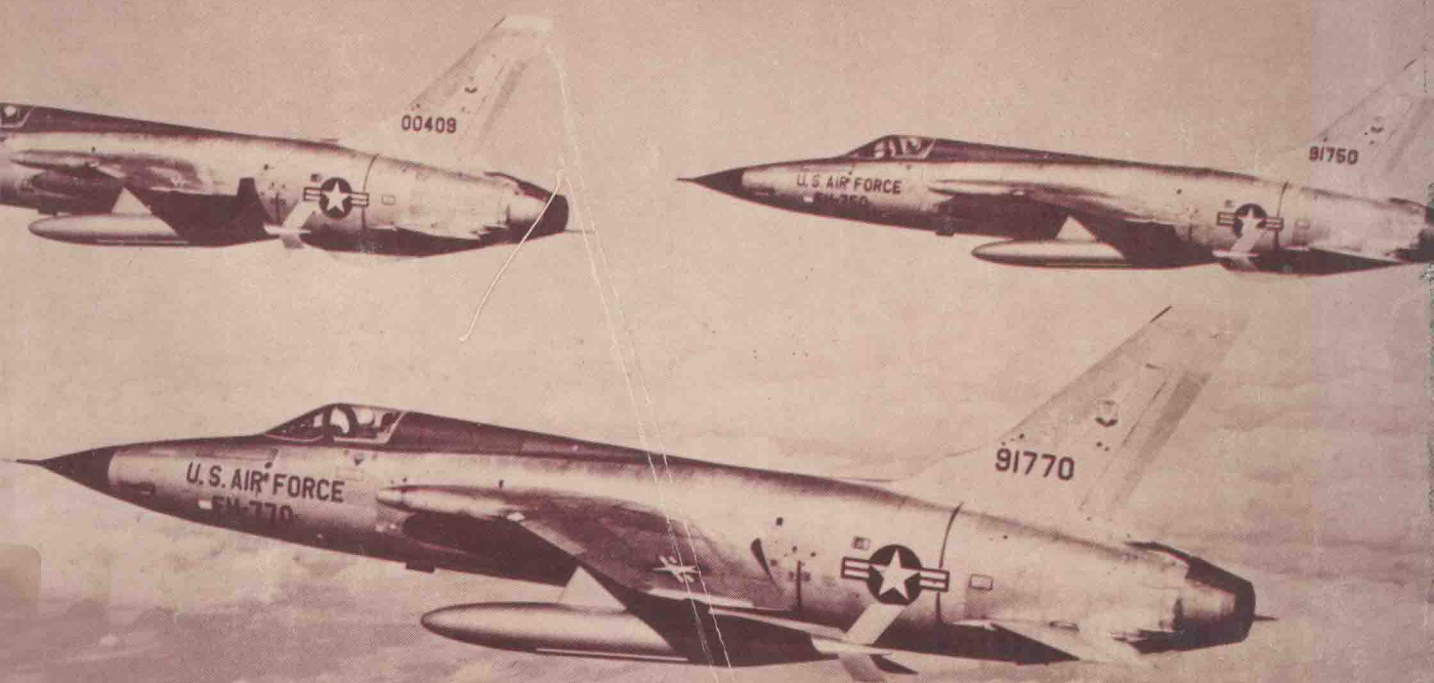


# THE MODERN UNITED STATES

# AIR FORCE



By Lt. Col. Carroll V. Glines

THE MODERN  
UNITED STATES  
AIR FORCE

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AIR FORCE

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HELICOPTER RESCUE

THE COMPACT HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

TO

*Karen, David and Valerie*

MY AIR FORCE FLEDGLINGS

# PREFACE

There was a time, not too long ago, when the icy contrails of a jet bomber being etched across the sky would cause people on the ground to stop and watch. Today, it seems that only the adults who remember the days when no airplane could get high enough to make contrails are still impressed with this modern-day artistry. Our children, conditioned to television and miniature radios, seem to take the Space Age for granted, much to our chagrin. The almost-daily new speed and altitude records are forgotten soon after their accomplishment. The compression of time between technological successes causes events to pile one on another so fast that the enormity of it all is difficult to comprehend fully. In a single life span we have watched the pattern of development from the Wright brothers' first frail airplane to Mach 4 aircraft and to orbited man-carrying vehicles portending a new age of magnificent promise.

The conditions of the Space Age have raised military aerospace power to such a position of pre-eminence in the world's thinking today that at times it seems to be the whole of aerospace power. It isn't. Aerospace power is more than a bomber with bombs, a missile with a warhead, or an astronaut in orbit. It embraces these, but it is also far more. Aerospace power is both military and civil. It is airports, air bases, aircraft carriers, and launching pads. It is the Ballistic Missile Early Warning System, and a radar scanner on a civilian airliner. It is the industry that makes the aircraft, the satellites, and the rockets; it is the host of other industries that turn out the components and accessories, supply the fuel, and dig up and process the raw materials.

It mirrors our national strength and ideals. It also provides a good index of the scientific and technological skill available for the operation of the nation's economy and the support of its security forces. In short, aerospace power expresses all the glories (and sometimes the flaws) of our fast moving civilization.

No one has to be an expert to observe the trend in the military air forces of the world powers today to see that we are in a race for quantity and for quality. Our security requires that there be air forces at all times and these forces must be superior to those of any possible adversary.

It is possible that we could have air forces of overwhelming numbers; but if they were not good enough, they might fail in their mission. It is also possible that we might have the highest quality air forces in the world; but if they were too few, again they might fail. The nation is forced to balance these important factors with our economy so that we can afford to have enough of both.

When the questions of economy, national security, and military forces are viewed in relation to one another, there are three essential points about air forces which every American should remember:

*Air forces are not a wartime instrument only.* They are a peace instrument too. We collect double value from them. Our Air Force provides tremendous fighting power if it must be used in war; but it also provides tremendous power to exert influence against the starting of war. Therefore, from an economic point of view, the money spent for air forces buys a constant capability.

*Air forces provide a global capability.* The Air Force is not tied to any particular areas of land or sea because of intrinsic restrictions. Its forces are inherently capable of flying anywhere in the world, at any time, on any kind of mission dictated by national policy. From the point of view of economy, the money spent for air forces buys world-wide influence.

*Air forces capitalize on a nation's greatest strengths.* The technological superiority of the United States is epitomized in its superior Air Force. This technological-industrial superiority is the answer to the military millions of the Communist enterprise. From the point of view of economy, balancing of Communist manpower with equal man-



power would be the most expensive way for us to seek security. Adequate and modern air forces, existing and operationally ready, serve to cancel the numerical advantages of the Communists. They permit us to conserve the most precious element of our national strength—the individual human being.

The problem of maintaining a proper balance between these three factors is the most difficult facing the nation today. The pressures of a dynamic society, the ever-present demand to reduce the burdens of taxation, our rapidly advancing technology, and the ominous threat of an opposite ideology force a constant evaluation of all our military forces. Do we have enough? Do we have too many? Are they the right kinds of forces?

These questions are never finally answered because a sudden technological breakthrough, a change in civilian or military leadership, new warfare concepts, or intense public concern can evoke dramatic shifting of emphasis in the make-up of our national military forces. Balance becomes a matter of opinion or viewpoint. What matters in the final analysis is the totality of those forces and whether they are properly equipped to counter any threat against the nation.

How the United States Air Force is organized, equipped, trained, and manned to provide the aerial shield and sword for the nation is the subject of this book. Its purpose is to give the reader a capsulized view of the United States Air Force in the beginning of its second half century of existence. This is a difficult—almost impossible—task for a writer because no matter how up-to-date he is when he writes, by the time his words are in print, he runs the risk of being a historian rather than a reporter. If the reader finds this so in this case, perhaps he will be consoled by the fact that our Air Force is truly the most dynamic military organization in the world today. It must be, and is, greatly diversified, highly versatile, and superbly responsive to any national policy in which aerospace forces can conceivably play a part. It is my hope that this book will prove that our nation's air arm is thoroughly prepared for its role in maintaining the peace or, if war comes, to fulfill its missions.

The initial stimulus for a book which would attempt a round-up

of today's fast-moving Air Force came from the Magazine and Book Branch of the Air Force's Office of Information. I am indebted to Majors James F. Sunderman and Gene Guerny of that office for their invaluable assistance and encouragement. In addition, I am indebted to the many nameless Air Staff and Department of Defense reviewers who wisely commented on the content and guided the manuscript through the required clearance process.

A publisher once remarked to me that "no author can ever claim full credit for his book." He is certainly right in this case because the factual matter presented here was taken from many official—and therefore anonymous—sources. Most of the basic information was obtained from the written material provided by Air Force information officers, speech writers, and Air Force ROTC textbook editors whose by-lines are not known and whose contributions therefore cannot be acknowledged. The final chapter was taken largely from reports of the Committee on Science and Astronautics of the House of Representatives, which were also written by unknown Government authors. My contribution has been to rearrange their words and tie their thoughts together for continuity. I am grateful to them nevertheless. I am also appreciative of the efforts of the many unheralded photographers throughout the Air Force who took the official photographs that appear here.

I can and do acknowledge, however, the patience and forbearance of my wife, Mary Ellen, who has shared the fun and frustration of service life with me during the past 20 years.

CARROLL V. GLINES  
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*McLean, Virginia*

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## CHAPTER I

# AIR POWER IN PERSPECTIVE

*“For good or ill air mastery is today the supreme expression of military power, and fleets and armies, however necessary and important, must accept subordinate rank. This is a memorable milestone in the march of man.”*

Sir Winston Churchill

THE MORNING OF June 25, 1948 was unseasonably warm for Berlin. There wasn't the usual chill in the morning air and there was an ominous low ceiling of dark clouds hanging over the city. As Berliners slowly awoke to another dawn amid their rubble-strewn city, they were not yet aware that for the next eleven months of their lives they would be the center of the world's attention.

A few hours before, during the night, news editors in West Berlin had been busy tearing up the front pages of their morning papers and remaking them. A news story had burst with a teletyped message from the Soviet-sponsored ADN news agency in East Berlin: “The Transport Division of the Soviet Military Administration is compelled to halt all passenger and freight traffic to and from Berlin tomorrow at 0600 hours because of technical difficulties. . . .” After weeks of frustrating discussions in which neither side would give in, the Russians decided they could force the Allies out of Berlin and advance the frontiers of Communism another notch.

## *AIR POWER IN PERSPECTIVE*

Promptly at 6 A.M., the blockade of the city began. The Soviet authorities had decided to starve, freeze, and scare the Allied forces and the West Berliners out. All land, rail, and river traffic stopped dead. The ultimatum: the Western democracies must withdraw their occupation forces from the city.

General Lucius D. Clay, highest-ranking U.S. officer in Berlin, reacted immediately. The three air corridors were still open. He asked Lieutenant General Curtis E. LeMay, then commander of the U.S. Air Forces in Europe, whether his forces could airlift emergency supplies into Berlin.

"Sir," LeMay answered with characteristic confidence, "the Air Force can deliver anything."

Within hours, a fleet of battered, war-weary, twin-engine Douglas C-47's—affectionately called "Gooney Birds" by their crews—began arriving at Tempelhof Air Base in the center of Berlin from various West German bases. By nightfall of June 26, eighty tons of flour, milk, and medicines had arrived in the blacked out western half of the city.

General LeMay and his staff worked diligently to figure out what it would take to build an air bridge with the airplanes at their disposal. Logistics experts quickly calculated that it would take 2000 tons of coal and 1439 tons of food a day to meet the minimum basic needs of the two million inhabitants. The normal tonnage requirement for Berlin was 13,500 tons daily. But even 3439 tons a day by air with the few aircraft available appeared an impossible task. In spite of the heroic efforts of a few hastily rounded up pilots, the city seemed doomed to give in. Berlin's Lord Mayor-Elect, Ernst Reuter, told General Clay that he and his people were grateful for the gesture made by the U.S. Air Force but they knew that the city didn't have a chance.

There was pessimism throughout the Allied nations. No city had ever been kept alive solely by airlift; the tonnage requirements were simply too great, especially in winter. Why try to hold Berlin anyway? It was like an island deep inside Soviet-controlled territory. Why not withdraw all Allied claims to Berlin and let the Russians have it?

While the world's press was debating the political issues, the United



## AIR POWER IN PERSPECTIVE

States Air Force went quietly to work. As an interim measure to start the flow of supplies, C-47's were ordered from all over Europe. In the meantime, larger four-engine transports, the Douglas C-54 *Skymasters*, were ordered from Panama, Guam, Hawaii, Alaska, Japan, and the United States because there were none in Europe. While they were winging their way toward Central Europe, the C-47's flew round-the-clock from Weisbaden and Frankfurt to Berlin and back. Special ground crews were hurriedly formed at both ends to load and unload the vital supplies. The Royal Air Force marshalled some of its transports and flew the air corridors to Gatow, another Berlin airfield in the British sector, to help fight this strange war of nerves.

Two days later, an American C-47 was landing every eight minutes to discharge two and one half tons of cargo—well over 150 plane-loads a day—and the precious supplies were trucked to warehouses strategically located throughout the western sector of the city. That day almost 400 tons of food, fuel, and medicines arrived; but this was less than one thirtieth of what the three Allied sectors required for normal living and economic activity.

The Communist-sponsored press in East Berlin had a heyday as they derisively referred to “the futile attempts of the Americans to save face and to maintain their untenable position in Berlin.” Never were airplanes thought to be able to carry enough supplies to feed and warm a city that size.

Those first days were brutal as far as the pilots and crews of the Air Force were concerned. The men flew eight hours; did sixteen hours of ground duty; then, if they were lucky, slept six or seven hours. The weather was maddening even though it was mid-summer. Pilots sometimes ran into rain, hail, fog, and snow all on one flight.

But slowly the airlift increased the tonnage delivered. By July 4, planes carried 675 tons. On July 7, 1000 tons were unloaded and the first coal, packed in soldiers' duffle bags, arrived. By July 20, 1500 tons a day were rolling into Berlin and the RAF hauled 750 tons more.

In August, the Allied planes carried 120,672 tons and the West Berliners were finally getting enough supplies for bare subsistence. In September, General Clay requested several steam rollers to build a new airfield, Tegel, in the French sector. The two existing airfields