



U.S. AIR FORCE



This Week in USAF and PACAF History 11-17 February 2008



13 Feb 1917 Captain John F. Curry of the Army Air Service arrives in Honolulu to command the first aviation unit established in Hawaii—the 6th Aero Squadron — organized for the aerial coast defense of Oahu. The squadron was first stationed at Fort Kamehameha, and then moved to Ford Island.

13-16 Feb 1951 The 315th Air Division (Combat Cargo) used more than 100 airlifters to drop supplies around-the-clock to the 23d Regimental Combat Team and a French battalion at Chipyeong-ni in central Korea (photo at right). Flying through heavy ground fire, the Flying Boxcars delivered 400 tons of ammunition. H-5 pilots from the 3 ARS flew through a blinding snowstorm and 40-knot winds to deliver blood plasma and medical supplies. They also evacuated 52 wounded men.



The fighting around the village of Chipyeong-ni followed the United Nations withdrawal from Northern Korea after the Chinese Communist intervention at the end of 1950. Chipyeong-ni was seen as the key to stabilizing the Eighth Army's front against the Communist Chinese offensive. The siege of Chipyeong-ni was one of the most bitterly contested engagements of the Korean War. The Army's 23rd Regimental Combat Team inflicted tremendous casualties on elements of five Chinese infantry divisions. Chipyeong-ni was the Chinese Communist Forces' first operational defeat of the war.

16 Feb 1958 North Korean agents hijacked a South Korean DC-3 airliner. As the Korean National Airlines plane neared Seoul, armed hijackers forced the American civilian pilot, Willis Hobbs, to fly to Pyongyang, North Korea. With Hobbs were his copilot, USAF Lt. Col. Howard McClellan (logging flying hours with Air Force permission) and 32 passengers. The hijacked aircraft was not intercepted on either side of the DMZ. North Korea demanded that South Korea enter into direct negotiations for the missing DC-3 (and thus officially recognize North Korea—something the South had always refused to do). Hobbs, McClellan and 26 passengers were released in early March. The six remaining passengers were assumed to be North Korean agents.

Willis Hobbs was also a Civil Air Transport (CAT) pilot. He flew six C-119 missions to resupply French forces at the 1954 siege of Dien Bien Phu in North Vietnam.



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17 Feb 1962 Formal dedication of new Hawaii Air National Guard facilities at Hickam included participation by the Governor, State Adjutants of the Army and Air Force National Guards, and the Hickam Base Commander. A fly-by of HIANG F-102 jets closed the morning ceremony, and an open house in the afternoon was attended by an estimated 10,000 people. (see HIANG F-102s over Hickam facilities, circa 1960s, at right).



16 Feb 1968 Since 1964, Itazuke Air Base had been in dispersed operating base (DOB) status, with no active flying units. On 16 February, the base was brought back to life with the arrival of the RF-4Cs of the 15 TRS and the EB-66s of the 16 TEWS, which had been in Korea as part of Combat Fox. The move to Itazuke was to ease crowded conditions at Osan Air Base. The resumption of flying operations from the base was not viewed with enthusiasm by the local Japanese. (See photo, "Itazuke Ramp, 1969," below).



12 Feb 1973 After North Vietnam released the POWs, the 1st Mobile Communications Group and 1961st Communications Group at Clark AB provided communications between Hanoi and C-141s returning POWs to Clark AB. When the 566 former POWs reached America, the 375 AAW transferred them to various military hospitals. Altogether, MAC used 118 C-9A and C-141 missions to support the operation. This event earned the MacKay Trophy.



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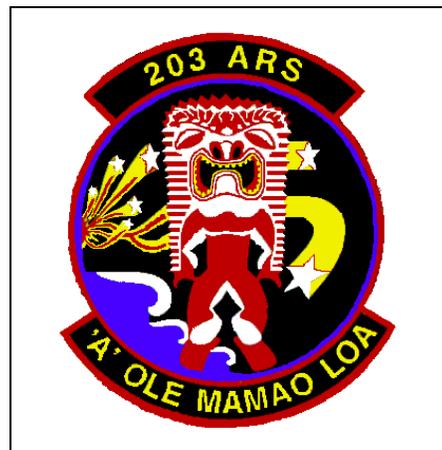


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14 Feb 1973 The first group of 20 former prisoners of war stopped over at Hickam, while en route from Vietnam to CONUS, as part of Operation Homecoming. Over 2,000 base personnel greeted the former POWs as they disembarked the C-141.

13-15 Feb 1987 Typhoon Uma hit the central islands of Vanuatu, leaving hundreds of people homeless. Four aircraft—two C-141 Starlifters from the 60th and 62d Military Airlift Wings and two C-130 Hercules from the 374th Tactical Airlift Wing—took part in the subsequent emergency operation.

12 Feb 1993 The 203rd Air Refueling Squadron (HIANG) activated at Hickam AFB, with Lt Col Walter K. Kaneakua in command. See photo and emblem below.



13 Feb 1993 A freighter heading for the United States carrying 535 Chinese refugees suffered engine failure. As food and water aboard the ship ran low, the crew broadcast distress signals. A Coast Guard ship towed the ship to nearby Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands. Between February 13 and March 9, a C-5 and a C-141, both from the Twenty-second Air Force, airlifted 18 tons of food and other relief supplies from Hawaii to Kwajalein to sustain the refugees. Subsequently, four AMC C-141s and three contract aircraft carried the refugees to Hawaii.

13 Feb 2004 South Korea's National Assembly approves a plan to send 3,000 troops, including 1,400 combat troops and 1,600 military engineers and medics, to Iraq in addition to the 465 military medics and engineers already there.

15 Feb 2005 A Japanese Air Self-Defense Force (JASDF) C-130 mission RFA MN046, delivering a shipment of canned goods to Banda Aceh, Thailand, was the final request for assistance and represented the conclusion of all HA/DR operations for Operation Unified Assistance.