

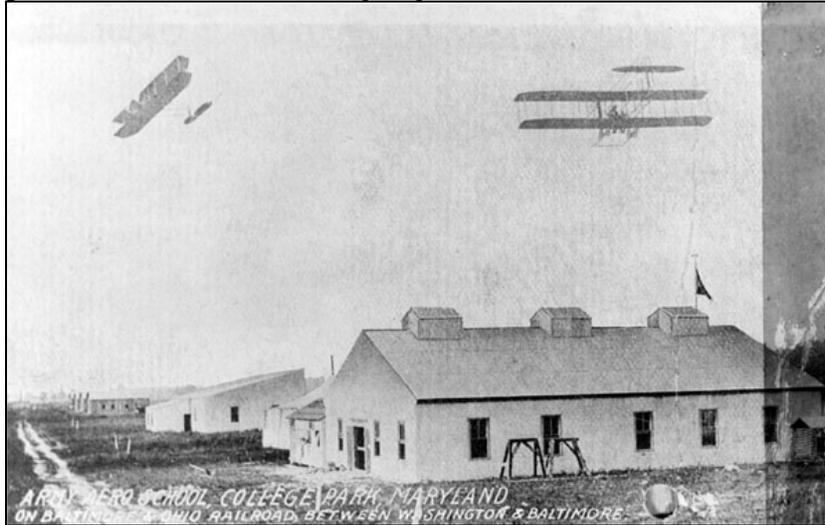


U.S. AIR FORCE

This Week in PACAF and USAF History 25-31 August 2008



25 August 1909 The U.S. Army leased land at College Park, Maryland, for the **first Signal Corps airfield** (photo below). Pilot training began on 8 October 1909.



31 August 1939 **Wheeler Field** became a separate permanent military post, although the transition to independent status had been gradual. By the end of the year, units stationed at Wheeler included the 18th Pursuit Group and the 4th and 5th Reconnaissance Squadrons, under the jurisdiction of the 18th Bomber Wing headquartered at Hickam Field.

27 August 1945 Twentieth Air Force B-29s completed their **first supply-dropping mission to Allied prisoners of war** at a camp near Peiping, China. B-29s completed their first supply drop operation to Allied POWs in the Weihsien camp near Peiping, China. In all, 154 camps with 63,500 prisoners in Japan, China, and Korea got food, medical supplies, and clothing. (Photo of a camp at right, with “P-W” and other markings on the roofs. POW camps were often located next to Allied bombing targets.)



28 August 1945 **FEAF arrives in Japan.** On 28 August 1945, an advance team of communications specialists flew in to Atsugi Airfield, located some 16 miles southwest of Tokyo – the first American personnel to begin the occupation of Japan. Among the American personnel was **Colonel Gordon Blake**, former Base Operations officer in charge of Hickam Field who was on duty during the attack of 7 December 1945. Protected only by units of the Japanese Imperial



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Army, Col Blake and this stalwart band set up the control tower and communication equipment necessary for occupation forces to land. Two days later, the operation called Mission 75 began landing American occupation forces in Japan. Over the course of 1,336 C-54 flights, the 11th Airborne Division; the 27th Infantry Division; the advanced echelons of General MacArthur's headquarters, of Far Eastern Air Forces, and the Eighth Army; plus the initial Air Transport Command detachment, were flown into Atsugi Airport. From 30 August to 12 September, Special Mission 75 ferried 39,928 occupation troops and 8,202 tons of supplies from a staging area in Okinawa to Japan. The mission used 259 C-54s and 360 B-24 bombers as cargo planes, and associated aircraft.

Lt Gen Gordon Blake later served as Director of the National Security Agency (1962-1965) and retired 1 June 1965. He passed away 1 Sep 1991.



29 August 1950 Under “**Operation Blood Plasma**,” the first shipments of whole blood from the mainland U. S. destined for Korea arrived at Hickam AFB. The 1500th Air Traffic Squadron was responsible for re-icing these shipments upon arrival and again upon departure, with ice furnished by the ice plant at Schofield Barracks.



25 August 1952 **Operation HAJJI BABA or MAGIC CARPET.** From 25 to 29 August, 13 C-54s airlifted 3,763 Muslim pilgrims stranded in Beirut, Lebanon, to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia -- the gateway to Mecca, birthplace of the Prophet and site of the Kaaba holy to Muslims. This airlift enabled the faithful Muslims to fulfill their religious obligation of making the pilgrimage to Mecca, known as Hajj. The operation helped restore America's standing in the Middle East. (See USAF photo of Muslim pilgrims aboard a C-54, left. Also see the AFA account “The Pilgrim Airlift,” <http://www.afa.org/magazine/march2007/0307pilgrim.asp>.)

28 August 1952 The first **women in the Air Force (WAF)** attendant to fly the Pacific Airlift between Hickam and Haneda (Japan), A/2C Irene Grandchamps of 49th Air Transport Squadron, left Hickam on 28 August aboard a MATS Pacific Division C-97 Stratofreighter and returned six days later.



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29 August 1952 On 29 August, FEAF fighter-bombers set a new 24-hour record, routing 854 **Fifth Air Force sorties against Pyongyang, Korea**. This closely coordinated attack destroyed 56 buildings and damaged 33 others.

31 August 1956 The **Boeing KC-135 Stratotanker** flew its maiden flight.

29 August 1958 **Second Taiwan Strait Crisis**. After Republic of China (ROC) forces on Quemoy Island were shelled and threatened with seizure by the Chinese Communists, PACAF asked for part of the TAC Composite Air Strike Force (CASF). On 29 August, all but two of the F-86Ds from 5AF's 16th FIS at Kadena flew to Tainan Air Base, Taiwan, and the JCS directed the 388th TFS, with 16 F-100s, to fly to Clark Air Base. President Eisenhower also authorized the delivery of the new Sidewinder air-to-air missile to the ROC F-86 Sabres, giving them an advantage over their MiG opponents. A ceasefire between the two Chinas was called on 6 Oct 1958. (National Museum of the USAF, F-86D, right).



30 August 1960 With six Atlas missiles ready to launch, the 564th Strategic Missile Squadron at Francis E. Warren AFB, Wyoming, became the **first fully operational ICBM squadron**.

26 August 1967 The North Vietnamese captured **Maj. George E. Day**, USAF, after shooting down his F-100 Super Sabre. Severely wounded, he was taken to a prison camp for interrogation and torture. Despite his crippling injuries, Major Day escaped and evaded the enemy for two weeks. He had crossed the demilitarized zone and was within two miles of a Marine Corps base when he was shot and recaptured. Back in prison and in poor health, he continued to resist his captors until he was released in 1973. For his bravery, he earned the **Medal of Honor**.

28 August 1972 **Capt Richard S. "Steve" Ritchie**, with his backseater Capt Charles D. DeBellevue, shot down his fifth MiG-21 near Hanoi. This made Ritchie the **first USAF ace of the Vietnam War**. For this feat, Ritchie shared the 1972 Mackay Trophy with Captains Jeffrey S. Feinstein, and Charles B. DeBellevue.

26 August 1976 Two groups of **women pilot candidates** began flight screening at Hondo Municipal Airport, prior to entering undergraduate pilot training at Williams AFB on 29 September. The 77-08 class included Capts Connie Engle, Mary Donahue, Kathy La Sauce, Susan Rogers, and Christine Schott; 1st Lts Sandra Scott and Victoria Crawford; and 2nd Lts. Mary Livingston, Carol Scherer and Kathleen Rambo. They graduated on 2 September 1977.



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26 August 1980 **Exercise PACIFIC CONSORT.** An ad hoc air defense exercise held in Australia from 26 August to 11 September, Pacific Consort was the first deployment of the F-15/E-3A team to the Southwest Pacific. Exercises in Australia and New Zealand, like other Asia exercises, had been severely curtailed during the Southeast Asia war.

30 August 1983 Lt. Col. Guion S. Bluford, USAF, became the **first black astronaut** to journey into space. He rode aboard *Challenger* on the eighth space shuttle mission.

25 August 1992 **Hurricane Andrew** smashed into southern Florida with sustained 140-MPH winds, destroying Homestead AFB. The Air Force embarked on one of its largest domestic humanitarian airlift operations. By 28 October, Air Mobility Command, Air Force Reserve, and Air National Guard transports, augmented by airliners under contract, had delivered more than 21,000 tons of relief supplies and had transported more than 13,500 passengers.

26 August 1992 The United States launched **Operation SOUTHERN WATCH** to enforce United Nations sanctions against Iraq. USAF aircraft began patrolling a no-fly zone south of 32 degrees north latitude in southern Iraq to provide protection to Shiite Muslims living there and to discourage any renewed Iraqi military activity against Kuwait or Saudi Arabia.

30 August 1995 The North Atlantic Treaty Organization launched **Operation DELIBERATE FORCE**, an intensive air campaign against Serb ground targets in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Together with a Bosnian-Croatian ground offensive, the air attacks persuaded the Serbs to agree to peace terms by the end of the year.

31 August – 3 September 1996 **Operation DESERT STRIKE.** Despite warnings from the United States, Iraq moved 40,000 troops into northern Iraq, threatening and then attacking the Kurdish population. In response, President Clinton ordered a strike on military targets in Iraq posing a threat to coalition aircraft in the no-fly-zone. The B-52 contingent of AEF IV in Southeast Asia was part of Desert Strike. After leaving Andersen AFB, Guam on 2 September, the bombers flew non-stop for 33.9 hours and 13,600 miles, launching 13 conventional air launched cruise missiles (CALCMs) against targets in Iraq. Andersen AFB also began hosting more than 6,600 Kurdish evacuees during the 8-month humanitarian assistance mission, Joint Task Force Pacific Haven (16 Sep 1996 – 30 Apr 1997). (See photo of B-52 launching a CALCM, at right).

