

AIR FORCE



**U.S.
MILITARY
FORCES**

Simon Rose

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U.S. MILITARY FORCES

AIR FORCE

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WHAT IS THE AIR FORCE?

The Air Force is one of the main branches of the United States Armed Forces. The other branches are the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Space Force, and Coast Guard. The Air Force is the aviation and air warfare force of the United States military. This means it is made up of forces that operate planes and weapons that attack the enemy from the sky. The Air Force was founded in 1947.

The Air Force is part of the Department of Defense. This department is in charge of five of the six military branches. The secretary of defense is the head of this department. The president of the United States is commander-in-chief of the entire Armed Forces. The U.S. Air Force is the largest air force in the world. It has more than 300,000 people on full-time active duty and about 200,000 personnel in the **Air National Guard** and **Air Force Reserve**. Both men and women in the Air Force are known as airmen.



Airmen are trained to fly over enemy territory and carry out dangerous missions.



The Air Force operates more than 5,000 aircraft, including helicopters, fighter jets, and bombers.

STRUCTURE OF THE U.S. ARMED FORCES



PROTECTING THE COUNTRY



The U.S. Air Force defends the United States and protects its interests around the world. It leads U.S. military attacks in and from the air. The Air Force supports the Army, Navy, and Marines in combat missions on land and water. It does this by using fighter jets, bombers, missiles, and cargo transport aircraft, as well as **surveillance** information from **unmanned aircraft** and space satellites. The Air Force is also responsible for keeping the United States safe from enemy attacks from the air.

The U.S. Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserve support the Air Force. Each state has its own Air National Guard. The Air National Guard can be called upon to provide personnel and equipment when needed.

The federal government is in charge of the Air Force Reserve. The Reserve works with the Air Force on a daily basis in the United States and around the world. However, reservists do not work on active duty as their full-time job.

On the Front Lines

In times of war, the Air Force is in charge of air attacks against enemy military sites, such as fuel stations and weapons factories. It attacks enemy land forces from the air, often to support U.S. forces already fighting the enemy on the ground. The Air Force leads combat missions against enemy air forces. It also takes part in **reconnaissance** missions, which help the U.S. military obtain information about enemy activities away from the battlefield.

AIR FORCE CORE VALUES



INTEGRITY FIRST Do what is right even when no one is looking. Have courage, be honest, take responsibility for your actions, and be fair to others.

SERVICE BEFORE SELF Your military duties are more important than your own desires. Follow rules, put the needs of the troops ahead of your own, be confident and optimistic in difficult situations, and have faith in your leaders.

EXCELLENCE IN ALL WE DO Dedicate yourself to improvement and innovation. Take classes that further your education, and stay in good physical and mental shape. When working with others to reach a common goal, show them respect and do not judge them. This will help get the job done with the best possible results.

HISTORY OF THE AIR FORCE

The Air Force became a separate branch of the U.S. Armed Forces in 1947. Before then, responsibility for aviation operations in the U.S. military was split between the Navy and the Army. The Navy was in charge of operations from aircraft carriers and ships with **amphibious** aircraft, such as helicopters. The Army was responsible for land-based operations. These responsibilities were combined under the Air Force.

Since it was founded, the Air Force has played a role in every armed conflict the U.S. has been involved in. It sometimes is the first branch of the Armed Forces to launch an attack. In 2003, the Air Force led the U.S. invasion of Iraq with heavy bombing and missile strikes on Baghdad. This made it easier for U.S. ground forces to attack the city.

1907

Army establishes Aeronautical Division, Signal Corps to oversee aviation operations



1944

D-Day, the Allied invasion of Western Europe, occurs on June 6

1918

The Air Service, US Army is formed and takes charge of aviation operations in the war, and World War I ends

1950 to 1953

Korean War



2001

Invasion of Afghanistan



1983

Invasion of Grenada

1900

1920

1940

1960

1980

2000

2020

1914

Aviation Section, Signal Corps replaces Aeronautical Division

1926

The Air Service is renamed as the U.S. Air Army Corps

1941

The U.S. Army Air Forces is created as a combat branch of the Army, and the U.S. enters World War II after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor

1947

The U.S. Air Force is officially created

1965 to 1973

Vietnam War

1989

Invasion of Panama

2021

Air strikes in Syria and Iraq

2003

Invasion of Iraq

1917

The United States enters World War I



1945

Atomic bombs are dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and World War II ends



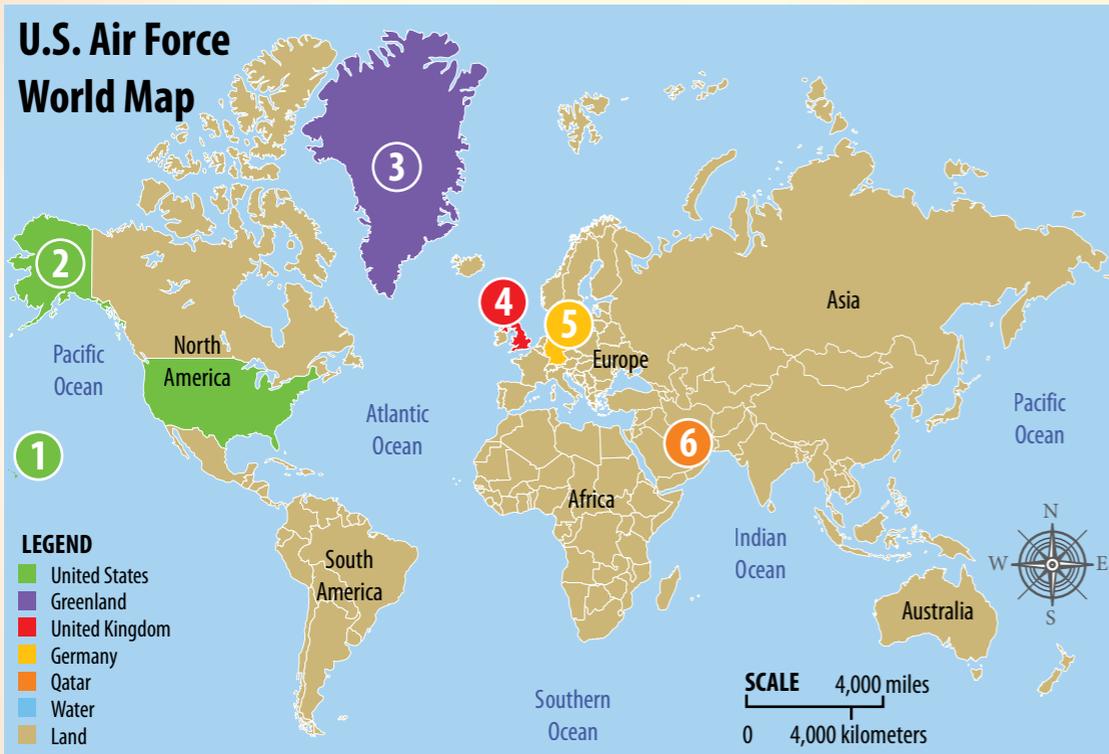
1990s

Air Force involved in NATO operations in Yugoslavia



THE AIR FORCE AROUND THE WORLD

In addition to its bases on the United States mainland, the U.S. Air Force operates bases in Hawai'i and Alaska, and in many different countries around the world. It also shares some bases with armed forces of other countries.



1 Hawai'i, United States

Pacific Air Forces is headquartered at Hickam Air Force Base in Hawai'i. This Air Force command is in charge of aviation operations of the U.S. military in the Pacific Ocean region. It has nine Air Force bases and almost 400 aircraft under its command. Its area of responsibility stretches from the North Pole to the South Pole and from the U.S. west coast to the east coast of Africa. This region is home to 36 nations and more than half of the world's population.



2 Alaska, United States

Eielson Air Force Base in interior Alaska trains airmen to provide combat air support in freezing arctic conditions. The base hosts the 354th Fighter Wing, which is often called the Iceman Team. With "Ready to go at 50 below" as its wing motto, the 354th Fighter Wing is the northernmost U.S. fighter wing in the world.



3 Greenland

Thule Air Base is farther north than any other U.S. military site. It is 947 miles (1,524 km) from the North Pole. The base has about 600 personnel. It is home to the 12th Space Warning Squadron, which is responsible for detecting long-range missiles heading toward the United States. These are called intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs).



4 United Kingdom

The U.S. Air Force operates a number of facilities at Royal Air Force (RAF) bases of the United Kingdom. RAF Mildenhall is a refueling stop for Air Force planes flying between the United States and Europe or the Middle East. The refueling can be done either at the airfield or by hooking up to a refueling plane in mid-air. The Air Force also has forces at RAF Molesworth and RAF Alconbury. Both of these bases played a major role in operations against Germany in World War II.



5 Germany

Ramstein Air Base is the headquarters of United States Air Forces in Europe, which is responsible for all Air Force operations in Europe. Ramstein is also a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) facility. Personnel at the base come from almost every country in Europe.



6 Qatar

Al Udeid Air Base is located in Doha on the Persian Gulf. It is home to the Air Force Central Command. This command is part of the U.S. Central Command, which also is based at Al Udeid. The U.S. Central Command is in charge of all Armed Forces operations in the Middle East, Central Asia, and East Africa.



AIR FORCE UNIFORMS

U.S. airmen have worn a number of different uniforms through the years. For pilots of early military aircraft, the most important need was for clothing to be warm. The pilots sat in an unheated **cockpit** that had no roof. It could be freezing cold because of the wind from the propeller and the lower temperatures high in the sky. Combat planes with heated, enclosed cockpits were not used until late in World War II.

WORLD WAR I

The Sidcot suit was similar to overalls. It was made from leather and had a fur lining. The cuffs were also lined with fur to prevent warm air from escaping. A fur collar could be attached to the suit. In addition to keeping pilots warm, the suit protected the pilot from oil flung out from the engines.

Pilots wore a leather cap with earflaps. They also used goggles and gloves.



WORLD WAR II

Airmen in combat planes wore jackets made of leather, often with fur collars. Shearling jackets were the warmest type of flight jackets. They were made from sheepskin lined with fur or wool.

Airmen who operated **gun turrets** had to fire through open windows. They wore electrically heated flight suits to stay warm. They also wore vests known as flak jackets to protect themselves from flying **shrapnel** from antiaircraft guns. These vests had steel plates sewn into them. Life preservers and parachutes were used in emergencies.



TODAY

The current Air Force flight suit is made of a lightweight, fireproof material called Nomex. The suits are usually green or tan in color and have several large pockets.

Pilots have a parachute and a life preserver to use in emergencies. They also use a survival vest that contains emergency items. These items include flares, a supply of water, ammunition, knives, medical supplies, and more.

The flight helmet has a visor and an oxygen mask.



AIR FORCE AIRCRAFT

Curtiss JN-4



WORLD WAR I

The **Curtiss JN-4 "Jenny"** was used to train military pilots in North America, although it was never used in combat. It was a biplane, which means it had two main wings, one above the other. The plane had a top speed of 75 miles (121 km) per hour and could operate at heights of 6,500 feet (1,980 m).

WORLD WAR II

The **P-47 Thunderbolt** was one of the main U.S. fighter planes in World War II. The aircraft had eight machine guns and won many battles with enemy fighter planes. The plane was also used as a bomber for ground attacks.



P-47 Thunderbolt

B-29 Superfortress



The **B-29 Superfortress** bomber was one of the largest aircraft used during the war. It had some of the most advanced technology, including remote-controlled machine-gun turrets. The B-29 was the main aircraft used in American **firebombing** attacks on Japan. It was also used to drop atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945.

TODAY

The **F-16** is the most popular fighter plane in the world. More than 4,600 F-16s have been built for the air forces of about 25 countries around the world. The U.S. Air Force has about 1,000 F-16s.

The aircraft has a top speed of 1,500 miles (2,400 km) per hour and can fly to a height of more than 50,000 feet (15,200 m). Its guns can launch a variety of missiles and bombs.



F-16 Fighter Plane



B-2 Spirit

The **B-2 Spirit** is also known as the Stealth Bomber. It uses special technology to help it avoid detection by enemy radar.

The bomber can drop eighty 500-pound (230-kilogram) bombs on a single flight.

Air Force One is the plane used to transport the president of the United States. The aircraft has three levels. The lower level is for cargo, and the upper level contains the cockpit and the communications room.

The middle level has offices, meeting rooms, and living quarters. The plane can carry 30 crew members and about 70 passengers. It can be refueled while it is in the air and can keep flying for long periods if needed.



Air Force One

JOINING THE AIR FORCE



Anyone wishing to join the Air Force must be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident. He or she must be between 18 and 27 years of age, have a high school education, and be in good physical condition. To qualify for officer programs, a person must have a college degree.

airmen attend technical classes to learn the jobs they will do in the Air Force. Those who wish to become officers may attend the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado, or Officer Training School at Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama.

Boot Camp

Basic Training for Air Force recruits is sometimes called Boot Camp. The training takes place at Lackland Air Force Base near San Antonio, Texas. It includes combat and marksmanship training, physical training, and training in first-aid procedures. Following Basic Training,



Air Force Basic Training is eight and a half weeks long.



Applying to the Air Force

Step One: Apply online

Step Two: Talk to a recruiter

Step Three: Take the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) test

Step Four: Visit the Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS), where it will be determined if you are qualified to join the Air Force

Oath of Enlistment

“I do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. So help me God.”



JOBS IN THE AIR FORCE



Being in the Air Force is not just about flying combat missions. There are many types of careers in the Air Force. There are jobs working with computers and technology, fixing and maintaining aircraft, and working in health care or as an engineer. There are also jobs in transportation, arts and education, business, communications, and more. The training and experience gained in the Air Force can lead to successful careers in **civilian** life after military service is completed.

Business and Administration
Administrative jobs involve keeping accurate information on personnel, equipment, money, and supplies. This is necessary for the Air Force to plan and manage its operations. Administrative personnel may work in specialized areas such as accounting, finance, business management, legal affairs, and human resources.



Air Force traffic controllers work to ensure that aircraft launch, fly, and arrive safely and efficiently.



There are about 1,000 officers in the Air Force Medical Service Corps.

Information and Technology
Jobs in this field involve working in high-tech areas such as computers and communication systems. Air Force **intelligence** specialists study photographs taken from aircraft and satellites to discover information needed by the military. There are also jobs using and repairing electronic systems involved with satellite communications, radar, and navigation.

Health Care
Air Force doctors and nurses take care of sick or wounded military personnel. They also may provide **humanitarian** health services for civilians in areas hit by earthquakes, floods, or other natural disasters. Air Force health care careers include working as doctors, nurses, dentists, and physical therapists. Other jobs involve laboratory research or operating medical tools such as x-ray and ultrasound equipment.



AIR FORCE COMMUNITY LIFE

In many ways, life in the Air Force is much like civilian life. Airmen work regular hours at a job, spend time with their families, and fill their free time with hobbies, sports, or any activity they choose. Some airmen live in barracks, but others live in houses either on or off the base.

Many Air Force bases have all of the facilities of most towns or cities. These may include hospitals, schools, day-care centers, libraries, sports facilities, and shopping malls. The Air Force provides a wide variety of programs to improve the quality of life for families living on Air Force bases. These include counseling services, programs to improve on-base education and job opportunities for family members, and programs that help families deal with the stress of having a parent working in a combat area overseas.



The Air Force provides free on-base housing for airmen and their families.

WRITE YOUR STORY

If you apply to join the Air Force, you will need to write an essay about yourself. This is also true when you apply to a college or for a job. Practice telling your story by completing this writing activity.

ONE

Brainstorming

Start by making notes about your interests. What are your hobbies? Do you like to read? Are you more interested in computers or power tools? Then, organize your ideas into an outline, with a clear beginning, middle, and end.

TWO

Writing the First Draft

A first draft does not have to be perfect. Try to get the story written. Then, read it to see if it makes sense. It will probably need revision. Even the most famous writers edit their work many times before it is completed.

THREE

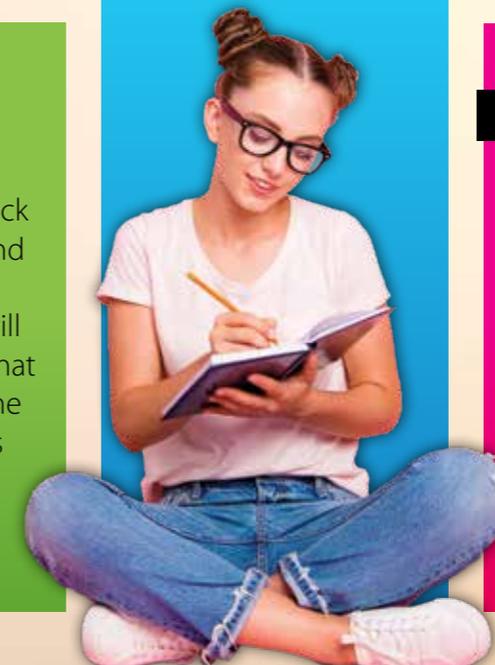
Editing

Go through your story and remove anything that is repeated or not needed. Add any missing information that should be included. Be sure the text makes sense and is easy to read.

FOUR

Proofreading

Proofreading is the stage where you check spelling, grammar, and punctuation. During the proofread, you will often find mistakes that you missed during the editing stage. Always look for ways to make your writing the best it can be.



FIVE

Submitting Your Story

When your text is finished, it is time to submit your story, along with any other application materials. A good essay will increase your chances of being accepted, whether it be for a school, a job, or the Air Force.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1

When was the Air Force founded?

2

Where are the headquarters of the United States Air Forces in Europe?

3

How many Air Force personnel are on active, full-time duty?

4

What is the most popular fighter jet in the world?

5

Where is the Air Force Academy located?

6

Where is Basic Training for Air Force recruits held?

7

What is the name of the plane that transports the president of the United States?

8

What are the three core values of the U.S. Air Force?



ANSWERS
1. 1947 2. Ramstein Air Base in Germany 3. More than 300,000 4. The F-16 5. Colorado Springs, Colorado 6. Lackland Air Force Base near San Antonio, Texas 7. Air Force One 8. Integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all we do

KEY WORDS

Air Force Reserve: part-time Air Force personnel who can be called to full-time duty in an emergency

Air National Guard: the air forces of individual states that can be called upon when needed

amphibious: operating both on land and on water

civilian: a person who is not an active member of the armed forces

cockpit: the space in a plane where the pilot sits

firebombing: attacking with bombs and missiles to start fires

gun turrets: revolving platforms with guns

humanitarian: efforts to save lives and prevent suffering

intelligence: information about the armed forces of another country

reconnaissance: exploration of an area to gain useful information

shrapnel: pieces of metal that fly out of a bullet or bomb when it explodes

surveillance: keeping close watch over an area

unmanned aircraft: a remotely controlled aircraft without a human pilot

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