

FAA's Seal

Origins of U.S. Heraldic Symbols

Heraldic and other military symbols have been used by the military forces as well as other organizational elements of the government since the beginning of the Revolutionary War. However, until 1919, there was no coordinated, overall military symbolism program. In that year, within the War Department General Staff, an office was delegated the responsibility for the coordination and approval of coats of arms and insignia of certain Army organizations. In 1924, formal staff responsibility for specific military designs was delegated to The Quartermaster General. As the needs for symbolism by the military services and the national government expanded, the scope of the services furnished by The Quartermaster General's Office evolved into a sizable heraldic program. The acceleration of activities brought about by World War II, the expansion of the Army, and subsequent increase of interest in symbolism, contributed to the growth of the program.

After World War II, the need for coats of arms, decorations, official seals, and organizational emblems began to expand from the military to other Government sectors. In 1949, the Munitions Board, acting for the Army, Navy and Air Force, directed the Army to provide heraldic services to all military departments. To aid nonmilitary federal organizations interested in heraldic services, President Eisenhower signed Public Law 85-263 on September 2, 1957, which allowed the Secretary of the Army to provide these services to all branches of the Federal Government. Heraldic services included design and development of departmental seals and flags.

Creation of FAA's Seal



The Federal Aviation Act of 1958, which established the Federal Aviation Agency, also directed the new agency adopt an official seal (section 301(c)). In early 1959, FAA Assistant Administrator for Management Services, Arvin Basnight, sent a request to the Office of the Adjutant General in the U.S. Army's Office of Quartermaster General for help designing FAA's seal. The Army provided several designs for FAA's approval, and after several modifications, the agency accepted a design on July 21, 1959. The design included the world in a circle, which denoted the immense space covered in flight; a compass rose with a fleur de lis symbol on top, which denoted the direction of flight; and a wing on the compass, which represented speed in flight.

With the design approved, FAA sent it to the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts for approval. The Commission, established in 1910 by Act of Congress, is charged with giving expert advice to the President, Congress, and the heads of departments and agencies of the Federal and District of

Columbia governments on matters of design and aesthetics. Among the Commission's many roles are approvals of designs done by the Army's Quartermaster Corps' Heraldic Branch. The Commission approved the FAA design on July 31, 1959.

FAA's first employee publication, *Fly-By*, reported that Administrator Elwood "Pete" Quesada formally adopted the official seal on October 29, 1959. According to the FAA 1959 annual report, "the seal, which is round and of simple design, has a gold border and a blue background. The words 'Federal Aviation Agency' and 'United States of America' are set around the edge in gold. These two phrases are separated by stars. In the center a winged, gold four-pointed compass rose is superimposed on a light green globe. The seal . . . depicts the Agency's national and international mission and responsibility in aviation . . ." To make the seal a matter of public record, the FAA published it in the *Federal Register* on November 5, 1959 [F.R. Doc. 59-9295].



The seal has undergone only minor changes through the years. When FAA became a modal administration under the Department of Transportation in 1967, the wording on FAA's seal changed accordingly. For a year's time in 2003-2004, FAA adopted a special 100th anniversary of flight logo. In September 2006 when FAA issued its new branding policy, FAA slightly altered the seal by removing the fleur de lis from the top of the compass.

