



**U.S. AIR FORCE**



**This Week in PACAF and USAF History  
21-27 April 2008**



25-26 Apr 1944 **First AAF helicopter combat rescue.** Lt. Carter Harman of the 1st Air Commando Group (standing at left in the photo), flying a Sikorsky YR-4 helicopter, rescued four men from the Burmese jungle in the first Army Air Forces combat rescue by helicopter.

In late April 1944, a 1st Air Commando light plane crash landed deep behind Japanese lines in Burma with three wounded British soldiers aboard. Lt. Harman flew his helicopter from his base in India on a circuitous 500 mile route to avoid the Japanese. He had to stop for fuel every 100 miles at landing zones torn out of

the Burma jungles and controlled by friendly ground commandos. He then flew to a clearing near the crash site to pick up the first wounded British soldier and took him to an emergency strip prepared by British commandos on a sand-bar 10 miles away. He went back and picked up the second wounded soldier, but an overheated engine forced him to remain at the sandbar overnight. He went back the next morning to get the third wounded soldier and then went back again and got the L-IB pilot.

25 Apr 1945 HQ Far East Air Forces Move. On 25 April, FEAF Headquarters moved to Fort William McKinley, just outside Manila, the Philippines.

21 Apr 1948 **KEY WEST AGREEMENT.** The SECDEF issued a memo to his Secretaries, with a paper defining the functions of the services and the JCS, based on the National Security Act of 1947. It was the first functions paper drawn up after the Act. The Air Force received responsibility for the air defense of America and primary responsibility for the strategic nuclear bombing mission.

**WHAT DID NOT HAPPEN:** The Air Force did not get the Navy's carrier-based aircraft. The Navy retained their aircraft for naval campaigns. Since aircraft that attack ships can also attack targets on land, the agreement did not prevent a significant Air Force-Navy airpower rivalry.

**WHAT DID HAPPEN:** Army and Marine Corps air capabilities were limited relative to the Air Force and the Navy. Therefore, with little faith that other services would provide robust air support, the Army eventually developed its own "air force" in the form of attack helicopters while the Marine Corps ultimately preserved its independent air wings. An effective, systematic concept for airpower unity of command was developed only after the Goldwater-Nichols DoD Reorganization Act of 1986 and the creation of the Joint Force Air Component Commander (JFACC) concept.



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26 Apr 1949 Lt Gen George E. Stratemeyer became Commanding General, Far East Air Forces, Tokyo, taking over from Lt Gen Ennis G. Whitehead. Gen Stratemeyer remained commander until 9 June 1951. His book, "The Three Wars of Lt. Gen. George E. Stratemeyer: His Korean War Diary," is available at the Air Force Historical Studies Office @ <https://www.airforcehistory.hq.af.mil/Publications/Annotations/ybloodstrat.htm>.

21 Apr 1953 **Operation LITTLE SWITCH** began. By May 15, the Air Force had airlifted more than 150 sick and wounded former prisoners of war from Korea to Japan and from Japan to the United States after North Korea released them in a prisoner exchange. On 28 April, thirty-five former POW's released by North Korea arrived at Hickam en route to the mainland. On 30 April, a second flight of released POW's arrived, followed in May by five more "Freedom Airlift" flights. On each occasion, the POW returnees were greeted by dignitaries, presented with leis, and entertained by hula dancers.

22 Apr 1953 Because of shortages of fighter-bombers, Fifth Air Force assigned Sabres of the 4th and 51st FIWs a new commitment -- the armed reconnaissance of enemy lines of communication.

23 Apr 1965 The first operational **Lockheed C-141 Starlifter** aircraft was delivered to Travis Air Force Base, California. Capable of crossing any ocean nonstop at more than 500 miles per hour, the Starlifter could transport up to 70,000 pounds of payload, including 154 troops, 123 paratroopers, or a combination of troops and supplies.

In the spring of 1960 the Air Force, needing replacements for its slower piston-engined cargo planes, called for a new aircraft that would be capable of performing both strategic and tactical airlift missions. The Lockheed response was Model 300, the first large jet designed from the start to carry cargo. The aircraft had a high swept wing with four pod-mounted turbofan engines. The cabin floor's height only 50 inches above the ground allowed easy access through the rear doors. President John F. Kennedy's first official act after his inauguration was to order the development of the Lockheed Model 300, which became the C-141. (See photo of early C-141 aircraft above.)



26 Apr 1966 Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara approved a joint recommendation by the secretaries of the Air Force and Navy to discontinue Navy participation in the Military Airlift Command.



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27 Apr 72 Four USAF fighter crews, releasing Paveway I laser-guided “smart” bombs, knocked down the Thanh Hoa bridge in North Vietnam. Previously, 871 conventional sorties had resulted in only superficial damage to the bridge.

29 Apr 1975 **Operation NEW LIFE.** Just before South Vietnam fell, MAC moved the last of 50,493 refugees from Saigon to safe haven bases in the Pacific on 201 C-141 and C-130 missions. Air Rescue and Recovery Service HH-53 helicopters airlifted another 362 evacuees from Saigon to the USS Midway.

29 Apr – 16 Sep 1975 **Operation NEW ARRIVAL.** Through 16 September, MAC used 196 C-141s and C-130s to airlift 31,155 Vietnamese refugees from the Philippines to Guam, while commercial contract carriers began an effort to move 121,560 refugees from SEA to the US.

23-24 Apr 1980 **CLOUD CHORUS.** PACAF E-3A AWACS aircraft participated in this NATO exercise for the first time. The exercise occurred at Ramstein AB. (Boeing photo of NATO E-3A at right).

24 Apr 1980 **Operation EVENING LIGHT/EAGLE CLAW.** An attempt to rescue American hostages in Iran failed after night-time sandstorms and mechanical difficulties caused some Navy RH-53 helicopter crews to turn back. Subsequently, an RH-53 and an Air Force HC-130 collided at a rendezvous landing site in Iran, killing eight servicemen.

22 Apr 1981 The 81 TFW set an USAF record by generating 533 sorties in a single day.

27 Apr 1995 Air Force Space Command declared the **Global Positioning System** satellite constellation fully operational. The system provides accurate geographical coordinates for personnel moving on the ground, sea, or air.

23 Apr 2001 The **RQ-4A Global Hawk** completed the first nonstop Pacific flight by an UAV. It flew from the Air Force Flight Test Center at Edwards AFB to Edinburgh, Australia, covering the 7,500 miles in about 23 hours. The flight demonstrated the Global Hawk’s high-altitude, long-range capabilities. (See USAF Global Hawk photo, right).

22 Apr 2002 The Air Force announced a new standard wing structure that would include four groups: operations, maintenance, missions support, and medical.





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28 Apr 2003 End of **Operation SOUTHERN WATCH**. The Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC) at Prince Sultan AB, Saudi Arabia, with responsibility for air operations in Southwest Asia, moved to Al Udeid AB, Qatar. The move coincided with the end of SOUTHERN WATCH, the operation to enforce a no-fly zone in southern Iraq. On 29 April, at a joint news conference in Riyadh, SECDEF Donald Rumsfeld and Prince Sultan bin Abdul Aziz announced the withdrawal of all US combat forces from Saudi Arabia to end 12 years of a continuous US presence in Saudi Arabia. The US military presence officially ended on 26 August.

28 Apr 2003 The 15<sup>th</sup> ABW at Hickam underwent a change of command and redesignated as the 15th Airlift Wing, signifying its near-future operational role as home to the C-17 Globemaster III airlifter. Colonel Albert F. Riggle became the last commander of the 15th Air Base Wing as Colonel Raymond G. Torres became the first commander of the 15th Airlift Wing.