

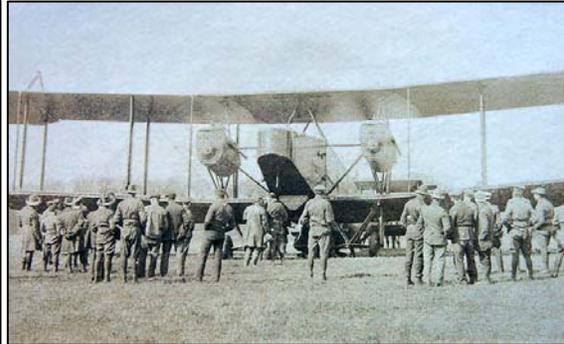
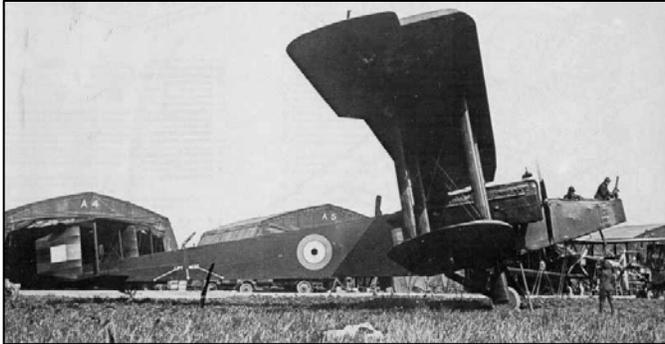


U.S. AIR FORCE

## This Week in USAF and PACAF History 13-19 October 2008



17 October 1918 Brig Gen Billy Mitchell briefed General John J. Pershing, Commander of the American Expeditionary Forces, on a **plan for a Spring 1919 airborne offensive**. Mitchell proposed training the 12,000-man 1st Infantry Division in parachute jumping, and then airdropping them behind German lines using Handley-Page O/400 bombers (photos below). General Pershing tentatively approved the concept, but the war ended in November, 1918.



14 Oct 1938 Edward Elliott conducted the **first flight test of the Curtiss XP-40** (below) at Buffalo, NY. The XP-40 was a modification of the P-36 Hawk and the prototype of the P-40s used in World War II. The wartime P-40's semi-modular design was easy to maintain even in harsh conditions. Later versions were well-armored and equipped with self-sealing fuel tanks and more powerful engines. With good agility, very good dive speed, deadly armament and a durable structure, the P-40 had excellent results in head-on engagements with Japanese fighters and in ground attacks on surface forces. The P-40 saw action in many theaters of World War II, most famously with the American Volunteer Group's *Flying Tigers* in China.



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19 Oct 1940 The **Hawaiian Air Force** (emblem at left), which later became the Seventh Air Force, was established. It was activated on 1 November 1940 at Fort Shafter, Territory of Hawaii, and assigned to the Hawaiian Department, U.S. Army. The Hawaiian Air Force motto was the Hawaiian phrase Ku Kiai ("On Guard").

The Hawaiian AF was moved to Hickam

Field in July 1941, and redesignated as 7th Air Force on 5 February 1942.

(See entry [http://www.au.af.mil/au/afhra/rso/numbered\\_airforce\\_index.html](http://www.au.af.mil/au/afhra/rso/numbered_airforce_index.html))



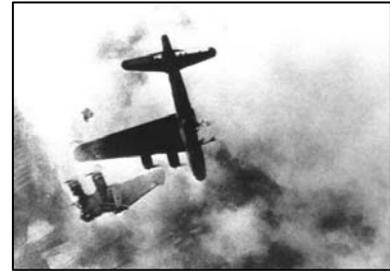


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**U.S. AIR FORCE**

14 October 1943 On **“Black Thursday,”** the Eighth Air Force raided **Schweinfurt**, the heart of the German ball bearing industry, for the second time. Of 291 B-17 bombers in the attacking force, 60 were lost to fighter interceptors and flak, and 138 more were damaged, causing the Eighth to temporarily discontinue daylight bombing of targets deep in Germany.



When Hitler’s minister of armaments and economics, Albert Speer, was interviewed after the war, he said that the Allies were remiss in not mounting a decisive bombing campaign against the bearing industry while it was still centrally located. Recognizing the threat to their armaments industry, the Nazis dispersed and rebuilt ball bearing and other factories, partially in bomb-proof underground facilities. Still, Speer made this comment: *“The strategic bombing of Germany was the greatest lost battle of the whole war for Germany.”*



14 October 1947 At Muroc Field, Capt Chuck Yeager (left) was the **first to break the sound barrier** in the rocket-powered Bell XS-1 after being dropped from a B-29. For this achievement, Yeager received the Mackay Trophy.

Retired Brig Gen Yeager celebrated the 30<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of his feat by flying faster than sound in an F-104 in 1977 and in an F-15 Eagle in 1997.



14 October 1947 SECDEF James V. Forrestal approved the Air Force’s control over all surface-to-surface “pilotless aircraft” and strategic missiles. The Army gained control over all tactical missiles.



15 October 1952 A B-47 photo reconnaissance mission, authorized by President Truman and staged out of Eielson AFB, was flown over the Chukotsky Peninsula in the Soviet Union. The mission confirmed that the Soviets were developing Arctic staging bases on the peninsula from which their bombers could easily reach targets on the North American continent.



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**14–15 October 1962** The **Cuban missile crisis** began when Maj. Richard S. Heyser and Maj. Rudolf Anderson, Jr., conducting U-2 reconnaissance flights over Cuba, proved that Soviet missile sites were under construction there. On October 18<sup>th</sup>, eight Air Force Reserve troop-carrier wings and six aerial-port squadrons were mobilized.



16 October 1963 **PROJECT VELA HOTEL/PROJECT 823.** At Cape Canaveral, Florida, the Air Force inaugurated a space-based nuclear-detection system by launching twin satellites to assume circular 57,000-mile-high orbits on opposite sides of Earth. The 475-pound, 20-sided satellites could detect nuclear explosions anywhere on the planet.

16 Oct 1964 The **Chinese Communists exploded their first nuclear device** near Lake Lop Nor in Xinjiang Province. The Air Force Technical Applications Center (AFTAC) collected data on the explosion. Special (TOE DANCER) operations were conducted to gather data. Air Weather Service provided C-130, WB-50, and WB-57 aircraft from Yokota AB, Japan; Wheelus AB, Libya; Eielson AFB, Alaska; and McClellan AF, CA. Nuclear debris from the test was picked up on over 30 sorties by Yokota aircraft. Radio-chemical analysis of the fallout cloud from the Chinese test revealed that it was a uranium device and contradicted intelligence that the Chinese nuclear weapon program was focused on a plutonium weapon.



WB-57 aircraft

15 Oct 1970 **TROPIC MOON III B-57Gs.** From Ubon RTAFB, the 13 BS flew its first night interdiction combat mission with the B-57G.

Under TROPIC MOON III, forward-looking radar, LORAN, and other improvements were made to B-57Gs. TMIII B-57Gs proved capable of night interdiction of enemy supply lines, although the AC-130s outperformed them. The squadron flew all of its missions in the eastern part of the so-called Steel Tiger area of Laos where North Vietnam sent thousands of trucks south into the Republic of Vietnam. (Photo of Tropic Moon B-57G, right).





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13 October 1972 **MACKAY TROPHY.** An F-4 weapon system officer, Capt Jeffrey S. Feinstein, shot down his fifth MiG-21 to become the **third and final ace of the Vietnam War.** For this feat, Feinstein shared the 1972 Mackay Trophy with Captains Richard S. “Steve” Ritchie and Charles B. DeBellevue.

14 October – 14 November 1973 **Operation NICKEL GRASS.** Military Airlift Command delivered over 22,000 tons of materiel from 20 locations in the U.S. to Israel during the 1973 “Yom Kippur War.” MAC completed this airlift, with a one-way distance of 6,450 miles, in 567 C-5 and C-141 missions. By comparison, the Soviets supplied 15,000 tons to the Arabs in 40 days flying over a route of 1,700 miles in 935 missions.

16 Oct 1980 The USAF announced that 48 **F-16s would be deployed to Kunsan AB, Korea,** to replace the F-4Ds at both Kunsan and Taegu. The modernization reaffirmed U.S. commitments to the security of South Korea, and was scheduled to begin in mid-1981.

17 Oct 1980 **Cope North Expanded.** Exercise Cope North 81-1, held at Misawa AB, Japan, was the first of the series to be funded by JCS, and also the first to be joint/combined. US Marine Corps A-4s and EA-6Bs joined PACAF F-4Es and OV-10s to combine with the Japanese Self-Defense Force F-1, F-4EJ, and F-104J aircraft. Previous exercises were PACAF-funded, and limited to PACAF and Japanese Self-Defense Force participation.

13 October 1999 The **X-43A**, an unmanned **Hypersonic Flight Research Vehicle** and the world’s first hypersonic air-breathing free-flight vehicle, arrived at Edwards AFB for testing by NASA. The X-43 involved Supersonic Combustion Ramjet, or “Scramjet,” technology. In 2001 the X-43A became the first vehicle with a non-rocket engine to fly at hypersonic speeds, and it has since flown at over Mach 9. Micro Craft, Inc., of Tullahoma, Tenn., built the 12-foot-long, unpowered vehicle for NASA's Hyper-X program. (AFNEWS Article 992034, 5 Nov 99)



15 Oct 2005 The “**Weatherscout**” **unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV)** flew its first mission from Northwest Field at Andersen AFB, Guam. This flight began six weeks of testing by the Air Force Operational Test and Evaluation Center. The UAV could become PACAF's equivalent of the 53rd Weather Reconnaissance Squadron “Hurricane Hunter's” WC-130J Hercules. Earlier in the year, a Weatherscout flew into Hurricane Ophelia and conducted the first-ever detailed observations of a near-surface, high-wind hurricane environment—an area considered too dangerous for manned aircraft to observe directly. (See photo above of Weatherscout being launched from a moving car).