



U.S. AIR FORCE

This Week in USAF and PACAF History 22-28 September 2008

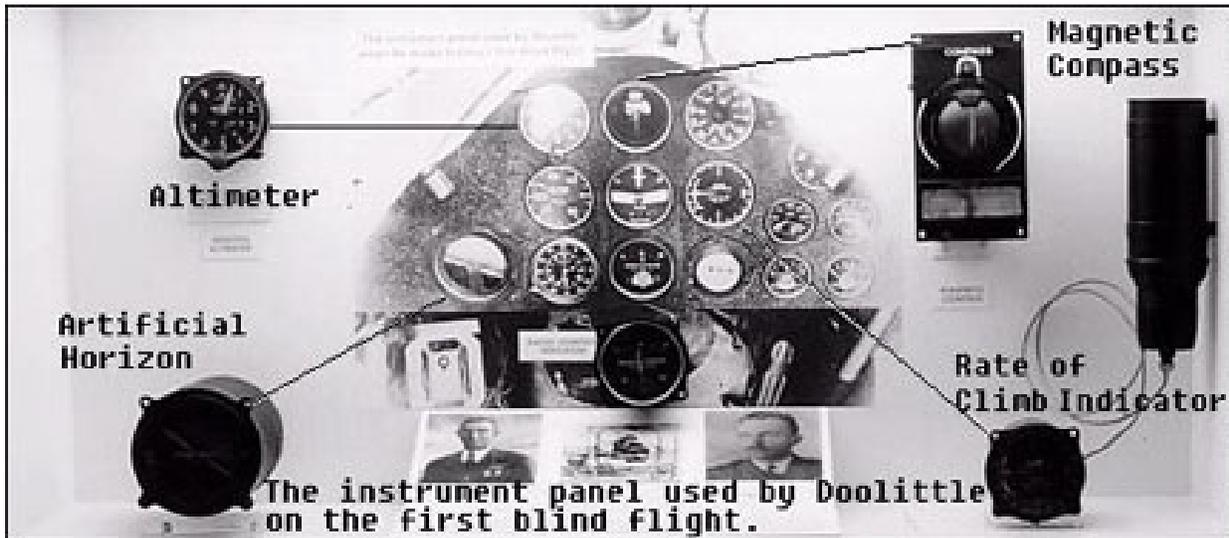


25 September 1918 **MEDAL OF HONOR.** On a voluntary patrol, Capt. Edward V. Rickenbacker spotted seven German aircraft. Despite the odds, he dove on them and shot down two of the enemy. For this action, he received the Medal of Honor.



24 September 1929 At Mitchel Field, New York, Lt. James H. "Jimmy" Doolittle (left) made the **first instruments-only, all-blind flight**, from takeoff to landing. Doolittle took off in a Consolidated NY-2 airplane with a completely covered cockpit, flew a short distance, and landed. He was accompanied by a check pilot who monitored the flight.

One of Doolittle's most important contributions to aeronautical technology was the development of instrument flying. He assisted in the development of fog flying equipment including the artificial horizon and directional gyroscope. These accomplishments made all-weather flight operations safe and practical, and earned Doolittle the Harmon Trophy.



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.

27 September 1943 For the first time, **P-47s flew all the way** with B-17s in a raid on Emden, Germany. The escorting P-47s were able to fly over 600 miles by carrying additional fuel tanks. The P-47 Thunderbolt became a very effective air-to-ground attack aircraft in World War II, but it also rendered valuable service as a bomber escort.



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22 September 1944 The **last USAAF shuttle bombing mission** between the UK and the Soviet Union against Nazi targets in Europe ended when 84 B-17s and 51 P-51s returned to the UK via Italy. On 26 September 1994, a B-52 Stratofortress, a B-1B Lancer and a KC-10 Extender landed at Poltava Air Base, Ukraine, marking the first time since World War II that U.S. bombers had landed in that country.

26 September 1945 The Army's WAC Corporal missile, the **first research rocket and the first liquid-propellant rocket**, completed its first development flight at the White Sands Proving Grounds. The rocket rose to 43.5 miles, about twice the expected altitude. The technology led to further programs such as Aerobee research rockets, Viking rockets and Titan ICBMs.

25 September 1947 President Truman named Gen. Carl A. Spaatz as the **first USAF chief of staff**. On the following day, Defense Secretary James W. Forrestal ordered air personnel, bases, and materiel transferred from the Army to the new Department of the Air Force.

23 September 1951 The 27th Fighter-Escort Wing received the **first F-84G Thunderjet** (photo below). The F-84G was the first fighter with built-in aerial refueling capability and the first single-seat aircraft capable of carrying a nuclear bomb.



The F-84G was also the first aircraft used by the USAF Thunderbirds flight demonstration team (photo at right).



27 September 1951 In Operation PELICAN, a **C-124 Globemaster II** flew for the first time from Japan to Korea, delivering 30,000 pounds of aircraft parts to Kimpo Airfield and demonstrating the potential of very large transport aircraft in a combat theater.

28 September 1954 The **YF-101A Voodoo first flew** at Edwards AFB. The F-101 was the heaviest, fastest single-seat US fighter of this period. Initially designed as a bomber escort, the "one-oh-wonder" also had roles as a nuclear fighter-bomber, air-defense interceptor and was the first fighter used for supersonic photo reconnaissance. The F-101's biggest role may have been its contribution to the development of its replacement – the F-4 Phantom.





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27 September 1956 **MACH 3.** Capt. Milburn G. Apt, USAF, while flying a Bell X-2 rocket-powered airplane dropped from a B-50 bomber launched at Edwards AFB, became the **first pilot to fly at Mach 3** (three times the speed of sound). The flight ended tragically in a fatal crash. The photo below is the X-2 with Capt Apt in the cockpit and Capt. Iven Kinchloe on the ladder. (Note where heat and air friction have burned away spots of paint on the X-2's nose.)



As military aircraft were equipped with jet engines, their designs incorporated smaller wings and tails in order to reduce drag. No one knew that the increased speeds and decreased stability of these new aircraft would cause a phenomenon later known as **inertia coupling**. Control inputs such as aileron roll on the wings met resistance from fuselage inertia, causing the aircraft to pitch and/or yaw into extremely violent, uncontrolled motion.

Capt. Apt was an experienced test pilot but had never before flown in the x-craft program. On his fatal flight, Capt. Apt followed the planned profile of climb to the "bend-over" altitude of

70,000 feet. The rocket engine burned perfectly, and the fuel lasted nine seconds longer than it had ever lasted before. The speed climbed past the X-2's previous record (1,900 mph) to 2,200 mph—3.3 times the speed of sound. When the fuel was gone, Apt found himself further from home than anticipated. The planned flight profile called for slowing to Mach 2.4 before turning back to base, but the additional time to slow before turning may have put him beyond safe gliding range of his planned runway. Captain Apt called on his radio: "The engine has cut out and I'm beginning to turn." Still above Mach 3, he began a turn back towards Edwards. The X-2 began a series of diverging rolls and tumbled out of control. Apt separated the escape capsule and attempted to bail out, but he was unable to free himself before impact.

The lessons learned from Capt. Apt's flight and other tests led to improved airframe designs, stability augmentation systems and other improvements to high-performance aircraft.

24 September 1958 From a distance of 75 miles, a **Bomarc missile** launched from Cape Canaveral destroyed a 1,000-mph target flying 48,000 feet over the Atlantic. ("Bomarc" refers to the design partnership between Boeing and the Michigan Aeronautical Research Center.)

23 September 1959 The DoD reorganized its space and missile programs to give the USAF responsibility over space transportation and ultimately all space booster rockets.

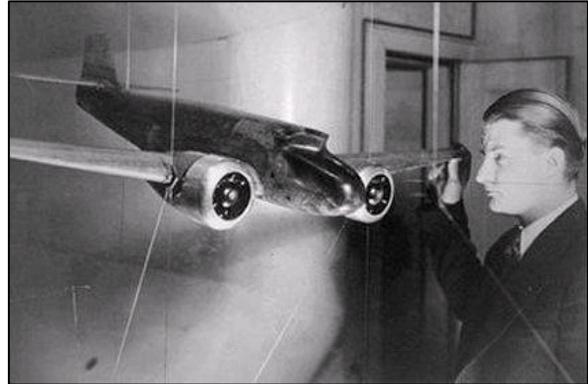


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24 September 1964 President Johnson presented aviation's highest honor, the **Robert J. Collier Trophy to Clarence L. "Kelly" Johnson** of Lockheed (pictured at right). Ten days earlier, Kelly Johnson also received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian award.



One of the most talented and prolific aircraft design engineers in the history of aviation, Kelly Johnson and Lockheed's "Skunk Works" designed and/or developed over 40 aircraft, including the P-38, F-104, U-2 and SR-71.

Johnson's boss at Lockheed once exclaimed, "That damned Swede can actually see air!"

28 September 1964 With eight KC-135s, the **Yankee Team Tanker Task Force** (also the Foreign Legion), started supporting PACAF fighter combat operations.

22 September 1987 An F-14 of Navy VF-74, based on the USS Saratoga, **accidentally shot down an USAF RF-4C** from the 26 TRW at Zweibrucken AB, Germany, during NATO exercise Display Determination over the Mediterranean. The Navy believed this was the first time that a Navy jet had shot down a friendly aircraft.

24 September 1987 The **Thunderbirds** gave their first show ever in the People's Republic of China before some 20,000 Chinese in Beijing.

27 September 1991 President George H. W. Bush ordered termination of Strategic Air Command's alert, initiated in October 1957, during which time crews stood ready around the clock to launch nuclear strikes. This event heralded the **end of the Cold War** between the United States and the Soviet Union.

27 September 2001 Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld announced that President George W. Bush had given authority to certain military commanders to order the destruction of hijacked civilian airliners.

