

Commander's Call Topics



September 18, 2014

“We will not be intimidated or pushed off the world stage by people who do not like what we stand for, and that is freedom, democracy and the fight against disease, poverty and terrorism.”

*Madeleine Albright
(b. 1937)
American Statesman*

September is
National Preparedness Month.
Are your [pets prepared](#)?
What's in your
[Emergency Supply Kit](#)?

Women's Progress Parallels History of Air Force

It's no coincidence that the creation of the Air Force and the inception of women serving in the military go hand-in-hand. The Air Force celebrates its 67th birthday on September 18, the youngest of the four services. It was less than a year after its creation in 1947 that the Air Force enlisted its first woman, Sgt. Esther Blake on July 8, 1948. From then, until today, women's milestones in the military have paralleled Air Force history.

As early as the Korean War, women serving as medical air evacuation nurses were involved in battle zones, although the majority of women serving in the Women in the Air Force (or WAFs) were in non-combat jobs such as air traffic controllers, weather observers, radar operators, photo interpreters and administration.

Even though a two percent cap on the number of women serving in the Air Force kept numbers low, by the end of the Korean War there were 12,800 WAF officers and enlisted serving.

Progress moved more swiftly during the Vietnam War and after the 1967 repeal of the two percent limit, women were allowed to serve in the Air National Guard as well. In 1969, college campuses saw their first female ROTC cadets and in just seven short years women would enter the service academies for the first time.

In 1971 the Air Force would have its first female general when Jeanne M. Holm pinned on her first star. Two years later the Supreme Court would rule in the case of Air Force Lt. Sharon Frontiero, providing benefits for dependents of military women, giving their spouses medical, commissary and post exchange benefits.

By the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 pregnant women would get the option of leaving the military or remaining on active duty, a choice not previously available to them. And a year later the Air Force would end the WAF program, incorporating women into the mainstream Air Force.

The decade of the 1980s would host a number of firsts for women, beginning in 1980 with the first female graduates from the Air Force Academy. Women began serving as pilots, test pilots and boom operators, and by the Gulf War in 1991, more than 40,000 women would serve in Desert Shield/Desert Storm. In 1993 one of those first female academy grads, then Maj. Susan J. Helms, would become the first female military member to fly into space as part of the space shuttle program.

From fighter pilots to four-star general, even secretary of the Air Force, today women are serving at the top echelons of the Air Force. It's a legacy of progress that has followed the Air Force for close to seven decades. Happy 67!

TRENDING

“We didn't become the world's greatest Air Force by accident,” said [Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force James A. Cody](#) in celebration of [67-plus years of airpower](#). “We got here through 67 years of American Airmen breaking new terrain and lifting us to a higher level. We should celebrate that innovation this year, and we're counting on you to continue this legacy for years to come.”

► RESOURCES

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

[AF.mil](#)

[Airman Magazine](#)

[Military OneSource/HomeFront](#)

[Air Force Personnel Center](#)

[Air Reserve Personnel Center](#)

[Department of Defense News](#)

[Department of Veteran Affairs](#)

[TRICARE](#)

[U.S. Government Website](#)

[Air Force Association Scholarships](#)

[Air Force Safety Center](#)

[Civil Service Employment Opportunities](#)

[NAF Employment Opportunities](#)

[Air Force Bands/Outreach](#)

► THIS WEEK IN AIR FORCE HISTORY

September 18, 1967 - Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara approved production of a "thin" Nike-X and ballistic missile to give regions in the U.S. at least one battery of warhead interceptors.

September 19, 1972 – A Minuteman III completed its first operational test launch from a regular launch facility at Vandenberg AFB, Calif.

Sept. 21, 1952 - During the Korean War, F-86 Sabre pilot, Capt. Robinson Risner destroyed two MiG-15s to become an ace when the enemy responded to an attack on the Pukchong munitions plant by 41 F-84s.

Sept. 22, 2005 - From Vandenberg AFB, a Minotaur rocket carried a 920-pound DARPA military research satellite into a yearlong orbit to gather information about the Earth's environment in low orbit. The Minotaur rocket was made from decommissioned first and second stages of a Minuteman II missile.

Sept. 23, 1959 - The DoD reorganized its space and missile programs to give the Air Force responsibility over space transportation and ultimately all space booster rockets.

Sept. 24, 1929 – Lt. James H. Doolittle made the first all-blind flight at Mitchel Field. Although a check pilot accompanied him, Doolittle took off in a Consolidated NY-2 airplane with a completely covered cockpit, flew a short distance, and landed.

Sept. 25, 1918 - While on a voluntary patrol, Lt. Edward V. Rickenbacker attacked seven German aircraft near Billy, France. Despite the odds, he dived on them and shot one of the Fokkers out of control and then attacked one of the Halberstadts and also shot it down. For this action, he later received the Medal of Honor.

Recent promotion? Change of command? Increased number of flight hours?

There are many reasons to update a biography!

Keep your leadership current by ensuring that their AF.mil biography is up to date.

Send us updates in real-time using the **NEW** link below:

afbiographies.dma@mail.mil

► CURRENT ISSUES

[SecAF: From legacy of past to uncertain future, bold leadership key](#)

An agile Air Force with a bold leadership id key to answering the challenges of today and an uncertain future.

[American Airman video contest winner announced at AFA](#)

The votes are in, the winner has been announced, and the minute-long selfie showcases what it takes to be an Airman.

► PERSONNEL ISSUES

[1,482 Airmen still missing: POW/MIA Recognition Day set for Sept. 19](#)

Remembering the sacrifices and service of prisoners of war, members still missing in action and their families is the mission of the [Air Force Missing Persons Branch](#).

[New eligibility cutoff dates for promotion to tech, master](#)

Airmen competing for promotion to technical and master sergeant face a series of changes to the enlisted evaluation and promotion systems.

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

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