

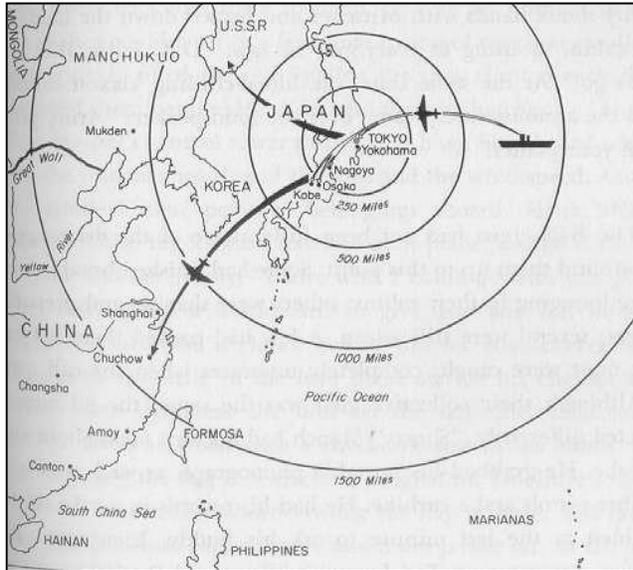


This Week in USAF and PACAF History
23 - 29 March 2009



U.S. AIR FORCE

28 Mar 1942 **Doolittle Raid Planning.** Without knowing the details or objectives of the top secret mission, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek granted final consent for American bombers to land at Chinese airfields. A few days later, President Chiang was told that at least twenty-five B-25's would be employed and that he should have fuel and flares ready at the Chinese bases. This was the final piece to be put in place for the Doolittle Raid. (Map and blood chit below.)



25 March 1944 Fifteenth Air Force attacked the Aviso Viaduct in the Brenner Pass, temporarily cutting the main highway between Italy and greater Germany. This raid was the **first Army Air Forces use of radio-guided bombs** – in this case, the VB-1 AZON (azimuth only), the only radio-guided bomb used by the U.S. Army Air Forces during WWII. AZON bombs were later employed in the European Theater in June 1944, and most successfully in the China-Burma-India Theater from November 1944 to August 1945. The AZON was the crude predecessor of the precision-guided munitions developed and used with great success in Vietnam.

24 Mar 1945 **Operation VARSITY, the Allied crossing of the Rhine River.** Eighth and Ninth Air Forces launched over 7,000 bombing, transport, reconnaissance, interdiction, close air support, and other sorties in support of this offensive. More than 2,000 transports and gliders of IX Troop Carrier Command dropped two Allied airborne divisions in daylight on the other side of the Rhine near Wesel, Germany.

27-28 Mar 1945 **First B-29 mining operation.** Almost 100 B-29 Superfortresses from bases in the Mariana Islands dropped mines in the Shimonoseki Strait of Japan to stop shipping between the islands of Honshu and Kyushu. This B-29 mining operation was the first of many against Japan.



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26 Mar 1949 **B-36D maiden flight.** Early versions of the B-36 were equipped with six propeller engines (below left). These aircraft burned fuel at an exorbitant rate, especially when fully loaded, and still lacked the required performance. The B-36D was the first version with jet engines, and the first 10-engine aircraft in the world. (Photo of 10-engine B-36 - below right.)



26 Mar 1954 **Gen Earl E. Partridge became the fifth FEAF commander**, taking over from Lt Gen Otto P. Weyland. Gen Partridge remained commander until 3 June 1955.

24 Mar 1955 The **Seventh Air Force** established its headquarters at Wheeler AFB in the newly modified and rehabilitated Building 107.

23 Mar 1977 **Tactical Air Command's first E-3A Sentry aircraft** arrived at Tinker Air Force Base, Oklahoma. The Sentry, the Air Force's first airborne warning and control system aircraft, carried a large rotating radar disk above its fuselage.

28 Mar 1960 Seventeen Hickam-based C-124 Globemaster IIs participated in "**Operation Big Slam/Puerto Rico**," the largest peacetime air transport movement of US Army forces to that date. The exercise was designed to test the Air Force and Army capability to respond to a crisis anywhere in the world. The Hickam C-124s flew 6,000 miles from Hawaii to Ramey AFB and Roosevelt Roads Naval Station. (Photo of MATS C-124 at right).



28 March 1964 After a massive earthquake in the area of Anchorage, Alaska, the United States launched **Operation HELPING HAND**. By April 17, USAF cargo aircraft, including C-124s, C-123s, C-130s, and C-97s, had delivered 1,850 tons of relief equipment and supplies.



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28 Mar 1966 Having been inactive for almost nine years, **Seventh Air Force was re-activated** on this day and assigned to PACAF. A few days later Seventh AF was organized at Tan Son Nhut Airfield, South Vietnam and designated the Air Component Command of Military Assistance Command, Vietnam. From April 1966 through 1973, the command assumed responsibility for most Air Force operations in Vietnam and shared responsibility with Thirteenth Air Force for operations from Thailand as 7/13 Air Force.

29 Mar 1972 **OPERATION LINEBACKER.** North Vietnam began a massive invasion of the South with 12 divisions, supported by armor and artillery. With the invasion, the US discarded the previous rules of engagement and most of the restrictions on US air power. Operation LINEBACKER I struck targets throughout North Vietnam, including Hanoi and Haiphong. Military commanders, rather than the White House, selected targets based on military objectives and far less on political considerations. US airpower bombed rail and road networks and mined harbors to severely reduce enemy supply shipments while simultaneously attacking enemy forces in the field. The massive US air strikes were the primary factor in the defeat of the North Vietnam offensive. (Photo of F-4 strike aircraft below.)



24 Mar - 20 Jun 1999 **Operation ALLIED FORCE / NOBLE ANVIL.** To prevent the forced eviction and genocide of ethnic Albanians living in Kosovo, NATO launched this operation against Yugoslavia. It was exclusively an air campaign and NATO's first combat operation against a sovereign nation. The U.S. named its part of the Operation NOBLE ANVIL. Additionally, the USAF used the B-2 for the first time in combat, while F-15 pilots shot down two MiG-29s on the first day of combat.

27 Mar 1999 **Operation ALLIED FORCE – F-117 Shootdown.** The Serbians shot down an F-117 in Yugoslavia—the only combat loss of a stealth fighter. An A-10 pilot, Capt John A. Cherrey, located the downed pilot for the rescue effort. Cherrey later received the Silver Star.

OPR: PACAF/HO



U.S. AIR FORCE

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There are many theories in open sources about the F-117 shutdown: Serbian experience with F-117 operations and routes, relocation of Serbian air defense systems accordingly and the failure of U.S. intelligence to detect those movements, the use of long wavelength radars to string together a track of momentary sightings, Serbian luck at getting a look at the F-117 with its bomb bay doors open (increasing its radar signature; photo below), and the use of infrared or optical tracking systems to sight the aircraft. General John P. Jumper, ACC Commander at the time, said "the shutdown was mostly the result of 'a lucky shot.' Those limited times of exposure that we know exist" - when the F-117 opens its bomb bay doors, or presents certain angles to a radar-"lasted just a little bit too long. We were targeted by a SAM site that we didn't have precisely located." Ref: <http://www.afa.org/magazine/June2001/0601stealth.asp>



27 Mar 1999 **The "Melissa" computer virus** swept across the Internet, destroying electronic programs and databases. Air Force systems escaped serious damage with the help of an Air Combat Command antivirus program.

26 Mar 2003 **Operation IRAQI FREEDOM.** Nearly 1,000 173rd Airborne Brigade "Sky Soldiers," based at Vicenza, Italy, parachuted from C-17 Globemaster IIIs into the Kurdish-controlled area of northern Iraq. It was the C-17's first insertion of paratroopers into combat, and the largest mass combat jump since WWII. The aircraft and aircrews came from Charleston AFB and McChord AFB. (C-17 airborne drop photo below.)

