

**September 18, 1947:  
The Air Force is born**



In the aftermath of World War II, President Harry S. Truman approved the National Security Act of 1947 that realigned and reorganized the United States' armed forces, foreign policy, and Intelligence Community apparatus. President Truman also issued Executive Order 9877 that by presidential directive outlined the duties of the three services. Each service was responsible for the area in which it operated — ground, sea, and air, although the Navy retained an air arm and the Marine Corps. The new National Military Establishment, along with a majority of the provisions of the National Security Act of 1947 took effect on September 18, 1947; the day after the Senate confirmed James V. Forrestal as the first Secretary of Defense. Along with the military reorganization, the act established the National Security Council, a central place of coordination for national security policy in the Executive Branch, and the Central Intelligence Agency, the United States' first peacetime intelligence agency. The bill signing took place aboard Truman's C-54 presidential aircraft "Sacred Cow," the predecessor of Air Force One.



**The  
Berlin Airlift**



The Berlin Airlift (June 24, 1948 to May 11, 1949) was one of the first major crises of the new Cold War. Following the Allied victory in World War II, the Soviet Union pushed the Allies for reparations from West Germany's industrial plants, though this had not been agreed to. When U.S. President Harry S. Truman refused to give the Soviet Union reparations, Soviet leader Joseph Stalin split off the Soviet sector of Germany as a Communist state and blocked railroad and street access to West Berlin. The U.S. circumvented the blockade by organizing a massive airlift. Hundreds of aircraft were used to fly in a wide variety of cargo, ranging from large supply containers to small packets of candy for the children of Berlin. Sick children were evacuated on return flights. The crisis abated after the Soviet Union did not act to stop American, British, and French humanitarian airlifts of food and other provisions to the Western-held sectors of Berlin. At its height, the Berlin Airlift delivered a record 12,940 tons in a 24-hour period. The Berlin Airlift ended on September 30, 1949. 149 allied aircraft carried 2,343,301.5 tons of supplies, including more than 1.5 million tons of coal, on 277,264 flights, and U.S. planes carried 1,783,826 tons.



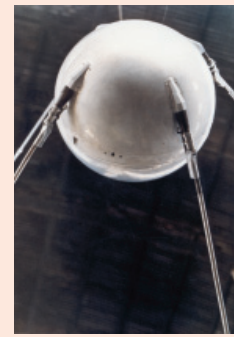
**The Tuskegee  
Airmen**



President Harry S. Truman called for an end to segregation in the military in 1948 with Executive Order 9981. On May 1st, 1949 the Air Force issued Air Force Letter 35-3, which called for equal treatment and opportunity for black servicemen and women and marked an end to legal discrimination in the Armed Forces. The U.S. Air Force was the first military service to announce an end to racial segregation in its ranks. During World War II the famous Tuskegee Airmen, formed into the all-black 332<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Group, had claimed 113 Luftwaffe aircraft shot down (including 3 Me-262 jets), a patrol boat run aground by machine gun fire, and numerous fuel dumps, trucks and trains. The group flew more than 15,000 sorties on 1,500 missions, and they never lost a single bomber to enemy aircraft (only to flack) in their role as escort fighters. The unit received recognition through official channels, and won two Presidential Unit Citations, 744 Air Medals, 150 Distinguished Flying Crosses, fourteen Bronze Stars, and several Silver Stars. In 1948 the Tuskegee Airmen found themselves in high demand throughout the newly formed U.S. Air Force.



**The  
"Space Race"**



Sputnik 1 was the world's first artificial satellite to be put into orbit, on October 4, 1957. At the height of the Cold War, the launching of Sputnik caught the West by surprise, and led to a wave of self-recriminations in the U.S. The launching started a movement to reform science education. Prior to Sputnik's launch, the United States had been working on satellites, primarily through teams working for the US Navy. Their first launch was originally intended to be before the Sputnik launch, but was delayed several times and eventually exploded on the launch pad. A rush effort then started under the U.S. Army's Jupiter project and succeeded in launching Explorer I in January 1958. This is considered the start of the Space Race between the two superpowers, which was a prominent aspect of the Cold War. The Space Race became an important part of the cultural, technological, and ideological rivalry between the USSR and the United States. Both nations attempted to out-do each other in space exploration, eventually culminating in the launch of the Apollo 11 mission to the Moon.



### The “Domino” Theory



On February 8, 1965 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. Many U.S. leaders used the “domino” theory during the Cold War to justify U.S. intervention in the Vietnam War. President Dwight D. Eisenhower and his top advisers applied the domino theory in 1954 to describe the prospects of communist expansion in Asia if Indochina were to fall. After the U.S. left Vietnam, the North took over the South, and Cambodia and Laos had also turned to Communism, although Cambodia is no longer a communist state. The domino theory was a 20th Century foreign policy theory that speculated if one land in a region came under the influence of Communists, then more would follow in a domino effect. The domino theory indicates that some change, small in itself, will cause a similar change nearby, which then will cause another similar change, and so on in linear sequence, by analogy to a falling row of dominoes standing on end.



### Air Force Academy opens to women



It literally took an act of Congress to open the United States Military Academies to women. In 1975, then President Ford signed Public Law 94-106 requiring the services to open the hallowed halls of West Point, Annapolis, and the Air Force Academy to women. In the fall of 1976 female cadets began their education and military orientation, as the “Class of ‘80” became the first coed class. On June 28, 1976 the U.S. Air Force Academy became the first of the big three service academies to admit women cadets when it admitted Joan Olsen. The transition wasn’t easy, and the lingering male chauvinist attitude didn’t help matters but for the most part women cadets succeeded in ignoring the micro-minded while acing the academics. Academic failure was twice as high for the men. Later that year the first of two groups of women-pilot candidates entered undergraduate pilot training at Williams AFB, Ariz. A year later the first class of woman pilots graduated - with the first class of woman navigators graduating a month later. In May 1980, for the first time, 97 women were among those receiving commissions as second lieutenants in graduation ceremonies at the U.S. Air Force Academy.



### The Gulf War (1990-1991)



The Gulf War (1990–1991) was a conflict between Iraq and a coalition force of approximately 20 nations led by the United States and mandated by the United Nations to liberate Kuwait. The war began with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990, following Iraqi contentions that Kuwait was illegally slant-drilling petroleum across Iraq’s border. The invasion was met with immediate economic sanctions by the United Nations against Iraq. Beginning in the early morning hours of January 17, 1991 the coalition launched a massive air campaign code named Operation Desert Storm with more than 1,000 sorties launching per day. The Persian Gulf War is sometimes called the “computer war” because of the advanced weapons used in the air campaign. Despite Iraq’s better-than-expected anti-aircraft capability, only one coalition aircraft was lost in the opening day of the war. The sorties were launched mostly from Saudi Arabia and the six Coalition aircraft carrier groups in the Persian Gulf, resulting in a decisive victory for the coalition forces, which drove Iraqi forces out of Kuwait with minimal damage to coalition forces. The main battles were aerial and ground combat within Iraq, Kuwait, and bordering areas of Saudi Arabia.



### The U.S. Air Force Memorial



On October 14, 2006 the president of the United States accepted the Air Force Memorial in a dedication ceremony in Washington D.C. attended by military leaders of the past and present, political and business representatives and thousands of ordinary citizens and Airmen alike. The U.S. Air Force Memorial honors the service and sacrifices of the men and women of the U.S. Air Force and its predecessor organizations, including the Aeronautical Division, U.S. Signal Corps; the Aviation Section, U.S. Signal Corps; the Division of Military Aeronautics, Secretary of War; the Army Air Service; the U.S. Army Air Corps; and the U.S. Army Air Forces. More than 54,000 airmen have died in combat while serving in the Air Force and these historical service arms of the military, the second highest of any of America’s four armed services. The Air Force was the only branch of service without any memorial in the Washington D.C. area commemorating its service to the nation.

