

UNITED STATES AIR FORCES IN EUROPE



MISSION

U.S. Air Forces in Europe executes the U.S. European Command mission with forward-based air power to provide forces for global operations, ensure strategic access, assure allies, deter aggression and build partnerships. Build and maintain partnerships, promote regional stability, provide forces for global operations, support combatant command missions, develop and care for Airmen and their families, sustain forward-based infrastructure, ensure strategic access to U.S. forces, assure allies and deter aggression. USAFE consists of two numbered Air Forces, seven main operating bases and 114 geographically separated units.

As the air component for U.S. European Command, USAFE directs air operations in a theater spanning three continents, covering more than 20 million square miles, containing 91 countries. In peacetime, USAFE trains and equips U.S. Air Force units pledged to NATO. In fulfilling its NATO responsibilities, USAFE maintains combat-ready wings based from Great Britain to Turkey. USAFE plans, conducts, controls, coordinates and supports air and space operations in Europe, parts of Asia and Africa to achieve U.S. national and NATO objectives based on taskings by the U.S. EUCOM commander.

LINEAGE

8 Air Force established, 19 Jan 1942

Activated, 28 Jan 1942

Redesignated Eighth Air Force, 18 Sep 1942

Redesignated United States Strategic Air Forces in Europe, 22 Feb 1944

Redesignated United States Air Forces in Europe, 7 Aug 1945

STATIONS

Savannah, GA, 28 Jan-20 May 1942
In transit to England, 20 May-17 Jun 1942
London, England, 18 Jun 1942
Bushy Park, England, 25 Jun 1942
St Germain-en-Laye, France, 26 Sep 1944
Wiesbaden, Germany, 25 Sep 1945
Lindsey AS, Germany, 15 Dec 1953
Ramstein AB, Germany, 14 Mar 1973

COMMANDERS

Brig Gen Asa N. Duncan, 28 Jan 1942
Maj Gen Carl Spaatz, 5 May 1942
Lt Gen Ira C. Eaker, 1 Dec 1942
Gen Carl Spaatz, 6 Jan 1944
Lt Gen John K. Cannon, 3 Jun 1945
Gen Carl Spaatz, 13 Jun 1945 (temp)
Maj Gen Westside T. Larson, 30 Jun 1945 (temp)
Lt Gen John K. Cannon, 4 Jul 1945
Maj Gen William E. Kepner, 3 Aug 1945 (temp)
Lt Gen John K Cannon, 13 Aug 1945
Maj Gen Idwal H Edwards, 2 Mar 1946
Brig Gen John F. McBlain (acting), 14 Aug 1947
Lt Gen Curtis E. LeMay, 20 Oct 1947
Lt Gen John K. Cannon, 20 Oct 1948
Gen Lauris Norstad, 21 Jan 1951
Lt Gen William H. Tunner, 27 Jul 1953
Gen Frank F. Everest, 1 Jul 1957
Gen Frederic H. Smith Jr., 1 Aug 1959
Gen Truman H. Landon, 1 Jul 1961
Gen Gabriel P. Disosway, 1 Aug 1963
Gen Bruce K. Holloway, 1 Aug 1965
Gen Maurice A. Preston, 1 Aug 1966
Gen Horace M. Wade, 1 Aug 1968
Gen Joseph R. Holzapple, 1 Feb 1969
Gen David C. Jones, 1 Sep 1971
Gen John W. Vogt, 1 July 1974
Gen Richard H. Ellis, 1 Sep 1975
Gen William J. Evans, 1 Aug 1977
Gen John W. Pauly, 1 Aug 1978
Gen Charles A. Gabriel, 1 Aug 1980
Gen Billy M. Minter, 1 Jul 1982
Gen Charles L Donnelly Jr., 1 Nov 1984
Gen William L. Kirk, 1 May 1987

Gen Michael J. Dugan, 12 Apr 1989
Gen Robert C. Oaks, 26 Jun 1990
Gen James L. Jamerson, 29 Jul 1994
Gen Richard E. Hawley, 17 Jul 1995
Gen Michael E. Ryan, 4 Apr 1996
Lt Gen William J. Begert (acting), 6 Oct 1997
Gen John P. Jumper, 5 Dec 1997
Gen Gregory S. Martin, 13 Jan 2000
Gen Robert H. Foglesong, 12 Aug 2003
Gen William T. Hobbins, 6 Dec 2005
Maj Gen Marc E. Rogers (acting), 10 Dec 2007
Gen Roger A. Brady, 17 Jan 2008
Gen Mark A. Walsh III

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Air Force Organizational Excellence Award:
1 Jan 2007-31 Dec 2008

EMBLEM



USSTAF Upon a shield argent charged with letters USSTAF gules, a chief azure charged with a pair of wings displayed or between three mullets one and two of the first in fess point a large mullet of the field that portion on shield fimbriated of the third charged with a torteau.

The insigne for the wartime USSTAF was not approved until 21 Dec 1944.

On an ultramarine blue disc, 2 5/8 inches in diameter, a white star, 1 inch in diameter, charge with a red disc in the center and with golden orange stylized wings; issuant being upper right point of star, a sword, erect proper and flamant red.



The flaming sword was taken from the shoulder sleeve insignia of the United States Forces, European Theater and was used with the design of the shoulder sleeve insignia of the prior Army Air Forces to indicate the relationship of the United States Air Forces in Europe to the prior Army Air Forces and the United States Forces, European Theater.

A USAFE shoulder sleeve insignia was developed 30 September 1947; it was approved and authorized for wear from 20 April 1948 through 30 June 1952.

Although shoulder patches were deleted from Air Force uniforms, the USAFE insignia continued to be the official emblem. The background color was changed from ultramarine blue to blue applique and the size of the star increased in a version adapted to the organizational flag on 22 April 1954.

The sword was copied from the insignia of the United States Forces in the European Theater (USAFET), USAFE's parent command in 1947. Its use with the insignia of the Army Air Forces indicated USAFE's relationship to USAFET and the AAF. The upright position of the flaming sword symbolized readiness to strike in the nation's defense.

SIGNIFICANCE: The upright position of the flaming sword symbolized readiness to strike in the nation's defense.

MOTTO

Vigilance for Freedom

(Approved, 15 June 1965)

OPERATIONS

During the Cold War, USAFE was a fight-in-place force postured for a large-scale conflict. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, it has transitioned to an Air Expeditionary Force with a mobile and deployable mix of people and resources that can simultaneously operate in multiple locations. Its role in Europe and Africa has included warfighting as well as humanitarian and peacekeeping operations, and other non-traditional contingencies throughout its area of responsibility.

Headquarters, United States Air Forces in Europe traces its lineage back more than three years prior to its postwar designation. The command was originally constituted as Eighth Air Force on 19 Jan 1942. Later that month it was activated at Savannah AB, GA on 28 Jan under the command of BG Asa N. Duncan.

After being manned, the headquarters moved to England and settled on 25 Jun 1942 at US Army Air Station 586, Bushy Park, Teddington, Middlesex, a suburb of London. The move was made under the new commander, MG Carl Spaatz. He was succeeded by LTG Ira C Eaker on 1 Dec 1942, and after 13 months General Spaatz resumed command for the remainder of the World War II period.

The command began heavy bombardment operations against the European continent on 17 Aug 1942, a role it maintained until Apr 1945.

Shortly after Fifteenth Air Force was organized in Italy to join the attack on Nazi territory from the south, the original Eighth Air Force was redesignated on 22 Feb 1944 as the United States Strategic Air Forces in Europe. The newly designated command, once again under the leadership of General Spaatz, coordinated all Army Air Force activities in the European Middle East Theater. This included the exercise of some operational control over the newly reorganized Eighth Air Force in England and Fifteenth Air Force, plus some administrative control over Eighth and the Ninth Air Force.

1945 Immediately after V-E Day, United States Strategic Air Forces in Europe began moving men and equipment from the European theater to the United States and on to the Pacific to join the war against Japan. In late May the War Department ordered USSTAF to send all remaining flyable, heavy bombardment aircraft and their crews back to the United States, except for aircraft earmarked for the occupation. During June, the first full month of the redeployment, over 62,000 men left the European theater.

On 7 Aug 1945, the War Department deleted the word "strategic" from the command's title, and it became the United States Air Forces in Europe (USAFE). As the occupation force, USAFE's basic mission was to disarm the German Air Force, assist in the occupation of Germany, and dispose of surplus wartime property. By mid-August the command had redeployed over 1,200 airplanes and 144,000 personnel—almost one-third of its total force.

On 28 Sep 1945, USAFE officially opened its new headquarters at US Army Air Station 197, in Wiesbaden, Germany. USAFE headquarters moved from St Germain-en-Laye, France, to Wiesbaden during the period 19-27 Sep, and located its staff in the former Government House for the Hesse-Nassau region. The command established Wiesbaden Air Force Station on 23 Nov 1945.

In 1951 the command entered a period of accelerated expansion. On 21 Jan USAFE was designated a specified command. On the same day, Twelfth Air Force was organized at Wiesbaden Air Base, Germany, and assigned to USAFE. It assumed operational control of all USAFE tactical units and served as the air element of the European Command. Also on the twenty-first, the 3d Air Division in England was reassigned from Headquarters USAF to USAFE. (On 1 May 3d Air Division was discontinued, and Third Air Force was organized and assigned to USAFE on the same date.) Thus, almost overnight, USAFE gained an organizational framework which led to its development as a major tactical air force.

Headquarters USAFE Relocated. In mid-Dec 1953 Headquarters USAFE began moving from the downtown government buildings it had occupied since 1945 to Camp Lindsey on the outskirts of Wiesbaden. The headquarters completed its relocation in late Jan 1954.

In Apr USAFE began planning to move its headquarters out of Lindsey Air Station, Germany. The Secretary of the Air Force approved the move to Ramstein AB, Germany, on 13 Jun. After approvals by the Secretary of Defense in July and the Secretary of State in September, the tempo increased with an official announcement on 26 Sep and publication of programming plan Creek Action on 9 Oct. By 6 Nov a reduced Seventeenth Air Force had moved from Ramstein to Sembach Air Base, and its former headquarters building was occupied by an advance USAFE headquarters party on 20 November.

Gen David C. Jones, CINCUSAFE, closed the command headquarters at Lindsey Air Station with formal retreat ceremonies on 13 Mar 1973. The next day he officially established Headquarters USAFE at Ramstein AB. When the issue of moving the headquarters from Lindsey was first raised as part of the original Reduction of Cost and Forces in Europe (REDCOSTE) proposals in 1968, the command successfully opposed the idea. When the question was raised in 1970, Gen Joseph R. Holzapple, then CINCUSAFE, bowed to the inevitable and, after exploring several possibilities, he settled on moving the headquarters to Wiesbaden AB as the least objectionable alternative. Thus, when General Jones assumed command of USAFE in Sep 1971, USAFE was in the process of negotiating the move with German federal, state, and local officials. The command was prepared to turn Lindsey AS over to the German authorities, and, in return, wanted them to bear 75 percent of the cost of the move and the construction of a new headquarters building at Wiesbaden AB. General Jones was convinced of the need to leave Lindsey, but he had "grave reservations about sinking deep roots on one of the least desirable bases in Germany." Instead, he suggested taking a fresh look at an old idea, moving Headquarters USAFE to Ramstein AB. He reasoned that since the bulk of USAFE's strike and reconnaissance forces passed to NATO's Fourth Allied Tactical Air Force (4ATAF) at Ramstein in time of war, and since CINCUSAFE also served as the commander of 4ATAF, the command

would be better prepared to respond to a crisis or war if the two headquarters were collocated at Ramstein.

USAF Unit Histories
Created: 15 Dec 2010
Updated: 23 Mar 2023

Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL Air Force Magazine Almanacs. Air Force Association. Arlington, VA. Various years.