



U.S. AIR FORCE

## This Week in PACAF and USAF History 9-15 June 2008



14 Jun 1912 After training at the Army Air School in the Philippines, Cpl. Vernon Burge became the Army's first enlisted pilot.

12 Jun 1918 The 96th Aero Squadron conducted the first daylight bombing by an American unit when it attacked enemy-held marshalling yards at Dommary-Baroncourt, France.

10 Jun 1943 The Royal Air Force and the Army Air Forces launched the Combined Bomber Offensive against Germany. Eighth Air Force struck enemy industrial targets by day, while the Royal Air Force attacked enemy cities by night. The around-the-clock bombing was designed to cripple and then destroy the Germans' ability and will to continue the war.

Three days later, in a raid on Kiel, Germany, Eighth Air Force lost 26 of 60 bombers, demonstrating the need for fighter escorts.

11 Jun 1943 After a month-long aerial bombardment that had commenced on May 8, some 11,000 Italian troops on the island of Pantelleria, between Italy and Tunisia, surrendered to the Allies without firing a shot. It was the first large defended area to fall to air power, and cleared the way for the Allies to move north from Africa to invade Sicily and Italy.

15 June 1944 Sixty-eight B-29 Superfortresses took off at night from staging bases at Chengtu, China, to bomb the Imperial Iron and Steel Works at Yawata on Kyushu, more than 1,500 miles away. This was the **first raid on the Japanese home islands since the Doolittle attack** of April 1942, but they caused little damage because of poor aiming. This mission marked the beginning of the strategic bombardment campaign against Japan. (See USAF photo at right of B-29s, circa 1940).



Ironically, on the same day, U.S. Marines invaded Saipan in the Marianas, Pacific islands that would later provide alternate and more effective B-29 bases.

15 June 1944 The Commander in Chief, Southwest Pacific Area, established **Far East Air Forces** (Provisional) at Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, as the single air headquarters in the Southwest Pacific Area (SPWA). It became Far East Air Forces on 20 June 1944 when the new command received War Dept. approval of its designation, and was formally activated on 3 August (the official anniversary date).

15 June 1944 **Lt Gen George C. Kenney**, commander of 5th Air Force, became **FEAF's first commander**. Gen Kenney remained commander until 30 Dec 1945.



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11 Jun 1948 The USAF revised its aircraft designation system. For example, “P” for pursuit changed to “F” for fighter, but the same model numbers were kept. Thus, the P-51 became the F-51, the P-80 became the F-80, etc. Previously, the “F” designation had been assigned to photo reconnaissance.

11 Jun 1957 The first U-2 high-altitude, long-range reconnaissance aircraft was delivered to the 4080th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing at Laughlin Air Force Base, Texas. The U-2 could fly 10-hour missions at exceptionally high altitudes at a top speed of 600 miles per hour.

9 June 1964 **First KC-135 Support for Vietnam Combat Operations.** Four KC-135s from Clark AB, Philippines, refueled eight F-100s from Da Nang AB, South Vietnam, on an attack against anti-aircraft batteries in North Laos. PACAF RF-101Cs and KB-50Js supported the strike.

16 Jun 1966 A Titan IIC boosted seven experimental communications satellites and one gravity-gradient satellite into orbit 18,000 nautical miles above the equator. The satellites demonstrated the feasibility of a global military communications satellite system.

13 Jun 1968 A Titan IIC launch vehicle successfully placed in orbit eight communications satellites from Cape Kennedy, Florida, to augment the initial Defense Satellite Communications System.



10 June 1969 **Project Misty Bronco.** Beginning in April, Misty Bronco tested the effectiveness of armed OV-10s providing an immediate USAF strike presence readily available to ground forces. The concept was deemed successful, and arming of all OV-10s was authorized on 10 June. (See photo of OV-10, left).

14 June 1969 **Wild Weasel IV.** PACAF's first F-4C Wild Weasel aircraft arrived at Yokota Air Base and was assigned to the 347 TFW in March. By June, 14 Wild Weasels were in Japan at Yokota and Misawa.

12 Jun 1970 A USAF K-30, one of the largest reconnaissance cameras, retired to the Air Force Museum after more than 20 years in service. The camera measured 3' x 4.5' x 5', weighed 665 pounds, and used a 100-inch focal length optical system.



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15 June 1970 The final **Blind Bat flare sortie** was flown by a C-130 over the Barrel Roll area of Laos. The primary role of the Blind Bat mission was to find, illuminate, and direct air strikes against North Vietnamese truck convoys, as well as river traffic (sampans), AAA sites, river fords, bridges and POL sites. The C-130As returned to Naha Air Base. Originally, the phrase Blind Bat was just the call sign for C-130s on forward air controller/flare duty over southern Laos. Soon, it came to have a wider meaning, denoting an entire mission. By early 1966, all C-130 flare operations in-theater went by the shorthand name Blind Bat. (Blind Bat patch at right.)



9 Jun 1974 The Northrop YF-17 prototype aircraft made its first flight at Edwards Air Force Base, California. Although the YF-16 was selected over the YF-17 as the Air Force's newest fighter aircraft, the YF-17 became the progenitor of the Navy's F-18 Hornet.

14 June 1993 **The first C-17 Globemaster III** arrived at its operational wing, the 437th Airlift Wing at Charleston Air Force Base, South Carolina. Capable of delivering outsized cargo to a tactical environment, the Globemaster III increased the Air Force's ability to airlift to relatively small airfields, eliminating the need to shift cargo from larger to smaller transports.



11 Jun 1996 **JSTARS**. ACC acquired its first E-8 Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System aircraft. The E-8, capable of providing detailed radar information on ground targets, had been tested during its development in Operations DESERT STORM and JOINT ENDEAVOR. Photo at left.

9 Jun 1997 **Expeditionary Air Force Unit Concept**. During Exercise CENTRAL ENTERPRISE (9-20 June), two B-1B bomber units became one force at a forward operating location—RAF Fairford, England. The 7th Bomb Wing from Dyess AFB and the 28th Bomb Wing from Ellsworth AFB, along with 350 people, formed the 7th Expeditionary Bomb Group.

10 Jun 1999 **Operation ALLIED FORCE**. NATO suspended air strikes against Yugoslavia after its President agreed in writing to withdraw Serb forces from Kosovo, their replacement with multinational peacekeeping forces, and the return of hundreds of thousands of ethnic Albanians to that province. Noted military historian John Keegan claimed that ALLIED FORCE was the first war in history won by air power alone.



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**17 June 2003 DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS.** The USAF awarded 34 aircrew members from Charleston AFB the DFC for actions in Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. Eight recipients earned the DFC during the first night of humanitarian relief operations in Afghanistan (7 October 2001), while the others received the DFC for inserting Marine forces at the Rhino Landing Zone near Kandahar on 28-30 November 2001. The crews flying to the landing zone performed the deepest insertion of Marines into hostile territory in Marine Corps history. They also accomplished three C-17 operational milestones: (1) the first C-17 combat landings on an unimproved dirt strip; (2) the first missions by C-17 special operations low-level aircrews in hostile conditions; and (3) the first use of night vision goggles by C-17 aircrews to make blacked-out approaches and landings in hostile territory. (See photo at right.)



**15 Jun 2004** The 15th Airlift Wing officially closed Johnston Atoll.

The Navy took over the atoll in 1934, and the Air Force assumed control in 1948. The site was used for high-altitude nuclear tests in the 1950s and 1960s, and until late in 2000 the atoll was maintained as a storage and disposal site for chemical weapons until destruction of the munitions was completed. On 15 Jun 2004, yellow "X" markings were painted on the inactivated runway and a Hawaii Air National Guard C-130 transported the last remaining personnel to Hickam AFB.



**16 June 2006** Northern Edge 2006 ended at Elmendorf AFB, AK. Among other goals, NE06 provided the first exercise opportunity for **F-22 Raptor** teams to display seamless integration with operators from the Navy, Marine Corps and Army, and to prove how the jet's capabilities would transform the wartime environment. (See USAF photo of F-22 landing at Elmendorf for Northern Edge 2006, at left).