

## The Smithsonian and the *Enola Gay*

From the Air Force Association's *Enola Gay* Controversy archive collection  
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## The Crew

### The Commander

Paul Warfield Tibbets was born in Quincy, Ill., Feb. 23, 1915. He joined the Army in 1937, became an aviation cadet, and earned his wings and commission in 1938. In the early years of World War II, Tibbets was an outstanding B-17 pilot and squadron commander in Europe. He was chosen to be a test pilot for the B-29, then in development. In September 1944, Lt. Col. Tibbets was picked to organize and train a unit to deliver the atomic bomb. He was promoted to colonel in January 1945.

In May 1945, Tibbets took his unit, the 509th Composite Group, to Tinian, from where it flew the atomic bomb missions against Japan in August.

After the war, Tibbets stayed in the Air Force. One of his assignments was heading the bomber requirements branch at the Pentagon during the development of the B-47 jet bomber. He retired as a brigadier general in 1966. In civilian life, he rose to chairman of the board of Executive Jet Aviation in Columbus, Ohio, retiring from that post in 1986.

At the dedication of the National Air and Space Museum's Udvar-Hazy Center in December 2003, the 88-year-old Tibbets stood in front of the restored *Enola Gay*, shaking hands and receiving the high regard of visitors. (*Col. Paul Tibbets in front of the Enola Gay—US Air Force photo*)

### The *Enola Gay* Crew

#### Airplane Crew

Col. Paul W. Tibbets	509th commander and pilot
Capt. Robert A. Lewis	co-pilot
Maj. Thomas W. Ferebee	bombardier
Capt. Theodore J. Van Kirk	navigator
SSgt. Wyatt E. Duzenbury	flight engineer
Sgt. Robert H. Shumard	assistant flight engineer
Pfc Richard H. Nelson	radio operator
SSgt George R. Caron	tail gunner
Sgt. Joseph S. Stiborik	radar operator
Navy Capt. William "Deak" Parsons	weaponer & ordnance officer
Lt. Jacob Beser	radar countermeasures officer
Lt. Morris R. Jeppson	assistant weaponer

#### Ground Crew

TSgt. Walter F. McCaleb	
Sgt. Leonard W. Markley	
Sgt. Leonard W. Markley	
Sgt. Jean S. Cooper	
Cpl. Frank D. Duffy	
Cpl. John E. Jackson	
Cpl. Harold R. Olson	
Pfc. John J. Lesniewski	
Lt. Col. John Porter	maintenance officer



### The names on the fuselage

The *Enola Gay*, on display at the National Air and Space Museum's Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center in Chantilly, Va., bears the same markings that it did in 1945, including the names of the flight crew from the historic mission, stenciled below the copilot's window. But whereas 12 men were aboard the aircraft for the Hiroshima mission, only nine names are painted on the fuselage.

Three officers—Navy Capt. Deak Parsons, the weaponeer, Lt. Morris Jeppson, the assistant weaponeer, and Lt. Jacob Beser, the radar countermeasures officer—are not on the list. They were mission specialists rather than flight crew members.

### Crew notes

- Four members of the *Enola Gay* crew had been on Tibbets's B-17 crew in Europe: bombardier Ferebee (called by Tibbets "the best bombardier who ever looked through the eyepiece of a Norden bombsight") navigator Van Kirk, tail gunner Caron, and flight engineer Duzenbury.
- Among others personally recruited by Tibbets for the 509th were the *Enola Gay* copilot, Lewis, radar specialist Beser, and four members of the *Bockscar* flight crew: aircraft commander Chuck Sweeney, copilot Don Albury, bombardier Kermit Behan, and navigator James Van Pelt.
- Lt. Jacob Beser was the radar countermeasures officer on the *Enola Gay* at Hiroshima and on *Bockscar* at Nagasaki, the only person aboard the bombing aircraft on both atomic bomb missions.

### The *Bockscar* Crew



Maj. Charles W. Sweeney	aircraft commander
Maj. Charles W. Sweeney	copilot
Capt. James F. Van Pelt	navigator
Capt. Kermit K. Beahan	bombardier
2nd Lt. Fred J. Olivi	observer
MSgt John D. Kuharek	flight engineer
Sgt. Raymond G. Gallagher	asst. engineer/scanner
Sgt. Abe M. Spitzer	radio operator
SSgt. Edward K. Buckley	radar operator
SSgt. Albert T. Dehart	tail gunner
Lt. Jacob Beser	radar countermeasures officer
Navy Cdr. Frederick C. Ashworth	weaponeer
Lt. Philip Barnes	asst. weaponeer

(Bockscar crew photo taken Aug. 11, 1945, two days after the Nagasaki mission. Note there is no nose art on the aircraft.—US Air Force photo)

### The 509th Composite Group/509th Bomb Wing

The unit that dropped the atomic bombs was activated at Wendover Army Air Field, Utah, Dec. 17, 1944. The crews trained with practice bombs called "pumpkins" because of their size and shape, which was the same as "Fat Man" atomic bomb.

The 509th deployed to Tinian in the Marianas in May 1945. It was a self-contained unit, with personnel strength of about 1,770. It consisted of the 393rd Bomber Squadron, 320th Troop Carrier Squadron,

390th Air Service Group, 603rd Air Engineering Squadron, 1027th Air Materiel Squadron, 1395th Military Police Company, and 1st Ordnance Squadron (in charge of handling the atomic bombs).

After the war, the group returned to the United States and was assigned to Roswell Army Air Base, N.M. It was redesignated the 509th Bombardment Group in 1946 and the 509th Bombardment Wing in 1947. The heritage was preserved in various locations and missions through the years.

In the 1990s, the Air Force assigned all of its B-2 bombers to 509th, based at Whiteman AFB, Mo. At Whiteman, Tibbets was able to visit with pride his grandson, Capt. Paul W. Tibbets IV, a B-2 pilot and commander of the 509th Bomb Group.

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### Further reading

*509th Composite Group Pictorial Album*, Tinian, 1945. Reprinted by Mid Coast Marketing, 2002.

**SWEENEY, Maj. Gen. Charles W., with James A. Antonucci and Marion K. Antonucci.** *War's End*. Avon Books, 1997.

**THOMAS, Gordon and Max Morgan-Witts.** *Enola Gay: Mission to Hiroshima*. Dallas Watson, 1995.

**TIBBETS, Paul W.** *Return of the Enola Gay*. Mid Coast Marketing, 1998.

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### Attachments

1. USAF biography for Brig. Gen. Paul W. Tibbets Jr.
2. USAF fact sheet on 509th Bomb Wing



# BIOGRAPHY



## UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

### BRIGADIER GENERAL PAUL W. TIBBETS JR.

Retired Sep. 1, 1966. Died Nov. 1, 2007.

General Tibbets was born in Quincy, Ill., in 1915. He graduated from Western Military Academy in Alton, Ill., in 1933, and later attended the University of Florida and the University of Cincinnati where he majored in chemistry.

He entered the Army Air Corps on Feb. 25, 1937 at Fort Thomas, Ky. Immediately thereafter, he entered flying school at Randolph Field, and in February 1938 graduated from pilot school at Kelly Field, Texas. His first assignment was to Flight B, 16th Observation Squadron, Lawson Field, Fort Benning, Ga.

In April 1941, General Tibbets became group engineering officer of the 3d Attack Group, Hunter Air Force Base, Savannah, Ga. On Dec. 4, 1941, he received orders to join the 29th Bomb Group at MacDill Field; however, before reporting to MacDill he was placed on temporary duty to take 21 B-18s to Pope Field, Fort Bragg, N.C. to form an anti-submarine patrol. In February 1942, General Tibbets actually reported for duty with the 29th Bomb Group at MacDill as engineering officer. After three weeks, he was made commander of the 340th Bomb Squadron, 97th Bomb Group, which was formed from a cadre taken from the 29th Bomb Group. From February until June 1942, he was in training for an overseas movement.

In June 1942, he arrived in England and immediately went into combat operations, flying 25 combat missions in B-17s, including the first American Flying Fortress raid against occupied Europe. In October 1942, the general was given the special assignment of flying General Mark Clark to make his rendezvous with the French in preparation for the invasion of North Africa. Upon his return from this trip, he was retained to ferry General Eisenhower and his staff to Gibraltar on the night of the invasion. General Tibbets then flew General Clark to Algiers where General Clark took control of the invasion forces.

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For the next 30 days, General Tibbets conducted bombardment missions in the North African area under the direct control of the British, pending build-up of the American bomber forces.

He led the first heavy bombardment mission in support of the invasion of North Africa. In November 1942,



General Tibbets reverted to control of the Twelfth Air Force and, with the arrival of the remainder of the 97th Bomb Group, resumed normal combat operations in the Sahara Desert area. In January 1943, he was reassigned to the Twelfth Air Force Headquarters at Algiers as assistant operations officer in charge of bomber operations under Colonel (now General) Lauris Norstad.

In March 1943, he was returned to the United States for the purpose of participating in the B-29 program. This flight test work with the Boeing factory and Air Materiel Command continued until March 1944 at which time General Tibbets was transferred to Grand Island, Neb., as director of operations under General Frank Armstrong who started a B-29 instructor transition school. In September 1944, he was assigned to the Atomic Bomb Project as the Air Force officer in charge of developing an organization capable of employing the atomic bomb in combat operations, and mating the development of the bomb to the airplane. In this function, he was also charged with the flight test development of the atomic bomb itself. As these developments progressed, General Tibbets was further charged with the tactical training of bombardment organizations and their deployment into the combat theater of operations. He flew the first atomic bomb mission against enemy forces, dropping the bomb on Hiroshima.

With the end of the war in 1945, General Tibbets' organization was transferred to what is now Walker Air Force Base, Roswell, N.M., and remained there until August 1946. It was during this period that the Bikini Bomb Project took place, with General Tibbets participating as technical adviser to the Air Force commander. He was then assigned to the Air Command and Staff School at Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala., from which he graduated in 1947. His next assignment was to the Directorate of Requirements, Headquarters U.S. Air Force, where he subsequently served as director of the Strategic Air Division.

In June 1950, General Tibbets was assigned to Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., and from July 1950 until February 1952, was B-47 project officer at the Boeing Airplane Company, Wichita, Kan., where the service test of the B-47 to determine its operational suitability took place. From February 1952 until August 1954, he was commander of the Proof Test Division at Eglin Air Force Base. The general then received orders assigning him to the Air War College at Maxwell Air Force Base, from which he graduated in June 1955. His next assignment was director of war plans, Allied Air Forces in Central Europe at Fontainebleau, France. In February 1956, he returned to the United States as commander, 308th Bomb Wing, Hunter Air Force Base, Ga.

In January 1958, General Tibbets was reassigned to MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., where he assumed command of the 6th Air Division. He is a rated command pilot.

In February 1961, General Tibbets was assigned to Headquarters U.S. Air Force as director of management analysis (redesignated as Directorate of Status Analysis effective March 27, 1961).

In July 1962, General Tibbets was assigned to the Joint Staff, Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, as deputy director for operations, J-3. In June 1963, with reorganization of the Operations Directorate, Joint Staff, General Tibbets became deputy director for the National Military Command System.

(Up to date as of May 1964)



# FACT SHEET

## U.S. Air Force Fact Sheet 509TH BOMB WING

### Mission

The 509th Bomb Wing is part of Air Force Global Strike Command as well as the host wing at Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo. The bomb wing and its fleet of B-2 Spirit bombers serve as part of the Air Force's conventional and strategic combat force. The men and women of the wing are capable of flying anywhere around the world from home station and delivering a wide range of precision-guided munitions.

### Personnel

The bomb wing includes a total force of approximately 5,500 military members as well as 2,800 civilian employees.

### Organizations and Functions

The bomb wing manages the 509th Operations Group, 509th Maintenance Group, 509th Mission Support Group and 509th Medical Group, which handle various aspects of the wing's mission. As the host unit at Whiteman, the 509th BW also controls the special staff functions of the inspector general, wing plans, the chaplain, staff judge advocate, arms control, command post, public affairs, history and safety. The 509th Comptroller Squadron also reports directly to the 509th BW commander



AF File Image

### History highlights

The wing's history dates back to its World War II ancestor, the 509th Composite Group. During the hectic days of that bygone era, the Army Air Forces formed the group with only one mission in mind: to drop the atomic bomb. Led by Col. Paul W. Tibbets Jr., the group trained hard for its unique task.

On Aug. 6, 1945, the 509th fulfilled its destiny when the B-29 "Enola Gay" piloted by Colonel Tibbets dropped the first atomic bomb and destroyed Hiroshima, Japan. On Aug. 9, 1945, the group once again visited the Japanese mainland and unleashed the atomic inferno on another city, Nagasaki. Within days, the Japanese sued for peace and World War II ended.

Upon returning to the United States in late 1945, the group settled into Roswell Army Air Base, N.M. Shortly afterward, it became the core of the newly created Strategic Air Command. In August 1946, the now-called 509th Bombardment Group again traveled to the Pacific where it participated in Operation Crossroads. During this special maneuver, the group dropped an atomic bomb on an armada of obsolete and captured naval vessels moored off the Bikini Atoll.

On Nov. 17, 1947, SAC activated the 509th Bombardment Wing at Roswell and assigned the group to the wing. Within five years, however, the Air Force inactivated the 509 BG while turning over the lineage and



honors of the group to the wing.

The wing pioneered a new concept in July 1948 when it received the 509th Air Refueling Squadron, one of the first two such units ever created, and its air refueling KB-29Ms. With the addition of tankers, the 509th's bombers could reach virtually any point on earth.

The dawning of a new decade brought more changes to the wing. In June 1950, it began receiving B-50s. In January 1954, the KC-97 aerial tanker replaced the aging KB-29Ms. The wing entered the jet age in June 1955 when it received the first all-jet bomber: the B-47.

The wing also received a new home toward the end of the 1950s when it moved its people and equipment to Pease AFB, N.H., in August 1958. There, the wing continued to function as an integral part of SAC. By 1965, SAC scheduled the B-47s for retirement. Unfortunately, this retirement also included the 509th. Fate intervened, however, as SAC decided to keep the 509th alive and equipped it with B-52s and KC-135s. Thus, the wing received its first B-52 and KC-135 in March 1966.

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. In April 1968 and again in April 1969, the wing began six-month ventures in the Western Pacific.

During the last deployment, SAC informed the 509th that the wing would swap its B-52s for FB-111As. Accordingly, the wing began receiving the formidable fighter-bomber in December 1970.

Over the next two decades, little changed for the 509th BW as it became SAC's fighter-bomber experts. However, a decision by the Department of Defense in 1988 to close Pease created major changes for the famous 509th.

Headquarters SAC decreed that the 509th would not inactivate but transfer to Whiteman AFB to become the first B-2 Stealth bomber unit. As such, the wing moved to Whiteman on Sept. 30, 1990, without people and equipment. That same day also saw most of the wing's squadrons inactivated.

This took place since the wing was expected to remain non-operational until the arrival of the first B-2 drew nearer. While the wing waited for that date, several more changes occurred. On Sept. 1, 1991, SAC changed the wing's name to 509th Bomb Wing. A second change occurred on June 1, 1992, when the Air Force disestablished SAC. Concurrently, the 509th became part of the newly created Air Combat Command.

The wing's hibernation at Whiteman lasted more than two years. However, on April 1, 1993, the Air Force returned the 509th to operational status as people were again assigned to the wing. The wing grew larger on July 1, 1993, when it accepted host responsibilities for Whiteman from the 351st Missile Wing.

On July 20, 1993, the 509th took another important step when it received its first fixed-wing aircraft in almost three years: a T-38 complete with a B-2-style paint job. After this, the wing's attentions turned to the arrival of the first B-2.

For the next several months, this passion consumed all 509ers. Finally, on Dec. 17, 1993, the first operational bomber, named "The Spirit of Missouri," touched down on the Whiteman runway. Not only did the date mark the 90th anniversary of the first powered flight by the Wright Brothers, it also fell on the 49th anniversary of the original activation of the 509th Composite Group. As more B-2s arrive at Whiteman, the 509th continues to pioneer the operation of this unique aircraft.

Some significant firsts associated with the B-2 include:

- The first operational delivery of munitions by the Spirit of California on Sept. 23, 1994;
- First B-2 appearance at a Red Flag exercise on Jan. 20, 1995;
- First B-2 flight to Europe by the Spirit of Missouri, June 10-11 1995;
- The first B-2 mission over the Pacific by the Spirit of Kansas, on Sept. 1, 1995; and
- The longest B-2 flight to date by the Spirit of Washington, a 25-hour, non-stop, round-trip flight to Santiago, Chile, on March 10, 1996.
- Three B-2s successfully executed the first live drops of the GAM on Oct. 8, 1996, at the Nellis range complex. The bombers scored 16 kills with 16 munitions.
- The first operational combat mission was flown on the first night of Operation Allied Force, March 24,

1999.

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-- During Operation Allied Force the B-2s flew less than 1 percent of the combat sorties but dropped 11 percent of the total bombs.

On Feb. 1, 2010, the bomb wing officially transferred from Air Combat Command to the Air Force's newest major command focused on the nation's nuclear enterprise, Air Force Global Strike Command.

Current as of July 2010