2013 the insurgent group, ISIS, took advantage of political turmoil in the Middle east and seized large parts of Iraq and Syria. By the end of 2014, seventy-seven nations were participating as part of an international coalition against ISIS in support of Iraq and a United Nations resolution to settle the ongoing civil war in Syria. September marks the first combat employment of the F-22. The F-22's combination of sensor capability, integrated avionics, situational awareness, and weapons provides first-kill opportunity against threats.



F-22 Raptor taxiing at an undisclosed location in Southwest Asia. Weapons loaders prepare missiles for loading in the foreground.



An A-29 Super Tucano preparing to launch at Moody AFB, for the Afghan A-29 Light Air Support training mission.

22 August: Two months after the Afghan National Security Forces assume responsibility for combat operations in Afghanistan from NATO, the USAF selects Moody Air Force Base, Georgia as the site to provide training to Afghan Air Force pilots, who will operate the A-29 light attack aircraft. In October, the 81st Fighter Squadron is established at Moody to train Afghan pilots and maintainers to operate the Embraer A-29, a small turboprop light attack aircraft.

2014

September: Air Force units provide airlift, medical, and engineering capabilities to western African nations after an outbreak of the Ebola virus, a highly contagious and dangerous virus spread by contact with blood or bodily fluids of an infected person. Medical and logistical support to combat the Ebola pandemic continue into the next year.



Members of the Ebola medical support team practice donning personal protective equipment during week-long training at the San Antonio Military Medical Center. The training prepares them to assist civilian medical professionals in the United States. The joint team consists of Air Force, Army and Navy medical personnel.

31 December: Operation ENDURING FREEDOM ends and Operation FREEDOM'S SENTINEL begins. This marks the end of active combat operations by U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan and a strengthened focus on providing training and advisory support to the Afghan government and its military and security forces. The USAF increases its efforts to train and advise Afghan Air Force pilots and maintainers and to assist Afghan Air Force with the transfer and procurement of aircraft.

2014



Air Force Secretary Deborah Lee James pins the Purple Heart onto Airman First Class Spencer Stone during a Pentagon ceremony in his honor.

21 August: While on leave in Belgium, USAF medical technician Airman First Class Spencer Stone assists with subduing a heavily-armed terrorist who attacked a passenger train. Stone, joined by his two friends and a British tourist, charged the terrorist, placing the safety of the other passengers ahead of their own, and despite suffering several stab wounds performed life-saving medical aid on the British citizen, who had been shot during the struggle. Stone received the Airman's Medal and Purple Heart for his actions, and later the French government bestowed the Legion of Merit upon him and his friends.



2 September: The USAF receives its first two operational F-35A aircraft, delivered to Hill Air Force Base, Utah, and the aircraft flies its first operational sortie on 17 September.

F-35A Lightning II aircraft piloted by Col David Lyons, 388th Fighter Wing commander touching down at Hill AFB, 2 September 2015.

2015

29 September: The Air Force opens six combat and special operations-related AFSCs to women, totaling over 4,000 positions formerly reserved for male Airmen. After the Secretary of Defense announced that all occupations and positions were open to women on 3 December, Secretary of the Air Force Deborah Lee James signed the AF Implementation Plan for Full integration of Women in the Air Force on 30 December, which included a timeline for recruiting, accessions, training, assignments, with implementation plan to start 4 January 2016.



27 October: The Air force awards a contract to Northrop Grumman to develop its long-planned next-generation stealth bomber (to become known as the B-21). Initial plans called for the production and delivery of over one hundred bombers.

17 December: The first class of Afghan Air Force A-29 pilots and maintainers trained by the U.S. Air Force graduates. During the next five years, over 30 student pilots and 70 maintainers will complete the training courses.

2015

19 August: Lieutenant General Stayce D. Harris, became the first African American female Lieutenant General. She became Inspector General of the Air Force, Office of the Secretary of the Air Force on 18 November 2017.



(left to right) Capt Broderick Lockett, pilot; SRA Charles Palmer, loadmaster; Capt Dante Earle, pilot; Capt Saj El-Amin, pilot; MSgt Ronald Strayhorn, loadmaster; and MSgt Shevaun Reighter, instructor loadmaster.



Lt Gen Stayce D. Harris

2 March: Flying a C-17 aircraft. In honor of Black History Month and the Tuskegee Airmen, a crew of six Airmen from the 21st Airlift Squadron at Travis Air force Base, California, organized an all-African American crew for a night training missions.

19 September: Secretary of the Air Force Deborah Lee James announced that the new bomber under development would be designated as the B-21 Raider in commemoration of the 1942 Doolittle Raiders.

2016



13 May: General Lori Robinson, previously commander of Pacific Air Forces, assumed command of U.S. Northern Command and, simultaneously, North American Aerospace Defense Command. She was the first woman to lead a U.S. unified combat command.

Gen Robinson receives tour of the 14th Combat Support Hospital in Humacao, Puerto Rico, Oct 2017. The Army unit augmented local hospitals affected by Hurricane Maria.

6 July: Enabled by U.S. and coalition airstrikes against ISIS leadership and ground forces, Iraqi security and allied paramilitary groups began offenses to take back lost ground in Iraq and Syria. Iraqi troops recapture the strategic airfield at Qayyarah, situated less than forty miles south of the city of Mosul, which ISIS had proclaimed as its capital in Iraq.



SRA Zevon Davis, an 821st Contingency Response Group aircraft maintainer, marshals out an Iraqi C-130 at Qayyarah Airfield West, Iraq, November 2016.

2016

18 January: To maintain pressure on the Libyan branch of ISIS after the conclusion of Operation Odyssey Lightning, two B-2 Spirit stealth bombers conduct a thirty-three hour long strike mission, flying from Whiteman AFB in Missouri to bomb two ISIS training camps near Sirte. MQ-9 Reaper remotely piloted aircraft also participated in the successful strike.

(right) Airmen from the 509th Bomb Wing at Whiteman AFB, MO prepare B-2 bomber for precision airstrikes in Libya.



13 April: The Air Force used the GBU/B Massive Ordnance Air Blast (MOAB) munition for the first time in combat. The MOAB, nicknamed “the Mother of All Bombs,” contains close to 22,000-pounds of explosives, making it the most powerful accurately delivered high explosive non-nuclear weapon. The MOAB was dropped from the cargo door of a Lockheed MC-130 onto an Islamic State of Iraq and Syria-Khorasan tunnel/cave complex in Achin district, Namgarhar province, Afghanistan, which served as a base for forces of the Islamic State.

(right) The MOAB sits at an air base in Southwest Asia, waiting for the right opportunity.

Although the MOAB had been created in 2003, fears of collateral damage prevented it from being used, but the cave complex full of terrorists proved to be the right place.



2017



MSgt Shannon Hawkins, a 370th Air Expeditionary Advisory Group, Detachment 1, airfield manager deployed in support of Operation INHERENT RESOLVE, communicates with air traffic controllers over the radio in a Humvee at Qayyarah West Airfield, Iraq, 2 July 2017, to ensure seamless control of both Iraqi and coalition air traffic.

17 July: The campaign against ISIS reaches a major milestone as Iraqi troops and allied regional forces capture Raqqa, which ISIS had proclaimed as its capital of Syria. Three days later, Iraqi and allied forces liberate the city of Mosul.

9 December: After ISIS loses control of most of its occupied territory in Iraq and Syria, Iraq declares an end to the war against ISIS. Airstrikes and other combat operations continue into the next year, forcing ISIS into an underground movement, and the U.S. and its coalition partners transition from combat into training and advisory missions with the Iraqi military and friendly regional paramilitary groups.

3 February: The U.S. Department of Defense and Lockheed Martin announced an agreement reducing the cost of the next batch of F-35A Lightning II aircraft by \$728 million, a 7.8% reduction. The aircraft are meant for the United States, Australia, Israel, and the United Kingdom. The deal pushes the per-unit cost of the F-35 to under \$95 million for the first time.

2017

20 August: General Maryanne Miller became the first four-star member of the Air Force's reserve component and began her tour of duty as Air Mobility Command's first reservist commander.



Gen Maryanne Miller, AMC commander, center, and 62d Aerial Port Squadron Airmen push a pallet of cargo onto a C-17 at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington during her visit. She was exposed to unique missions carried out by the team, including support to worldwide combat and humanitarian airlift operations.

27 September: The Air Force awarded a contract to Boeing to develop a new jet training aircraft to replace the service's long-serving fleet of T-38s. Boeing delivered the first of 351 trainers, designated the T-7A Red Hawk, in April 2022.



Lt Gen Richard M. Clark, U.S. Air Force Academy Superintendent, speaks during the T-7A Red Hawk rollout ceremony 28 April 2022. The Red Hawk will be used to train pilots to fly fourth and fifth-generation aircraft.

2018

28 February: A C-5M Super Galaxy took off from Travis Air Force Base, California to deliver equipment and supplies for warfighters in Afghanistan. The 11-person aircrew, commanded by Captain Dariel Baker of the 22d Airlift Squadron, was all African American. The historic mission was created to honor the heritage of the Tuskegee Airmen and to showcase the capability of Travis to deliver cargo from the United States to the front lines of Afghanistan. Captain Baker said, “It is important that the Air Force is diverse enough to have an all African American crew because it shows how far the Air Force has come in relation to diversity and acceptance. While we still have farther to go, it is a significant milestone that should be shared as it generates pride not only for those involved, but for everyone who is happy to see our progress as an Air Force.”



C-5 all African American crew, commanded by Capt Dariel Baker of the 22d Airlift Squadron



Task Force Talon II Airmen rally around CMSgt Craig Williams, 325th FW command chief at Tyndall AFB, FL. The task force Airmen pitched in to clear debris from various parts of Tyndall AFB.

10 October: Hurricane Michael struck Northwest Florida and Tyndall Air Force Base was devastated. Half of the buildings on base were destroyed or damaged beyond repair, the rest were stable enough to attempt repair. F-22 Raptor aircraft from the base had been evacuated, never to return. Air Force leadership directed the rebuild of Tyndall AFB, with a projected future F-35 mission.

2018

25 January: Boeing delivered the first KC-46A Pegasus tanker aircraft to the Air Force. The KC-46 was the first phase in recapitalizing the U.S. Air Force's aging tanker fleet. With greater refueling, cargo and aeromedical evacuation capabilities compared to the KC-135, the KC-46 was intended to provide next generation aerial refueling support to Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps and partner-nation receivers.



F-35 Lightning IIs from the 422d Test and Evaluation Squadron refuel from a KC-46A Pegasus over the Nevada Test and Training Range.

11 October: To better organize its information warfare capabilities, the Air Force merged the 24th Air Force, responsible for cyberspace operations, and the 25th Air Force, responsible for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance operations, to create the 16th Air Force.



December 2019: Chief Master Sergeant Ramón "CZ" Colón-López became Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (SEAC), the first Airman to hold this position. As SEAC he is the most senior enlisted service member, by position, in the United States armed Forces, and the principal military advisor to the Chairman on all matters involving enlisted personnel.

(left) SEAC Ramón Colón-López

Note: See page 124 for more about PJ Colón-López and Combat Medal.

2019

20 December: The U.S. Space Force was established within the Department of the Air Force, creating the first new branch of the armed services in 73 years. The new service was created with the transfer of personnel, mostly from the Air Force, and from the other armed services. General John W. Raymond, the commander of U.S. Space Command, served as its first Chief of Space Operations.

The Vice chief of Space Operations, Gen David D. “DT” Thompson swore in the first four new Space Force recruits at the Baltimore Military Entrance Processing Station, Fort George Meade, Maryland, 20 October 2020. The Space Force started out with a small cadre of mostly Air Force transfers and continues to grow.



U.S. Space Command commander Gen John W. “Jay” Raymond and Senior Enlisted Advisor CMSgt Roger Towberman present President Donald J. Trump with the space force flag in the Oval Office of the White House, 15 May 2020. To the left are Secretary of Defense Dr. Mark T. Esper and Secretary of the Air Force Barbara M. Barrett.

2019

28 January: Air Force support to the official response to the COVID-19 pandemic began when Secretary of Defense Mark T. Esper approved the quarantine of U.S. citizens evacuated out of China at March Air Reserve Base, California. Within a week, the Air Force supported several additional airlifts and quarantine of U.S. citizens from China, and with the rapid spread of the viral respiratory disease the service soon began providing direct medical aid and conducting other pandemic response operations worldwide. The pandemic forced major changes to daily operating procedures for uniformed and civilian Airmen, including travel restrictions, the widespread adoption of remote work, disease mitigation measures such as the wearing of face masks and social distancing, and rapidly changing testing, treatment, and quarantine requirements for affected individuals as the disease and its effects became better known. By the end of the year, almost 34,000 Airmen, dependents, and civilian workers or contractors had contracted the disease, and at least thirty-nine deaths were reported.

AIR FORCE GUIDANCE ON USE OF CLOTH FACE COVERS
COVID-19

EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY

To the extent practical without significantly impacting mission, all individuals on Department of the Air Force property, installations and facilities are required to wear cloth face coverings when they cannot maintain six feet of physical distance in public areas or work centers.

Any cloth items worn as face coverings should be functional, clean and maintained in compliance with current Air Force instructions, and should cover the mouth and nose.

Face Masks*

Neck Gaiters/Warmers

Balaclavas

*N-95 and surgical masks should be reserved for health care workers.

Guidance applies to total force military personnel, DoD civilian employees and contractors, family members and all individuals on DAF property, installations and facilities.

Note: Guidance above does not apply within a personal residence on a military installation.

CLOTH FACE COVERING DOES NOT PREVENT THE WEARER FROM GETTING SICK, BUT MAY PREVENT THE SPREAD OF THE VIRUS FROM THE WEARER TO OTHERS.



Air Force Academy cadets wearing face masks, and socially distanced, at 2020 graduation ceremony, 18 April 2020.

Air Force guidance on the use of face coverings, released 6 April 2020.

2020

6 August: General Charles Q. Brown, Jr., became the USAF's first African-American Chief of Staff and the first African-American to lead an armed service of the United States.



Secretary of the Air Force Bargar M. Barrett administers the oath of office to incoming 22nd Air Force Chief of Staff Gen Charles Q. Brown during the CSAF Transfer of Responsibility ceremony.

Ms. Sharene Brown, holding the bible that has been used to swear in every CSAF.

2020

19 June: Chief Master Sergeant JoAnne S. Bass was selected to become the 19th Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, becoming the first woman in history to serve as the highest ranking noncommissioned member of the Air Force.



CMSgt Bass installed as 19th Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force

26 March: As Iraq and allied forces increasingly shouldered the burden of containing the ISIS insurgency, the U.S. transferred Qayyarah Airfield West over to the Iraqi military. Iraq assumed control of a number of other major air and ground bases over the summer of 2020 as the U.S. and its coalition partners continued training and advisory efforts.

13 November: By this time, the U.S. had obligated over \$2 billion to train, man, and equip the Afghan Air Force, which had grown to over 200 fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft and executed almost half of the airstrikes in Afghanistan. The final class of Afghan pilots receiving training in the A-29 at Moody AFB graduated, and although the Afghan Air Force was still short of trained pilots and service personnel, the USAF training program came to an end.

2020

11 March: The Air Force accepted the first Boeing F-15EX Eagle II air superiority fighter. The Eagle II, which features superior radar, avionics, and weapons payload capabilities to the older F-15C model, will replace aging fighters and provide a less costly means of reaching the service's planned aircraft inventory and average airframe age goals than purchasing greater numbers of stealthy fifth-generation fighters or upgrading older fighter models.

14 July: The White House announced Operation ALLIES REFUGE , an initiative led by the U.S. Department of State to relocate interested and eligible Afghan nationals and their families who were already being processed for Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs). The Air Force began preparation to provide transport, housing, and support for arriving Afghan refugees until their permanent relocation and resettlement could be arranged.

12 August: The sudden collapse of Afghan military and security forces and the fall of Kabul to the Taliban resulted in the deployment of over a thousand U.S. troops and increased transport flights in and out of Hamid Karzai International Airport. Afghan refugees were flown to eight USAF sites in the continental United States, Germany, Italy, and Spain as airmen provided air traffic control, security, logistical support, and other services vital to the round-the-clock airlift. By the time the last flight left Kabul just before midnight on August 31, over 250 USAF cargo aircraft were involved in the effort to fly 124,000 people out of Afghanistan.



An Afghan child walks up the ramp of a USAF C-17 at Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul, Afghanistan, during Operation ALLIES REFUGE, 19 August 2021. OAR is one of the largest evacuations of civilians by air in American history.

2021

24 August: The Department of Defense mandated the vaccination of all uniformed service-members against COVID-19, and by October civilian employees were also required to receive one of the widely-available, medically-safe vaccines. The vast majority of uniformed and civilian airmen complied with the vaccination requirement.



(top) Under Secretary of the Air Force Gina Ortiz Jones speaks with Maj Molly McCowan, 433d Medical Squadron about vaccination efforts.

(left) SRA Rendall Powell receives COVID-19 vaccination from Lt Col Yvonne Storey at Edwards AFB California.

2021

24 February: Russia invaded Ukraine. Although outnumbered and outgunned the Ukrainian armed forces mounted a spirited defense, sustained in part by the United States and its NATO allies. Within three months, U.S. Transportation Command cargo aircraft delivered over 52 million tons of military equipment, including radars, air defense systems, and antiaircraft missiles, to support the defense of Ukraine. Along with this badly-needed equipment, more than 16,000 troops deployed to the region to reassure allied nations and deter further Russian aggression and USAF fighter, bomber, and tanker aircraft patrolled the skies over Poland, the Baltics, Romania, and the Black Sea as a sign of NATO's readiness and resolve.



Air Force Airmen assigned to the 721st Aerial Port Squadron load pallets of ammunition that will end up being delivered to Ukrainian forces.

2 December: The Air Force unveiled the first of six B-21 Raider long-range stealth bombers currently under production. Designed to operate in tomorrow's high-end threat environment, the B-21 will play a critical role in ensuring America's enduring airpower capability.



*B-21 Raider
Named for the WWII
Doolittle Raiders*

2022

18 September 2022: Seventy-Five years earlier, 18 September 1947, the United States Air Force was established.



A modern, autonomous, and thoroughly trained Air Force in being at all times will not alone be sufficient, but without it there can be no national security.

General of the Air Force Henry H. Arnold

2022

END NOTES

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This book is essentially an update of the Air Force Historical Studies Division work: *One Hundred Ten Years of Flight, USAF Chronology of Significant Air and Space Events 1903-1912*, updated by Dr. Daniel L. Haulman, Dr. Priscilla D. Jones, and Dr. Robert D. Oliver. That chronology is an update of an earlier Air Force History and Museums Program 100 year chronology. Most of the 1947-2012 entries are taken directly from the 110 year chronology. Another source used to fill in history gaps throughout this work is the *Chronology American Aerospace Events*, put together by Harold “Phil” Myers, Director of the Sixteenth Air Force History Office, Lackland AFB, Texas. In addition to those two main sources, some of the entries have been expanded with additional data and photos from other U. S. Air Force sources. These end notes will credit those additional sources. Information and photos for all of the Medal of Honor inserts are from the Air Force Historical Support Division (HOH) website: <https://www.afhistory.af.mil/History/Medal-of-Honor-AF-Cross-Silver-Star/>. Some of the Vietnam era gaps were filled with the use of an unpublished Vietnam chronology with references by Kenneth Kan of the AF Historical Support Division, *USAF in Southeast Asia*, cited here as “Kan’s Vietnam Chronology.”

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