

# The Columbine

The Columbine (actually Columbine II) was the original Air Force One. Over Richmond, Virginia in 1954, Eastern Airlines Flight 8610, a commercial flight, shared the same air space with Air Force Flight 8610, which was carrying President Dwight D. Eisenhower at the time, prompting the adoption of the unique call sign Air Force One whenever the President was on board any aircraft.

It was built as a C-121A at Burbank, California and bailed to Lockheed to support the Lockheed Air Service International maintenance facility at Keflavík, Iceland. Early in 1953 this aircraft was converted to VC-121A-LO standard for use by President-elect Dwight D. Eisenhower until replaced by VC-121E-LO Columbine III (AF Ser. No. 53-7885), operated by the 1254th Air Transport Squadron of the United States Air Force (USAF).

After being replaced, Columbine II continued in service with the United States Air Force until retired to Davis–Monthan Air Force Base for storage during the late 1960s. The aircraft was sold as part of a package lot to Mel Christler, a Wyoming businessman who owned a crop-dusting service, and was made airworthy in 1989 and flown to Abilene, Kansas for Eisenhower's 100th birthday celebration and to an air show at Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland. In 2003, it was flown to Marana Airport, AZ.

The owner was considering cutting the aircraft up as scrap when the Smithsonian Institution, during a research project, contacted the owner and informed him that 48-0610 was, in fact, a former presidential aircraft. The owner then, in the hope of finding a new owner willing to display the aircraft, attempted to sell the plane at auction, but it was not sold.

Columbine II was eventually purchased and moved from Arizona to Bridgewater, Virginia in March 2016 for restoration by Dynamic Aviation. The purchase price has not been disclosed but the purchaser, Karl D. Stoltzfus Sr., founder of Dynamic Aviation, has said it was less than \$1.5 million. Dynamic Aviation mechanics did significant work on the plane in Arizona in preparation for its flight to Virginia. The restoration is expected to take several years to complete. [[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Columbine\\_II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Columbine_II)]

