



U.S. AIR FORCE

This Week in USAF and PACAF History 2 – 8 November 2015

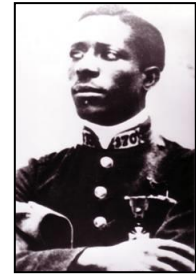


5-13 Nov 1912 The **Army used aircraft for artillery adjustment for the first time** at Fort Riley, Kansas. Capt Frederick B. Hennessy, Lt Henry H. Arnold, and Lt Thomas DeWitt Milling signaled the ground using radiotelegraphy, drop cards, and smoke signals.

7 Nov 1917 Eugene Bullard, **the world's first black military pilot**, became the **first black pilot to claim an aerial victory**. Bullard, an African-American, had stowed away on a ship to get to Europe. At the outbreak of World War I, he joined the French Foreign Legion. Fighting on the ground in some of the war's major land battles, Bullard was severely wounded. After his convalescence, he completed flight training in the French Air Service and eventually flew 20 missions. A national hero in France, Bullard received at least 15 major awards including the *Legion of Honor*, *Medaille Militaire* and the *Croix de Guerre* for heroism. In 1994, Eugene Bullard was posthumously commissioned as an officer in the United States Air Force. Read more and see additional photos in this [factsheet](#) from the National Museum of the USAF.



Bullard with his aircraft



Bullard in the French Army

5 Nov 1934 [Lt Col Horace Meek Hickam](#), a distinguished aviation pioneer, died at Fort Crockett, Texas when his A-12 struck an obstruction during night landing practice on the unlighted field. Six months later, **Hickam Field in Hawaii was dedicated in his honor**.

As a young officer, Hickam took flying lessons in his spare time. After earning the Silver Star in the Mexican Punitive Expedition, Hickam joined the Signal Corps' Aviation Section and trained as a pursuit pilot. He was chief of the Air Service's Information Division and then Assistant Commandant of the Advanced Flying School at Kelly Field, Texas. In November, 1925 he testified on behalf of airpower and a separate Air Force, stating "*I am confident that no general thinks he can command the navy, and no admiral thinks he can operate an army, but some of them think they can operate an air force.*"



After attending the Air Corps Tactical School, Air War College and other military courses, Hickam was assigned to the War Plans Division of the General Staff. Hickam was promoted to lieutenant colonel on 1 March 1932 and given command of the 3rd Attack Group at Fort Crockett. During the 1934 Air Mail operation, he commanded mail delivery operations in the U.S. Central Zone. Hickam often battled with the old soldiers of that era who classified the airplane as merely an auxiliary to ground troops. "*During the World War,*" he said in 1934, "*the airplane was considered as a weapon of the ground troops, but that day has passed just as has the concept of naval vessels as transports for soldiers. The Air Force has come into its own right, and like the Navy it has come to stay.*" Portraits of Hickam are on display in the Hickam PME Center auditorium, 15th Wing Headquarters and the AMC Passenger Terminal stairway.



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2 November 1943 **Fifth Air Force attacked Japanese shipping and bases at Rabaul** on New



B-25s attack Japanese shipping at Rabaul

Guinea. These raids helped protect the U.S. invasion of Bougainville in the Solomons Islands to the east. Three B-25 Groups escorted by seventy P-38s sank three Japanese destroyers, eight merchant ships, and destroyed 80 enemy aircraft.

During this action, Major Raymond Wilkins earned a posthumous **Medal of Honor**. Leading a B-25 squadron, Wilkins put his own aircraft in the position of greatest risk. Despite battle damage, Wilkins continued his attack, strafing harbor vessels and scoring direct hits on a destroyer and a transport. Bombs expended, he was withdrawing his squadron

when he saw a heavy cruiser posing a direct threat to the mission. Wilkins went in for a strafing run to neutralize the cruiser's guns and attract its fire, which brought him down.

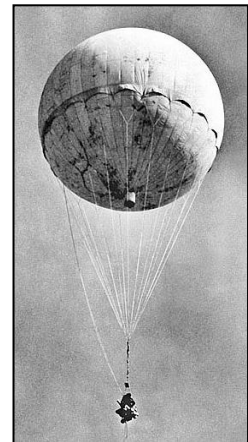
3 Nov 1944 **Balloons with bombs attached were first launched from Japan against the United States.** The Japanese hoped the jet stream would carry them eastward across the Pacific.

The Japanese launched some 9,000 balloon bombs against the U.S. during the war. The bombs were meant to start forest fires, produce chaos and divert U.S. manpower from the war effort. They were also a reprisal for the Doolittle raid on Tokyo. The hydrogen-filled balloons were 33 feet in diameter and carried ballast and hydrogen release mechanisms to maintain altitude across the North Pacific (photo at right). Only about 300 were ever observed in North America (mapped [here](#)). The easternmost balloon reached the suburbs of Detroit, Michigan.

Analysts estimate that as many as 1,000 Japanese balloon bombs reached the U.S. mainland. Fighters in the U.S. intercepted about 20 of the balloons. The only fatal attack occurred in Oregon when a woman and six children were killed when they approached the mysterious object.

The U.S. strategy was to keep the Japanese from knowing that any balloons had reached the mainland. The press cooperated by not reporting balloon sightings. The Japanese learned of only one bomb that got to Wyoming but failed to explode, so they stopped the launches after less than six months. After the war, the press blackout was lifted and the public was warned about the potential danger of finding unexploded bombs. The last balloon with a payload still intact and lethal was discovered in 1955, and balloon remnants were found as late as 1992.

On 10 March 1945, one of the balloons came down at the Manhattan Project's Hanford Site in Washington State. It short-circuited power lines to the nuclear reactor cooling pumps, but backup devices immediately restored power. The Hanford Site was the world's first plutonium production facility, and it provided materials for the Trinity test and the Nagasaki weapon.





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8 Nov 1950 General Hoyt S. Vandenberg, Air Force Chief of Staff, agreed to send an **F-84E wing and an F-86A wing to the Far East Air Forces (FEAF)**. Also on 8 November, seventy B-29 Superfortresses conducted the **largest incendiary raid of the Korean War**, dropping 580 tons of firebombs on Sinuiju, North Korea – near the Chinese border.

3 November 1965 A B-52 successfully fired an **AGM-28 Hound Dog missile** over Green River, Utah on a route to White Sands Missile Range. The Hound Dog was a nuclear missile designed to attack segments of the Soviet air-defense system so that the launching B-52 could penetrate to its primary target. It had a maximum speed over Mach 2, a 49,000 foot ceiling and a range of nearly 600 nautical miles. The Hound Dog could conduct high or low altitude attacks with either air or surface detonations.



The Hound Dog was deployed for 15 years until it was replaced by newer weapons including the AGM-69 Short Range Attack Missile and the AGM-86 Air-Launched Cruise Missile.

8-9 Nov 1967 **MEDAL OF HONOR. Capt Gerald Young** and his HH-53 crew (Capt Ralph Bower, SSgt Eugene L Clay, and Sgt Larry W. Maysey) flew into an area near Khe Sanh to rescue a U.S.-Vietnamese reconnaissance team. His helicopter was hit at point-blank range and destroyed. Wounded with second and third degree burns over one-fourth of his body, Capt Young helped one of the other crew members to escape. Young then spent 17 hours luring the pursuing North Vietnamese troops away from the crash site and other survivors. After losing his pursuers, Capt Young called for rescue and was picked up six miles from the crash site. For his heroism, Capt Young received the Medal of Honor.



5 Nov 1981 The **first operational EF-111A defense-suppression aircraft** was delivered to the 388th Electronic Combat Squadron at Mountain Home AFB, Idaho.



The EF-111A Raven (left) would eventually replace EB-66 and EB-57 aircraft as the U.S. Air Force's primary electronic warfare jamming aircraft. The EF-111A usually provided protection from a stand-off jamming orbit, but it could also escort attacking forces with its high-performance and night and terrain-following capabilities.

EF-111s were involved in every U.S. conflict from Eldorado Canyon in Libya to Desert Storm, where an EF-111 was credited with one of the first kills of the conflict. A maneuvering Raven caused a pursuing Iraqi Mirage to crash.

The EF-111 was retired in 1998. Currently, a variety of Air Force and Navy aircraft can defeat enemy air defenses by means of destruction, jamming and/or stealth. For more, see the [EF-111 Fact Sheet](#) from the National Museum of the USAF.



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2 November 2001 **USAF Wingmen in Action.** During Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, two MH-53 Pave Low helicopters flew an urgent mission to retrieve an ailing soldier from behind enemy lines in the mountains of Afghanistan. Due to equipment malfunctions and very bad weather, the crew of *Knife 03* had to crash land, sustaining injuries to several crewmembers. Their wingman, *Knife 04*, received the 2001 **Mackay Trophy** for performing “extraordinary acts of valor and heroism” during the combat rescue of their wingman in 10,000 foot terrain, darkness, sub-zero temperatures and white-out conditions. An excerpt from the award citation:

Several attempts to reach the downed crewmembers that had sustained injuries and were now exposed to sub zero temperatures and enemy ground forces were unsuccessful. Knife 04 began coordinating the first of four aerial refuelings and initiated on scene command responsibilities while evading bad weather and taking enemy ground fire. As the weather cleared, Knife 04 located the crash site and began an approach to the rugged area. The extremely slim power margin forced them to dump all but the very minimum fuel required for the approach. After a perilous landing, the downed aircrew were brought aboard. The takeoff in blinding snow with rotor speed decreasing to dangerous levels was accomplished through superior effort and ability from the crew. During the egress from hostile territory, Knife 04 was forced to aerial refuel several times as the minimum power margin prohibited their loading all of the required fuel in one engagement.

The mission led to many awards of the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal. The combat controller on the ground was recognized as the “USAF Combat Controller of the Year” and one of the MC-130 tanker crews earned the **Brigadier General Ross Hoyt Award** as the most outstanding aerial refueling aircrew in Air Mobility Command. The Arab linguist on *Knife 03*, TSgt Navid Garshasb, received the 2001 **Pitsenbarger Award** given annually to an enlisted member for heroic acts that save lives. Despite severe injuries, Garshasb diffused a potentially hostile situation with local villagers.

Below, *Knife 03* and *Knife 04* crewmembers stand together in front of a Pave Low MH-53.

For more images, maps and information, see this [mission review brief](#) (large file) and/or read the inspiring narrative in the Winter/Spring 2013 issue of the [Air Commando Journal](#) (page 39).



Original photo courtesy of Col (Ret) Paul Harmon

Your comments on *This Week in USAF and PACAF History* are valued and appreciated.
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