



U.S. AIR FORCE

## This Week in PACAF and USAF History 21-27 July 2008



27 July 1909 Orville Wright, with Lt Frank P. Lahm as a passenger, flew the Army's first airplane at Fort Myer, Virginia for 1 hour 12 minutes, setting a two-man endurance record. This **first official flight test** fulfilled a contract requirement for an hour-long flight with a passenger.

24 July 1917 Congress appropriated \$640 million for **Army aviation** and authorized the Aviation Section to expand to 9,989 officers and 87,083 enlisted men. No earlier appropriation had come close to this amount.

26 July 1935 Captain Howard B. Nurse, constructing quartermaster, arrived in Hawaii to plan, design, and supervise the **construction of Hickam Field**. Capt. Nurse was responsible for the unusual Moorish design of Hickam's Water Tower, as well as incorporating the "garden city" concept to make Hickam a beautiful — as well as an efficient — place to live and work. See <http://www.hickamcommunityhousing.com/documents/MuseumandHistoricalHomesCareBook.pdf>.

27 July 1943 On July 27, 1943, Colonel Joseph Duckworth, commander of the Army Air Forces Instrument Flying School in Bryan, Texas, flew an AT-6 Texan (a single-engine, two-seat trainer) into a hurricane that was moving ashore near Galveston, proving it could be done.



Many British pilots attending the instrument school were already aces from World War I. They wanted to be trained in the top U.S. fighters instead of the AT-6. The Brits knew little of hurricanes, and when they heard that the planes might have to be flown away from a storm, they started teasing the instructors about the frailty of the AT-6. Colonel Duckworth bet them that he could fly the Texan into a hurricane, proving that both the plane and his instrument flying technique were sound. Duckworth flew all the way into the eye on the **first intentional flight into a hurricane**. The following year, larger military airplanes began flying into hurricanes and Pacific typhoons to collect data for forecasters. Eight years later, Col Duckworth arrived at Hickam to be the 1500th Air Transport Wing Commander and Base Commander (March 1951 – Oct 1952). See [http://www.history.noaa.gov/stories\\_tales/surprise.html](http://www.history.noaa.gov/stories_tales/surprise.html).

25 July 1944 In **Operation COBRA**, almost 1,500 Eighth Air Force heavy bombers conducted saturation bombing of the Saint-Lô area of northern France to allow Allied forces to break through German lines. Although the operation succeeded in its ultimate objective, some of the bombers hit the wrong area in bad weather, killing 100 U.S. troops and wounding 500 more. Lt. Gen. Lesley J. McNair, commander of the U.S. Army Ground Forces, was one of the fatalities. Fort McNair is named in his honor.

26 July 1947 President Harry S. Truman signed the **National Security Act**, which created a **Department of the Air Force** equal to the Department of the Army and the Department of the Navy; a National Military Establishment under the secretary of defense; and an Air National Guard as a reserve component of the Air Force.



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26 July 1951 **Project Lincoln** was created—an MIT Lincoln Laboratory study of air defense for the DoD. Two of its early developments were the Semi-Automatic Ground Environment (SAGE), a nationwide network of radar and anti-aircraft weapons, and the Distant Early Warning Line (DEW Line), a radar surveillance system along the polar approaches to the United States.

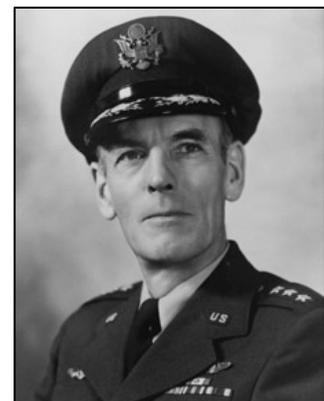
27 July 1953 **KOREAN WAR ENDS.** UN and Communist representatives signed an armistice at Panmunjom. When it ended, U.S. pilots enjoyed a 10-1 edge in air-to-air combat. U.S. aircrews flew more than 625,000 combat sorties and destroyed 839 MiG-15s, probably destroyed 154 more, and damaged 919 others. FEAF pilots destroyed the North Korean Air Force in the first weeks of the war. They obliterated strategic targets within the first months and conducted an effective interdiction campaign throughout the conflict. FEAF aircraft, including B-29s in a tactical role, wiped out 34,000 vehicles, 276 locomotives, and 3,800 railroad cars. Interdiction destroyed 70 percent of North Korea's tanks, trucks, and artillery pieces--and inflicted nearly 50 percent of the casualties sustained by North Korea troops. MATS used C-47s, C-54s, C-97s, C-119s, and C-124s to airlift 214,000 passengers and 80,000 tons of cargo to the combat area. In Korea, MATS aircraft airdropped another 15,000 tons of supplies and equipment, while medical aircraft airlifted 386,536 patients. The Air Rescue Service also recovered 9,898 UN troops, with 996 saves in the combat zone. SAC's B-29s flew 1,995 reconnaissance and 21,328 effective combat sorties to drop 167,000 tons of bombs on various targets. Air Force casualties numbered 1,729.



On the day of the armistice, Capt. Ralph S. Parr, Jr., USAF, scored the last aerial victory of the Korean War by shooting down an Il-2, allegedly with a number of senior Soviet military commanders onboard. The shoot down triggered a short-lived diplomatic protest from the USSR. (Photo above is an F-86.)

26 July 1954 Lt. General Hubert R. Harmon was appointed the **first Superintendent of the USAF Academy**. Known as the “father of the Air Force Academy,” General Harmon had been recalled from retirement at the request of his West Point classmate, President Eisenhower, to become special assistant to the CSAF for air academy matters. General Harmon assumed his position on 14 August 1954.

In 1943, General Harmon had been appointed deputy commander for the air forces of the South Pacific Area and in January 1944 he assumed command of the 13th Air Force. During March-June, Harmon was commander of all Allied air units in the Solomon Islands campaign. (Photo at right.)





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21 July 1961 Capt. Virgil I. Grissom became the second U.S. and the **first USAF astronaut** in space. His suborbital spaceflight attained an altitude of 118 miles and a speed of 5,310 mph.

23 July 1971 Hughes Aircraft Company was awarded a \$70 million contract to build 2,000 **AGM-65A Maverick** air-to-surface missiles for use on F-4E and A-7D aircraft.

The Maverick was developed because of the shortcomings of earlier missiles such as the AGM-12 Bullpup. These weapons had simple, radio-controlled guidance systems that required the launching aircraft to remain in direct line with the target – and exposed to enemy fire. The



Maverick was the first general purpose fire-and-forget tactical air-to-ground missile in service with the U.S. Air Force. This “launch-and-leave” capability allowed a pilot to fire the Maverick and immediately take evasive action or attack another target as the missile guided itself by optical, infrared or laser homing.

26 July 1971 With an **all-USAf crew** composed of Col. David R. Scott, Lt. Col. James B. Irwin, and Maj. Alfred M. Worden, **APOLLO XV** launched from Cape Kennedy, Florida. The lunar module Falcon landed on the Moon on 30 July and left on 2 August. The command module landed in the Pacific on 7 August. Apollo XV had two firsts: use of a lunar rover and first deep space walk. The mission also set three FAI records: greatest mass lifted to lunar orbit, 76,278 pounds; time outside a spacecraft on the moon, Scott with 18 hours 18 minutes; and distance traveled on the moon, 16,470 feet in the Lunar Rover. (Photo above is Irwin on the Moon.)



24 July 1990 **EC-135 Looking Glass flights ended** after nearly 30 years of continuous operation with over 250 million miles of accident-free flying. During the Cold War, the EC-135 Airborne Command Post provided airborne nuclear command and control capability.

24 July 1994 **Operation SUPPORT HOPE.** USAF airlift aircraft started flying relief supplies to Rwandan refugees in Zaire in the wake of the Rwandan civil war. Through 11 September, AMC flew 700 airlift missions to transport over 11,000 passengers and 23,000 short tons. Nearly 400 KC-135 missions refueled the C-5s and C-141s, while KC-10s flew several dozen missions to ferry fuel from Harare, Zimbabwe, to Entebbe.

23 July 1999 Col. Eileen M. Collins, USAF, the first woman pilot of a space shuttle in 1995, became the **first woman commander of a space-shuttle mission** on a flight of the Columbia.



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25 July 2000 Through 23 September, the **worst fire season in decades** consumed over 6.5 million acres in the American West, more than twice the annual average. For the fire suppression effort, USAF and commercial carriers flew 48 missions to move 339 short tons of cargo and 5,967 Army and Marine troops to augment civilian firefighters in Montana and Idaho. Guard and Reserve C-130s equipped with modular airborne fire-fighting systems flew 774 sorties from to drop 970,500 gallons of fire retardant on wildfires in California, Idaho, and Montana.

22 July 2002 At McConnell AFB, Kansas, the YAL-1A, destined to become the **world's first directed-energy combat aircraft**, completed its first flight. A modified Boeing 747, the YAL-1A carries an **airborne laser** to destroy enemy missiles in their boost phases.



27 July 2006 **Exercise Green Lightning.** The U.S. Air Force completed its first-ever B-2 deployment on the continent of Australia. The historic event took place July 25-27 and featured training sorties on Australia's Delamere Air Weapons Range and a B-2 Engine Running Crew Change at RAAF Darwin - the first time the B-2 has landed on Australian soil. Called "Green Lightning," the Total Force mission featured B-2 Spirit Bombers from the 13th Expeditionary Bomb Squadron and was supported by KC-10 tankers from the U.S. Air Force Reserve Command's 506th Expeditionary Air Refueling Squadron. Both units are deployed to Andersen AFB, Guam. (See photo at right of KC-10 refueling a B-2 during "Green Lightning.")

