



FACT SHEET

U.S. Air Force Fact Sheet HERITAGE OF GLOBAL STRIKE CHALLENGE

Global Strike Challenge recaptures a critical part of the Air Force's nuclear heritage – competition. Global Strike Challenge pits the top security forces, missile and bomber maintenance and missile and bomber operations crews from Air Force Global Strike Command, as well as participants from Air Combat Command, the Reserve and Guard, in head-to-head competition. The competition connects heritage and mission, while at the same time recognizing and celebrating the “best of the best” in weapons system and technical expertise.



History of Global Strike Challenge

Like bomber and missile competitions of the past, Global Strike Challenge returns to the roots and traditions of Air Force heritage by incorporating three major events into one competition: the former Proud Shield bomber competition, the former Olympic Arena missile competition, and the former Giant Sword combat weapons loading competition. The new competition builds on a celebrated past.

SAC Bomber Competitions

Bomber competitions began in 1948 when Strategic Air Command announced a competition to focus attention to improve bombing accuracy and aircrew proficiency. The following month three crews from each of SAC's ten B-29 groups gathered at Castle Air Force Base, Calif., to compete in the first competition. Another competition was held in October 1949 at MacDill AFB, Fla.

The Korean War temporarily halted the competition but Gen. Curtis LeMay revived the event in 1951, and for the next nine years the competition would grow in size and scope, including the introduction of jet bombers and different categories such as radar navigation. The 1951 competition awarded the Fairchild Trophy to the best bombardment wing, in honor of Gen. Muir S. Fairchild, for outstanding results in the fields of bombing and navigation. Over the years, the competitions helped build morale and sharpen the competitive edge of SAC's crews. The competition truly became international with the Royal Air Force fielding aircraft and crews commencing in the mid-1950s.

Six competitions were held during the Southeast Asia conflict. SAC revived the competition in 1974 with Air Force Reserve, Air National Guard, and Royal Australian Air Force crews joining in 1977, 1978, and 1980, respectively. SAC conducted its final bombing competition in April 1992, mere weeks before the command's inactivation on June 1, 1992. Bomber crews, however, occasionally participated in bombing competitions sponsored by Air Combat Command between 1994 and 2009.

SAC Missile Competition

A missile combat contest, similar to the annual bombing competition long used by manned aircraft units in the Air Force, became a reality in 1967 with the advent of "Curtain Raiser." Unlike with bombing, live booster launches were not practical. Instead, precision, care, and other factors prior to actual launch determined the potential effectiveness of the missile strike for scoring purposes. For the competition, Headquarters developed a missile counterpart to the Fairchild Trophy. The 351st Strategic Missile Wing was the first recipient of the Blanchard Trophy, named after Gen. William H. Blanchard.

Funding and the Southeast Asia conflict prompted cancelation of the 1968 competition, but it was resurrected in 1969 under the name Olympic Arena. In 1971, Minuteman III missile teams joined the event. Participation was dramatically increased for Olympic Arena '72 which also marked the first time that Minuteman III was represented by both missile combat crews and a maintenance team.

Olympic Arena continued until the 1990s. Missile units participated in the final SAC missile competition in May of 1992. Even after that, missile units continued to participate in Guardian Challenge, a competition sponsored by Air Force Space Command, between 1994 and 2008.

SAC Weapons Loading Competition

As one of several measures to hone the technical skills of load teams, SAC held its first Munitions Loading Competition at MacDill AFB, Fla., in March 1958. A second competition, at March AFB, Calif., was held in October 1958, while two additional competitions were held at Bergstrom AFB, Texas, in 1959 and 1960. SAC halted the competition for the next 13 years as load crews were needed in support of contingencies, maintaining alert duties, and operations in Southeast Asia.

The headquarters restarted competition in 1974 under the name Giant Sword, during which aircraft crew chiefs joined the competition teams. In 1975 the competition moved to Ellsworth AFB, S.D., and expanded to include security police elements.

The 1976 competition established a precedent as SAC awarded the Chief Master Sgt. Barrentine Trophy to the best munitions competition team.

Ellsworth would be home for the next ten competitions with Fairchild hosting the competition beginning in 1986. The 1989 competition proved to be the final event of its type within SAC.

Today's Global Strike Challenge

Like its predecessors, Global Strike Challenge is designed to enhance readiness, teamwork, esprit de corps, mission pride and a competitive spirit. The competition is an amalgam of the best of the historic bomb competition and the former missile competitions. However, it is unique when compared to those competitions because it includes operations, maintenance and security forces participants from both the missile and bomber communities under Air Force Global Strike Command launching the beginning of a new tradition that celebrates the past.

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