



U.S. AIR FORCE

This Week in USAF and PACAF History **29 September – 5 October 2008**



5 October 1905 **The first “practical” airplane.** Even after the **Wright brothers** created separate, independent controls of the three flight axes—pitch, roll and yaw—their Flyer still had marginal performance. After Orville was nearly killed in a crash, they rebuilt the Flyer with the forward elevator and rear rudder both enlarged and placed several feet farther away from the wings. On 5 October 1905, the new *Wright Flyer III* flew for more than half an hour and covered nearly 24 miles near Dayton, Ohio.

Four days later, the Wright brothers wrote to the War Department, describing their new flying machine and offering it to the Army for purchase. Misunderstanding the offer as a request for research funds, the Board of Ordnance and Fortification turned them down.

29 September 1918 **MEDAL OF HONOR.** Frank Luke was a copper miner and bare-knuckle boxer before enlisting in the Army during World War I. After flight training, he was assigned to the 27th Aero Squadron with a specific mission to destroy observation balloons. Luke earned the nickname of “the Arizona balloon buster” after destroying 14 enemy balloons and airplanes in 17 days of combat. On 29 September, Luke fought through eight enemy fighter escorts to shoot down three more balloons. Severely wounded, Luke dropped close to the ground and fired on German ground forces before crash landing. Once on the ground, Luke drew a pistol and re-engaged the enemy soldiers until he died. At the time of his death, Frank Luke was 21 years old and the leading ace among U.S. pilots. He received the Medal of Honor posthumously.



"Man, how that kid could fly! No one, mind you, no one, had the sheer contemptuous courage that boy possessed. I know he's been criticized for being such a lone-hander, but, good Lord, he won us priceless victories by those very tactics. He was an excellent pilot and probably the best flying marksman on the Western Front. We had any number of expert pilots and there was no shortage of good shots, but the perfect combination, like the perfect specimen of anything in the world, was scarce. Frank Luke was the perfect combination."

- Harold Hartney, Commanding Officer, 1st Pursuit Group

"He was the most daring aviator and greatest fighter pilot of the entire war. His life is one of the brightest glories of our Air Service. He went on a rampage and shot down fourteen enemy aircraft, including ten balloons, in eight days. No other ace - Britain's Bishop from Canada, France's Fonck or even the dreaded Richthofen - had ever come close to that."

- Eddie Rickenbacker



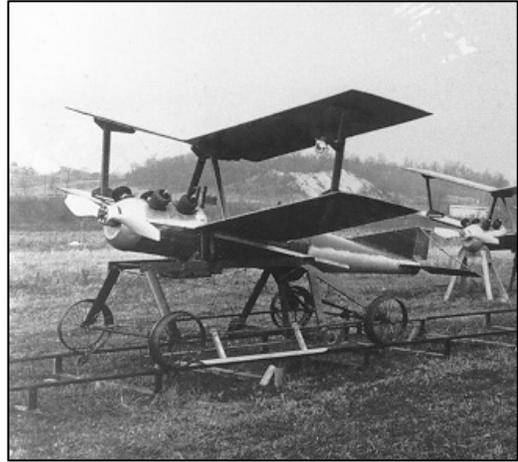


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2 October 1918 The **first successful unmanned air vehicle/cruise missile** was successfully flight-tested at Dayton, Ohio. The Army had asked inventor Charles Kettering of Dayton to develop the weapon, and Orville Wright was a consultant on the project. The Kettering Aerial Torpedo, or “Kettering Bug,” was a small bi-plane with a 180-pound bomb, launched from a dolly running on a portable track. Technicians calculated the number of engine revolutions to the target based on distance and winds. Elmer Sperry designed the aircraft’s control system, consisting of a small gyroscope for course control and an aneroid barometer to maintain altitude. When the engine had completed the calculated revolutions, a cam dropped into place, shutting off the engine and detaching the wings, leaving the bomb to fall on its target. The Kettering Bug made several successful test flights, but World War I ended before the weapon could be employed in combat.



5 October 1918 **The first sustained effort at aerial resupply** of a ground unit occurred during World War I. Planes from the 50th Aero Squadron dropped supplies and aided in determining the location of the “Lost Battalion,” elements of the 77th Division that were cut off from the Allies and besieged by the Germans during the Argonne Forest offensive.

29 September 1938 Maj. Gen. Henry H. Arnold became **chief of the Army Air Corps**, replacing Maj. Gen. Oscar Westover, who died in an airplane crash on September 21st.

30 September 1940 Contractors completed work on **Hickam’s “Big Barracks,”** also known as the “Hickam Hotel” and the “**Hale Makai.**” The building was the world’s largest single military barracks at that time. Now home to Headquarters PACAF, the three-story reinforced concrete structure could house 3,200 enlisted personnel. Its central kitchen could feed all the troops in shifts in the centrally-located mess hall.

4-6 October 1946 Col Clarence S. Irvine and his crew flew the B-29 “Pacusan Dreamboat” to a **nonstop, unrefueled distance record** of 9,500 miles by flying from Honolulu to Cairo, Egypt, in 39 hours 36 minutes. The flight path took the aircraft over Arctic regions to test the crew through hazardous weather and with complicated navigation and communication problems.

1 October 1952 **Operation FOX PETER TWO.** Through 14 October, a mass flight of 75 F-84Gs flew across the Pacific through the use of extended air refueling. The first refueling occurred between California and Hawaii, and the second between Midway Island and Japan. These operations proved that fighters could be moved to the PACAF AOR quickly by air and also avoid the corrosion of water transport.



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30 September 1953 The Bell GAM-63 Rascal missile was launched for the first time. The Rascal was the **first air-to-surface strategic nuclear missile** developed by the Air Force, but it was never fully operational and was replaced by the GAM-77/AGM-28 Hound Dog.

1 October 1953 The Air Force activated its **first airborne early warning and control squadron**, the 4701st, at McClellan AFB, California. Under Air Defense Command, the squadron flew the RC-121 aircraft (below).



1 October 1957 General Thomas S. Power, the CINCSAC, decided to begin **ground alert** operations to counter the Soviet ICBM threat. SAC maintained approximately one-third of its aircraft with weapons loaded and crews prepared for immediate takeoff. It was also under Power's command that SAC adopted the slogan "*Peace Is Our Profession.*"

4-5 October 1980 The Dutch cruise ship **M.S. Prinsendam** with 519 passengers and crew aboard caught fire in the Gulf of Alaska, forcing all to abandon ship. Elmendorf's 71st Aerospace RR Squadron sent an HH-3 helicopter and an HC-130 to the disaster site. Piloting the HH-3, Capt. John J. Walters, USAF, and his crew rescued 61 passengers and crewmen, hoisting and airlifting them from lifeboats to a supertanker. For this rescue, Captain Walters earned the **Mackay Trophy**. The abandoned *Prinsendam* sank on 11 October.



2 October 1981 "**Rearming America.**" Reversing several decisions made by President Carter, President Ronald W. Reagan announced that the Air Force would build and deploy 100 B-1 bombers. (On 1 October 86, the B-1 achieved initial operating capability at Dyess AFB, Texas.) President Reagan also cancelled the horizontal multiple shelter basing scheme for the M-X intercontinental ballistic missile in favor of super-hard silos, and announced programs to continue the ALCM program and to develop an advanced stealth bomber.



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1 October 1986 The **Goldwater-Nichols Act** removed the service chiefs from the operational chain of command, which subsequently ran from the President and Secretary of Defense directly to unified combatant commanders. This legislation was based partly on lessons learned from operations in Vietnam, Grenada and the attempted rescue of U.S. hostages in Iran.

1 October 1993 **ACC and AMC swapped aircraft assets.** In this exchange, ACC received C-130 Hercules from AMC in return for KC-135 Stratotankers.



3-14 October 1993 **AIR FORCE CROSS.** An Army MH-60 Black Hawk helicopter was shot down during a battle in Mogadishu, Somalia. Despite his own injuries, Para-rescueman TSgt Timothy Wilkinson, USAF (at left) ran through enemy fire repeatedly to carry out five wounded Army Rangers. Even when shrapnel tore a chunk of skin off his face, Wilkinson did not falter. For his heroism, he earned the Air Force Cross.

Operation RESTORE HOPE II. Over the next nine days, C-5 Galaxy and C-141 Starlifter aircraft transported 1,300 troops, 18 M-1 Abrams tanks, and 44 Bradley infantry fighting vehicles from the United States to protect U.S. forces who had come under heavy attack during the United Nations food distribution effort in Somalia. Tankers flew 169 refueling missions to offload 13.4 million pounds of fuel to support the airlift.

4 October 1994 F-16 Fighting Falcons replaced the **last F-4 Wild Weasel aircraft** in the performance of suppression of enemy air defenses (SEAD) missions.

1 October 1999 The USAF deployed Aerospace Expeditionary Force (AEF) 1 to Southwest Asia. It was the **first AEF to deploy** under a new rotational system for 10 AEFs. The new system allowed the Air Force to respond more effectively with ready forces for operations overseas and increased morale by making deployments more predictable.

29 September 2001 The **U.S. launched satellites from Alaska** for the first time, using the Kodiak Launch Complex. Previous U.S. space launches were only from Florida or California.

2 October 2006 ACC declared an initial operating capability for the GBU-39B **Small Diameter Bomb**, a low cost and low collateral damage 250-pound precision strike weapon for use by fighters, bombers and UAVs. Three days later, the 494th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron used the GBU-39/B in combat for the first time. A two-ship F-15E Strike Eagle formation carried the new weapon on a close-air support mission in Iraq.

4 October 2006 USAF officials announced **proposed locations for the F-35A Lightning II:** Eglin AFB for primary maintenance and flight training; Nellis AFB and Edwards AFB for flight testing; and Hill AFB, Kadena AB, Shaw AFB and McEntire ANGB, S. C., for operational squadrons. The announcement initiated environmental studies.