

This Day in History... April 1, 1954

U.S. Air Force Academy Established

On April 1, 1954, President Dwight Eisenhower created the Air Force Academy to train officers. During its more than 60 year history, the academy has had over 52,000 graduates move on to become US Air Force officers.

As far back as 1918, there were calls for an aeronautical academy, similar, but separate from those of the Army and Navy. As Lieutenant Colonel A.J. Hanlon said, "As the Military and Naval Academies are the backbone of the Army and Navy, so must the Aeronautical Academy be the backbone of the Air Service. No service can flourish without some such institution to inculcate into its embryonic officers love of country, proper conception of duty, and highest regard for honor."



Stamp commemorates the 50th anniversary of the Air Force as a part of our National Defense System. It was originally a part of the Army and known as the US Army Air Corps.

Congressman Charles F. Curry submitted legislation calling for an academy in 1919, but concerns over costs forced it to be dropped. Then in 1925, air power pioneer Billy Mitchell addressed Capitol Hill saying that it was necessary "to have an air academy to form a basis for the permanent backbone of your air service."

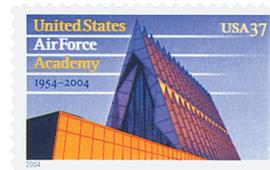
After World War II, the Air Force became its own branch of the military as part of the National Security Act of 1947. For the next several years, Army and Navy school graduates were allowed to receive their commissions in the Air Force, but disagreements between the services quickly arose. In 1950, the Service Academy Board, headed by Columbia University President Dwight Eisenhower, decided that the current system wasn't working and that the Air Force needed its own school.

By the time the board's recommendation was approved by Congress, Eisenhower was president of the United States and signed the legislation creating the Air Force Academy on April 1, 1954. Charles Lindbergh and Carl Spaatz were among those on the panel that selected the school's location – Colorado Springs, Colorado.

In July 1955, the first class of 306 cadets began training at a temporary facility at Lowry Air Force Base, near Denver, Colorado. The academy moved to its permanent 18,000-acre location in 1958.

The Air Force Academy's motto is Integrity First, Service before self, Excellence in all we do. Its mission is to prepare young men and women to serve as officers in the Air Force. Cadets study for four years to earn a Bachelor of Science degree. They also receive military training to earn regular commissions in the Air Force. Upon entering the academy, students agree to serve four years as cadets and at least five years as Air Force officers.

The 2004 US Air Force Academy stamps features a striking photograph of the cadet chapel – considered one of the most beautiful modern academic architectural buildings in America. It is often used as a symbol of the Academy itself. A popular Colorado tourist attraction, the Academy receives more than a million visitors a year.



Stamp commemorating the Academy's 50th anniversary.



Issued for the 50th anniversary of the creation of the US Air Force as its own branch of the military.

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