

Commander's Call Topics



May 23, 2013

"Time will not dim the glory of their deeds."

General of the Armies John J. Pershing

Memorial Day is May 29th.
Commemorate the service and
sacrifice of the U.S. armed forces
at the [American Battle
Monuments Commission](#) website

Roots: The Air Force Version

While we celebrate the U.S. Air Force birthday as the day we became a separate service on September 18, 1947, an often overlooked milestone is the day, May 24, 1918, to which the Air Force can trace its roots.

About a year after the U.S. entered the First World War, the War Department established the U.S. Air Service as a separate, independent branch within the Army, responsible for control of all military aviation activities. Beginning combat operations as part of the American Expeditionary Force in France, the Air Service started with 35 pilots and 51 student pilots on its roster.

Despite a combat record of only nine months (February to November 1918), the Air Service made a respectable showing during World War I. The 740 American aircraft assigned to squadrons at the front on Nov. 11, 1918, Armistice Day, represented little more than 10 percent of the total aircraft strength of Allied nations. But the Air Service had conducted 150 separate bombing attacks. Penetrating as far as 160 miles behind German lines, its aircraft had dropped about 138 tons of bombs. In all, the Air Service downed 756 enemy aircraft and 76 enemy balloons, while losing 289 airplanes and 48 balloons.

The dispersal of aero squadrons among various Army organizations during the war made it difficult to coordinate aerial activities, which led to the creation of higher echelon organizations. At the front, squadrons with similar functions were formed into groups, the first organized in April 1918 as I Corps Observation Group. The following month the 1st Pursuit Group was formed, and in July 1918 the American Expeditionary Forces organized its first aircraft unit higher than a group--the 1st Pursuit Wing--made up of the 2d and 3d Pursuit Groups and, later, the 1st Day Bombardment Group. In November 1918 the AEF possessed 14 groups (seven observation, five pursuit and two bombardment).

Following the armistice, demobilization of the Air Service was rapid and thorough.

At war's end the Air Service possessed 185 aero squadrons; 44 aero construction; 114 aero supply, 11 aero replacement, an 150 spruce production squadrons; 86 balloon companies; six balloon group headquarters; 15 construction companies; 55 photographic sections; and a few miscellaneous units.

By Nov. 22, 1919, all had been demobilized except one aero construction, one aero replacement, 22 aero squadrons, 32 balloon companies, 15 photographic sections, and a few miscellaneous units. Between Nov. 11, 1918 and June 30, 1920, officer strength plummeted from 19,189 to 1,168, and enlisted strength dropped from 178,149 to 8,428.

Following World War I, the strength of the Air Service matched what Congress considered satisfactory for peacetime.

Between Wars

The Army Reorganization Act of 1920 made the Air Service a combatant arm of the Army and gave the Chief of the Air Service the rank of major general and his assistant chief the rank of brigadier general.

Tactical air units in were placed under the nine U.S. Army corps area commanders where they continued to be employed primarily in support of the ground forces. The Chief of the Air Service retained command of various training schools, depots and other activities exempted from Army corps control.

During most of the 1920s, the offensive strength of the Air Service in the U.S. consisted of one pursuit, one attack and one bombardment group. Overseas, the Canal Zone and the Philippines each had assigned one pursuit and one bombardment squadron with two squadrons of each type stationed in the Hawaiian Islands. The Air Service focused initially on observation and pursuit aviation, with major.

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► TRENDING ...

[Each of us must do our part to keep everyone around us safe off duty](#), as we do on duty. Fundamental military lessons of working together, exercising leadership, focusing on the mission, and having the courage to say no to a risky situation are all essential to enjoying the summer and returning to your units -- Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel urged service members, civilian employees and their families May 23 to enjoy the upcoming summer, but to do so safely.

► RESOURCES

AF.mil

<http://www.af.mil>

Airman magazine

<http://www.airmanonline.af.mil>

Air Force Outreach

<http://www.afoutreach.af.mil>

Military OneSource

<http://militaryonesource.af.mil>

Military HOMEFRONT

<http://www.militaryhomefront.dod>

Air Force Personnel Center <https://mypers.af.mil>

<http://www.afpc.af.mil>

Air Reserve Personnel Center

<http://www.arpc.afrc.af.mil>

Department of Defense News

<http://www.defense.gov>

Department of Veteran Affairs

<http://www.va.gov>

TRICARE

<http://www.tricare.mil>

U.S. Government Website

<http://www.firstgov.gov/>

Employment Opportunities www.usajobs.com

www.nafjobs.org

Air Force Association Scholarships

<http://www.afa.org/afef/aid/scholars.asp>

Air Force Safety Center

www.afsec.af.mil

Roots: *Continued from page 1...*

aeronautical development efforts concentrated in the Engineering Division at McCook Field, Dayton, Ohio The formal training establishment took shape during the 1920s. The Air Service concentrated flying training in Texas. Technical schools for officers and enlisted men were at Chanute Field, Ill. The Air Service (later, Air Corps) Tactical School trained officers to command higher units and taught the employment of military aviation. First located at Langley Field, Va., this school moved to Maxwell Field, Ala. in 1931. The Air Corps Act of 1926 changed the name of the Air Service to Air Corps, but left unaltered its status as a combatant arm of the U.S. Army.

► CURRENT ISSUES

[Tinker AFB aircraft return to Oklahoma after diverting to Arizona](#) Six Air Force E-3 Sentries and two Navy E-6B Mercuries returned to Tinker Air Force Base, Okla., May 21 after diverting here in advance of severe weather in Oklahoma.

[Chief nurse candidates must submit applications by May 31](#) Statements of intent for officers interested in chief nurse positions are due May 31, Air Force Personnel Center officials said May 20.

► PERSONNEL ISSUES

[NCO attaché position applications due June 10](#) Active duty staff through senior master sergeants interested in attaché duty could find themselves on an international affairs team in Argentina, Taiwan, Russia and other countries, but those interested must submit their applications by June 16 to be considered, Air Force Personnel Center officials announced today.

► FAMILY, HEALTH AND SAFETY

[VA, veteran groups announce initiative to reduce claims backlog](#) The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Disabled American Veterans and the American Legion today announced a new partnership to help reduce the compensation claims backlog for veterans.

► THIS WEEK IN AIR FORCE HISTORY

May 23 1988 - The Bell-Boeing V-22 Osprey, the first production tilt rotor aircraft, was unveiled at the Bell Helicopter Textron plant at Arlington, Texas.

May 24, 1994 - The C-17 Globemaster flew across the Atlantic for the first time.

May 25, 1910 - Orville and Wilbur Wright flew together for the first time at Dayton.

May 26, 1983 - General Dynamics delivered the 500th F-16A aircraft to Hill AFB, Utah.

May 27, 1951 - Unit 4/SAM C-47s flew leaflet drop/voice broadcast sorties encouraging the enemy to surrender to elements of the U.S. Army's IX Corps. Some 4,000 enemy soldiers surrendered, with many carrying leaflets. The captives reported morale problems among the enemy because of UN aerial attacks.

May 28, 1923 - Lt H. G. Crocker used a DH-4B Liberty 400 to make a nonstop transcontinental South-North flight from Ellington Field, Houston, Tex., to Gordon, Ontario, in 11 hours 55 minutes.

May 29, 1934 - The Hamilton Standard Propeller Company, with credit to Frank W. Caldwell, received the 1933 Collier Trophy for developing a controllable pitch propeller.