

**Introduced by Senator Johannessen
(Principal coauthor: Senator Knight)**

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June 30, 1997

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 50—Relative to the 50th Anniversary of the United States Air Force.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL’S DIGEST

SCR 50, as introduced, Johannessen. 50th Anniversary of the United States Air Force.

This measure would commemorate the 50th anniversary of the United States Air Force since its inception as an independent arm of the United States armed forces on September 18, 1947. The measure would recognize the Air Force’s historical antecedents and its many achievements in the two World Wars, between the wars, the Korean War, Vietnam, and the Space Program, including, among other things, the Air Force’s pioneering achievements in aeromedical research, the development of the Strategic Air

Command (SAC), and the United States Air Force's intercontinental ballistic missile program.

Fiscal committee: no.

1 WHEREAS, John La Mountain and Thaddeus S. C.
2 Lowe were the first successful civilian balloonists
3 employed by the Union Army of the United States to
4 observe troop movements of the Confederate forces in
5 1861 as the Balloon Corps of the Army of the Potomac; and

6 WHEREAS, Brig. Gen. Adolphus W. Greenley, Chief
7 Signal Officer of the United States Army from 1887 to
8 1906, established a balloon section in the Signal Corps,
9 which sent its one balloon to Cuba after the outbreak of
10 the Spanish-American War in 1898, to observe the Spanish
11 troops and direct artillery fire in the Battle of San Juan
12 Hill; and

13 WHEREAS, On August 1, 1907, the Signal Corps
14 established an Aeronautical Division to take "charge of all
15 matters pertaining to military ballooning, air machines,
16 and all kindred subjects," giving birth to the Army Air
17 Arm and opening the way to the acquisition of the
18 service's first airplane, a Wright flyer; and

19 WHEREAS, On September 17, 1908, in a
20 demonstration flight for the army, with Orville Wright at
21 the controls of his airplane, Lt. Thomas E. Selfridge, an
22 aviation enthusiast, who had been associated with
23 Alexander Graham Bell in aeronautical experiments, and
24 who only a few months before, in May 1908, had become
25 the first U.S. Army officer to make a solo flight in a
26 powered flying machine, the "White Wing," developed
27 by Bell and his associates, was tragically killed as a
28 passenger in the same flight; and

29 WHEREAS, The pilots of the 94th Pursuit Squadron,
30 the famous "Hat-in-the-Ring" squadron, became the first
31 American-trained unit to see combat in World War I and,
32 later commanded by Eddie Rickenbacker, America's top
33 ace, as part of the American Expeditionary Force (AEF),
34 it included Maj. Raoul Lufbery, Lt. Douglas Campbell,
35 and Lt. Frank Luke, Jr., who was killed in action, and like
36 Rickenbacker was awarded the Congressional Medal of



1 Honor, and the unit became America's "First Team," first
2 as a member of the 1st Pursuit Group, and then the 1st
3 Fighter Group, and finally the 1st Tactical Fighter Wing,
4 which from its beginnings in France in May 1918 to the
5 modern wing stationed at Langley Air Force Base, the
6 "First Team" has been in the forefront in the
7 development and testing of new fighter tactics, new
8 operational doctrines, and new equipment; and

9 WHEREAS, Between the world wars, the pilots of the
10 air corps made the first round-the-world flight on April 4,
11 1924, in 175 days, in four specially built Douglas World
12 Cruiser airplanes covering 26,000 miles from Seattle,
13 Washington, only two of which returned to Seattle on
14 September 28, 1924, demonstrated the first use of aerial
15 refueling in 1923, setting new endurance records in 1929,
16 and in 1934 in a flight of B-10 Martin bombers to Alaska
17 under the command of Lt. Col. Henry (Hap) H. Arnold,
18 the future commanding general of the U.S. Army Air
19 Forces during World War II, successfully proved the
20 value of resupplying outlying possessions by air; and

21 WHEREAS, The United States Army Air Corps was
22 organized on July 2, 1926, the United States Army Air
23 Forces established on June 20, 1941, and the United States
24 Army reorganized on December 9, 1942, into three
25 autonomous forces, including the Army Air Forces, the
26 predecessor to today's United States Air Force; and

27 WHEREAS, The Army Air Forces through the 8th Air
28 Force in England and the 15th Air Force based in Italy
29 proved the value of daylight strategic bombing as a means
30 of destroying an enemy's ability to wage war, and with the
31 availability of long-range fighter support reduced our
32 casualties and increased the losses of the enemy, thereby
33 shortening the war; and

34 WHEREAS, The Women's Auxiliary Ferrying
35 Squadron (WAFS), later redesignated as the Women's
36 Air Force Service Pilots (WASPS) contributed greatly to
37 the World War II effort by ferrying aircraft, personnel,
38 and testing top secret weapons and airplanes to ensure
39 their safety for use by flight instructors and students, and
40 without acknowledgement of military service or honors



1 until 1979, 38 died in the line of duty and more than 900
2 continued to serve even though they were told on
3 December 20, 1944, that they would be sent home; and

4 WHEREAS, Women were first allowed to join the
5 fighter pilot ranks in 1993, and Capt. Amy Lynn Svoboda,
6 a 1989 graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy and one
7 of 14 female fighter pilots in the Air Force, was killed on
8 May 27, 1997, when her A-10 Thunderbolt attack jet went
9 down in the Barry M. Goldwater Air Force Range near
10 Gila Bend, about 100 miles from Tucson, Arizona, while
11 she was two hours into a training mission, becoming the
12 first female fighter pilot in the Air Force to die in a crash,
13 and as one of just six women A-10 pilots she was chief of
14 A-10 training for her squadron; and

15 WHEREAS, On January 16, 1941, the War Department
16 announced the formation of the 99th Pursuit Squadron,
17 the first African-American flying unit, to be trained at
18 Tuskegee, Alabama, and known as the “Lonely Eagles”
19 who fought throughout the Mediterranean and European
20 Theaters as the renamed 99th Fighter Squadron assigned
21 to the 332nd Fighter Group, of which they served as a
22 bomber escort group that never lost a bomber to enemy
23 fighters, and also became known as the “Tuskegee
24 Airman,” the Air Force being the first service after the
25 war to announce an end to racial segregation in its ranks
26 on July 1, 1949; and

27 WHEREAS, During World War II, the first four Air
28 Forces served to protect the western and eastern borders
29 of the United States, the 5th Air Force became
30 headquartered in Australia in December 1941, the 6th Air
31 Force was formed in Panama in February 1942, the
32 Hawaiian Air Force became the 7th Air Force in
33 February 1942, the 8th Air Force, established in February
34 1942 and headquartered in England, began flying
35 bombing raids over Europe in cooperation with the Royal
36 Air Force Bomber Command, the 9th Air Force was
37 established in September 1942 and moved to Egypt, and
38 the 10th Air Force was formed in Ohio and moved in
39 March 1942 to India where it was responsible for



1 operating in the China-Burma-India Theater of
2 operations; and

3 WHEREAS, The 11th Air Force was formed from the
4 Alaskan Air Force to protect the United States and
5 Canada and recover the Aleutian Islands from the
6 Japanese, the 12th Air Force was established in August
7 1942 and moved to England to participate in the North
8 African invasion, the 13th Air Force was formed in
9 December 1942 and operated throughout the Pacific
10 Theater of operation in the Solomon Islands, New Guinea,
11 the Philippines, the Marianas, Midway, the Caroline
12 Islands, Iwo Jima, Japan, and the Marshall Islands, and the
13 15th Air Force began combat operations on November 2,
14 1943, in Tunisia, North Africa, and later operated from
15 Italy; and

16 WHEREAS, On December 20, 1941, the American
17 Volunteer Group (AVG), Claire Chennault's Flying
18 Tigers, entered combat for the first time over Kunming,
19 China, and later as part of the China Air Task Force
20 (CATF), the Flying Tigers continued to fly missions over
21 the Himalayas known as "the hump" from India to China,
22 the CATF was redesignated as the 14th Air Force, and
23 though greatly outnumbered, the 14th Air Force
24 established a kill ratio of eight-to-one; and

25 WHEREAS, Lt. Col. James H. Doolittle of the Army Air
26 Corps, an aviation pioneer and daredevil racer who
27 pioneered instrument flying, won the Schneider Cup
28 Race in 1925, and pushed for higher octane gasoline for
29 airplanes in the 1930's, trained the volunteer crews of
30 twin-engined B-25B Mitchell bombers to take off in only
31 450 feet from the deck of the aircraft carrier, the U.S.S.
32 Hornet, to strike at the Japanese mainland in March 1942
33 to raise U.S. morale at a time when the Japanese were
34 victorious and became known as "the Doolittle Raid" for
35 which he received the Medal of Honor; and

36 WHEREAS, The Army Air Corps began World War II
37 with more than 2,000 members and a few hundred
38 airplanes, five years later the Army Air Force had almost
39 2.4 million members and nearly 80,000 aircraft and



1 became, to this day, the largest air force ever assembled;
2 and

3 WHEREAS, The National Security Act of 1947 on
4 September 18, 1947, established the Department of
5 Defense and the Air Force as a separate and independent
6 arm of the United States armed forces, with W. Stuart
7 Symington as the first Secretary of the Air Force and Gen.
8 Carl A. Spaatz, Commanding General of the Army Air
9 Force, as its first Chief of Staff on September 26, 1947, and
10 upon its issuance, Executive Order No. 9877 defined the
11 role and mission of the United States Air Force and its
12 internal organization was established in the Air Force
13 Organization Act of 1951, approved on September 19,
14 1951; and

15 WHEREAS, The United States Air Force, operating
16 within the limits of conventional warfare in the Korean
17 War of 1950–1953, repelled two invasions of South Korea
18 and secured control of the skies so that United Nations
19 troops could fight without fear of air attack, the Air
20 Forces' F-86 pilots downing more than 100 MIGs in June
21 1953, including 16 on June 30 alone, and for the first time,
22 with air supremacy established, the use of the helicopter
23 permitted the frequent rescue of aviators shot down
24 behind enemy lines, the Air Rescue Service having
25 retrieved 170 Air Force pilots or crewmen from enemy
26 territory, more than 10 percent of those who went down
27 there; and

28 WHEREAS, On June 26, 1948, the Berlin Airlift
29 “Operation Vittles” began with Douglas C-47 crews
30 bringing eighty tons of supplies into the city on the first
31 day, by December 31, 1948, the Air Force had flown the
32 100,000th flight of the airlift, and by the end of the
33 combined Anglo-American airlift, the British and
34 Americans delivered a total of 2,324,257 tons of food, fuel,
35 and supplies to the beleaguered city of Berlin; and

36 WHEREAS, The Air Force through its Physiological
37 Research Laboratory at Wright Field, Ohio, and later
38 through the Air Force Aerospace Medical Research
39 Laboratory, to name a few achievements, pioneered
40 research on the effects of acceleration on the living



1 organism, issued the first recommendation on the use of
2 a carbon monoxide detector for aircraft, carried out the
3 first aircraft flight using pressure breathing equipment at
4 an altitude of 42,000 feet, prepared the first military
5 service manuals concerning the high altitude health
6 hazards to aircrew, conducted the first high altitude
7 bailout with parachute deployment above 40,000 feet,
8 pioneered research on high-speed human ejection,
9 including participation in the first live in-flight ejection
10 seat test, introduced the first operational full-pressure
11 suit, developed the first Helmet Mounted Display, and
12 designed the first computerized graphics of
13 anthropometric data for use in aircraft design; and

14 WHEREAS, During the Vietnam War from 1962 to the
15 summer of 1973, the Air Force, though fighting resolutely
16 and courageously, experienced a decade of frustration
17 due to questionable political policies and decisionmaking,
18 and played the decisive role in forcing North Vietnam to
19 the peace table in 1973, and all told, the Air Force flew
20 5.25 million sorties over South Vietnam, North Vietnam,
21 northern and southern Laos, and Cambodia, losing 2,251
22 aircraft, 1,737 because of hostile action and 514 for
23 operational reasons, a ratio of roughly 0.4 losses per 1,000
24 sorties compared favorably with a 2.0 rate in Korea and
25 the 9.7 figure during World War II, beginning with the
26 deaths of Capt. Fergus C. Groves II, Capt. Robert D.
27 Larson, and SSgt. Milo B. Coghill in 1962, 1,738 officers
28 and enlisted men of the Air Force were killed in action in
29 Southeast Asia and another 766 died in accidents or from
30 illness; and

31 WHEREAS, Capt. Charles (Chuck) E. Yeager (later
32 General) made the first supersonic flight in the
33 rocket-powered Bell XS-1 (later redesignated the Bell
34 X-1) over Muroc Dry Lake, California on October 14,
35 1947, Maj. William (Pete) Knight flew the experimental
36 X-15A-2 rocket plane to Mach 6.72 or 4,520 mph on
37 October 3, 1967, the fastest speed ever for a manned
38 aircraft, Capt. Robert C. Helt flying a Lockheed SR-71A
39 "Blackbird" reconnaissance aircraft at Beale AFB,
40 California, set a world record for altitude in horizontal



1 flight (85,068.997 feet) on July 28, 1976, on the same day,
2 Capt. Eldon W. Joersz flying the same type of aircraft at
3 Beale AFB, California, set a world record for speed over
4 a straight course (2,193.16 mph), and, again, on the same
5 day, Maj. Adolphus H. Bledsoe flying the Lockheed
6 SR-71A “Blackbird” reconnaissance aircraft at Beale
7 AFB, California, set a world record for speed over a closed
8 circuit (2,092.294 mph); and

9 WHEREAS, On March 21, 1946, by order of
10 Headquarters, Army Air Forces, the Continental Air
11 Forces became the Strategic Air Command and from
12 1946 to 1991 the Strategic Air Command (SAC) operated
13 the intercontinental and nuclear strike forces of the
14 United States Air Force, assuming the crucial role of the
15 main force deterring potential aggression against the
16 United States and its allies by having our bombers on an
17 airborne alert readiness status 24 hours a day; and

18 WHEREAS, On March 15, 1950, the Joint Chiefs of Staff
19 gave the Air Force the exclusive responsibility for
20 strategic guided missiles resulting in the development of
21 the Atlas series intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM)
22 and booster for the U.S. Mercury manned flights, the
23 Titan I and II, the Titan II becoming a launch vehicle for
24 the Gemini Space Program, the Minuteman, our
25 principal solid-propelled deterrent missile weapon, the
26 Thor intermediate-range ballistic missile, and the Titan
27 III which became the standard space launch system for
28 our manned and unmanned booster missions, including
29 the USAF’s Manned Orbiting Laboratory (MOL), and
30 the future development of military space shuttle plans
31 and operations, communication satellites, early missile
32 warning systems, and the Navstar Global Positioning
33 System (GPS) for navigation; now, therefore, be it

34 *Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the*
35 *Assembly thereof concurring,* That the United States Air
36 Force is to be commended on its 50th anniversary as an
37 independent arm of the United States armed forces and
38 for its achievements in the development of our air
39 defenses, aircraft safety, aeromedical research, strategic
40 bombing, fighter combat, the missile and space programs,



1 and the many peacekeeping and relief missions the Air
2 Force has performed throughout the years; and be it
3 further

4 *Resolved*, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit a
5 copy of this resolution to the President of the United
6 States, the Secretary of the Air Force, the Chief of Staff
7 of the Air Force, the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the United
8 States Armed Forces and the California Members of the
9 United States Senate and the House of Representatives.

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