

A Look Back...

AFMC 34TH ANNIVERSARY LOOK BACK - PART THREE

"We trace our heritage to the beginnings of flight at McCook field in 1917, and since that time, AFMC has morphed, adapted, and re-structured. Through it all, we remain constant in our commitment to stay one step ahead of our adversaries and deliver the capabilities our Air Force relies upon to fly, fight, and win. We continue to push the limits of what's possible today to build the future Air Force."

General Duke Z. Richardson, AFMC Commander, 2022

During the early 2000s, AFMC delivered new capabilities and enhanced others, enabling the warfighter to successfully engage the enemy. The early 2000's also brought new focus, as leaders turned their attention to the needs of AFMC military members and their families in the form of privatized military family housing and the Fit-to-Fight program.

Privatized Housing

A major Air Force and AFMC Military Housing Privatization Initiative began in earnest in Fiscal Year 1996. As early as the 1940s, and through the 1950s, several efforts were undertaken through the Wherry and Capehart Acts. By 1996, after years of struggling to gain control of the housing privatization process (which led to the desire of Privatization of Utilities), AFMC and the Air



Early military housing.



Modern privatized military housing.

Force constructed a program, that slowly produced tangible results. The Military Housing Privatization Initiative, begun through an act of Congress in 1996, and offered a powerful tool to the military services in their effort to remedy a chronic shortfall in the supply of adequate military family housing.

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By October 2001, the AFMC Commander urged the commanders at three of the AFMC centers to reevaluate the feasibility of privatizing military family housing previously judged inappropriate for privatization. Robins AFB awarded a contract for its privatization project in September 2000. Kirtland AFB and Wright-Patterson AFB anticipated awarding unit (homes) contracts during 2002. Privatized military housing may seem to be a direct reference to just housing, however any agreements reached by the installation allowed for the demolition of existing substandard housing, renovation of existing housing and construction of new housing.

The first AFMC housing privatized project reached completion in September 2008 at Robins AFB, Georgia. Here, military members and dependents occupied 670 units and new family venues. By 2019, the Air Force had privatized tens of thousands of housing units and solidified the privatization of utilities for these units long before.

Being Fit-to-Fight

Along with military housing, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF) wanted to focus the force on keeping mental and physically fit through a program titled, “Fit-to-Fight.”



Airmen prep for a fitness test.

On 30 July 2003, General John P. Jumper, CSAF, issued a sight picture for “Fit-to-Fight,” setting forth his views and decisions on the future of the Air Force military fitness program. The nature of war was changing, and the Air Force’s role in it was changing. The force required new fitness standards so Airmen could keep up with the ever-changing demands placed on Airmen while deploying to the “desert,” living under austere circumstances and harsh environments while engaging enemy combatants. “The amount of energy we devote to our fitness programs is not consistent with the growing demands of our warrior culture,” he wrote. In late fiscal year 2005, some 18 months after the “Fit-to-Fight” program was initiated, the Air Force continued to make changes. To date, the Air Force fitness program continues to evolve with the ever-changing world in which members of AFMC operate.

F-117 Retirement

As Air Force leaders focused on a fit-to-fight force, they did not forget the need to streamline the operational Air Force. One streamline came in the form of retiring the F-117. Mid-June 2006, in the ever-changing world of aircraft operations, the Secretary of the Air Force (SECAF) approved the retirement of the F-117 (the world's first operational aircraft designed to exploit low-observable stealth technology). Following, Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force (VCSAF), General John D.W. Corley, directed the commanders of Air Combat Command (ACC) and AFMC to develop a plan to retire 10 F-117s in fiscal year 2007 and 42 in fiscal year 2008, in varying configurations. By 18 January 2007, AFMC approved a Tonopah Test Range storage plan for multiple F-117s. As a side, during this time, on 25 September 2007, the MQ-9 Reaper, an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV), saw first operational use while in Afghanistan.



Afghanistan 2007, MQ-9 taxiing at Bagram.

The last four F-117s scheduled to retire under the Retirement Plan were retired in August 2008. As a result of the official retirement of the F-117, 410th Flight Test Squadron inactivated on 30 September 2008. The Squadron had been stationed at



F-117s in a storage hangar at Tonopah Test Range, 2019.

Air Force Plant 42 in Palmdale, California since 1993; the squadron's primary mission was performing flight test missions for the airframe. The F-117 was soon replaced with the F-22 Raptor due to a recapitalization and modernization program. Interestingly, though officially retired, F-117s have still been seen in skies as recent as 2026.

As early as 2009, the Secretary of Defense passed source selection authority for the KC-X tanker to the USAF. In September 2009, the Air Force announced its new acquisition strategies for the KC-X aerial tanker program. The following day, the Air Force released the official Request For Proposal (RFP). By 24 February 2011, the Air Force announced the award of the KC-X (KC-46A) contract to Boeing. While processing continued to move forward on the KC-46A, the Air Force and AFMC shifted from wartime footing and air operations in Iraq.

The U.S. formally ended Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF) combat operations on 1 September 2010, and transitioned to Operation NEW DAWN (OND), focusing on advising, training and assisting Iraqi security forces. These efforts required continued support from AFMC. Though things quieted in Iraq, military operation continued in other locations in the Middle East. One such operation ended on 1 May 2011, when U.S. forces killed al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden. While some military operations occur quickly, aircraft production does not; this is true for the production of the F-35.



AFMC leadership celebrate AFMC's
20th Anniversary

The F-35 is a product of years of ideas and concepts with their beginnings in the 1980s, and in the 1990s, programs developing at this time merged with the ideas and concepts of the 1980s in 1994. This merger created the Joint Advanced Strike Technology (JAST) program. By 1995, the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) program emerged, initially servicing the Air Force, United States Marine Corps and United States Navy (eventually expanding internationally), and focused on the needs of these military services to replace various combat aircraft such as the F-16, F/A-18, A-10, F-117 and the AV-8B Harrier. The JSF program eventually became the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter Program with the first F-35 aircraft arriving at Eglin AFB, Florida on 14 July 2011. Interestingly, several months after the F-35's first night training flight (24 March 2014), the F-22 made its combat debut, conducting airstrikes on positions held by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Syria between 22-23 September 2014.

In 2016, along with Air Force Research Laboratory, Air Force Test Center, Air Force Sustainment Center, Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center and Air Force Life Cycle Management Center, AFMC received an additional core mission - Installation and Mission Support, by standing up Air Force Installation and Mission Support Center. Also of note, from the 1940s onward, AFMC and its predecessor commands have performed the Nuclear Systems Management mission for the Air Force.

“AFMC We Need...”

The command, for a time, may have lost some balance when supporting its civilian force, however both the Air Force and AFMC needed to find balance. General Ellen M. Pawlikowski, had been the commander of AFMC for over a year when on 1 July 2016, General David L. Goldfein, became the CSAF. During the year prior to Goldfein’s new assignment, Pawlikowski focused on taking a command still in transition and moving forward. Within months of Goldfein taking command, he announced change, refocusing Pawlikowski’s efforts within the command and changed her initial mission goals. She would retire leaving much work for her replacement to continue.



AFMC We Need team conducts cadre training.

The incoming AFMC commander (General Arnold W. Bunch, Jr.) was delayed, opening an opportunity for an interim/acting commander, Lieutenant General Robert D. McMurry. He served both as the commander of AFLCMC and AFMC for over eight months and relinquished command to Bunch in May 2019. Throughout this period, the Secretary of Defense introduced a new National Defense Strategy (NDS) signaling the rise of China as a Pacific Rim adversary and Russia’s return as a major peer competitor. The new NDS drove major changes within the command as it gave General McMurry and Major General Carl Schaefer, AFMC Deputy Commander, a beacon in which they could index the current state of the command to DoD and the Department of the Air Force’s future needs. The NDS shaped many of Bunch’s early decisions and supported his efforts in proceeding with a command review, which became known as the “AFMC We Need.”

The AFMC We Need effort intended to identify areas where AFMC could improve so it could better support the future warfighter, who would engage in a near-peer battle.

“AFMC is the most important MAJCOM in the U.S. Air Force to achieve the National Defense Strategy and to acquire, field and sustain the Air Force We Need. AFMC built the most powerful Air Force in the world and our nation is depend-

ing on us to build the Air Force we need to secure our nation's future. The technology advantage we have experienced and enjoyed in the past is quickly closing or has closed. Our potential adversaries are innovating and rapidly developing both their technologies and warfighting expertise. For us to continue to ensure a technological advantage we must develop and field technology at the speed of relevance. In order to ensure AFMC is properly positioned to execute the National Defense Strategy and drive to the Air Force We Need, I am kicking off a command wide initiative—the AFMC We Need!” - General Arnold W. Bunch Jr.

Throughout 2020, following inputs from the AFMC We Need initiative, the command released a new mission, motto and logo for command-wide use. The new mission statement was: Powering the world's greatest Air Force...we develop, deliver, support and sustain war-winning capabilities. The new vision stated: One AFMC: Collaborative, Innovative, Trusted, Empowered. Indispensable to our nation, disruptive to our adversaries. The new motto became: One AFMC... Powering the World's Greatest Air Force. The logo represents a continuous process of evolution and innovation. AFMC cannot remain static but must continually evolve in order to achieve the National Defense Strategy and the Air Force We Need. The six centers receive representation through six triangles that are spaced equally, but are contained within the evolutionary circle. The blue triangles represent the Air Force and AFMC; the intersection between the two symbolizes the flexibility and collaboration required to build a faster, smarter Air Force together. The wings, gear and star are a nod to our rich heritage. The gray background represents the intellect of the workforce, and the “gray matter” needed to innovate and produce the world's greatest Air Force. The font is a modern sans serif meant to illuminate the unbounded potential of AFMC's mission.



AFMC logo.

Efforts moved forward to help command personnel feel more connected to the history, heritage and mission of the command. On 4 April 2020, General Bunch, as a result of the AFMC We Need initiative, eliminated the AcqDemo control points, referred to as tiers, within the broadband levels, beginning on 1 October 2019. Later in the month, to increase the amount of contracted custodial services at AFMC installations, the AFMC We Need championed a policy memorandum change transferring Air Force Common Output Level Standards (AFCOLS) from the VCSAF to AFIMSC/CC. Still later in 2020, Bunch approved the AFMC We

Need Initiative to spend approximately \$8.5 million on facilities and quality of life issues across the command. These just name a few of the changes brought about by AFMC We Need. Not affected by We Need, yet a major change within the DoD, Air Force and AFMC, was the activation of Space Force.

Space Force

During its early stages, military leaders classified the words “Space Force,” and with this in mind, on 19 February 2019, President Donald J. Trump directed military leaders to create the US Space Force (USSF). This led to the creation of the sixth military branch within the DoD. By 20 December 2019, US Space Force was established and Air Force Space Command (AFSPC) was redesignated USSF. The newly designated USSF accepted all operational and mission support functions of AFSPC and served as the transitional headquarters for USSF. Though a separate branch, USSF remained an administrative component of the Air Force and AFMC was selected as, what Air Force leaders were calling, the “Servicing Major Command (MAJCOM).” This was a logical fit, because AFMC was supporting the bases where Air Force installations would reconstitute as USSF bases. This was to be done through one of our centers, the Air Force Installation Mission Support Center (AFIMSC).



By 1 October 2021, General Bunch declared MAJCOM support to the USSF had reached Initial Operation Capability (IOC), and he pushed for Full Operational Capability (FOC) by 1 October 2022. Space Force Service Seal.

In summary, although 34 years old, AFMC has a long and distinguished heritage dating back to pre-World War I, when the experimental engineering facility was established at McCook Field in Dayton, Ohio. With the creation of the U.S. Air Service in 1918, the organization known as the Engineering Division was expanded to include responsibility for the Air Corps' logistics system. It was redesignated the Air Corps Materiel Division in 1926. As the largest branch of the Air Corps, the Materiel Division was responsible for all aircraft and equipment research, development, procurement, maintenance, supply and flight tests.

The research, development and logistics functions separated during World War II. However, they subsequently reunited for several years during the late 1940s

under the Air Materiel Command, and structured around the strengths of technological superiority and worldwide logistics support. In 1950, the Air Research and Development Command was broken out as a separate organization devoted strictly to research and development. In 1961, Air Materiel Command was redesignated Air Force Logistics Command (AFLC), while the Air Research and Development Command gained the added responsibility for weapon system acquisition and was redesignated Air Force Systems Command (AFSC).

On 1 July 1992, AFLC and AFSC combined to form AFMC, a single, streamlined organization with an expanded mission. The new command built upon AFLC's expertise in providing worldwide logistics support, including maintenance, modification and overhaul of weapon systems; and AFSC's expertise in science, technology, research, development and testing.

From cradle-to-grave, AFMC provides the work force and infrastructure necessary to ensure the United States remains the world's most respected air and space force.





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