



U.S. AIR FORCE

This Week in USAF and PACAF History 6 - 12 April 2009



8 Apr 1942 **“Flying the Hump.”** A strategic objective of Allied forces in World War II was to supply Chinese forces fighting Japan. The Allies used an overland supply route that ran from India through Burma to China, but the Japanese cut this route in early 1942. On 8 April, two



DC-3s (later purchased in huge numbers as C-47 Skytrains) transported gasoline and lubricating oil over the Himalaya Mountains from eastern India to southern China to begin World War II’s largest airlift operation. On one of the earliest missions, eight airplanes carried the fuel and oil to service the B-25 bombers from the “Doolittle Raid.” From December 1942 through the close of the operation in November 1945, the airlift delivered nearly 740,000 tons of cargo. Over half of this total was transported during the last eight months of the war. (C-47 illustration at left).

11 Apr 1942 The Curtiss-Wright Company unveiled its **first production C-46 Commando**. After deliveries began two months later, the C-46 eventually became the largest and heaviest twin-engined aircraft used by the US AAF. Due to its load capacity and high-altitude performance, the AAF primarily used it in the Pacific region and it became an important factor in the success of the “Hump” airlift over the Himalayas.

11 Apr 1944 **MEDAL OF HONOR.** Lt Edward Michael received his medal after cannon shells riddled his B-17 Flying Fortress, wounding himself, the copilot, and most crewmen. As the crew left the plane, he noticed that the bombardier's parachute was badly damaged. He decided to try a crash landing. For 45 minutes, he evaded German fighters before taking the crippled plane down to 100 feet above the ground over France. Amazingly, the B-17 flew across the English Channel to a RAF base. With the wheels and flaps inoperable, and the bomb bay doors jammed open, the seriously wounded Michael still had enough strength left to skillfully bring the bomber in on its belly.

7 Apr 1945 Twentieth Air Force launched the **first fighter-escorted B-29 raid on Japan**. Acquisition of the island of Iwo Jima, after heavy fighting in February and March, made this raid possible by providing a base within fighter range of Japan.

10 Apr 1945 About 50 German jet aircraft shot down 10 U.S. bombers over the Berlin area—the **largest single-mission loss of bombers to enemy jets**. The same day, the bombers and their escorts shot down at least 20 of the German jets.

10 Apr 1964 During **memorial services for General Douglas MacArthur**, a fly-by of three F-102 jets in the “Missing Man” formation passed over the Hickam Mall.



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11 Apr 1966 **MEDAL OF HONOR / AIR FORCE CROSS.** Near Cam My, South Vietnam, A1C William H. Pitsenbarger (photo at right), a pararescue jumper, hoisted nine soldiers to safety aboard a HH-43 Huskie and then remained behind to treat the wounded amid heavy mortar and sniper fire. Despite several gunshot wounds, he continued to treat the wounded soldiers until fatally shot. He became the first airman to receive the Air Force Cross posthumously. The Air Force later upgraded his award to the Medal of Honor.



Read A1C Pitsenbarger's complete story at <http://www.afa.org/magazine/Feb2001/0201pitts.asp>

9 Apr 1967 Through 14 April, the 315 AD began the largest tactical unit move in the Vietnam War. In 351 sorties, **C-130s airlifted the entire 196th Light Infantry Brigade**, with 3,500 people and 4,000 tons of equipment, 375 miles from Tay Ninh to Chu Lai.



10 Apr 1967 **Operation POKER DICE.** SAC accomplished the beddown of B-52s at U-Tapao with the first 3 aircraft arriving during the day. Later in the day, the B-52s from U-Tapao flew their first bombing mission in the Vietnam War. Combat sorties averaged three hours in duration as compared to 12 hours for Guam-based aircraft. (See photo at left of a B-52 and KC-135 at U-Tapao).

7 Apr – 13 May 1972 **Operation CONSTANT GUARD I.** To stop a full-scale North Vietnamese invasion Military Airlift Command moved personnel and cargo from McConnell AFB, Kans., and Seymour Johnson AFB, N.C. to Thailand. Through 13 May, the USAF moved 12 squadrons and 200 aircraft to Southeast Asia.

11 Apr 1973 **Project SCOOT** (Support Cambodia Out of Thailand). Through October, USAF C-130s flew 1,290 sorties from U-Tapao AB to deliver 3,314 tons of rice to Phnom Penh, and 7,055 tons of ammunition to Cambodian forces. They also airdropped another 39.7 tons of rice.



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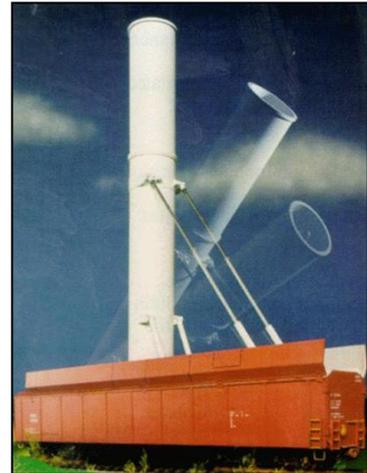
6 Apr 1975 **Operation EAGLE PULL.** The United States began the fixed-wing aerial evacuation of Phnom Penh, Cambodia, which was surrounded by Khmer Rouge forces. On 6 April, MAC flew more than 1,400 U.S. Marines and 1,561 tons of equipment from Kadena AB to Cubi Point, Philippines, in 29 C-141, 8 C-5, and 2 commercial contract missions. By April 11, some 875 Cambodians had flown to Thailand aboard USAF C-130s. On 12 April, USAF and Marine Corps helicopters, with escorts from USAF fighters and gunships, evacuated 287 people in the final airlift from Phnom Penh. The city fell to communist forces on 17 April.



10-25 April 1980 **RNZAF in COPE THUNDER.**

The first participation by a third country in Cope Thunder was during CT 81-5, when the Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF) deployed 8 A-4Ks to Clark Air Base. HIANG F-4Cs from Hawaii took part in this exercise as well, and also flew in Combat Sage. (Photo at left of RNZAF A-4s at Clark AB.)

6 Apr 1983 **Scowcroft Commission.** A special President's Commission led by retired Lt Gen Brent Scowcroft concluded that the warning time for ballistic missile attacks on the U.S. was shrinking and suggested several ICBM modernization efforts. The Commission's findings led to the deployment of Peacekeeper missiles in existing Minuteman silos and the investigation of more survivable ICBM basing modes. The OSD developed a plan for a "rail garrison" system whereby 25 trains armed with two Peacekeepers each would use the national railroad system to conceal themselves (conceptual illustration at right). It was intended that this system would become operational in late 1992, but budgetary constraints and the changing international situation led to the plan being scrapped.



12 Apr 1993 **Operation DENY FLIGHT.** In its first combat operation, NATO enforced a UN Security Council resolution that authorized a no-fly zone over Bosnia. The USAF provided most of the resources for this operation.

10 Apr 1994 Two F-16 Fighting Falcons struck a Bosnian Serb command post near Gorazde in Serbia after Bosnian Serbs attacked UN personnel in the enclave. This was the **first close air support mission of Operation DENY FLIGHT** and the **first air-to-ground bombing in NATO's history.** (F-16 photo above/left.)



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9 Apr 1997 **F-22 roll-out.** Lockheed-Martin and Boeing rolled out the F-22 air superiority fighter in a ceremony at the Marietta, Ga., plant.

10 Apr 2004 **Disaster relief.** The island of Yap was devastated by Typhoon Sudal, with wind speeds up to 125 miles per hour for 6-10 hours, knocking out the power, communications and infrastructure of the island. After the call went out for help, Yokota AB sent two C-130 aircraft, four aircrews and six crew chiefs to Andersen Air Base, Guam, on April 12. Operating out of Guam, they flew 11 missions (25 sorties) totaling 69 hours, delivering 31 passengers and 102.4 short tons of cargo in support of Federal Emergency Management Agency relief efforts.

8 Apr 2006 **C-17 Transition.** Prior to this date, air crews from the 15th Airlift Wing and the Hawaii Air National Guard's 154th Wing were in a training status even as they answered PACAF requests to fly support for relief efforts in Kauai and the Philippines, the repatriation of servicemen remains recovered from Vietnam and transporting personnel and cargo in Iraq. The arrival of the fourth of eight C-17 Globemaster IIIs at Hickam (photo below) marked the transition of the composite squadron of active duty and Guard C-17s from training to their primary airlift mission and the assumption of regularly scheduled taskings from Pacific Air Force's Air Mobility Division. PACAF now had C-17s at its disposal.

