



U.S. AIR FORCE



This Week in USAF and PACAF History

7 – 13 January 2008

9 Jan 1793 Jean Pierre Blanchard made the first manned balloon flight in America with a 46-minute trip between the Wall Street Prison in Philadelphia, Pa., to Debtford Township, N.J. He carried landing clearance orders signed by President George Washington and a small black dog as a passenger.

9 Jan 1917 Capt Henry H. Arnold is ordered from Aviation School duty at San Diego to Panama to organize and command the 7th Aero Squadron. Capt John F. Curry is ordered to Fort Kamehameha, Hawaii, to command the 6th.

7 Jan 1931 **The MacArthur-Pratt Agreement.** General Douglas MacArthur (CSA, at left) and Admiral William Pratt (CNO, at right) agreed that: “The Naval Air Force will be based on



the fleet and move with it as an important element in solving the primary missions confronting the fleet. The Army Air Forces will be land-based and employed as an essential element to the Army in the performance of its mission to defend the coasts at home and in our overseas possessions, thus assuring the fleet absolute freedom of action without any responsibility for coast defense.” Admiral Pratt



believed that the Navy should have maximum mobility and striking power, without being tethered to a static coastal defense role. While in effect, this agreement recognized the Army's primary responsibility for coastal defense. Two years later, MacArthur defined the Army Air Corps mission "to conduct the land-based air operations in defense of the United States and its overseas possessions."

12 Jan 1935 Amelia Earhart completed the first Hawaii-to-Mainland solo flight in her Lockheed Vega monoplane, taking off from Wheeler Field at 1644L and arriving in California 18 hours and 16 minutes later. (See rare photo at right, taken on 2 Jan 1935, just ten days before her famous flight. As the Pan-Pacific Press photo caption reads: “Two American champions investigate the insides of a pineapple. Amelia Earhart, famous flyer photographed at Waikiki with Duke Kahanamoku, one of America’s great swimmers and now sheriff of Honolulu.”)





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12 Jan 1939 President Franklin D. Roosevelt asked Congress to expand the US AAC to a force of 5,500 planes, 3,203 officers, and 45,000 men in response to world political conditions.



13 Jan 1951 Far East Air Forces flew the first effective TARZON mission, destroying 58 feet of an enemy-held bridge at Kanggye, Korea. The Tall Boy Range and Azimuth Only (TARZON) bomb program combined the 12,000 pound British Tall Boy bomb with radio controls from the bomber. The bombardier made flight corrections to the

bomb based on visual sighting or on television from a camera in the nose of the weapon. The development of radio-controlled smart bombs had begun during World War II.

13 Jan 1953 A dozen North Korean fighters shot down a USAF B-29 on a psychological warfare leaflet-drop mission over North Korea (STARDUST 40). The captured crew members were held longer than any other prisoners of war during the Korean conflict. China did not release the crew until 4 Aug 1955. (See last known photo of crew at right, taken in 1952 before being shot down).



13 Jan 1962 **PROJECT RANCH HAND.** The Ranch Hand test project began to determine if aircraft could destroy jungle foliage by spraying chemicals. The Tactical Air Command deployed six C-123 aircraft, modified with chemical tanks and spray bars, to Clark Air Base on 5 December 1961, and they began operations in Vietnam on 13 January.





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7 Jan 1966 The 4200 SRW at Beale AFB received the first operational SR-71 Blackbird strategic reconnaissance aircraft. Strategic Air Command had SR-71 Blackbirds in service from 1966 through 1991. Of the 32 SR-71 aircraft in the inventory, 12 were destroyed in accidents, though none was lost to enemy action.

SR-71s first arrived at the 9th SRW's Operating Location at Kadena Airbase, Okinawa on 8 March, 1968. On 21 March 1968, Major (later General) Jerome F. O'Malley and Major Edward D. Payne flew the first operational SR-71 sortie from Kadena. From 1968 until 1972, the Blackbird's sortie rate in reconnaissance missions over enemy territory (North Vietnam, Laos, etc.) gradually increased from one sortie a week to nearly one sortie every day. While deployed in Okinawa, the SR-71s and their aircrew members gained the nickname **Habu** after a dangerously venomous pit viper, which the Okinawans thought the plane resembled.

13 Jan 1975 Dr John L. McLucus, secretary of the Air Force, authorized purchase of the low-cost, lightweight, and highly maneuverable General Dynamics F-16 (at right). The first operational unit to receive the F-16A/B was the 388th Tactical Fighter Wing at Hill AFB, Utah, on 6 Jan 1979.



9 Jan 1976 The F-15 Eagle, first fighter to have a thrust greater than its weight, allowing it to accelerate while going straight up, arrived at the 1st Tactical Fighter Wing, Langley Air Force Base, VA.





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13 Jan 1993 Maj Susan Helms, USAF, a member of the space shuttle Endeavour crew, became the first U.S. military woman in space. Major Helms was also the first woman to live on the International Space Station. Major Helms' portrait is at right.

Brig. Gen. Helms is currently the Commander, 45th Space Wing, at Patrick AFB, Florida.



10 Jan 2007 China successfully carried out its first test of an anti-satellite weapon, in which a direct-ascent kinetic-kill vehicle destroyed an aging Chinese weather satellite. It was the first known successful satellite intercept test since 1985, when the United States conducted a similar test.

The PRC ASAT test was the worst space debris-generating event on record, generating at least 2,087 pieces of debris large enough to be tracked. It far surpassed the previous record of 713 pieces from the 1996 explosion of a Pegasus rocket body.

