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Wright Brothers Day, 1981

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Since the dawn of civilization, men have dreamed of conquering the air. History is filled with tales of those who tried to emulate the flight of birds, but not until the early days of this century did that dream become a reality.

On December 17, 1903, near Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, the age of aviation began when Orville and Wilbur Wright launched man's first successful flight in a mechanically propelled aircraft. Orville Wright remained aloft in a flying machine for just 12 seconds, covering a distance of only 120 feet, but the inventiveness and daring of these two brothers changed our lives for all time.

Today, aviation is vital to the American way of life and to our economy and national defense. The air transportation network enables us to travel for business or pleasure with unequalled speed and convenience while providing for the rapid and efficient transfer of our nation's commercial goods.

The pioneering spirit exhibited by the Wright brothers and fostered by our system of free enterprise has kept America in the forefront of innovative aeronautics—a spirit dramatically demonstrated again this year with the two successful missions of the United States Space Shuttle COLUMBIA. As it glided to perfect landings in the California desert, COLUMBIA gave us pause to reflect on another triumph in American aviation and on the creative genius of the American people.

To commemorate the historic achievements of the Wright brothers, the Congress, by a joint resolution of December 17, 1963 (77 Stat. 402, 36 U.S.C. 169), designated the seventeenth day of December of each year as Wright Brothers Day and requested the President to issue a proclamation annually inviting Americans to observe that day with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby call upon the people of this nation and their local and national governmental officials to observe Wright Brothers Day, December 17, 1981, with appropriate ceremonies and activities, both to recall the accomplishments of the Wright brothers and to provide stimulus to aviation in this country and throughout the world.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 14th day of Dec., in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-one, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and sixth.

Ronald Reagan