

CHAPTER 5



An F-4 Phantom, P-47 Thunderbolt, F-16 Fighting Falcon, and P-51 Mustang fly in a heritage-flight formation.

Courtesy US Air Force

The US Air Force Is Born

Chapter Outline

LESSON 1

The Army Air Forces Become the US Air Force

LESSON 2

Military Aircraft Development After World War II

LESSON 3

The Role of Airpower from the Korean War to the Vietnam War

LESSON 4

Other US Air Force Military Operations That Supported National Objectives

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Global Interventions From 1990

“In the development of air power, one has to look ahead and not backward, and figure out what is going to happen, not too much what has happened.”

Brigadier General William “Billy” Mitchell

LESSON 1

The Army Air Forces Become the US Air Force



Quick Write

After reading the following vignette, write down three important facts about the Marshall Plan and what it did for Western Europe after World War II.



Learn About

- military developments after World War II
- the National Security Act of 1947 and the creation of an independent Air Force
- political developments after World War II
- the Cold War and how it affected US foreign policy and the US Air Force
- the Berlin Airlift and how the US Air Force helped break the Berlin Blockade

BY THE END OF WORLD WAR II, most of Europe was economically and politically devastated. American leaders feared that if Western Europe remained weak, it would fall under Communist control. The United States wanted to help Europe get back on its feet. So in 1948 Congress passed the European Recovery Program, also known as the **Marshall Plan**. The plan was a *strategy for rebuilding the countries of Europe and repelling communism after World War II*. The United States invited the countries under Soviet control to join, but the Soviets refused to allow them to participate.

The Marshall Plan was first suggested by then-Secretary of State George C. Marshall in 1947. Marshall had been a five-star general, chief of staff of the Army, and one of the president's senior military advisors during World War II. The Marshall Plan was a great success. It helped Western European industry get up and running again. It also boosted the US economy by opening up new markets for American goods.

The Marshall Plan was recognized as a great humanitarian effort. It earned Secretary of State Marshall the Nobel Peace Prize in 1953. He is the only general to receive this award.



Secretary of State George C. Marshall

Historical Office Public Affairs/Office of the Secretary of Defense

Military Developments After World War II

After World War II ended, the United States gave in to public pressure and began to reduce the military. It also began restructuring how the military was organized, based on lessons learned from World War II. This reorganization resulted in a new military establishment, later to be called the Department of Defense.

Force Reduction

The end of World War II began a new age for the US military. With Europe, Japan, and China in shambles from the war, the United States and the Soviet Union were the only two major powers remaining in the world. Taking an active role in world affairs was the best way to protect US national interests. This was especially true with the Soviet Union expanding its territories and influence. The United States and its allies saw this expansion as a threat to world peace and democracy.

Democracy is a form of government in which people choose their leaders by voting. If the West didn't stop Soviet attempts to expand, Europe and perhaps the Middle East might fall under Soviet control.

At the same time, Americans wanted their military family members home from Europe and the Pacific, and to return to a peacetime economy. US leaders were certain that, with the invention of the atomic bomb, the United States had all the security it needed. No one would dare attack the United States or its allies for fear of **massive retaliation**—*returning an attack with a large-scale attack, including using the atomic bomb*. This led many people to believe that the United States no longer needed a large military force. The result was a period of confusion for US defense policy.

Vocabulary



- Marshall Plan
- democracy
- massive retaliation
- reserves
- National Guard
- integration
- superpower
- satellite government
- containment
- takeover
- aggression
- arms
- United Nations (UN)
- Strategic Triad
- missiles
- satellite
- nuclear deterrence
- Western Allies
- airlift

As a result, the United States rapidly reduced the size of its armed forces after World War II. Within a year after Japan surrendered, the Army shrank from 8 million Soldiers to less than 2 million. The Navy was reduced from 4 million Sailors to 1.6 million, and thousands of ships were retired. Both the Army and Navy created a reserve program in case of future wars. **Reserves** are *military forces not part of the regular military, but trained and organized for a quick call to action*. Another goal was to have a **National Guard**, *a military force recruited by each state, equipped by the federal government, and subject to either a state or federal government recall*.

By 1947, the Army Air Forces (AAF) had been cut from 2.3 million Airmen and 72,000 planes to about 300,000 Airmen and 10,000 planes. More than 90 percent of the AAF's mechanics left the service. By 1950, about 2 million personnel made up the entire military. This force's purpose was to meet the threat of communism.

Reorganization

As the US government was reducing the size of all military branches, it was rethinking how to fight wars. The atomic bomb had drastically changed warfare. Both civilian and military leaders saw the need to change US military organization based on the military experiences of World War II. They wanted to correct the intelligence failures and poor coordination between the Army and the Navy that helped lead to the disaster at Pearl Harbor. The law that changed the military organization was the National Security Act of 1947.

The National Security Act of 1947 and the Creation of an Independent Air Force

As you read in Chapter 3, airpower was vital to the Allies' victory in World War II. Between 1941 and 1945, the Army Air Forces developed new strategies and tactics. Engineers built more-powerful bombers and fighters. US planes delivered the atomic bombs on Japan that ended the war in 1945. US airpower grew up fast, and the atomic bomb made it mature even faster. By 1947, most people were convinced it was time for the Air Forces to gain independence from the Army.

The National Security Act of 1947

In July 1947 President Harry S. Truman signed into law the National Security Act of 1947. This act set the stage for military development in the years to come. It authorized the founding of the National Military Establishment (today's Department of Defense).

The law created the post of secretary of defense, who would answer to the president of the United States. It created the National Security Council and the Central Intelligence Agency. It established three branches within the National Military Establishment: the Department of the Navy, the Department of the Army, and the Department of the Air Force. This last change marked the creation of an independent United States Air Force (USAF). The first secretary of the Air Force, Stuart Symington, was appointed in September 1947.

Separate Air Force

As you have read in earlier lessons, the vision of a separate Air Force began with Brigadier General Billy Mitchell after World War I. But the proposal was not seriously considered until the Army Air Forces proved their military value in World War II. By the end of the war, the AAF had become the most powerful air arm in the world. It had long-range bombers that could deliver an atomic weapon. This made the AAF a powerful political tool and key to US plans for preventing another war.

Although the independent Air Force was created in July 1947, it did not receive full and formal independence until 18 September that year. On that day President Truman appointed Stuart Symington as the first secretary of the Air Force. It still took another two years for an orderly transfer of functions and personnel from the Army.



Waypoints

Integrating the Air Force

On 26 July 1948, President Truman issued Executive Order 9981. It called for equal treatment of all people in the military services, regardless of race, color, religion, or national origin. Of all the services, the Air Force was the most ready to answer President Truman's call. It was already studying ways to improve military efficiency. **Integration** means *including individuals from different groups in society or an organization as equals*. Secretary Symington met some Air Force leaders' objection to integration firmly. He told the generals he expected no one to get in the way. Those who didn't agree with the policy should resign. As early as 1947, Secretary Symington had said publicly that African-Americans should be able to enter the Air Force based on their merits and abilities rather than their race. Over the next few years, under his guidance the Air Force disbanded African-American units. It was the first service to be fully integrated.

The First Air Force Chief of Staff

General Carl Spaatz was the first US Air Force chief of staff. He had commanded many World War II operations in the European and Pacific theaters. As chief of staff, General Spaatz was in charge of military operations for the Air Force. Secretary Symington was in charge of administrative matters.

General Spaatz oversaw three major operating commands created in 1946: the Strategic Air Command (SAC), the Tactical Air Command (TAC), and the Air Defense Command (ADC). SAC was the atomic-weapons command. It was the best-funded command of the three. TAC was in charge of tactical, or smaller, air operations. ADC's role was to defend the country from air strikes.



President Truman signs the Presidential Proclamation designating 1 August 1946 as Air Force Day. With him are General Carl A. Spaatz, Commanding General of the Army Air Forces, and Lieutenant General Ira C. Eaker, Deputy Commander of the AAF.

Courtesy US Air Force

The Right Stuff

First Woman in the Air Force

Esther Blake enlisted on the first minute of the first hour of the first day that regular Air Force duty was authorized for women: 8 July 1948. Blake's active military career began in 1944. A widow, she joined her sons in the Army Air Forces. Blake joined the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC) when she was told that her oldest son, a B-17 pilot, had been shot down over Belgium and was missing. Her younger son said she joined in hope of helping free a needed Soldier from clerical work to fight. She felt this would speed up the end of the war. Both of Blake's sons returned home from combat with only minor wounds and many decorations.

Blake remained in the Air Force until 1954, when she left due to disability. After leaving, she worked as a civil service employee at the Veterans Administration Regional Headquarters in Montgomery, Alabama, until her death in 1979.



Staff Sergeant Esther M. Blake

Courtesy US Air Force

Political Developments After World War II

With the defeat of Germany and Japan in World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union emerged as superpowers. A **superpower** is a *powerful, dominant country that has nuclear weapons*. So the world was left with two major political forces—Soviet communism and Western democracy.

The Soviets made it clear immediately after the war that they would not allow the nations they had occupied during the war to have their own forms of government. The Soviet Union began expanding the territories it controlled in Europe and other parts of the world. In 1939 the Soviet Union had occupied the Baltic states of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia; a small section of Finland; and a large portion of Poland. After the war, the Soviets set up Communist satellite governments in Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Romania. A **satellite government** is a *government dominated politically and economically by another nation*. Communists also took power in Yugoslavia and Albania. Communism threatened Greece and Turkey, and large Communist parties were active in France and Italy.

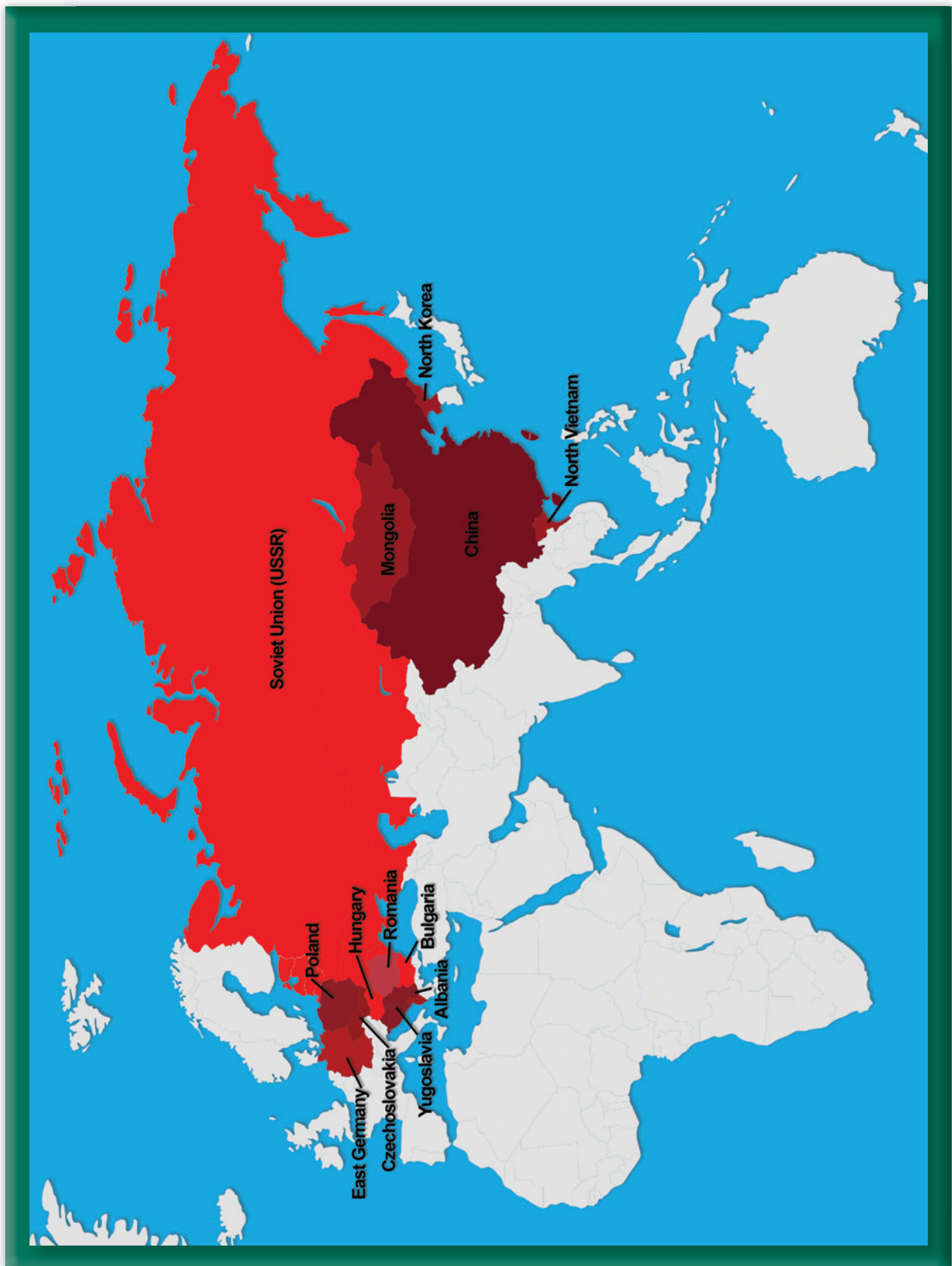
The Soviets' greatest fear was another war with Germany. The Germans had invaded the Russian empire and the Soviet Union twice during the 20th century. During the 18th and 19th centuries as well, invasions of Russian territory had come from the west.

Communism was also spreading in East Asia. The Soviet Union put in power a Communist government in northern Korea, which it controlled after Japan surrendered. A decades-long civil war in China between Western-allied Nationalists and the Soviet-allied Communists turned in the Communists' favor. The Chinese Communists eventually won the war and took control of China.

In French Indochina, Communists were fighting a war against the French colonial army.

The Soviet Union was trying to increase its influence in the world. The United States was trying to decrease the Soviet Union's influence without going to war. The United States answered the spread of Communism with military aid under the Truman Doctrine and economic help under Marshall Plan. These efforts were known as **containment**—the *US Cold War policy to prevent the spread of communism in the world*.

In 1947, the United States sent military and economic aid to Greece and Turkey to enable them to resist a Communist takeover. A **takeover** is *the seizure of a country's military and political power*. In 1948, the Marshall Plan provided economic aid for the rebuilding of Europe after World War II. In 1949, the United States and other Western democracies organized the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). NATO was a treaty alliance to defend its members and preserve peace and security against aggression in Europe. **Aggression** is *hostile action against another country or government*. The increasingly tense standoff between the Soviets and the West developed into the Cold War.



Countries with Communist governments in the 1960s

The Cold War and How It Affected US Foreign Policy and the US Air Force

Most Americans expected a long period of peace after World War II. But that didn't happen. The country was about to enter a new kind of war. It wouldn't be another world war. It would be fought in smaller theaters. It would include a huge buildup of **arms**—*weapons*—including atomic weapons.

The United States would wage this war against a powerful country that had been one of its major allies in World War II: the Soviet Union.

What the Cold War Was

The *Cold War*, as it came to be called, lasted for more than four decades—roughly from 1948 until 1991. The primary players were the United States and the Soviet Union. The two countries disagreed on how the world should be run in the postwar years. The Cold War was their political, economic, and military rivalry. But both also had something in common. They wanted to avoid another worldwide war, a “hot” war or a direct military conflict between the two countries.

The Cold War got its name from Bernard Baruch, an American delegate to the United Nations.

The **United Nations (UN)** is a worldwide organization first formed in 1945 by the victorious Allies to maintain international peace. In a 1947 speech, Baruch said, “Let us not be deceived—today we are in the midst of a cold war.”

As you read earlier, the Soviets were putting Communist governments in place in the countries along their borders in Eastern Europe. They hoped a Communist Eastern Europe might buffer them from Germany. But they were afraid that America's powerful new atomic bomb would threaten their plan. The Soviets were still trying to develop the bomb.

MILESTONES

Communism

The Communists believed that the state should own all means of production. They permitted no private ownership of factories or businesses. They also severely restricted or forbade private ownership of land. They supported dictatorship by a single party—the Communist Party—and did not permit free elections or respect human rights such as a free press, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, or freedom of association. Citizens of Communist countries could not emigrate to another country or live elsewhere, and very few were allowed to travel outside the Communist group of nations. Most Communist governments collapsed as the Cold War ended. By 2016, Cambodia, China, Cuba, Laos, North Korea, and Vietnam were the only surviving Communist governments. By then, their practice of Communist economic teachings varied widely.



B-36J Peacemaker

Courtesy US Air Force

The United States was confident it could keep the Soviets out of Western Europe because America alone had the atomic bomb. Eventually it developed a three-pronged method of delivering nuclear weapons called the Strategic Triad. (A triad is a group of three.) The **Strategic Triad** consisted of *land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs)*, *submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs)*, and *long-range bombers*. In other words, it consisted of land-, sea-, and air-based nuclear weapons.

The purpose of multiple methods for delivering nuclear weapons is to ensure that the United States can retaliate if it is attacked. If one type of weapon becomes vulnerable to an enemy (for example, because of an enemy's technological breakthrough), the other types would still be protected—and the United States would remain safe.

Then in 1949 the Soviets tested their first atomic weapon. Tensions between the two nations increased. Each side worried that the other might use its atomic bombs, with dreadful results. Yet it was this threat of total destruction that each side hoped would prevent the other from ever striking.

In a way, that fear had a preventive effect. But some serious face-offs did take place. The first was the Berlin Blockade (1948 to 1949), which you'll read about later in this lesson.

The Creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

Eleven Western European countries and the United States formed the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949. NATO nations promised to defend one another from Communist aggression. They agreed that "an armed attack against one or more of them shall be considered an attack against them all." The first NATO headquarters was in Paris.

Some people wondered why the United States joined NATO. After all, America tended to be an isolationist nation. So why did it join a military pact in a time of peace? The reason was simple: the United States was intent on keeping communism—with its pro-Soviet dictatorships and violations of human rights—from spreading around the globe. NATO seemed a good way to bond countries with a similar goal. As another indication of its support, the United States agreed to keep US troops in Western Europe in case any of its allies needed help.

In 1955 the Soviets responded to NATO's creation. They drew up the Warsaw Pact—named for the capital of Poland—with the East European Communist allies that they dominated. In this pact, or treaty, the Soviet leaders promised to safeguard any of their friends who came under attack.

How the USAF Was Organized to Fight the Cold War

SAC was the most crucial command in the Air Force at the time. In the early days of the Cold War, SAC had hundreds of B-50D Stratofortress aircraft, an improved version of the B-29. It also had B-36 Peacemaker, B-47 Stratojet, and B-58A Hustler bombers. KC-97L tankers refueled the bombers in mid-air.

SAC's role eventually expanded to running aerial reconnaissance. Spy planes, like the U-2, allowed SAC to spot Soviet **missiles**—*rocket-propelled vehicles that carry a weapon or warhead*.

Finally, as technology further improved, each side launched satellites into space. A **satellite** is *an object that orbits another object in space, such as a planet*. The satellites could check for an enemy nation's missiles on the ground. The US military built underground bunkers from which to keep track of its satellites. But SAC found that enemy atomic bombs could target its bunkers. So it created flying command centers called *Looking Glass*. These planes flew 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, for more than 29 years.



Convair B-58 Hustler

Courtesy US Air Force



Boeing KC-97L Stratotanker

Courtesy US Air Force



Lockheed U-2A

Courtesy US Air Force

How the Cold War Drove Developments in SAC

The invention and use of the atomic bomb during World War II finally led to the Air Force getting its independence from the Army. The Air Force could now perform a function that no other branch of the military could carry out.

Indeed, as the creation of SAC showed, the atomic bomb would shape the Air Force's mission. Today there are many means of delivering atomic bombs, including missiles and submarines. But in the years just after World War II, only airplanes could do this job.



Boeing B-52 Stratofortress

Courtesy US Air Force



Boeing B-47 Stratojet

Courtesy US Air Force

Military and civilian leaders thought the atomic bomb would protect the United States from aggression. They called this protection **nuclear deterrence**, or *prevention of war by convincing an enemy that if he attacks, he will be destroyed by nuclear weapons*. The main duty of the Air Force at that time was to deliver the atomic bomb. SAC was the command within the Air Force that would fulfill the mission. Its bombers would drop the bombs if need be.

The US-Soviet rivalry and the atomic bomb drove decisions in aviation development. The Boeing B-52 Stratofortress bomber, with its 10,000-mile range, became SAC's main bomber. But it wasn't the first or last.

The Boeing B-47 Stratojet became the Air Force's first sweptback-wing multi-jet-engine bomber. The sweptback wing—a wing angled rearward from the point of attachment—was first designed by the Germans during World War II. This type of wing is more efficient at higher speeds than a straight wing. The wind can flow more easily over it. The Boeing B-47 first rolled off the assembly line in 1947 and entered service in 1951. But this plane could fly only 3,000 miles without refueling. That prompted the Air Force to ask for a longer-range bomber. Boeing won the contract to build its longer-range B-52, with the first one flying in 1954.

Tactical Air Command (TAC) and Air Defense Command (ADC)

The Air Force had two other commands: TAC and ADC. TAC's mission was to be able to carry out tactical air operations anywhere in the world, without other US forces. ADC was responsible for stopping and destroying enemy air weapon systems fired at the United States. However, most Air Force dollars were still going to SAC.

From 1947 to mid-1950s, the size of TAC changed with the international situation and with funds made available to the command. By 1947 most of TAC's aircraft were from World War II and considered outdated. TAC did have three jet-powered aircraft, including the P-80 pursuit plane, later changed to F-80 Shooting Star. (The old "P" designation for pursuit aircraft was changed to the current "F" for fighter aircraft.) Along with this, TAC had the B-45 Tornado bomber and the F-84 Thunderjet fighter-bomber.



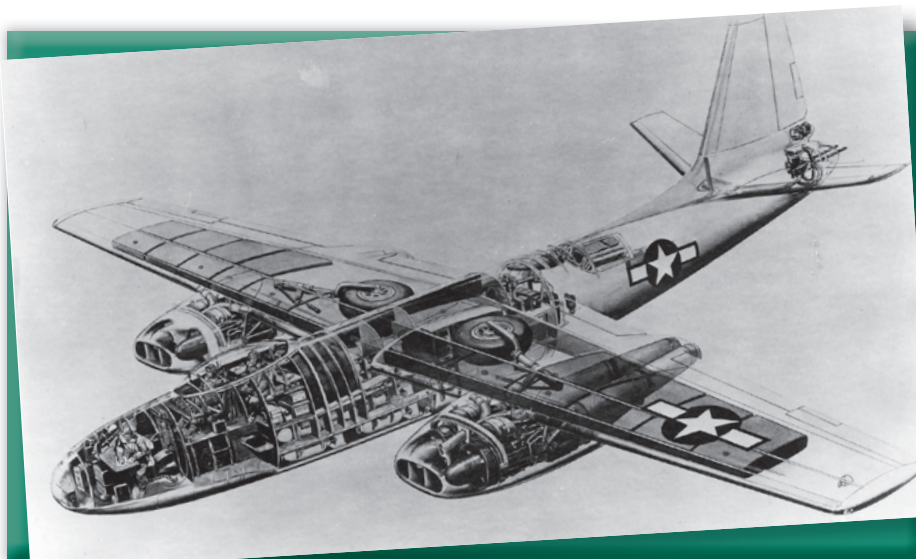
Mission-ready F-80C Shooting Star with two 1,000 pound bombs

Courtesy US Air Force



Republic F-84 Thunderjets fly in formation.

Courtesy US Air Force



Cutaway drawing of North American B-45 showing crew positions and aircraft systems

Courtesy US Air Force

Like TAC, the Air Defense Command was neglected in the early years of the newly independent Air Force. In the period following World War II, US leaders thought the country was relatively free from the threat of air attack. Even during the war, the need for air defense had not been brought to the attention of the American people.

In 1947, foreseeing the possibility of an air attack on the US, Air Force leaders approved a plan for building a large aircraft control-and-warning network. However, the Air Force was unable to get the funds to build this network until 1949. That was the year the Soviets exploded their first atomic bomb. This meant the threat of a nuclear attack on the United States was now real, and the country needed to plan for it.

The Air Force at this time was caught in conflicting currents. Although it was building its new organization in 1947, it was also trying to cut back to a size that the defense budget could support. From 1946 to 1947, the Air Force had gone from 218 to 52 fighter groups, only 11 of which were considered combat ready. Because of budget limitations, it was very difficult for the Air Force to maintain the 48 fighter groups that President Truman approved for 1950. The Air Force would have to wait until the Korean War to see any buildup of its fighter forces.

The Berlin Airlift and How the USAF Helped Break the Berlin Blockade

Before the end of World War II, the Allies were already talking about what to do with Germany when it surrendered. Based on the lessons they learned after World War I (see Chapter 3, Lesson 2), the United States, Britain, and France wanted Germany to prosper. That way it wouldn't drag Europe into yet another world war. But the Soviet Union had a different view. It wanted to dominate Germany so the Germans would never again invade Soviet borders.

The Allies' solution was to divide Germany in two parts. Each side could rule its part as it wished. The Soviets controlled East Germany, where they set up a Communist dictatorship. The **Western Allies**—*the United States, Britain, and France*—controlled West Germany, where they set up a democracy.

Germany's capital, Berlin, posed a problem. It was in East Germany. The four Allies split Berlin into four sectors, too. The Soviets got one sector—East Berlin. The Western Allies controlled the three sectors of West Berlin. But by June 1948 the Soviets decided they wanted all of Berlin. After all, it was in the Soviet-run part of Germany. The Soviets decreed that the Western Allies could no longer use roads, railroads, or canals to enter East Germany to deliver goods to Berlin. The first big clash of the Cold War and the first test of the new independent Air Force had begun.



The Soviets controlled East Germany, while the United States, Britain, and France controlled West Germany.



Berlin, the capital of Germany, was divided between the Soviets, who would run East Berlin, and the Western Allies, who would manage West Berlin.



According to a 1945 agreement, the United States, Britain, and France could use three air routes over Soviet-controlled East Germany to enter Berlin.

How the USAF Broke the Berlin Blockade

The Western Allies had to get goods such as coal and food to their sectors in Berlin. Otherwise, more than 2 million West Berliners could freeze in winter and starve. If the Western Allies couldn't get into Berlin by ground transport, what about the air? A previous agreement between the four former Allies in 1945 gave the United States, Britain, and France the right to three 20-mile-wide air corridors that ended in Berlin.

General Lucius Clay, US commander in Europe, took action. The Western Allies would prevent the Soviet takeover of West Berlin through a massive **airlift**—the transportation of personnel or material by air. Thus the Berlin Airlift began. (It was also called *Operation Vittles*.)

While war usually calls for bombers and fighters, this was to be a bloodless battle conducted by cargo aircraft. Clay ordered Lieutenant General Curtis LeMay, then commander of US Air Forces in Europe, to make available as many cargo planes as possible. Clay asked Major General William Tunner, the transport expert from World War II, to command the airlift into West Berlin. The airlift began in June 1948, the same month in which the Soviets set up the blockade.

The Cargo Plane

Lieutenant General LeMay gathered more than 100 C-47 cargo planes for Major General Tunner. The *Gooney Birds*, as they were nicknamed, could each lug two to three tons of goods. But West Berliners needed 4,500 tons of food, coal, oil, and other supplies each day.

So LeMay got an even larger, faster transport plane into service—the C-54. It carried about 10 tons of cargo. By October 1948 200 C-54s were shuttling cargo to the city. USAF cargo planes were joined by transports from Britain's Royal Air Force. Some days, almost one cargo plane a minute landed in Berlin.

By May 1949 the Soviets caved. They realized that the US, Britain, and France would not give up their airlift, no matter the cost. By that time, the Allies had airlifted 1.75 million tons of goods into the blockaded city.



The last *Operation Vittles* Douglas C-54 prepares for takeoff from Rhein Main Air Base, Germany, on 30 September 1949.

Courtesy US Air Force

The Right Stuff

Lieutenant General William Tunner: Cargo Commander

Lieutenant General William Tunner (1906–1982) was a West Point graduate. He spent his career with the Army Air Corps and the Air Force.

Tunner's specialty was transport planes. During World War II he was chief of the Air Transport Command Ferrying Division. While in that post, he asked Nancy Love to form the Women's Auxiliary Ferry Squadron. Also during that war, he figured out how to safely transport supplies across the Himalayan Mountains to China. China was one of the Allies at that time.

Because of Tunner's success in China, General Lucius Clay tapped him to head the Berlin Airlift. Tunner was a very organized person. He knew that for any transport mission to succeed, it must run in an orderly manner. Tunner demanded strict schedules for flights, schedules for crews, and weather reports. As a result, the airlift had an excellent safety record. And the amount of cargo ferried to Berlin rocketed between 1948 and 1949.

Tunner recognized the importance of cargo planes to any Air Force operation. He also knew how undervalued they were. With the triumph of the Berlin Airlift, Tunner showed the world how to command transport missions.



Then-Brigadier General William Tunner in 1943

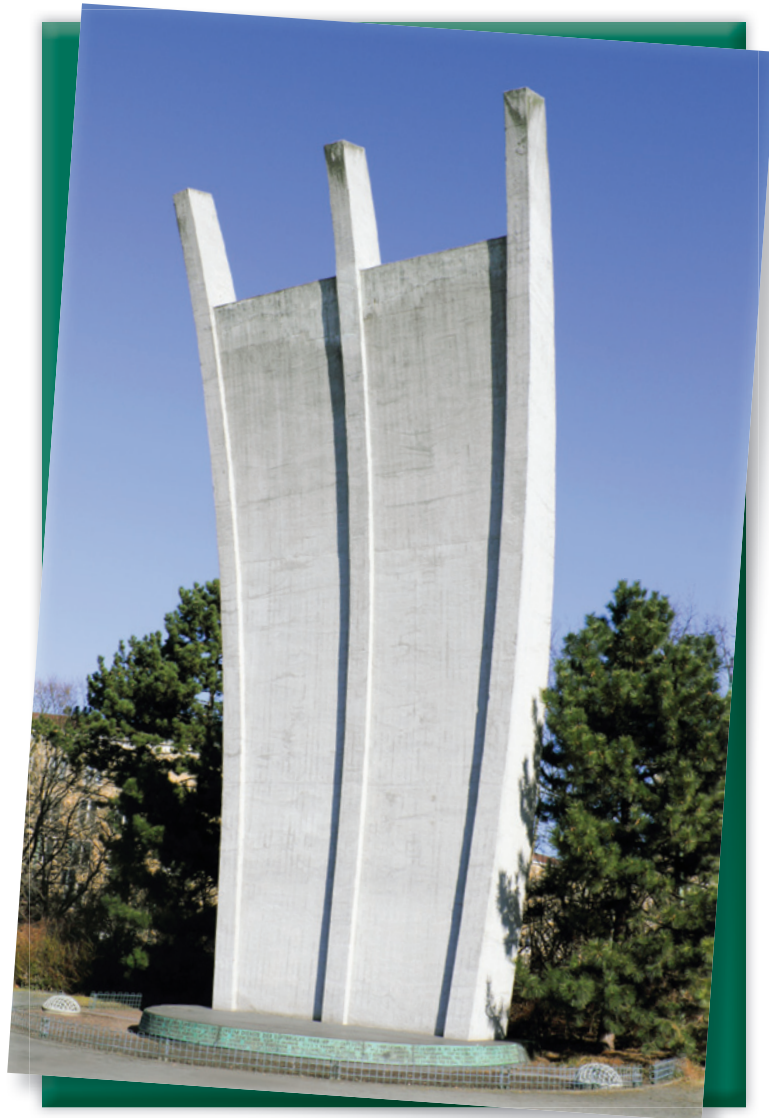
Courtesy US Air Force

Lessons the USAF Learned From the Berlin Airlift

The Berlin airlift helped convince American leaders of the need to build a stronger Air Force. The cargo plane came into its own during the airlift. It wasn't as flashy as bombers or fighters, but it saved a city from a Communist takeover. These workhorse transports formed the critical element in the American response to the Soviet blockade of Berlin.

The intensity of the airlift also taught cargo crews a lot about what they could achieve. They had daily chances to perfect air support. One year later, transports, bombers, and fighters would all be called on to fight the next stage of the Cold War: the Korean War.

Meanwhile, the blockade helped convince West Europeans of the threat the Soviet Union posed. It helped lead to the creation of NATO. And it contributed to the later creation of the democratic Federal Republic of Germany on the territory the Western Allies controlled.



The Berlin Airlift Memorial at the former Tempelhof Airport in Berlin. The three arcs symbolize the three air corridors through which the Americans and British flew supplies to West Berlin.

ArTono/Shutterstock

The Right Stuff



Then—1st Lieutenant Gail Halvorsen

Courtesy US Air Force

1st Lieutenant Gail Halvorsen: The Candy Bomber

1st Lieutenant Gail Halvorsen was one of the US pilots picked to fly C-54s during the Berlin Airlift. These pilots often had little to do while waiting for their cargo aircraft to be unloaded. One day, trying to pass the time, he talked with some German children who were peering through the airport fence. They asked if he had any candy. He told them that the next time he flew in, he'd wiggle the wings of his plane and then drop small packages of candy to them.

Halvorsen kept his promise. He rigged miniature parachutes with American candy bars and gum and then dropped them over Berlin for German children to retrieve. Many German children who didn't live near the airport wrote Halvorsen asking for candy to be dropped in their neighborhoods. They called him *Uncle Wiggly Wings*. He was also known as the *Candy Bomber*.

Soon many other pilots wanted to help. General Tunner learned about the candy drops and added his support, calling the effort *Operation Little Vittles*. People back in the United States joined the effort, too.

Halvorsen retired from the Air Force with the rank of colonel in 1974.

✓ CHECKPOINTS

Lesson 1 Review

Using complete sentences, answer the following questions on a sheet of paper.

1. What did the United States protect by taking an active role in world affairs?
2. What invention made US leaders certain the United States had all the security it needed?
3. What is the name of the law that created the independent United States Air Force?
4. Who was the first chief of staff of the USAF?
5. What was the Strategic Air Command?
6. Which two major political forces was the world left with at the end of World War II?
7. Who won the civil war between the Chinese Nationalists and Chinese Communists?
8. What was the Cold War?
9. Why did the United States join NATO?
10. What was the mission of Tactical Air Command?
11. When the Soviets Union decreed that the Western Allies couldn't deliver goods to Berlin using ground transport, how did the West get supplies to sectors of Berlin it controlled?
12. Which were the two main cargo aircraft of the Berlin Airlift, and how many tons could each carry?
13. What did the Berlin airlift convince American leaders of the need to do?

APPLYING YOUR LEARNING

Based on the lessons learned from World War II, how important do you think it is for the United States to maintain air superiority today? Provide a detailed explanation of why it is important or not.