



U.S. AIR FORCE

This Week in PACAF and USAF History 14-20 July 2008



15 July 1931 The Air Corps Tactical School moved from Langley Field, Virginia to Maxwell Field, Alabama. It produced most of the Air Corps' doctrine during the 1930s, including the concept of long-range, high-altitude daylight precision bombing of selected military and industrial targets—the fundamental strategy of the Army Air Forces in World War II. (Photo above is Austin Hall in the 1930s.)



18 July 1934 A War Department board issued a report recommending formation of a centrally controlled aerial strike force. The Drum Board had come to the same conclusion in its recommendation in 1933 for a General Headquarters Air Force.

19 July 1934 **Mackay Trophy/Distinguished Flying Cross.** Through 20 August, **Lt Col Henry H. Arnold** commanded ten Martin B-10s from Bolling Field to Fairbanks and back. They covered 7,360 miles in 51 hours 30 minutes, or 25 hours 30 minutes going north and 26 hours going south. For this flight, Arnold received the Mackay Trophy and DFC.

19 July 1941 Capt. Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., a West Point graduate whose father had been its first black graduate, reported to Tuskegee Institute in Alabama with 12 aviation cadets to begin flight training as the first class of black pilot candidates in the U.S. military.

14 July 1943 Comiso Airfield was the first airfield recaptured in Sicily. Shortly thereafter, a German JU-88 landed amid US flak shots. The pilot climbed out, shook his fist at the flak battery and, much to his surprise, became a prisoner. Later, two German ME-109s also landed, believing the airfield was still in German hands. They were also taken prisoner.

17 July 1944 Ninth Air Force dropped napalm bombs for the first time, releasing them from P-38s on an enemy fuel depot at Coutances, near Saint-Lô, France. Napalm, a jellied gasoline, was a revolutionary incendiary compound with immense destructive potential.

14 July 1945 After its long, successful island campaign across the Pacific, **Seventh Air Force moved to Okinawa** and was assigned to the Far East Air Forces for missions against the Japanese home islands.

14 July 1945 From Hollandia, A-20s set fire to Japanese oil fields at Boela, Ceram. They used rocket bombs for the first time in the Southwest Pacific.

16 Jul 1945 The **first atomic bomb**, called the “**Gadget**,” was detonated at the Trinity Site near Alamogordo, New Mexico. This bomb had a yield of 19 kilotons. It was the prototype for the Fat Man bomb used against Japan.



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15 July 1954 The **Boeing 707**, the first U.S. jet-powered airliner, made its first flight near Seattle, Washington. This aircraft revolutionized commercial aviation, replacing slower propeller-driven airliners, and became the prototype of the **C-135** transport and **KC-135** tanker, the latter designed to refuel the new B-47 and B-52 jet bombers.

15 July 1958 **Operation BLUE BAT.** After the Iraqi government fell, civil unrest threatened the government of Lebanon and Lebanon's President asked for U.S. security assistance. President Eisenhower authorized Operation BLUE BAT in response. After U.S. marines landed by sea to secure Beirut airport, TAC dispatched its Composite Air Strike Force BRAVO to the Middle East in 12 hours. When the crisis ended on 8 September, MATS aircraft had moved 5,500 passengers and 5,500 tons of cargo in 314 missions to support the strike force. This was America's first military operation in the region since WWII, and the intervention resulted in political negotiations that produced years of peace.

18 July 1958 Public Law #85-534 authorized the Air Force to transfer 171 acres of land to the Territory of Hawaii for development of **Honolulu Airport.**

19 July 1962 A Nike-Zeus antimissile missile fired from Kwajalein Island in the Pacific Ocean made the first known intercept of an intercontinental ballistic missile when it brought down the nose cone of an Atlas missile launched from Vandenberg Air Force Base, California.

16 July 1965 The **OV-10A Bronco** flew its first test flight. The Bronco was a multi-purpose, light attack aircraft developed under an Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps tri-service program. The USAF acquired the OV-10 primarily as a forward air control (FAC) aircraft, but it also performed observation, helicopter escort, reconnaissance, gunfire spotting, personnel transport and ground attack. Faster and more tactically versatile than helicopters, yet slower and more maneuverable than jets, the Bronco utilized tactics not possible with either. In military operations, the Bronco's outstanding capability to find and hit battlefield targets close to friendly troops made it effective against conventional and guerrilla forces. The first USAF OV-10As destined for combat arrived in Vietnam on July 31, 1968. A total of 157 OV-10As were delivered to the USAF before production ended in April 1969.



16 July 1969 **Apollo XI/First Lunar Landing.** The Apollo XI lunar landing mission launched from Kennedy Space Center, carrying astronauts Neil A. Armstrong, Col. Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin Jr, USAF, and Lt Col. Michael Collins, USAF. On 20 July, Armstrong and Aldrin flew the lunar module Eagle to the Sea of Tranquility, where Armstrong took the first step on the moon. On 24 July, Apollo XI splashed down in the mid-Pacific.



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16 July 1971 Jeanne M. Holm, director of Women of the Air Force, was promoted to brigadier general, becoming the **first woman general in the Air Force**.

21 July 1972 Through 15 August, PACAF airlifted 2,000+ tons of food, medical supplies, and other **relief supplies to Luzon** for flood victims in the Philippines. C-130s, H-3s and H-43 helicopters airlifted more than 1,500 passengers, disaster relief teams, and medical evacuees.

15 July 1973 **LAST SEA COMBAT MISSION/VIETNAM SUMMARY.** All US bombing in Cambodia ended after eight years of conventional operations in SEA. An A-7D from the 354th TFW flew the last combat mission in SEA. Altogether, the USAF flew 5.25 million sorties over South Vietnam, North Vietnam, northern and southern Laos, and Cambodia. The USAF lost 2,251 planes—1,737 to hostile action and 514 for operational reasons—at a cost of \$3,129,948,000. During the Vietnam War, tactical or intratheater airlift carried 7 million tons of passengers and cargo from 1962 to 1973. Between 1964 and mid-August 1973, air rescue operations in Southeast Asia saved 3,883 lives. And from 9 June 1964 through 15 August 1973, KC-135s flew 194,687 sorties to supply 8,964 million pounds of fuel during 813,878 refuelings. They also routinely airlifted people, equipment, and aircraft parts between the US, forward bases, and bases in the Far East and Southeast Asia. Photo at right: A U.S. Air Force HH-3 helicopter crewman fires a mini-gun during rescue patrol over South Vietnam, Oct 1968.



19 July 1982 The **8th Tactical Fighter Wing** (later the 8th Fighter Wing) completed transition to the F-16, with the last F-4 departing Kunsan.

19 July 1984 TAC took possession of its first **E-3B Sentry** at Tinker AFB. The E-3B had five more Situation Display Consoles (SDC), a new computer, radio teletype, and maritime surveillance capability. Other enhancements included one additional HF radio and five additional UHF radios with “Have Quick” anti-jamming circuitry.

17 July 1987 The first of 33 **MH-53J Enhanced Pave Low III** helicopters rolled out at NAS Pensacola. Pave Low provided night and adverse weather navigation capabilities.

22 July 1988 **Gen Merrill A. McPeak** became PACAF's 21st commander, taking over from Gen Gregory. Gen McPeak left in October, 1990 to become the Chief of Staff of the Air Force.

17 July 1989 The **B-2 Spirit** flew for the first time over Edwards AFB.



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15 July 2000 The **final B-2** arrived at Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri. The Air Force planned to add no more new bombers to its inventory for 35 years.

The AFFTC photo at right is a B-2 in flight over the Pacific. Though not supersonic, the bomber compresses the surrounding air enough to lower the dew point and cause condensation.



15 July 1998 Raytheon Aircraft Company's **first T-6A Texan II aircraft**, or the **Joint Primary Aircraft Training System (JPATS)**, successfully completed its initial flight at Wichita, Kansas. To meet Air Force and Navy primary aircraft training needs, the DoD decided to buy 740 T-6A aircraft, along with the accompanying JPATS Ground Based Training System. (AFNEWS Article 981039, 17 Jul 98)

14 July 2001 A prototype Minuteman **ICBM interceptor** successfully targeted and destroyed an unarmed Minuteman II ICBM over the central Pacific. Ten minutes after launch, the interceptor destroyed the warhead, traveling some 15,000 mph at more than 140 miles in altitude above the Earth. The 30th Space Wing at Vandenberg AFB and the Ballistic Missile Defense Organization conducted the Ground-based Midcourse Defense Segment, formerly called the National Missile Defense Program, test. (AFNEWS Article 0961, 17 Jul 2001)

21 July 2002 Through 2 August, **five C-5s flew 23 combat missions** from a forward operating location to Kandahar to redeploy more than 780 troops and 1,350 short tons of equipment from Canada's Princess Patricia's Light Infantry Regiment. The five C-5 aircraft operated from the same forward operating location as the 782d Expeditionary Airlift Squadron. A 31-person Tanker Airlift Control Element from the 615th Air Mobility Operations Group supported the C-5s at Kandahar. This redeployment demonstrated that the USAF's largest jet transport aircraft could successfully operate at a remote, austere airfield.