



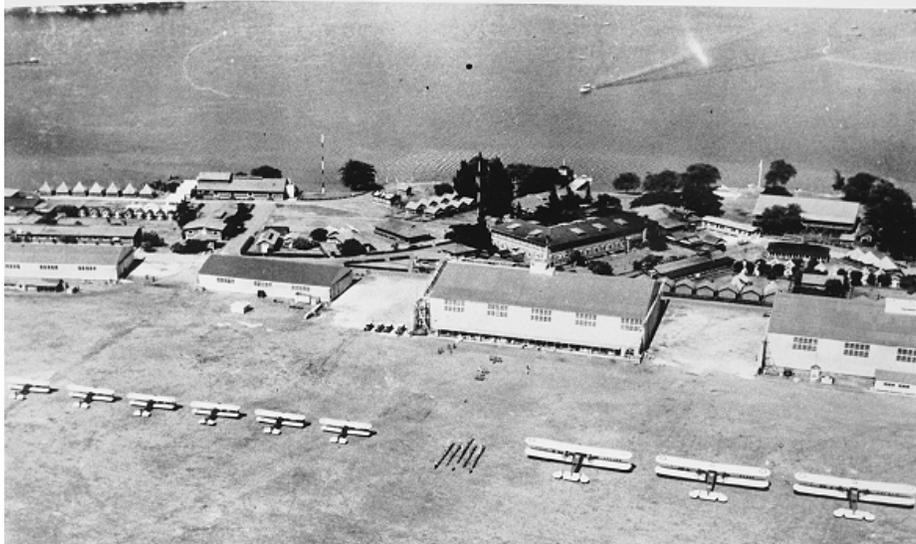
U.S. AIR FORCE

This Week in PACAF and USAF History **2-8 June 2008**



4 June 1920 Congress passed the **National Defense Act** to establish the Air Service on a permanent basis as a combatant arm of the Army, making it the equivalent of the infantry, cavalry, and artillery. Congress also created the rating of “airplane pilot” and authorized flying pay of 50 percent above base pay.

5 June 1931 The **Hawaiian Air Depot was activated** at Luke Field on Ford Island. This represented the consolidation of three separate units: the Air Section of the Hawaiian General Area Supply Depot (Honolulu), and the Station Repair Section and Station Supply Section of the 65th Service Squadron (Luke Field). (See photo of Luke Field, circa 1930, below).



6 June 1936 The Socony-Vacuum Oil Company began producing 100-octane **aviation gasoline**, which provided more power for aircraft engines, allowing planes to fly faster and carry heavier weights. The increased performance meant that, when World War II broke out, Allied planes were better than Axis planes by a factor of 15 percent to 30 percent in engine power for take-off and climbing; 25 percent in payload; 10 percent in maximum speed; and 12 percent in operational altitude. Source:

http://portal.acs.org/portal/PublicWebSite/education/whatischemistry/landmarks/about/WPCP_007595

3-6 June 1942 **Battle of Midway.** The Japanese tried to take the island of Midway in the in a major battle—the most important turning point in the war in the Pacific. Having broken the Japanese code, U.S. forces were ready for the invaders. The battle was fought primarily by Navy carrier aircraft but also by some Army Air Forces aircraft from Midway. Seventh Air Force flew 55 B-17 sorties and four B-26 torpedo attacks, claiming 22 hits on ships and 10 Japanese fighters shot down. It lost two B-17s and two B-26s. In the battle, the Japanese lost four aircraft carriers, a heavy cruiser, 322 aircraft, and some 5,000 men, including many skilled pilots. The United States lost the USS *Yorktown*, one of its three aircraft carriers. This defeat ended Japan’s eastern offensive and forced Japan to go on the defensive—a major turning point in the war.



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5-6 June 1944 **D-Day: Operation OVERLORD**, the Allied invasion of northwest Europe, began on 6 June. The Ninth Air Force had been organized for tactical air offensive, and had grown rapidly from a small nucleus in January to the largest single force of medium and fighter-bombers in the world. From 1 May to 6 June it flew more than 35,000 tactical sorties, over a thousand a day, in preparation for landings. Its targets were enemy airfields, railroad yards, transport, coastal gun positions, communications, and bridges, stretching from the Netherlands to the Pyrenees. The Allied air attacks largely prevented the Luftwaffe from countering the invasion and cut German transportation arteries, isolating the beachheads from German forces.

On D-day and the night before, Eighth and Ninth Air Forces and the Royal Air Force supported the invasion with some 15,000 interdiction, close air support, and airlift sorties. More than 1,400 C-47s, C-53s, and gliders of Ninth Troop Carrier Command dropped or landed three full airborne divisions (13,000 troops) and artillery in German-occupied France on the night before and during the Allied amphibious invasion of Normandy. The airborne troops' mission was to secure the land approaches to and from the beaches.

2 June 1949 Gen Henry H. Arnold received the permanent rank of **General of the Air Force**.

8 June 1953 At Luke Air Force Base, Arizona, the **USAF Thunderbirds**, officially designated the 3600th Air Demonstration Flight, performed for the first time. The team was named partly for the legendary Thunderbird of Native American folklore in the southwestern U.S., a creature held in awe and respect that shook the earth with the thunder of its great wings.

The first Thunderbird lead was Major Dick Catledge, a training squadron commander at Luke. Captains Bill and Buck Pattillo, a set of twins with experience from a USAFE demonstration team, were selected to fly left and right wing, respectively. Capt. Bob Kanaga, an instructor at Luke, was selected for the difficult position of slot, the position sandwiched between both wingmen and behind the leader. The spare pilot was Capt. Bob McCormick, another veteran of demonstration teams. 1st Lt. Aubry Brown served as maintenance officer for the team. Capt. Brown and his senior enlisted man, MSgt. Earl Young, selected 21 enlisted men to help maintain the team's aircraft. Capt. Bill Brock was the final officer selected for the team serving as the information services officer and team narrator. The first Thunderbird aircraft was the straight wing F-84G Thunderjet (see photo at right), considered well suited for aerobatic maneuvers.



With the move to the F-100 Super Sabre in 1956, the Thunderbirds became the world's first supersonic aerial demonstration team. Although never a routine part of the Thunderbird show, the solo flew supersonic at the request of the air show sponsor. Eventually, the Federal Aviation Authority, a precursor to today's FAA, banned all supersonic flight at air shows.



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2 June 1958 **First PACAF Fighter Symposium.** Through 6 June, PACAF held a US/Asian Fighter Weapons Symposium at the mountain resort of Baguio in the Philippines. PACAF Staff officers met with their counterparts from the Chinese Nationalist Air Force, Korean Air Force, Philippine Air Force, Royal Thai Air Force, and the Vietnamese Air Force. It was the first such conference on operational requirements and problems.

3 June 1958 **Medical Assistance to Thailand.** On 3 June a PACAF C-130 airlifted 300,000 units of anti-cholera serum from Manila to Bangkok in response to a request from the Thai government for assistance in fighting a cholera epidemic.

3 June 1959 **The Air Force Academy graduated its first class.** Of the 207 graduates, 205 were commissioned as regular USAF officers.

Secretary of the Air Force Harold E. Talbott was unhappy with the proposed designs of the cadet uniforms, so he asked for help from Hollywood. Cecil B. DeMille's designs for cadet uniforms were selected and adopted by the Air Force. DeMille's design of the distinctive cadet parade uniform is still worn by cadets today. At right is a photo of graduating cadets in parade dress uniform.



6 June 1960 **Electronic Flight Planning.** An operational development of major importance was successfully tested when two F-100s took off from Itazuke Air Base, Japan on what was **PACAF's first computer-planned mission.** The computer-produced frag orders were more detailed and accurate and could be produced in a few seconds. The time and money saving features of the new system were obvious, but most important was the quick reaction to changes in combat profiles, a factor which was to prove a vital ingredient of combat missions to come.

7-24 June 1976 **First TEAM SPIRIT Exercise.** Team Spirit was a joint and combined field training exercise designed to evaluate and improve the interoperability of the ROK and U.S. forces. One of the specific objectives of this first Team Spirit was to test and evaluate the Korea Tactical Air Control System. A total of 608 U.S. and ROK aircraft flew 2,418 sorties.

4-18 June 1977 **Cope Thunder Expanded.** Cope Thunder IX, conducted 4-18 June, included units from PACAF; MAC, SAC, the Marine Corps; two US Navy aircraft carriers, the Philippine Army; and the U.S. Army. A total of 632 sorties were flown in nine flying days. The realistic exercises filled a vital need in PACAF, and the exercise grew and expanded in subsequent years.

8 June – 2 July 1991 **The eruption of Mount Pinatubo** in the Philippines buried Clark Air Base and two other U.S. military installations with volcanic ash, forcing the Air Force to evacuate some 15,000 people to Guam and the United States. **FIERY VIGIL** became the largest evacuation operation since the fall of South Vietnam in 1975. Clark Air Base, the oldest and

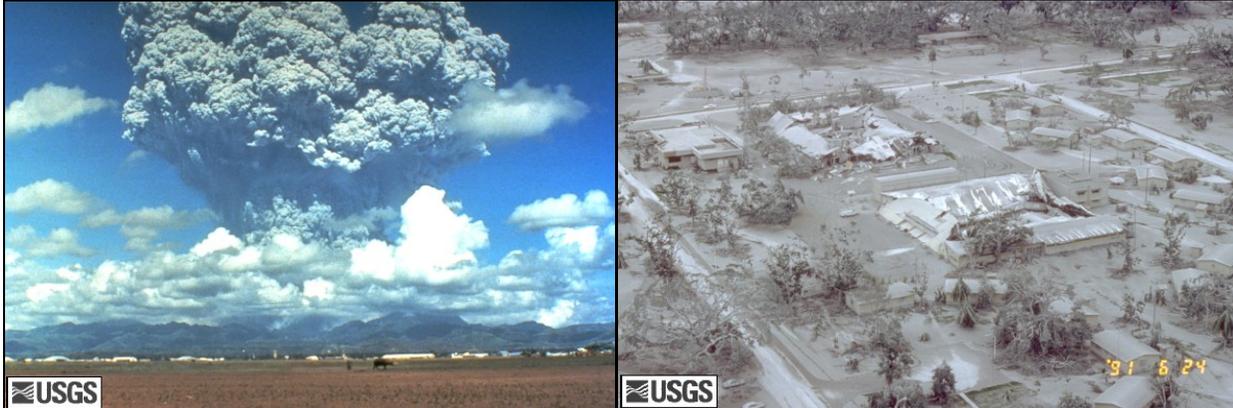


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largest USAF overseas base, closed permanently. The photos below show the eruption (left) and a part of Clark Air Base some weeks after the ash fall (right).



6 June 1996 At NAS Whidbey Island, Washington, the first Air Force aircrew graduated from the Navy's EA-6B Fleet Replacement Squadron to join one of five new **Navy/Air Force EA-6B "Prowler" squadrons**. The joint venture between the Air Force and Navy consolidated the airborne threat radar jamming mission and led to the retirement of the EF-111 Raven.



4 June 2003 Members of the Indian Air Force arrived at Eielson AF, Alaska for **Cooperative Cope Thunder**, marking the first time Indian military forces fully integrated and participated in the U.S. exercise. A Soviet-built Indian IL-76 transport also participated in Cooperative Cope Thunder for the first time. The exercise included forces from Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Thailand, India and NATO, with observers from many other countries in the Asia-Pacific region and around the world. The exercise also marked the first time fighters from the Japanese Air Self Defense Force deployed to North America for an exercise.

2 June 2004 In a flight bringing home the remains of two American servicemen missing since the Vietnam War, Maj. Gen. Edward Mechenbier (USAFR) piloted the '**Hanoi Taxi**,' a C-141 Starlifter that carried the first group of repatriated American prisoners of war in 1973. Gen. Mechenbier himself had been a POW in Vietnam for six years and was on the Hanoi Taxi's first flight out of Vietnam.