

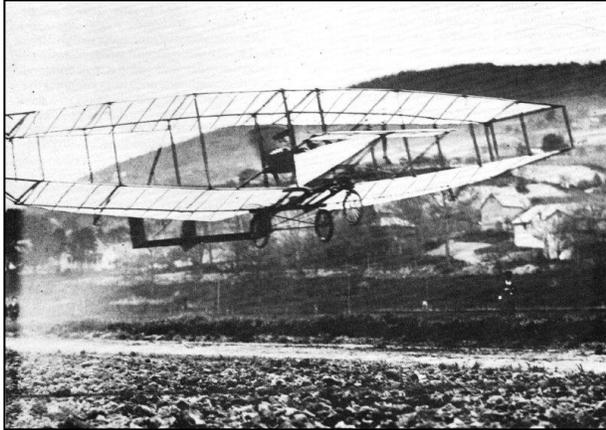


U.S. AIR FORCE

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19 May 1908 Lt. Thomas E. Selfridge became the **first Army officer to solo** in an airplane. Selfridge flew Dr. Alexander Graham Bell's second Aerial Experiment Association plane – the



White Wing (left) designed by F. W. “Casey” Baldwin. It had hinged ailerons controlled by wires attached to the pilot's harness. When the plane's wings tipped one way, the pilot leaned the other way, pulling the flaps, and leveling the plane.

Four months later, on 17 September 1908, Lt Selfridge was killed while riding as an observer with Orville Wright on a flight at Fort Myer, Virginia. (Portrait of Selfridge at right.)



19 May 1918 **Raoul G. Lufbery**, who earned at least 17 aerial victories during World War I, **lost his life in combat**. Born in France, Lufbery (photo at left) became a citizen of the United



States, graduated from the Nieuport School in France and was assigned to the Escadrille Americaine on May 24, 1916. Part of Lufbery's success was due to his skill as a mechanic. His aircraft were always the best in the Escadrille and he hand-loaded his own machine gun rounds into their drums to check for any slight imperfections that might cause his gun to jam. After transferring to the American Expeditionary Forces, he passed much of his knowledge of aerial warfare to fledgling American fighter pilots such as Eddie Rickenbacker.

Read his bio on the National Aviation Hall of Fame [website](#).

19 May 1919 Master Sergeant Ralph W. Bottriell (right) became the **first Army member to jump from an airplane with a backpack-type parachute**. MSgt Bottriell (right) designed, developed and tested Army free-fall parachutes, earning the Distinguished Flying Cross for his life-saving work.



21 May 1927 **Medal of Honor**. Charles Lindbergh (left), a 25-year-old Captain in the Missouri National Guard, made the first nonstop solo flight across the Atlantic. Lindbergh was in pursuit of the \$25,000 *Orteig Prize* offered for the first successful nonstop flight between New York and Paris. Six well-known aviators had already died in the attempt.



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Lindbergh's custom-designed aircraft "The Spirit of St. Louis," named for his financial supporters back in his hometown, had extra fuel tanks and an extended wing span. Once airborne, Lindbergh faced many challenges such as flying blind through fog for several hours, flying as low as 10 feet above the wave tops to avoid storms and icing, and navigating only by magnetic compass, airspeed indicator, the stars (when visible) and dead reckoning. After flying 3,609 miles in 33 hours and 39 minutes, Lindbergh landed in Paris and immediately became an international hero and an American celebrity. President Coolidge later presented Lindbergh with the Medal of Honor.



20 May 1951 Capt James Jabara, flying an F-86 Sabre, became the **world's first jet-vs-jet ace**. On this date, he shot down his fifth and sixth MiG-15s in the Korean War. Eleven days later, Capt Jabara reported to USAF Chief of Staff General Hoyt S. Vandenberg in his office, and met with Captain Eddie Rickenbacker, the leading American fighter ace of World War I (photo at left).

18 May 1953 On his last day of combat flying, Capt Joseph C. McConnell, Jr. became the **first 'triple ace' of the Korean War**. On this day, McConnell and his wingman chased two MiGs across the Yalu River. When more MiGs showed up, McConnell quickly scored two kills, bringing his total to fifteen (an ace has five aerial victories). As their home base monitored their radio conversation, McConnell's wingman said "there must be thirty MiGs." McConnell's reply: "Yeah, and we've got 'em all to ourselves." Despite the bravado, the two pilots were happy to get back south of the Yalu. Later that afternoon, McConnell flew another sortie and scored his third kill of the day, his 16th victory overall. The photo at right was taken on the same day.



McConnell flew the F-86 jet fighter (below, left) with the 51st Fighter Interceptor Wing, predecessor of the 51st Fighter Wing at Osan Air Base, Korea. (51FW aircraft are below, right.)





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25 May 1953 George Welch, North American test pilot, flew the prototype **YF-100 Super Sabre** for the first time, taking off and landing at Edwards Air Force Base, California. He broke Mach 1 during the flight. The F-100 was an unsolicited, company-funded North American project to improve on the F-86 Sabre, and this maiden flight was seven months ahead of schedule.

On 7 Dec 1941, George Welch flew two sorties over Oahu in a P-40 Warhawk. He was credited with shooting down four Japanese warplanes. Welch had 16 kills in the Pacific theater during World War II.

25 May 1959 Air Defense Command accepted its first **F-106 Delta Dart** (photo at right). Originally an advanced derivative of the F-102 Delta Dagger, this “Ultimate Interceptor” became a new design series in its own right. The major change was a fuselage shaped to reduce transonic shock waves that bleed away power and produce “wave drag.” The innovation allowed the “Six” to reach its original design speed of Mach 1.2.



21-22 May 1960 **Hawaiian Tsunami.** Tremendous earthquakes in Chile produced tsunami waves that pounded the east coast of the island of Hawaii. Although warnings were issued, many Hilo-area residents tragically decided to stay in their seaside homes near Hilo Bay. Up to 61 people died and hundreds were left homeless. By the end of the month, the 50th Air Transport Squadron, 1502nd Air Transport Wing from Hickam AFB airlifted more than 12 tons of emergency equipment and supplies to Hilo. Flying C-124 Globemaster II aircraft, the unit delivered a generator, a refrigerator, vans, clothing, and food.



To aid the earthquake victims in Chile, **the Air Force began one of its largest humanitarian airlifts**, Operation AMIGOS, on 23 May 1960. Within a month, cargo aircraft had delivered more than 1,000 tons of equipment and supplies from bases in the United States, some 4,500 miles away from the stricken region.



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21 May 1976 **Super Typhoon Pamela** hit Guam with 150 mph winds and 27 inches of rain in a 24-hour period, flooding the island and tearing apart most buildings. Despite preparations, the typhoon killed at least five people, injured 500 and deprived thousands of their homes. Andersen AFB suffered the same level of destruction. Communication with the outside world was lost for 14 hours, and the runways were flooded and buried under debris. Through 9 June, Military Airlift Command (MAC) supervised the airlift of 2,652 tons of cargo to Guam in seven C-141s, six C-5s, and one C-130.

22 May 1990 23rd Air Force was redesignated as **Air Force Special Operations Command**, the USAF component of U.S. Special Operations Command.

23 May 2000 The first production-model **T-6A Texan II** aircraft arrived at Randolph Air Force Base, Texas. Designed as a dedicated training aircraft with jet-like handling, the T-6A



replaced both the Air Force T-37 and the Navy T-34, which had been in service since the mid-1950s. The T-6A offers better performance and significant improvements in training effectiveness, safety, cockpit accommodations and operational capabilities. (Photo at left.)

22 May 2002 The **X-45A unmanned combat air vehicle (UCAV)** flew for the first time at Edwards Air Force Base, California. It was the first unmanned aircraft designed for combat operations in an extremely hostile environment (such as suppression of enemy air defenses). The X-45A was a swept-wing, stealthy design of composite construction, with two internal weapons bays, hardpoints for auxiliary fuel tanks or additional weapons, an internally mounted turbofan engine, and fully retracting landing gear. (Photos below by Jim Ross and NASA.)



The X-45 UCAV was consolidated with the Northrop Grumman X-47A UCAV project resulting in the Joint Unmanned Combat Air Systems (J-UCAS) program. (See the NMUSAF [factsheet](#).)

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