



## Contents

## Commitment to Environmental Excellence - Contrails

[Introduction](#)

## Background

[Background](#)

[Contrail](#)

[Wingtip  
Condensation  
Trails](#)

[Exhaust Gases](#)

[Chaff and Flares](#)

[Aerial Spraying](#)

[Cloud Seeding  
and Fire  
Suppression](#)

[In-flight  
Emergency Fuel  
Release](#)

[The "Chemtrail"  
Hoax](#)

[Link to Related  
Sites](#)

[References](#)

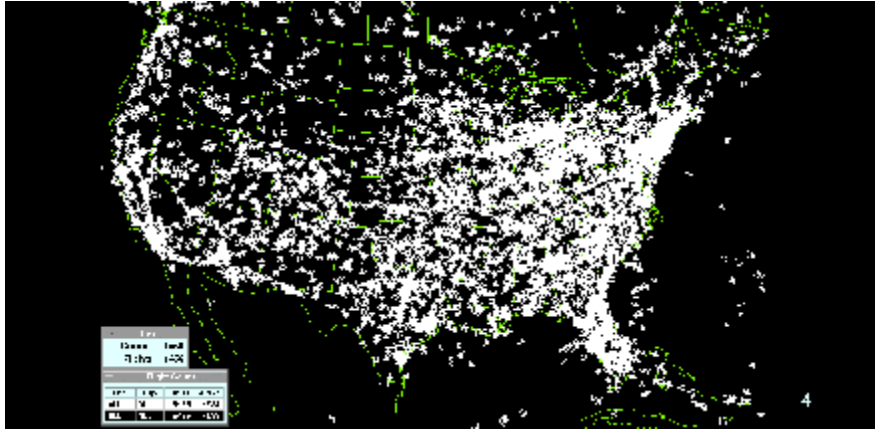
[Layman's  
Library](#)

The US military has played a significant historical role in the development of aircraft and space launch vehicles, airspace management, environmental management, and public land management procedures. In the earliest years of aviation and rocketry and up through the late 1980s, the military owned and operated the majority of the United States aircraft and space launch fleets. Since the end of the 1991 Persian Gulf War, the USAF has been in a drawdown and restructuring mode. In 1990, there were approximately 9,059 aircraft in the Air Force inventory and approximately 6,126 aircraft in 2000. Of the approximately 6,228 aircraft in the USAF fleet in 1998, 4,447 were assigned to active duty Air Force installations and 1,781 were assigned to Guard and Reserve units, usually co-located at municipal airports. For a more detailed discussion on the changing nature of military and civilian aviation, see [A Review Of Military Aviation And Space Issues](#).

In the 1980s, commercial airline passenger service and satellite telecommunication growth resulted in an increase in civil aircraft and space booster fleets with numbers almost equivalent to the military (total of all services). Future projections for the next 15 years indicate that commercial aviation and space launch fleets will become larger than the military fleet.

The civil aviation fleet is projected to grow from 12,281 aircraft in 1997 to 25,998 in 2017. The assumptions on growth rates and types of aircraft are dependent on many changes in air traffic control, airspace management, and economic growth, but the general trend for civil aviation is increasing capacity by adding more frequent flights with smaller regional jets.

Aircraft fly along specific routes and corridors called the National Airspace System (NAS). The NAS is comprised of the air navigation routes and infrastructure across the United States that supports approximately 60,000 daily flights of commercial, general aviation, and military flights. The FAA is the lead federal agency charged with the operations and maintenance of the NAS. They manage over 5-million square miles of land routes and 23-million square miles of oceanic routes. The FAA must balance the safety and efficiency of the NAS on a daily basis. Many agencies and organizations are involved with the National Airspace System for a variety of purposes: civil air carriers, general aviation, military services, and research organizations. A typical snapshot of daily aircraft operations in the United States is shown below.



In the last ten years, there has been tremendous growth in the number of aircraft operated around the world. The majority of aircraft seen overhead are civilian flights, particularly near large cities. For a more detailed description of the NAS, see [A Review Of Military Aviation And Space Issues: Aerospace And Airspace \(Part II\)](#).

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[Top>](#)