



U.S. AIR FORCE

This Week in USAF and PACAF History 19 - 25 January 2009



21 Jan 1911 Lt Paul W. Beck sent the **first radio message from a plane to ground station** at Selfridge Field, Mich., 1.5 miles away. He designed a transmitter to send telegraph signals and used Phillip O. Parmalee's Wright plane flying at 100 feet for this demonstration. The Wright Flyer is pictured at left.

24 Jan 1944 **D-DAY AT ANZIO.** The Allied air campaign in Italy leading up to the Anzio landings had destroyed German airfields, aircraft and lines of communication, and made a feint toward an Allied landing site different than Anzio. The intensity of the air campaign forced the Germans to withdraw most of their aircraft northward, reducing their ability to mass their air effort and to oppose the landings. On 24 January, the allied assault forces landed at Anzio and Nettuno with minimal resistance. Twelfth Air Force provided air cover for the landings and played a major role in defending the beachhead.

The Germans counterattacked with the intention of trapping and destroying the allied forces. From D-Day until 15 February, allied air forces flew 27,204 sorties, dropped 13,035 tons of bombs, and destroyed 326 enemy planes at a cost of 96 allied bombers and 133 fighters, lost mostly to German anti-aircraft artillery. 12th AF maintained air cover over the beachhead, supplied convoys and naval vessels and provided close air support to the assault forces. To enhance cooperation between the ground and air commanders, Fifth Army and 12th AF personnel met nightly to review the day's operations and plan the next day's attacks. The air-land team also developed the "call targets" system, consisting of telephone calls from Fifth Army to 12th AF when emergency air support was needed. 12th AF then directly assigned the "call targets" to air units standing by for attack. Several dangerous penetrations by German forces into allied lines were repulsed.



The Allied effort in the Mediterranean drained German combat power that could have been used on other fronts, enhanced the re-supply of Allied forces throughout the Mediterranean theater, deprived German forces of critical resources, and led to the allied invasion of southern France in August, 1944.

20 Jan 1949 **The first flight of the Matador**, model XSSM-A-1, occurred at the White Sands Missile Range. The TM-61 Matador was a jet-powered cruise missile which became **the Air Force's first fully operational tactical missile.**



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22 Jan 1950 The U.S. Air Force established the **Air Research and Development Command**. In 1961, the organization was re-designated **Air Force Systems Command**.

24 Jan 1951 **OPERATION THUNDERBOLT**. Close air support for United Nations (UN) ground troops remained a priority mission for FEAF in the Korean conflict. In an Eighth Army campaign designed to reach the Han River, T-6 Mosquito controllers patrolled ahead of friendly ground forces, notified ground forces of enemy strong spots, and called in air strikes by US fighter-bombers. Generals Matthew B. Ridgway and Earl E. Partridge personally reconnoitered the front lines in a T-6 prior to the 25 January dawn attack on Red Chinese forces.



24 Jan 1953 Two USAF pilots of the 51st FIW, Captains Dolphin D. Overton III and Harold E. Fischer, Jr., achieved ace status. In addition, Captain Overton (at left) set a record for becoming a **jet ace in the shortest time** (four days).

Overton did not receive credit for two other kills because they occurred in Chinese airspace - a violation of the Rules Of Engagement which banned combat sorties across the Yalu River into China except in the case of "hot pursuit." Captain Overton was the first F-86 pilot to be caught unauthorized over the Yalu. He was grounded, sent home and threatened with a general court martial to compel him to resign from the Air Force. When ground crews learned what had happened they threatened to mutiny and no other pilots were punished.

Captain Overton's awards include the Distinguished Flying Cross and four Air Medals.

20 Jan 1960 **Soviet Missile Testing**. Early in January, the Soviet Union announced planned testing of more powerful rockets. The first test flights would impact within a 44,800-sq. mi. area in the Pacific, located only 1,000 miles southwest of the Hawaiian Islands. Under Project Big Arm, PACAF and Pacific Fleet (PACFLT) cooperated to observe these Soviet missile tests. On 20 and 22 January, PACAF employed KC-135, C-130, and RB-69 (P2V-7) aircraft to accomplish very successful observation and data-gathering missions. (See photo of USAF RB-69, at right).





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21 Jan 1961 **HIANG Conversion Completed.** The first flight of a TF-102A of the Hawaii Air National Guard's 199th Fighter- Interceptor Squadron occurred on 21 January. The new aircraft replaced the old F86s on alert status in May. (See photo of HIANG F-102s, below).



23 Jan 1966 Military Airlift Command completed **Operation BLUE LIGHT**, the airlift of the Army's 3rd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, from Hickam AFB to Pleiku, South Vietnam, to offset the buildup of Communist forces there. The airlift began on Dec. 23, 1965, and its 231 C-141 sorties move approximately 3,000 troops and 4,700 tons of equipment. At the time, Blue Light counted as the largest combat zone airlift in history.

21 Jan 1968 **SIEGE OF KHE SANH.** Communist forces began an extended siege of three Marine battalions at Khe Sanh, Vietnam. In early January 1968, some 15,000 Communist troops cut off all ground supply to the base. On 16 January, C-130s moved another Marine infantry battalion to Khe Sanh to give the base a total of 6,000 defenders. The siege began on 21 January and lasted into March, prompting an extensive airlift. USAF tactical transports made 447 landings (below, right) and 576 airdrops (below, left) under very hostile conditions. The airlift reinforced Khe Sanh with another battalion and delivered 12,430 tons of cargo, giving the defenders a 30-day supply of food, fuel, and ammunition. Enemy fire destroyed three aircraft and damaged 18 others. To this date, only the Berlin Airlift had surpassed the size of the Khe Sanh resupply operation.





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21 Jan 1991 **AIR FORCE CROSS.** Capt Paul T. Johnson was awarded the Air Force Cross for his action on this date in Desert Storm. An excerpt from the citation:



“Captain Johnson was the flight lead on Sandy 57, a two-ship of A-10s tasked for search and rescue alert at a forward operating location. While en route, he received tasking to look for an F-14 crew that had been shot down the night before. During the next six hours he would lead his flight through three aerial refuelings, one attack on a possible SCUD missile site, and three hours of intensive searching deeper inside enemy territory

than any A-10 had ever been. He risked his life as he had to fly at a mere 500 feet in order to pinpoint the survivor's location. When an enemy truck appeared to be heading toward his survivor, Captain Johnson directed his flight to destroy it, thus securing the rescue.”



22 Jan 1991 **DESERT STORM.** “Smart bomb” attacks began against hardened aircraft shelters at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq. The attacks were so successful that Iraqi fighters started flying to Iran to escape destruction.

24 Jan 2006 **The Hawaii Air National Guard flew its last C-130 mission.** Former members of the 6594th Test Group -- Lt Col James "Jim" Yuki, Lt Col Gerald "Gerry" Mansell, and Lt Col Kevin Garcia -- were part of the crew, which participated in the final mission of the last member of the HIANG's fleet of five C-130H Hercules cargo planes. The Guard's C-130, dubbed "Koea Kea," would be sent to the Idaho Air National Guard, as the HIANG geared up to fly Hickam-based C-17s beginning February 2006. (See Honolulu Star-Bulletin photo at right, showing Lt Col James Yuki on final approach to HIA flying the “Koea Kea”).

