

Commander's Call Topics



June 12, 2014

*"O thus be it ever, when freemen shall stand
Between their loved home and the war's desolation."*

The Defence of Fort M'Henry, stanza 4

Francis Scott Key (1779-1843)

American lawyer, author and amateur poet

America's most famous
seamstress,
Betsy Ross,
is the inspiration for a
[Flag Trivia Quiz](#).

There's More to Old Glory Than Red, White and Blue

Fort McHenry, Maryland, likes Flag Day so much, they're celebrating America's most recognizable symbol of patriotism twice this year—in June and in September.

Annually, June 14th commemorates the day in 1777 when the Continental Congress replaced the symbol of the Grand Union flag with the stars and stripes—13 stars on a blue background, to symbolize "a new constellation," and alternating red and white stripes to symbolize the "martyr's blood and pure spirit," of those who fought during the Revolution. In the past, Flag Day and Fort McHenry were nearly synonymous with a day-into-evening parade of flags and musicians, people picnicking on the lawn surrounding the fort, and a grand display of fireworks launched from a barge less than a hundred yards away on the Patapsco River.

This year, the Baltimore Harbor landmark will be celebrating Flag Day differently. An afternoon of fife and drum performances, a special color guard, and a program sponsored by the American Flag Foundation, highlight an afternoon honoring the adoption of the Stars and Stripes as the United States' national flag, quite possibly the most recognizable national colors anywhere. This more subdued salute is the precursor for a larger event later in the year: the bicentennial of the writing of the national anthem.

It would be the War of 1812, the 2½-year military conflict between the United States and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, that would best be known for two outcomes that would provide a singular place in History for Fort McHenry. The war would resolve many issues which remained from the Revolutionary War three decades earlier (although it would change no boundaries). It would also set the stage for Francis Scott Key, a young lawyer, to write the poem "The Defence of Fort M'Henry" in September 1814, as he witnessed the bombardment—"the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air"—from the *HMS Surprise*, a truce ship in the Patapsco River, where he was being held captive watching the Battle of Fort McHenry.

The poem was first published in *The American*, a Baltimore newspaper, and the melody was borrowed from the "The Anacreontic Song" from an amateur musicians' social club in London. Although many find the 1½-octave range difficult to sing, the melody, which had already been coupled with a variety of lyrics, was popular in the United States. With Key's poem set to the tune and renamed "The Star-Spangled Banner," it would soon become a well-known American patriotic song. Although the poem, and thus the anthem, has four stanzas, only the first is commonly sung.

And it will most assuredly be sung and played in September when Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine, now operated by the National Park Service, celebrates with flags and fireworks, fife-and-drum muster, and an all-out 21st century celebration in honor of Old Glory.

► TRENDING ...

"It is a privilege to be an Airman, and an honor to defend our nation," said [Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force James A. Cody](#) in his monthly address to the Air Force, [Roll Call](#). "We can never forget that."

► RESOURCES

Website access to the following resources can be gained by clicking on the name.

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► THIS WEEK IN AIR FORCE HISTORY

June 12, 1973 – Early Warning Space Satellites joined the aerospace surveillance system. Fourteenth Air Force operated the satellite system that augmented the ground-based, missile-launch detection sensors.

June 13, 1983 - Pioneer 10 became the first spacecraft to leave the solar system.

June 14, 1957 - In flying an Aero Commander 680 to 30,300 feet at Tulsa, aviatrix Jerrie Cobb set a world altitude record for light two-engine planes.

June 15, 1944 – Brig. Gen. LaVerne G. Saunders, XX Bomber Command, led the first B-29 strike against Japan. In that raid, 47 B-29s flew from bases in Chengtu, China, to attack steel mills at Yawata on Kyushu.

June 16, 1959 - The first F-105s arrived at Seymour Johnson AFB.

June 17, 1997 - A C-5A Galaxy from the 436th AW at Dover AFB flew from Andrews AFB to Tashkent, Uzbekistan, on the 500th humanitarian airlift mission supporting Operation Provide Hope.

June 18, 1968 - In three years of Vietnam operations, SAC's B-52 accomplished more than 25,000 sorties to deliver more than 630,000 tons of conventional bombs.

► CURRENT ISSUES

[The latest news in force management has a page of its own](#)

An across-the-Air Force perspective of the programs, issues and repercussions of force management have been brought together on a single web page.

► FAMILY HEALTH AND SAFETY

[Key spouse program vital to family readiness](#)

The impact of the challenges and unexpected difficulties of being the spouse in support of a deployed Airman are lessened by the guidance and backing of this official program's training, reference guide and solid relationships.

► PERSONNEL ISSUES

[AF test pilot applications due in June](#)

Fighter, multi-engine aircraft, helicopter and remotely piloted aircraft pilot applications must reach Headquarters Air Force Materiel Command Air, Space and Information Operations by June 23rd.

[AF implements new feedback process July 1](#)

The first step in a more comprehensive Air Force evaluation system for officers and enlisted members will be the July 1 implementation of the Airman Comprehensive Assessment Worksheet performance feedback tool.

For more information on Air Force heritage, visit <http://www.airforcehistory.af.mil>

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