

Air Force Weather Heritage - Air Force Director of Weather



America's entry into World War I quickly pointed to the need for the re-establishment of a military weather service after a lapse of nearly twenty years. In July 1917, the Chief Signal Office created a Meteorological Section in the U. S. Army Signal Corps. Following the war, the Army Air Corps became the principal user of the Army's weather services. On January 28, 1937, the Secretary of War directed the Chief of the Air Corps to assume responsibility for the military weather service on July 1, 1937.

The Air Corps established the Weather Service on July 1, 1937, under the direction of the Chief of the Weather Section in the Office of the Chief of the Air Corps. The Weather Section controlled "fixed" weather stations while the General Headquarters Air Force, the combatant command, oversaw "mobile" weather units, and the theater commanders administered the five overseas weather stations. In 1942 the "fixed" and "mobile" weather units were united within the Army Air Forces Weather Service.

World War II generated much turmoil as the Air Staff attempted to best organize itself for conduct of the war. The Weather Section was disbanded in 1942 as the Directorate of Weather was formed to bring the Army Air Forces Weather Service under more effective centralized control. On March 29, 1943, the weather directorate was eliminated as the Air Staff again reorganized. The weather function was divided into five distinct offices within three of the new major Air Staff divisions.

Out of this division of effort, the Weather Unit of the Flight Control Service Command Section in the Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations, Commitments, and Requirements emerged as the coordinator of weather functions across the Air Staff. Validating what had already emerged, on July 10, 1943, the Army Air Forces established the Office of the Air Weather Officer, which was assumed by the Chief of the Weather Unit. On September 2, 1943, the several weather offices consolidated under the Chief of the Weather Division, in the Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations, Commitments, and Requirements.

On July 1, 1945, the Army Air Forces elevated the weather service to major air command status, abolished the Air Staff Weather Division, and dual-hatted the Chief of the Army Air Forces Weather Service as Staff Weather Officer to the Commanding General, Army Air Forces. This arrangement worked especially well after Air Weather Service moved its headquarters from Asheville, North Carolina, to the national capital region.

From 1946 to circa 1950, the responsibility for advising the Chief of Staff of the Air Force on meteorological matters resided with the Air Staff Air Weather Officer. However, when that separate function was disbanded, the duty fell again to the Air Weather Service commanding general to function as the meteorological advisor to the Chief of Staff of the Air Force. However, in June 1958, that convenience ended when the Air Force directed Air Weather Service, along with Military Air Transport Service to which the weather service was subordinated in 1948, to relocate its headquarters to Scott Air Force Base, Illinois.

The Air Staff established the Office of the Assistant for Weather, first in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and, following the 1963 Air Staff reorganization, in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Programs and Requirements. Other than for the increase to three weather officers in 1966, the Office of the Assistant for Weather remained relatively stable until 1978 when the next major reorganization of the Air Staff abolished the office.

With the restructuring of the Air Force during the early 1990s and the resultant divestiture of Air Weather Service, in 1991 the Air Staff established the Office of the Director of Weather in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans & Operations, redesignated Air & Space Operations in the 1997 Air Staff reorganization.

Air Staff Weather Officers

Chief of Weather Section

Capt Robert M. Losey
July 1937

Maj (later Col) Arthur F. Merewether
January 1940

Director of Weather

Col Don Z. Zimmerman
March 1942

Col (later Brig Gen) Harold H. Bassett
November 1942

Air Weather Officer

Col (later Brig Gen) Harold H. Bassett
July 1943

Chief of Weather Division

Col (later Brig Gen) Harold H. Bassett
September 1943

Col (later Lt Gen) Donald N. Yates
January 1945

Staff Weather Officer

Col (later Lt Gen) Donald N. Yates
July 1945

Air Weather Officer

Col (later Lt Gen) Thomas S. Moorman, Jr.
July 1946

Col (later Brig Gen) Norman C. Spencer, Jr.
July 1947

There was no Air Staff weather officer circa 1950-1958

Assistant for Weather

Col Richard M. Gill
May 1958

Col James T. Seaver, Jr.
July 1960

Lt Col (later Col) Douglas C. Purdy
September 1962

Col Nicholas H. Chavasse
February 1963

Col Louis A. Gazzaniga
November 1967

Col Mortimer F. Bennet
December 1972

Col William E. Cummins II
August 1975

There was no Air Staff weather officer circa 1978-1991

Director of Weather

Brig Gen John J. Kelly, Jr.
April 1991

Brig Gen Thomas J. Lennon
May 1994

Brig Gen Fred P. Lewis
July 1996

Brig Gen David L. Johnson
July 2000

Brig Gen Thomas E. Stickford
July 2003

HQ AFWA/HO

106 Peacekeeper Drive, Suite 2N3
Offutt AFB, Nebraska 68113-4039
(402) 232-8682 DSN 272-8682
E-Mail HO@AFWA.AF.MIL

Air Force Weather Heritage

Air Force Director of Weather

Air Force Weather History Office
Headquarters Air Force Weather Agency
Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska

May 2005