A Brief History of the U.S. Air Force

The beginnings of flight in the U.S. Army first started in 1926, when a law was passed that established the Army Air Force. From 1926 until 1947 the Army has its own air wing, and there was no such thing as the U.S. Air Force, not yet anyway. Beginning September 26th, 1947 by an order of the Secretary of Defense, the Air Force of the United States was formed, transferring aircraft and personnel from the Department of the Army and the Department of War to the new organization.

The roots of the Air Force go all the way back to the invention of flight, when two Dayton Ohio bicycle mechanics first presented the U.S. Government with proof of a flying machine in 1905. Before actual aircraft took to the air, the United States Government had used balloons successfully in creating the U.S. Signal Corps. The first aircraft delivered to the U.S. Government was in 1909, just in time for World War II. Congress was slow to get on the bandwagon, but voted a military aviation bill in 1911. The success of aircraft in Europe during the First World War proved the importance of aviation.

The British provided the model when they joined their Navy and Army air forces into one unit, the Royal Air Force, or RAF for short. The airplane was seen by US leaders as a means of reinforcing the infantry, so it was not given full consideration. World War II was where Air Power truly proved its mettle. Army Major General Henry Arnold became the chief of the Army Air Corps in 1941, the summer before Pearl Harbor.

Between 1941 and 1944 at the end of World War II, the Army Air Corps expanded dramatically. After the end of the War, it became its own Service with the National Security Act of 1947. Since 1947 the Air Force has served proudly defending the United States throughout the Cold War of the last half of the 20th Century, through the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the First Gulf War in Iraq. It continues to recruit, equip, and train combat air forces in serves to the United States. With the advent of terrorism, the Air force has now worked to deliver options for the sovereign defense for America in Space, In the Air, and in Cyberspace to fight cyber terrorists that would threaten the United States.