

## 20 Years of Dynamic Deterrence

### The Post-War World

(Part 2 of a 22 part series)

*In December 2014, Air Force Global Strike Command (AFGSC) is recognizing the 70th anniversary of the Continental Air Forces, the predecessor of Strategic Air Command (SAC) and today's AFGSC. To commemorate this, the Command History Office is re-publishing a series of stories detailing the first 20 years of SAC. The SAC Press Service originally published these stories in 1966 to commemorate the first 20 years of Strategic Air Command. They were re-published in 1971 to commemorate the 25th anniversary of SAC. Though the AFGSC History Office has edited the original text to correct syntax and to provide insight, the context of the original text remains and the reader must view these articles looking through the lens of history.*

In December 1944, the Army Air Forces created the Continental Air Forces to coordinate the activities of the four Numbered Air Forces (First, Second, Third, and Fourth) stationed in the United States. However, strategic bombardment operations during World War II showed the need for a major command devoted exclusively to strategic, long-range air combat operations. So, in March 1946, the Army Air Forces re-designated the Continental Air Forces as the Strategic Air Command. The Strategic Air Command served as America's greatest deterrent to the threat of nuclear attack on the continental United States from the early 1950's until May 1992. To accomplish this mission, the command maintained a stable of long range strike bombers and intercontinental ballistic missiles along with a fleet of air-to-air refueling tankers and reconnaissance assets. However, during 1992, as a result of the diminishing danger of massive nuclear warfare and the disappearance of a meaningful distinction between strategic and tactical missions, the United States Air Force disestablished the Strategic Air Command, dividing its assets and missions among the newly created Air Combat Command, Air Mobility Command, and Air Force Space Command. Seventeen years later, on 7 August 2009, the Air Force reactivated Strategic Air Command and then re-designated the organization as Air Force Global Strike Command. Air Force Global Strike Command with its six wings contains the nation's entire inventory of Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missiles and nuclear capable B-2 and B-52 bomber aircraft with the Air Force's newest Major Command perpetuating the proud heritage of the Continental Air Forces and Strategic Air Command.

*Originally released 25 March 1966 [edited for clarity]*

SAC PRESS SERVICE

UNCLASSIFIED

20 YEARS OF DYNAMIC DETERRENCE

The Post-War World

Early in February 1945, the “Big Three” Allied powers [United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union] met at Yalta [in Crimea Russia from 4-11 February for an Allied leaders conference, codename ARGONAUT] to map plans for the world peace that was hoped would follow the war. Both Great Britain and the United States realized that Yalta that the attitude of the Soviet Union was all-important to future plans. Therefore, every attempt was made to eliminate any cause for Soviet distrust or suspicion and win post-war cooperation.

It was also a hard fact that Soviet armies were already within 30 miles of Berlin [capital city of Nazi Germany’s Third Reich] while other Allied troop had barely entered Germany [from the west]. In addition, the Pacific war was still in doubt and Russia would make a valuable ally against [Imperial] Japan.

As a result, the Yalta Agreement mad every possible concession to the Soviet Union while the Communists, in turn, only conceded the principle of free elections for “liberated peoples.” And, in exchange for domination of Manchuria [part of China occupied by Imperial Japan], the U.S.S.R. definitely agreed to enter the war against [Imperial] Japan. Moreover, the general structure of the United Nations was established at Yalta and final plans were made for the San Francisco Conference to set up this organization [formally].

The futility of these concessions soon became apparent. Just two weeks after her Yalta pledge to establish democratic governments in liberated nations [of Eastern Europe], Russia threw out the existing peasant government in Rumania and, backed up by Soviet troops, converted that country into a Communist dictatorship. Within another two weeks, similar Russian tactics were begun against Poland – without benefit of “free elections.”

At the Potsdam Conference [held in a Berlin suburb of defeated Germany] in the summer of 1945 [17 July-2 August], Russian intentions became even clearer. All attempts at constructive agreement were blocked by Soviet quibbling. It finally was demonstrated that wherever the Russian Army dominated, Communist would prevail.

For the next few months, French, British and American negotiators in the new United Nations and in dozens of conferences continued to hope that some start could be made toward building a real peace, but every move was blocked by the Soviet Union [that like the other

victorious Allies from World War II had veto power on the Security Council of the new United Nations.]

Meanwhile, the United States rapidly began to dismantle [through demobilization] its wartime military forces. Our [that is, American military] strength dropped in months from over 10 million men under arms to a greatly reduced force whose major mission was processing the departure of citizen soldiers, seamen, and airmen back to their homes [and into civilian life]. Western Europe [due to the Nazi occupation and war] was in shambles. Allied strength was exhausted, yet still faced the gigantic task of [post-war] occupation [of both defeated Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan] and rebuilding the war torn ruins of their homelands.

The Soviet military, solid in their armed occupation of the ruins of Eastern Europe, began to dismantle what was left of German industry and ship it back to Russia. With their massive army intact and unchallenged, the Soviet leaders openly overturned government after government and blocked access to their occupied areas [in Eastern Europe] with armed force. As [British Prime Minister Churchill later said, “an Iron Curtain had descended across the continent” [of Europe].

### Building a Post-War Air Force

Soviet treachery was just barely evident in early 1946 when plans were being formed for post-war air power and the war in the Pacific had just been won [with the formal surrender of Imperial Japan on 2 September 1945].

At the close of the war, U.S. land-based air power was under the direction of the Army Air Forces [AAF]. Most of its strength was deployed in the various war theaters under the operational command of theater commanders. The major operational unit in the United States was called the Continental Air Forces (CAF) [activated on 13 December 1944]. As the “Air Force’s Air Force,” the CAF was primarily a training organization [stationed in the United States] although it also had a combat role in the air defense of the [Continental] United States.

In response to Headquarters Army Air Forces interest, the CAF submitted a plan to the Pentagon about two weeks after V-J [Victory over Japan] Day that recommended the formation of a post-war air force centered around a single operational command with the mission of tactical air forces, strategic air forces, and air defense forces.

Other ideas were being considered at Headquarters AAF besides the CAF plan. For example, a memo [memorandum] on 20 September 1945, to Lieutenant Ira C. Eaker, then AAF Chief of Staff, recommending the formation of a “Strategic Striking Force” to be based in the United States, constantly ready and capable of striking anywhere on the globe. Its major weapon would be the atomic bomb.

Attempting a complete reorganization of U.S. defense forces, Headquarters AAF made its decision known in a War Department directive dated 21 March 1946. Accordingly, CAF was divided into three separate commands: Strategic Air Command, Tactical Air Command and Air Defense Command. [Indeed 21 March 1946 is the activation date for all of these three commands.] Most of the people and resources of the old CAF went to the new SAC.

This was the environment in which SAC was created. Even at the moment of victory, it was clear that there would be no peace. The United States and her Allies faced the prospect, at best, of an indefinite “Cold War” with the Soviet Union.

Western Europe was exhausted. The World War II military strength of the United States was almost gone. And, the Soviet Union, stronger than ever, was apparently intent on using the post-war confusion as a golden opportunity for Communist expansion. The only trump card we had was the atomic power and the air power to deliver it.

(NEXT STORY: Part 3, The Need for Professionals)