



FACT SHEET

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

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Eighth Air Force



Mission

With headquarters at Barksdale Air Force Base in the communities of Bossier City and Shreveport, La., Eighth Air Force is one of three active-duty numbered air forces in Air Combat Command. It serves as the only information operations and bomber warfighting headquarters, employing decisive global air power for U.S. Joint Forces Command and U.S. Strategic Command and combatant commanders.

Operations

The Eighth Air Force team consists of more than 41,000 active-duty, Air National Guard and Reserve professionals operating and maintaining a variety of aircraft capable of deploying air power to any area of the world. This air power includes the heart of America's heavy bomber force: the B-2 *Spirit* and B-52 *Stratofortress* aircraft. E-8C *Joint STARS*, EC-130H *Compass Call*, E-3B *Sentry*, RC-135 *Rivet Joint*, and U-2S *Dragon Lady* reconnaissance aircraft round out the command's lethal airpower arsenal.

Eighth Air Force is the first numbered air force to integrate information operations into a warfighting headquarters. The integration will give the Mighty Eighth the ability to gain, exploit, and attack adversary information or information systems while defending friendly or coalition information and information systems from enemy attack. Eighth Air Force gains the capability to collect, process, and analyze data on weather, foreign weapon systems, friendly and enemy force disposition, etc., from different sources, and to provide this information to warfighters and national decision makers.

History

The VIII Bomber Command (later redesignated Eighth Air Force on Feb. 22, 1944) was activated as part of the U.S. Army Air Force on Feb. 1, 1942, at Langley Field, Va. About ten days later, the VIII Bomber Command joined its parent unit, Eighth Air Force at Hunter Field in Savannah, Ga. Thirteen days later, Brig. Gen. Ira C. Eaker took VIII Bomber Command to Daws Hill, England. Once on English soil, a permanent home for VIII Bomber Command was soon established. From May 1942 until July 1945, VIII Bomber Command would plan and execute the American daylight, precision, and strategic bombing campaign over Nazi-occupied Europe from a former girls school at High Wycombe, England.

During World War II, under the leadership of such generals as Ira Eaker and Jimmy Doolittle, the VIII Bomber Command became the greatest air armada in history. On Feb. 22, 1944, the Army reorganized its Air Forces in Europe. In redesignation actions, Eighth Air Force became the United States Strategic Air Forces in Europe (now the United States Air Forces in Europe), and the VIII Bomber Command became Eighth Air Force. By mid-1944, Eighth Air Force had reached a total strength of more than 200,000 people (it is estimated that more than 350,000 Americans served in Eighth Air Force during the war in Europe.) At peak strength, Eighth Air Force could dispatch more than 2,000 four-engine bombers and more than 1,000 fighters on a single mission. For these reasons, Eighth Air Force became known as the "Mighty Eighth."

The Mighty Eighth compiled an impressive record in the war. This achievement, however, carried a high price. Half of the U.S. Army Air Force's casualties in WW II were suffered by Eighth Air Force (more than

47,000 casualties, with more than 26,000 dead). Seventeen Medals of Honor went to Eighth Air Force personnel during the war. By war's end, they had been awarded a number of other medals to include 220 Distinguished Service Crosses, and 442,000 Air Medals. Many more awards were made to Eighth Air Force veterans after the war that remain uncounted. There were 261 fighter aces in the Eighth Air Force during World War II. Thirty-one of these aces had 15 or more aircraft kills apiece. Another 305 enlisted gunners were also recognized as aces

Following the end of the war in Europe, Eighth Air Force headquarters moved to Okinawa in July 1945, to train new bomber groups for combat against Japan. However, the Japanese surrendered before Eighth Air Force saw action in the Pacific theater. In June 1946, the headquarters moved to MacDill Field, Fla., to join the newly established Strategic Air Command. In November 1950, the headquarters transferred to Fort Worth Army Air Field (later Carswell AFB), Texas.

Eighth Air Force spent the next few years building its strategic capabilities. As a result, the Eighth had a minimal role in the Korean War, only deploying the 27th Fighter Wing to fly combat missions over Korea. On June 13, 1955, Eighth Air Force moved to Westover AFB, Mass., and transitioned to the jet age with the B-47 and KC-97 aircraft. These aircraft were phased out in the early 1960s and were replaced by the current workhorse, the B-52 *Stratofortress*, KC-135 tankers, and Atlas and Titan intercontinental ballistic missiles.

Eighth Air Force was called upon again in 1965 to perform combat missions in Southeast Asia. The Eighth periodically deployed its stateside-based B-52 bomber and KC-135 tanker units to operating bases in Guam, Okinawa and Thailand. In April 1970, Eighth Air Force Headquarters transferred to Andersen AFB, Guam to direct these operations. The intensive bombing of the Hanoi and Haiphong areas during the 11-day period in December 1972, known as LINEBACKER II, or the Christmas-Day Bombing Campaign, was but one highlight of that period. Those bombing missions influenced the Hanoi government to return to the negotiating table. Following the end of hostilities in Southeast Asia, Eighth Air Force moved to its current home, Barksdale AFB, La., replacing Second Air Force on Jan. 1, 1975.

In the 1980s, the Eighth participated in several key operations such as running the tanker task force for URGENT FURY in 1983 and directing all air refueling operations for EL DORADO CANYON in 1986 and JUST CAUSE in 1989.

Eighth Air Force units played a key role in the Gulf War, spearheading the air war campaign with B-52 strikes from Barksdale AFB. The B-52s launched

conventional air-launched cruise missiles on Iraq targets to begin that war. Eighth Air Force units in the Persian Gulf region bombed Iraq's Republican Guard forces and other key strategic targets during that conflict. The majority of air refueling and tactical reconnaissance assets came from the Mighty Eighth as well.

On Dec. 16, 1998, Eighth Air Force was once again called into action during Operation DESERT FOX. Joining other Allied Forces in the Arabian Gulf, B-52, as well as B-1B bombers in their first-ever operational mission, participated in the bombing campaign to reduce Iraq's weapons of mass destruction program and other strategic targets.

Units from the "Mighty Eighth" returned to combat in Europe for the first time in more than 50 years during Operation ALLIED FORCE, March 24 – June 10, 1999. During the 78-day air campaign, B-1Bs, B-2s, and B-52s joined other allied forces in the NATO operation against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. This first offensive action in NATO history included the combat debut of the newest Air Force bomber, the B-2.

B-1B and B-52 aircraft (deployed to RAF Fairford U.K.) and B-2s (which operated from Whiteman AFB, Mo.) flew close to 325 sorties, while dropping more than 7 million pounds of ordnance.

Eighth Air Force is again at the forefront of a new campaign...the war on terrorism. Since the beginning of Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and NOBLE EAGLE in October of 2001, the "Mighty Eighth's" B-1, B-2 and B-52 aircraft, along with other Air Force aircraft, have flown more than 48 percent of all combat missions in Afghanistan. During these missions, the Air Force has dropped more than 73 percent of the operation's total munitions, and destroyed nearly three-quarters of planned targets.

Organization

Under Air Combat Command since June 1, 1992, Eighth Air Force controls assets throughout the United States and overseas locations. Eighth Air Force was reorganized into a general purpose numbered Air Force with a warfighting mission to support the U.S. Joint Forces and U.S. Strategic Commands.

On Feb. 1, 2001, Headquarters Air Intelligence Agency realigned under Air Combat Command as a primary subordinate unit. The agency's two wings, the 67th Information Operations Wing and the 70th Intelligence Wing, realigned under Eighth Air Force.

The move created the only information operations and bomber numbered air force in the Air Force today.

The move also brought information operations capabilities into a structure similar to those of other Air Force weapons systems provided to commanders.

The “Mighty Eighth” became even mightier with the addition of four operational wings as the Air Force moved into the second step of integrating Information Operations into its combat forces on October 1, 2002. On the leading edge of modern warfare, IO experts train to disrupt enemy communications and information systems in concert with aerospace power, physically destroying enemy defenses. Equally important, IO experts play a crucial role in protecting critical U.S. and DoD information systems.

In addition, the Air Force Network Operations and Security Center will stand up in April 2004 and will provide around-the-clock centralized command and control of U.S. Air Force-wide networks. This is a mission to control legacy and new information technologies. The AFNOSC is the next logical step in the evolution of the Air Force’s command and control of computer network operations. This center enables the Air Force to maintain its information superiority by providing the Air Force a single organization to execute both service-specific and joint component responsibilities.

This reorganization takes place as the Air Force continues to blend high-tech information systems with high-tech combat capability. Recent operations have shown that new precision-guided munitions continue to improve the accuracy of Eighth Air Force bombers, and that of unmanned Aerial Vehicles, Airborne Warning and Control System aircraft, and Joint Surveillance, Target and Attack Radar System aircraft are shortening the gap between identifying and targeting enemy forces.

Eighth Air Force will be able to give the warfighting commander better ‘eyes on target’ to effectively use air and space capabilities to achieve joint force objectives. With this combination of resources, Eighth Air Force will be everywhere you look—in air, space, or cyberspace.

The IO capabilities will be integrated with all the other warfighting assets and allow the “Mighty Eighth” to strike anywhere in the world in “8” seconds with electrons or “8”-teen hours with steel on target.

(Current as of January 2004)

Active duty units and aircraft include:

- 2nd Bomb Wing, Barksdale AFB, La. (B-52H)
- 5th Bomb Wing, Minot AFB, N.D. (B-52H)
- 509th Bomb Wing, Whiteman AFB, Mo. (B-2)

- 9th Reconnaissance Wing, Beale AFB, Calif. (U-2S)
- 55th Wing, Offutt AFB, Neb. (E-4B, OC-135B, RC-135S/W, TC-135S/W, WC-135C/W)
- 552nd Air Control Wing, Tinker AFB, Okla. (E-3B/C)
- 41st and 43rd Electronic Combat Squadron, Davis-Monthan AFB, Ariz. (EC-130E)
- 67th Information Operations Wing, Lackland AFB, Texas
- 70th Intelligence Wing, Fort Meade, Md.
- 480th Intelligence Wing, Langley AFB, Va.
- 3rd Air Support Operations Group, Fort Hood, Texas
- 607th Air Control Squadron, Davis-Monthan AFB, Ariz.
- 726th Air Control Squadron, Mountain Home AFB, Idaho
- 728th Air Control Squadron, Eglin AFB, Fla.
- 729th Air Control Squadron, Hill AFB, Utah
- 819th REDHORSE Squadron, Malmstrom AFB, Mont.

Eighth Air Force Active Duty and Air National Guard “Blended” unit

- 116th Air Control Wing, Robins AFB, Ga. (E-8C)
The first of its kind, the 116th ACW combines active-duty and Air National Guard members into a single unit.

Eighth Air Force gained Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve Assets include:

- 117th Intelligence Squadron, Birmingham, Ala
- 123rd Intelligence Squadron, Little Rock, Ark.
- 152nd Intelligence Squadron, Reno, Nev.
- 169th Intelligence Squadron, Salt Lake City, Utah
- 103rd Air Control Squadron, East Granby, Conn.
- 109th Air Control Squadron, Salt Lake City, Utah
- 116th Air Control Squadron, Camp Rilea, Ore.
- 117th Air Control Squadron, Savannah, Ga.
- 123rd Air Control Squadron, Blue Ash, Ohio
- 128th Air Control Squadron, Volk Field, Wis.
- 134th Air Control Squadron, McConnell AFB, Kan.
- 141st Air Control Squadron, Punta Borinquen, Puerto Rico
- 255th Air Control Squadron, Gulfport, Miss.
- 513th Air Control Group, Tinker AFB, Okla. (E-3B)
- 917th Wing, Barksdale AFB, La. (B-52H, A-10)