

## **A Brief History of the 509 Bomb Wing**

The 509 Bomb Wing traces its historical roots to its World War II ancestor, the 509 Composite Group, which was formed with one mission in mind: to drop the atomic bomb. The Group made history on August 6, 1945, when the B-29 "Enola Gay," piloted by Colonel Paul W. Tibbets, Jr., dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan. On August 9, 1945, the "Bockscar," piloted by Major Charles Sweeney visited the Japanese mainland and unleashed the atomic inferno upon Nagasaki.

In late 1945, the Group settled into Roswell Army Air Base, New Mexico, where it became the core of the newly formed Strategic Air Command (SAC). In August 1946, the renamed 509 Bombardment Group (BG) returned to the Pacific to participate in Operation Crossroads. During this operation, the B-29 Dave's Dream dropped an atomic bomb on an armada of obsolete and captured ships moored off the Bikini Atoll.

The 509 BG was assigned to the newly activated 509 Bombardment Wing (BW) at Roswell on November 17, 1947. The BW mission expanded in July 1948 when it received the 509 Air Refueling Squadron and its KB-29M, a modified B-29 which provided air-to-air refueling for bombers thus giving BW the ability to reach nearly any point on earth. In June 1950 the wing received the B-50 and four years later, the KC-97 aerial tanker replaced the aging KB-29M. The 509 BW entered the jet age in June 1955 when it received the B-47 Stratojet, the first all-jet bomber. However, by this time the 509 BG had been inactivated and its lineage and honors transferred to the 509 BW.

In August 1958, 509 BW moved its personnel and equipment to Pease AFB, New Hampshire. By 1965, the B-47s and the 509 BW were slated for retirement. SAC, however, decided to keep the bomb wing alive and equip it with B-52s and KC-135s. The wing's association with the B-52 included two major deployments to Andersen AFB, Guam, as part of the now famous Vietnam War ARC LIGHT missions. The wing began receiving the FB-111 flight bomber in December 1970 and would operate the aircraft for almost the next two decades.

In 1988 Pease AFB was one of several Air Force installations closed as part of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission recommendation. That same year Congressman Ike Skelton announced the B-2 Advanced Technology Bomber would be based at Whiteman AFB. On June 1, 1992, the AF disestablished SAC and the 509 became part of the newly created Air Combat Command (ACC). On September 30, 1990, the 509 BW was transferred to Whiteman AFB and in July 1993, accepted host responsibilities for the base. During this same month the wing received its first fixed-wing aircraft, a T-38 complete with a B-2 style paint job.

On December 17, 1993, the 90th anniversary of Orville Wright's historic first successful, controlled, heavier than air powered flight at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, the world's most sophisticated and advanced aircraft, the B-2 Advanced Technology Bomber, the Spirit of Missouri, arrived at Whiteman Air Force Base.

The 509 BW once again made history on September 17, 1996, when three B-2s dropped three inert GBU-36 weapons, a new, highly accurate Global Positioning System-Aided Munition, which used the GPS-Aided Targeting System. The following month, three B-2 visited the Nellis AFB, NV target range and released 16 2,000-pound GBU-36 bombs from an altitude of 40,000 feet. Amazed range personnel discovered all 16 projectiles hit close enough to their targets to be confirmed as 16 kills. This unprecedented display of airpower was quickly briefed to a gathering of senior AF operational planner who realized the key question was no longer, "how many planes are needed to destroy a target?" but rather "how many targets can one plane destroy?"

### **Operation ALLIED FORCE**

The B-2 first saw combat on March 23, 1999, during NATO operations in Serbia and Kosovo, the first sustained offensive combat air offensive conducted solely from US soil. Over a period of two months, the 509 generated 49 B-2 sorties flown directly from Missouri to Europe and return. Although the B-2s accounted for only 1 percent of all NATO sorties, the aircraft's all-weather, precision capability allowed it to deliver 11 percent of the munitions used in the air campaign. The missions lasted an average of 29 hours, demonstrating the global reach of the B-2.

### **Operation ENDURING FREEDOM**

Following the terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C. on September 11, 2001, the 509 quickly transitioned to a wartime mode by joining forces with the 314th Airlift Wing, Little Rock, Ark., and the Missouri Air National Guard's 139th Airlift Wing, St. Joseph, Mo., to send Missouri Task Force-1 to assist rescue efforts at the World Trade Center.

In October 2001 the B-2 bombers led America's strike force in Afghanistan, hitting the first targets in the country to "kick down the door" for the air campaign which followed. The bombers again flew from Missouri to their targets before landing at a forward location in the Indian Ocean to exchange crews which the engines continued to run. The combat missions lasted more than 40 hours, with the aircraft operating continuously for more than 70 hours without incident before returning to Whiteman.

After twice proving its ability to fly combat missions from Missouri, the wing stepped up efforts to deploy the B-2 from forward locations. By late 2002, the AF had completed special shelters for the aircraft at an overseas operating location.

The shelters provided a controlled climate similar to the facilities at Whiteman for specialized work on the aircraft skin in order to maintain its stealth characteristics. This ability to sustain operations from a forward location added a new dimension of flexibility to potential air campaigns.

### **Operation IRAQI FREEDOM**

The new shelters were put to use when the B-2 bombers again led a coalition air strike against the regime of Saddam Hussein, beginning on March 21, 2003. The famous “shock and awe” campaign saw unprecedented use of precision-guided munitions by the B-2 in an effort to minimize collateral damage and destroy key targets. The campaign also marked another milestone for the 509 BW, as B-2s flew combat missions from both Whiteman AFB and a forward deployed location simultaneously.

On December 17, 2003, the world celebrated the centennial of the first powered flight by the Wright Brothers. At the same time, the 509 Bomb Wing celebrated the 10-year anniversary of the Spirit of Missouri’s arrival at Whiteman. Only a decade after delivery, the B-2 was now a proven weapon system, a veteran of three campaigns and first-ever forward deployment. In recognition of the maturity of the system and the unit, the Air Force declared the B-2 Fully Operational Capable.

Since that day in 2003, the B-2’s forward presence has become a reality and proved that it can deliver combat airpower, any time and any place. The deployment to Guam, which began in February 2005, provided a continuous bomber presence in the Asia Pacific region and augmented Pacific Command’s establishment of a deterrent force. The 80-day tour, the longest in the bomber’s 13-year history, also marked the first B-2 deployment since the aircraft was declared fully operational.

### **COMMANDERS**

509 Composite Group/Bombardment Group  
(1944-1952)

Name	Date
Col Paul W. Tibbets, Jr.	17 Dec 44
Col William H. Blanchard	22 Jan 46

(Renamed: 509 Bombardment Group, 10 Jul 46)

Col John D. Ryan	15 Sep 48
Col William H. Blanchard	21 Jul 51-16 Jun 52

## 509 Bombardment Wing<sup>1</sup>

Col William H. Blanchard	17 Nov 47
Col John D. Ryan	1 Aug 48
Brig Gen Clarence S. Irvine	15 Sep 48
Brig Gen Hunter Harris, Jr.	15 Jan 50
Col John D. Ryan	1 Feb 51
Col Berton H. Burns	19 Jul 51
Col William H. Blanchard	7 Apr 52
Col Wilson R. Wood	11 Feb 53
Col Clifford F. Macomber	16 May 55
Col Brooks A. Lawhon	11 Feb 59
Col Donald G. McPherson	1 Jun 60
Col Edward D. Edwards	10 Mar 62
Col James O. Frankosky	21 Oct 63
Col Madison S. McBrayer	23 Jan 67
Col Joseph V. Adams, Jr.	28 Mar 68
Col Robert E. Blauw	1 Oct 68
Col Winston E. Moore	11 Feb 69
Col John M. Parker	22 Feb 72
Col Alan L. Hichew	14 Jun 72
Col Isaac M. Glass	26 Mar 73
Col Paul W. Maul	21 Aug 73
Col Richard A. Burpee	26 Feb 74
Col Frederic E. Roth	1 Apr 75
Col Guy L. Hecker, Jr.	3 May 76
Col James M. Greer	11 Jan 78
Col Samuel H. Swart, Jr.	4 May 79
Col John A. Dramesi	22 Jun 81
Col Trevor A. Hammond	21 Dec 81
Col Denis L. Walsh	10 May 83
Col Frederick A. Fiedler	13 Jun 84
Col Robert J. McCracken	14 May 85
Col Thad A. Wolfe	27 Feb 87
Col Orin L. Godsey	25 Feb 88
Col William C. Brooks	28 Feb 90-30 Sep 90

(Unit placed in non-operational status on 30 Sep 90 and  
redesignated as 509 Bomb Wing on 1 Sep 91)

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<sup>1</sup>This list does not include those individuals who were in temporary command while the wing commander was away from the unit for an extended period.

509 Bomb Wing

Brig Gen Ronald C. Marcotte	1 Apr 93
Brig Gen Thomas B. Goslin, Jr.	26 Mar 96
Brig Gen Leroy Barnidge, Jr.	8 Jun 98
Col Anthony F. Przybyslawski	7 Jun 00
Brig Gen Douglas L. Raaberg	22 Apr 02
Col Christopher D. Miller	24 Apr 04
Col Gregory A. Biscone	1 May 06
Col Garrett Harencak	14 Sept 07

Detachment 509, 100 AD

Col John J. Donnelly	29 Jun 90
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(Unit Inactivated on 26 Jul 91)

Detachment 509, 351 MW

Col John J. Donnelly	26 Jul 91
Lt Col Thomas R. McCleary	18 Aug 92

(Unit Inactivated on 1 Apr 93)

**HONORS**

**Bestowed Honors:** Authorized to display honors earned by the 509 Operations Group prior to 17 Nov 1947. **Service Streamers:** None. **Campaign Streamers,** World War II Asiatic Pacific Theater: Air Offensive, Japan, 1942-1945; Eastern Mandates, 1943-1944; Western Pacific, 1944-1945. **Decorations:** 1 Jul-14 Aug 1945 (w/"V" Device).

**Service Streamers**

None

**Campaign Streamers**

None

**Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

None

## **Decorations**

### **Air Force Outstanding Unit Award**

1 Apr–1 Oct 1968

1 Jul 1981–30 Jun 1982

1 Jul 1982–30 Jun 1984

1 Jun 1995–31 May 1997

1 Jun 1997–31 May 1999

1 Jun 1999–31 May 2001

1 Jun 2003–31 May 2005

**Emblem:**



**Blazon:** Or, in base a label Gules of three, surmounted by an atomic cloud Proper, between a pair of wings Azure; all with a diminished bordure of the first. Attached below the shield a White scroll edged with a narrow Yellow border and inscribed “DEFENSOR VINDE” in Blue letters.

**Significance:** The 509 Bombardment Wing’s emblem is rich in tradition. Each symbol on the shield represents some part of the past. The Air Force wings represent the branch of service but are not in the familiar outstretched position. When the ancient Greeks approached a stranger, they raised their arms with palms outward to show they were carrying no weapons – a sign of peace. The 509 obtained special permission to display the wings in this configuration to show that it, too, comes in peace. The atomic cloud burst represents two things: that the 509 is the only unit to ever drop atomic bombs in wartime and that it still uses atomic power as a deterrent to war and defender of peace. Finally, the eldest son symbol (the red tripod) shows that the wing is the oldest atomic trained military unit in the world.

**Motto:** Defensor Vindex (Defender Avenger), approved 10 July 1952.