



U.S. AIR FORCE

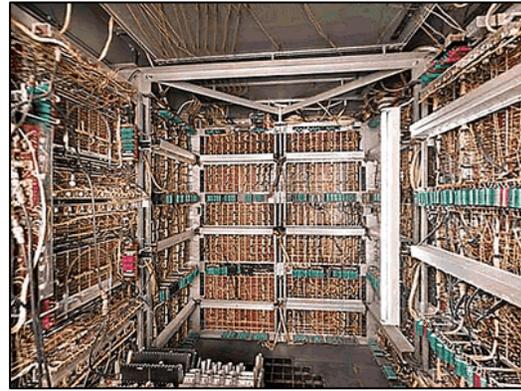
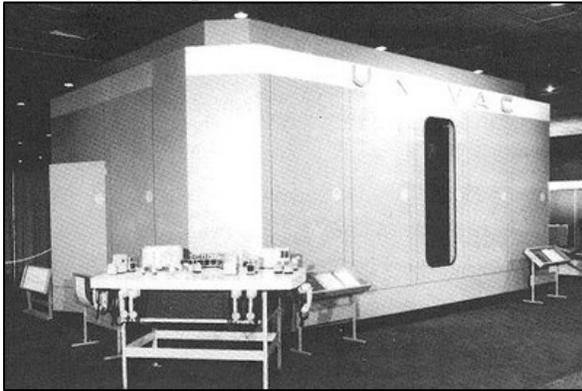
This Week in USAF and PACAF History 26 January – 1 February 2009



27 Jan 1912 **Mackay Trophy.** Clarence H. Mackay established the Mackay Trophy. Aviators could compete for the trophy annually under rules made each year, or the War Department could award the trophy for the most meritorious flight of the year.

1 Feb 1943 **General Officer rescue.** Navy crews in PBY-5 Catalina aircraft rescued Thirteenth Air Force commander Maj. Gen. Nathan F. Twining and 14 others near the New Hebrides Islands after they were forced to ditch their aircraft and spend six days in life rafts.

1 Feb 1952 **The Air Force acquired its first general-purpose, high-speed digital computer.** Delivered the following month, the vacuum-tube-based **Universal Automatic Computer I (UNIVAC I;** photo below left) was the second government acquisition of the computer, after the Census Bureau. The circuitry that made up the original walk-in UNIVAC I (below right) now fits on a fingertip.



30 Jan 1953 **The Boeing B-47 Stratojet first flew.** The innovative B-47 (below) had swept wings, jet engines, and aerial refueling capability. The B-47 was designed in the late 1940s as a high-altitude, medium-range bomber. Fielded before the age of SAMs, ICBMs, SLBMs and cruise missiles, the B-47 could hold its own against fighter interceptors of the early 1950's. The B-47 carried only one or two high yield nuclear weapons, but it was produced in numbers sufficient for its mission. By 1956, there were over 1,300 B-47 bombers assigned to SAC, besides over 200 RB-47s. Many of the B-47's features became a part of the design of the B-52.





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1 February 1961 The **ballistic missile early warning system** (BMEWS) site at Thule, Greenland, became operational. Subsequently, other sites became operational at Clear, Alaska, and Flyingdales in the United Kingdom. Operated by NORAD, the system could provide the United States warning of an impending Soviet missile attack in time to respond.

On the same day, the **Minuteman intercontinental ballistic missile** was launched for the first time at Cape Canaveral, Florida, in a major test. Under full guidance, it traveled 4,600 miles to its target area. The solid-fueled Minuteman could be stored more easily and fired more quickly than the liquid-fueled Atlas and Titan intercontinental ballistic missiles.

1-3 Feb 1966 **Disaster Relief.** From 1-3 February, a typhoon devastated Tutuila, the largest island of American Samoa, leaving 90 people dead. The 61st Military Airlift Wing stationed at Hickam flew over 13 tons of relief cargo to Pago Pago, some 2,300 miles away. The wing flew three C-124 Globemaster IIs, carrying an electrical generator, half a ton of wire, 10 tons of construction tools and materiel, and 2.2 tons of rice.

27 Jan 1967 **Flash fire during ground testing of the Apollo 1 command module** killed three astronauts: Air Force Lt. Col. Virgil I. Grissom, Navy Lt. Cmdr. Roger B. Chaffee and Edward H. White. The disaster set the moon-landing effort back two years.

27 Jan 1968 **Operation COMBAT FOX.** After North Korea seized the S.S. Pueblo on 23 January, MAC supported USAF and Army deployments from the U.S., Pacific, and SEA to South Korea and Japan. During the next three weeks, MAC moved 7,996 passengers and nearly 13,700 tons of cargo in over 800 missions to the region.

29 Jan 1973 **Operation COUNTDOWN.** Through 29 March, following the signing of the Vietnam peace accords, Air Force and commercial aircraft airlifted 21,000 American and allied forces and 7,000 tons of equipment from South Vietnam.

28 Jan 1986 **Space shuttle Challenger exploded** 73 seconds after liftoff, killing all seven astronauts, including Hawaii-born astronaut Lt Col Ellison Onizuka. More than 1,500 members of the 15th ABW, lined up for a scheduled open-ranks inspection at Hickam's base operations, were shocked when the wing commander stepped up to the podium and informed them of the disaster. One of Hickam's missions was to act as an alternate or emergency base for contingency landings of the Space Shuttle.





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27 Jan 1991 **DESERT STORM.** F-111 Aardvarks delivered guided bombs on the Al Ahmadi oil refinery to close oil manifolds opened by the Iraqis. This attack stopped the flow of the biggest deliberate oil spill in history.

29 Jan 1991 **Battle of Khafji.** In the first weeks of Desert Storm, coalition air attacks were rapidly immobilizing Iraqi ground forces. The Iraqis, attempting to seize the initiative while their armored forces still had the ability to maneuver, assembled an assault force to attack across the border into Saudi Arabia. Joint STARS aircraft detected the Iraqi movements and warned



coalition commanders. However, the weight of U.S. Army and other coalition land forces were in the midst of a three-week redeployment 200 miles to the west in preparation for the planned “left hook” coalition ground attack. Iraqi forces attacked and seized the town of Khafji, but the Joint Force Commander, General Schwarzkopf,

decided not to play into Saddam’s hands by launching a ground counterattack. Instead, Schwarzkopf instructed his commanders to use airpower as the key element, along with Marine, Saudi, and other coalition ground forces, to stop the Iraqi offensive.

Hundreds of air attacks on Iraqi forces in Kuwait were already scheduled and under way. With airpower already flowing through the kill boxes, air controllers quickly diverted sorties to the Marine forward air controllers or sent them ahead to interdict the Iraqi forces attempting to reach coalition lines. The previously dug-in Iraqi armored vehicles were now in the open and more easily identified and targeted by coalition air assets. In three days, the Iraqi attack was stopped.



At 0600 hours on the morning of January 31, "Spirit 03" was the last of three AC-130 Spectre gunships on station to provide close air support. Spirit 03 was due to end its patrol when it received a call from the Marines - they needed an enemy missile battery destroyed. Despite the risk of the rising sun exposing them to enemy fire, the crew of "Spirit 03" chose to

remain and destroy the position as requested. Soon after eliminating the target, Spirit 03 was shot down by an SA-7, killing all 14 crewmembers. This was the largest USAF loss of the war.

Also see “The Epic Little Battle of Khafji,” AF Magazine @ <http://www.afa.org/magazine/feb1998/0298epic.asp>.



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31 Jan 1997 This date marked the activation of the 31st Air Expeditionary Wing—**the first expeditionary wing in the Air Force**. Such wings would be available for rotational deployments worldwide.

1 Feb 1997 Two 509th Bomb Wing B-2 pilots emerged from perhaps **the longest simulator flight in Air Force history** at Whiteman AFB. The 44.4-hour simulator flight, called Vigilant Spirit II, ended on 1 February for Maj Steve Moulton and Capt Jeff Long. The test tried to determine how fatigue impacted pilot abilities to perform a long mission safely. It used sleep, dietary strategies and seat exercises to reduce fatigue. (AFNEWS Article 970175, 18 Feb 97)

31 Jan 2001 **Disaster Relief**. Through 3 February, two C-5s and four C-17s flew 115 short tons of humanitarian cargo to Ahmedabad, India, after a 7.7 earthquake devastated western India on 26 January. Each C-5 Galaxy flew nonstop from Travis AFB, California to Andersen AFB, Guam. Hawaii ANG KC-135s refueled each C-5 en route to Guam. At Andersen (photo below), workers transferred the C-5 cargo onto four 62 AW C-17s from McChord AFB, because Ahmedabad's airfield was too small for the C-5s. KC-135Rs from the 18th Wing at Kadena AB refueled the C-17s on their 13-hour flight between Guam and India.



31 Jan 2002 **Global War on Terror**. U.S. military forces joined Philippine forces in a campaign against Abu Sayyaf, a terrorist organization seeking an independent Islamic state in the southern Philippines.