

# The Historical Development of the Air Force Materiel Command Emblem

By AFMC History Office



Paths to the Present  
**FLASHBACK**



**Official Air Force Materiel Command Emblem, approved 1992.**

The Air Force uses official unit emblems as visible, enduring symbols to promote *esprit de corps*, morale and a sense of heritage. Air Force Materiel Command (AFMC) personnel are familiar with the Command's emblem, but may have questions about its creation and what it represents. The AFMC emblem has very distinct elements that symbolize our heritage.

Ultramarine blue and Air Force yellow are the Air Force colors. Blue alludes to the sky, the primary theater of Air Force operations. Yellow refers to the sun and the excellence required of Air Force personnel. The wings are representative of the Air Force. The gear with the star and red disc is from the historical shoulder insignia approved on 16 June 1947. It is symbolic of the technical air missions performed by the Command in service to the advancement of air power for our country's continued freedom.

Our emblem traces its evolution to AFMC’s functional predecessors, the former Army Air Forces (AAF) Technical Service Command (AAFTSC) which was redesignated in 1946 as Air Materiel Command (AMC). In 1961, AMC became the Air Force Logistics Command (AFLC). During AMC’s early years it had no official emblem so AMC personnel, as did AAFTSC personnel, wore the basic Army Air Forces patch with a tab above.



Technical Service Command unofficial emblem.



AAFTSC tab above the Army Air Forces patch.

The origin of the shoulder–sleeve insignia for the AFMC emblem is traced back to a letter dated 16 June 1947.<sup>1</sup> Within this letter, Army Air Forces Brigadier General W. H. Middleswart, Chief, Military Planning Division, Office of the Quartermaster Corps, approved an earlier request for a shoulder – sleeve insignia from AMC. Lieutenant General N. F. Twining, AMC Commanding General,



Air Materiel Command tab above the Army Air Forces patch.

requested the shoulder sleeve insignia with the notion it would come to represent the traditions, achievements, and beliefs that were part of AMC’s history.

Stephen A. Saliga (pictured right with the AMC emblem), was an artist/designer for the AAF Research and Development program. He proposed a design for a unique shoulder – sleeve insignia, containing the elements which would evolve into today’s Command emblem.<sup>2</sup> He offered a design consisting of a blue disc, on which lay the white gear wheel. Situated inside the gear wheel is the original Air Corps star, which possesses a red center. Gold wings, with tips inverted, carry the gear wheel. The Air Force approved his design in 1947.



Stephen A. Saliga, best quality photo available

Saliga's design embraced many of the heraldic standards we use today. The AMC shoulder-sleeve insignia had blue and yellow colors, along with wings to represent of the Air Force. The gear, star, and red disc symbolized the technical air missions the Command performed in service to the advancement of air power to preserve the freedom of the United States.<sup>3</sup> In the coming years, the shoulder – sleeve patch would morph to become a fundamental centerpiece to the development of another important symbol of AMC, its official flag. From 1947 to 1953 the Command displayed the approved insignia, in the form of a disc, but did not have an official emblem in the current shield format.

Early January 1953, AMC received an invitation to display its official flag at the inauguration of President--elect Dwight D. Eisenhower on 20 January 1953. Unfortunately, AMC did not have an authorized flag. As a result, the Command sought and received approval to place an appropriate emblem on a flag for display. The design elements were the same as those that embodied AMC's shoulder – patch, but instead of using a disk, AMC would now use a shield. Months later, on 4 March 1953, AMC acquired an approved flag, on which it displayed its authorized emblem. On 1 April 1961, the Air Force redesignated AMC as Air Force Logistics Command (AFLC). In accordance with Air Force policy, the emblem remained the same with only the lettering in the scroll changing from Air Materiel Command to Air Force Logistics Command.<sup>4</sup>



Official Air Materiel Command emblem.



Official Air Force Logistics Command emblem.

Several decades passed, then on 10 January 1991, the Secretary of the Air Force announced plans for the Air Force to integrate its acquisition and logistics commands into a new command. The Air Force projected 1 July 1992 as the date when Air Force Systems Command (AFSC) and AFLC would inactivate, and the Air Force would form Air Force Materiel Command (AFMC).<sup>5</sup>

With respect to the USAF Historical Research Agency and the Office of the Air Force Historian, this integration had to overcome two salient obstacles: the suggested method to amalgamate the two organizations by the process of a merger and the reconciling guidance for emblems and logos found in AFR 900-3.

Early on, Air Force leadership proposed merging AFSC and AFLC instead of inactivating the two organizations. Colonel David Trettler, Acting Chief, Office of the Air Force Historian, argued this approach created confusion and disorder. As an alternative, he suggested using lineage as a deciding factor. The principle of unique lineage preserves the lineage of merging organizations, as it requires the line of ancestry to be “the unique, official, traceable record of organization actions peculiar to each Air Force organization; therefore, [...unique lineage...] is the sole determinant of an organization’s rights to history, honors, and emblems,” per AFI 84-105. This guidance proved beneficial, and allowed leadership to rack and stack the history of AFSC and AFLC. The exercise revealed that while Systems Command and Logistics Command had unique, important histories, one was not more important than the other. Therefore, Colonel Trettler’s argument convinced those with designs on a merger to adopt his approach, and in doing so, the Air Force inactivated AFSC and AFLC and activated a new organization, Air Force Materiel Command.<sup>6</sup>

While Colonel Trettler staved off a disastrous attempt to merge AFSC and AFLC, he and Colonel Elliott Converse, Commander USAF Historical Research Agency, still had to reconcile Air Force regulations on emblems and logos. AFR 900-3 provided guidance for the use and display of the Department of the Air Force Seal, organizational emblems, flags, guidons, streamers and automobile and aircraft plates.<sup>7</sup> It stipulated, “Emblems are approved for the exclusive use of the unit concerned.”<sup>8</sup> Essentially, this meant the original purpose of AFLC’s emblem was for AFLC’s use, to the exclusion of any other organization. Under normal circumstances Air Force Materiel Command would have developed a new, unique emblem; however, during planning, the Commanders of AFLC (General Charles C. McDonald) and AFSC (General Ronald W. Yates) personally requested the Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF) to authorize AFMC the use of the AFLC emblem. They based their request on its historical use by the former Air Materiel Command. General Merrill A. McPeak, CSAF, agreed during the Air Force's CORONA Conference 17-18 June 1991.

By continuing to use the AFLC emblem (not the lineage and honors), the Air Force recognizes the continuity of missions performed by AFMC today with those of the old Air Materiel Command, which began during World War II.

To overcome issues within AFR 900-3, the first AFMC Commander, General Yates, agreed the emblem would revert to AFLC if the command ever reactivated. Moreover, leaders agreed that AFMC (Provisional) could use this emblem on briefing slides and other related efforts toward activation. This agreement, created the conditions under which the new AFMC displayed its emblem. On 2 August 1991, the *Skywrighter* newspaper reported on AFMC's new emblem and on 9 August 1991, the AFLC newspaper made a similar report. Finally, on 12 March 1992, the Hilltop Times provided a deeper understanding of the historical development of the new AFMC emblem.<sup>9</sup> The Air Force approved the AFMC emblem on 1 July 1992.



Official Air Force Materiel Command emblem (color and OCP versions).

**End Notes:**

<sup>1</sup> Ltr (U), Adjutant General, AGO for Brig Gen W. H. Middleswart, QMC, Chief Military Planning Division, to Commanding General, AMC Wright Field, [Shoulder Sleeve Insignia for Air Materiel Command], 16 June 1947.

<sup>2</sup> Newspaper (U), The Wright Flyer, News to the general public, "Shoulder Patch Designer," I: 13 (ca. 2 August 1991) p 1. Mr Saliga was an Air Force veteran and retired Visual Arts Branch Chief for NASA. He was also an official in charge of Air Force exhibits at the National Museum of the United States Air Force (NMUSAF). While at the NMUSAF he created a display to coincide with the launch of NASA's Pioneer Program. As designed, the US Pioneer program of unmanned space missions was for planetary exploration. There were a number of missions, the most notable were Pioneer 10 and Pioneer 11, and these explored the outer planets while leaving our solar system. Both carried a golden plaque, depicting a man and a woman and information about the origin and the creators of the probes, should any extraterrestrials find them. It is noteworthy to know that Mr. Saliga, credited with naming the Pioneer Program. Air Force Orientation Group, Wright-Patterson AFB, as chief designer of Air Force exhibits.

<sup>3</sup> Ltr (U), Major J. K. Baliga, Asst Chief, Awards Branch Personnel Services Division Directorate of Military Personnel to Commander, Air Materiel Command, ATTN: MCAMP, WPAFB, ["Organizational Air Force Flag"], 1 November 1956.

<sup>4</sup> Memo (U), unknown author to unknown recipient [The Emblem Displayed on AMC and AMA Flags], ca. June 1953; Ltr (U), Preparing Office: AFLC/HO/Weber/77633 to all AF organizational units, ["Heraldry – Air Force Materiel Command"], ca. 1991.

<sup>5</sup> Ltr (U), Office of Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs) to the public and all AF organizational units, ["Air Force To Create New Materiel Command"], 1 January 1991.

<sup>6</sup> Ltr (U), Office of Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs) to the public and all AF organizational units, ["Air Force To Create New Materiel Command"], 1 January 1991.

<sup>7</sup> Ltr (U), Department of the Air Force, Headquarters United States Air Force, Bolling AFB to the AFLC/HO, ["Lineage, Air Force Materiel Command"], 1 January 1991.

<sup>8</sup> Ltr (U), Department of the Air Force, Headquarters United States Air Force, Bolling AFB to the AFLC/HO, ["Lineage, Air Force Materiel Command"], 1 January 1991.

<sup>9</sup> MFR AFMC/HO, "(U) Final Decision on AFMC Emblem," 25 June 1991; Ltr (U), USAF/CV Tattini to HQ USAFHRC/RS, ["Organizational Emblem – Air Force Materiel Command"], 5 July 1991; Newspaper (U), Skywrighter News to the general public, "'New' Emblem Reflects Heritage," ca. 2 August 1991; Newspaper (U), AFLC News to the general public, "'New' Emblem Reflects Heritage," 9 August 1991; Newspaper (U), Hilltop Times to the general public, "History, tradition included in new AFMC Emblem," 12 March 1992.



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