



U.S. AIR FORCE

This Week in PACAF and USAF History 1 - 7 December 2008



1 December 1872 Maj Gen John M. Schofield (left, Commander of the Military Division of the Pacific) and Col Barton S. Alexander (US Army Corps of Engineers) sailed from San Francisco to Honolulu with secret instructions to evaluate Hawaii's ports in terms of defensive capabilities and commercial facilities. They recognized **the great potential of Pearl Harbor** as a "harbor of refuge in time of war," and recommended the U.S. obtain a deed.



1 December 1887 Hawaii's King Kalakaua (right) reluctantly agreed with his cabinet's recommendation to **cede Pearl Harbor** to the United States. America now had exclusive rights to enter Pearl Harbor, improve its entrance channel, and establish a coaling and repair station there.



6 Dec 1907 U.S. Army Lieutenant Thomas E. Selfridge became the **first Army officer to solo** in a powered aircraft, the White Wing. The following year, Lt Selfridge was killed while riding as an observer with Orville Wright during a demonstration flight at Fort Myer, Virginia.

1-16 December 1914 **Two-way air-to-ground radio communications** were demonstrated by Army Signal Corps Lts. H. A. Dargue and J. O. Maubornge in a flight over the Philippines.

2 Dec 1936 **The Boeing YB-17 made its maiden flight.** Even after awarding a contract to the far less expensive B-18 Bolo, the Air Corps was so impressed with Boeing's bomber design that they used a legal loophole to order 13 YB-17s as test aircraft. The B-17 "Flying Fortress" went on to enter full-scale production as the first truly mass-produced large aircraft. It was used primarily in the strategic bombing campaign against Germany and it also conducted raids on Japanese shipping in the Pacific. The B-17's legendary ability to survive extensive battle damage, belly landings and ditchings made it the favorite bomber among World War II aircrews. The B-17 dropped more bombs than any other U.S. aircraft in the war.





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7 Dec 1941 **Japanese carrier-based aircraft attacked U.S. military airfields on Oahu** along with the primary Japanese target—the **Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor**. The bombing and strafing of Hickam, Wheeler, and other airfields crippled U.S. air defenses and prevented U.S. bombers from striking the Japanese aircraft carriers. The Army Air Forces on Oahu suffered 690 casualties, including 244 killed. Out of 234 AAF aircraft, 76 were completely destroyed and only 83 were still in commission after the attack.



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The attack brought the United States into World War II against Japan and its allies, Germany and Italy. These photographs show Wheeler's flightline burning (above) and a pile of aircraft wreckage collected after the attack (right).



5 Dec 1949 The USAF diverted \$50 million from other projects to build a radar screen in Alaska and certain US areas after detecting a Soviet atomic explosion in August 1949. The successful Soviet test came several years earlier than expected and alarmed U.S. defense experts.



B-45 Tornado

4 Dec 1950 MiG-15s shot down a USAF B-45 Tornado reconnaissance aircraft, marking the first successful jet bomber interception in airpower history. Two days later, the 27th Fighter Escort Wing began flying combat operations from Taegu, bringing F-84 Thunderjets to the war.



F-84 Thunderjet



7 Dec 1956 The DoD placed all air transport operations under a single service manager and named the Military Air Transport Service (MATS) as its operating agency. This directive required the Navy to transfer its transport aircraft, except for 30 four-engine land transports belonging to the Fleet Logistic Air Wings, to the Air Force. (See MATS emblem at left.)



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7 Dec 1960 The first ten of 29 **F-102 “Delta Dagger”** aircraft joined the **Hawaii Air National Guard**, replacing their F-86s. Participating in dedication ceremonies for the new aircraft were Lieutenant Governor Keahola, Brig Gen Chickering, “Daddy” Bray (Hawaiian kahuna), Brig Gen V.A. Siefermann and Col D.P. Silva of the Hawaii Air National Guard. (See photo of HIANG F-102s, below).



2 December 1966 **"Black Friday" of the Vietnam War.** The Air Force lost five aircraft and the Navy three to SAMs or anti-aircraft fire. Air Force losses included three F-4Cs, one RF-4C, and an F-105. The Navy lost one F-4B and two Douglas A-4C Skyhawks. Losses such as these led DoD officials to accelerate acquisition programs and tactics developments aimed at suppressing enemy air defense systems.

2 December 1991 **Thirteenth Air Force established headquarters at Andersen AFB, Guam** after officially departing Clark AB, Philippines in November.

1 December 1993 **North Korean goal to reunify the peninsula by force.** Vice Marshal Choe Kwang, Chief of the General Staff of the North Korean military (and defense minister, 1995-97), declared at a major state function that the military “has the heavy and honorable task of reunifying the fatherland with guns in the nineties without fail.”



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2 December 1993 Air Force Col. Richard O. Covey, pilot and mission commander, piloted the fifth flight of the shuttle Endeavor, which set a record of five spacewalks.



On the same flight, Air Force Lt. Col. Tom Akers became the U.S. record holder for spacewalks with 29 hours and 40 minutes.

5 Dec 1994 **The START I Treaty went into force.** The breakup of the Soviet Union had delayed START's entry into force for nearly three-and-a-half years until Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine, which had inherited strategic nuclear weapons from the Soviet Union, ratified START and joined the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as non-nuclear states.

6 December 1995 **Operation JOINT ENDEAVOR.** USAF airlifters started moving troops and equipment to Bosnia. This NATO operation implemented the Dayton Peace Accord between Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia reached at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio.

3 December 2001 Lockheed Martin delivered the USAF's **first C-130J-30** to the 143 AW (ANG) at Quonset State Airport, R. I. These aircraft have a longer fuselage than the standard "J" model. They carry 128 combat troops or 8 pallets rather than 92 troops or 6 pallets.

8 Dec 2002 **Super typhoon Pongsona struck Guam** with wind gusts of more than 180 mph, causing extensive damage across the island and downing scores of power and telephone poles. Three fuel storage tanks caught fire. Pongsona left Andersen AB with waist-high water, loss of power, major damage to base structures and more than 1,000 downed trees. Hickam sent a 19-member team including civil engineers and services members to Guam aboard a Hawaii ANG KC-135 to help restore power production and work at structural repair, fencing, and signage.