



U.S. AIR FORCE

This Week in USAF and PACAF History 3 – 9 August 2009

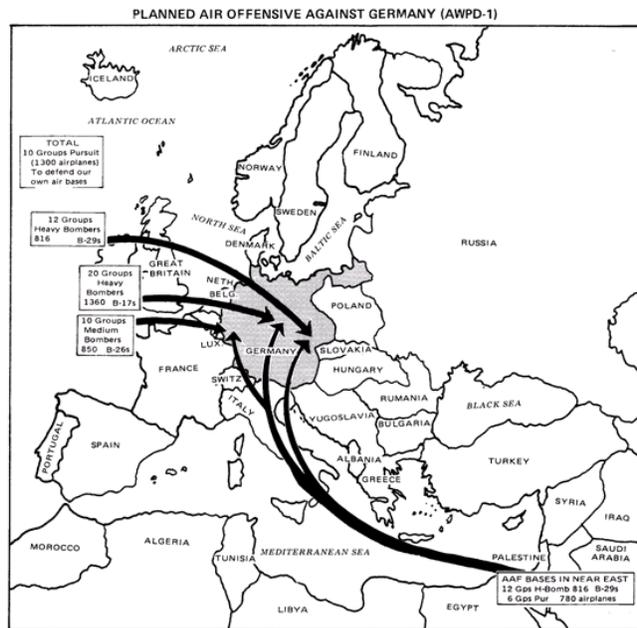


4 August 1910 Elmo N. Pickerill made the **first radio-telegraphic communication** between the air and ground while flying solo in a Curtiss pusher from Mineola, Long Island, to Manhattan Beach and back. The photo at right is a Curtiss Pusher, Model D, with tricycle landing gear.



8 August 1913 **An airplane flew in Hawaii for the first time**, piloted by Army Lt. Harold Geiger from a new aviation school at Fort Kamehameha. The aircraft, a Curtiss E two-seater, soared over Pearl Harbor. Established in July, the school operated only about a year. Read more in the 13 July 2008 edition of *This Week in USAF and PACAF History*.

4 August 1941 **Air War Planning Document 1 (AWPD-1)** outlined the Army Air Forces strategy for the imminent war with the Axis powers. President Roosevelt, anticipating US entry into World War II, had asked the Army and Navy in July 1941 for an estimate of the production that would be required to defeat the Axis. General Hap Arnold, the Army Air Forces Chief, got permission to have his new Air War Plans Division prepare the air portion of this study. Lt. Col. Harold L. George, Lt. Col. Kenneth N. Walker, Maj. Haywood S. “Possum” Hansell, Jr., and Maj. Laurence S. Kuter, forecast the aircraft necessary to defeat Germany. Based on seven years of tactical school theories, AWPD-1 said the Army Air Forces would need 251 combat groups, 105,467 aircraft, and 2,164,916 airmen. With most of Europe under Nazi control and tensions high in the Pacific, this estimate was accepted, almost without question, as the basis for planning the wartime air campaign. Completed on August 12, AWPD-1 outlined a strategic bombing campaign against key enemy target sets.





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5 August 1943 **Jacqueline Cochran** assumed duties as Director of **Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP)**, a new organization that merged her Women’s Flying Training Detachment with the Women’s Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron (WAFS). Nancy Harkness Love, former WAFS commander, became WASP executive with the Ferrying Division of Air Transport Command. Cochran’s photo is at right.



3 August 1944 The **Far East Air Forces (FEAF)**, predecessor of PACAF, was **officially activated** at Brisbane, Australia, with Lt. Gen. George C. Kenney commanding.



6 August 1945 In the **first atomic bomb attack** in history, Col. Paul W. Tibbets piloted a B-29 called *Enola Gay* from the island of Tinian in the Marianas to Hiroshima, Japan, destroying the city with a single bomb called “Little Boy.” (Photo at left is the Enola Gay parked at Hickam with Diamond Head in background, sometime after 6 August 1945).

6 August 1945 On the same day, **Major Richard I. Bong** -- America’s “Ace of Aces” and Medal of Honor recipient -- died while testing the Lockheed P-80 fighter at Burbank, California. Bong had survived 200 combat missions and shot down 40 Japanese planes in the Pacific. According to some sources, Bong had more victories in combat but did not report them to avoid being sent home earlier. General Kenney finally sent him home for good in January 1945. In February, Bong married his sweetheart, Marge Vattendahl, whose picture and name had adorned the nose of his P-38. (Photo at right is Major and Mrs. Bong in an aircraft cockpit.)



9 August 1945 Maj. Charles W. Sweeney and his crew, flying a B-29 called Bock’s Car, bombed Nagasaki in the second and **last atomic bomb attack**. The weapon dropped on Nagasaki was named “Fat Man” and it largely destroyed the city, killing at least 35,000 people.

8 August 1946 The Convair **XB-36 Peacemaker** first flew at Fort Worth. See the 29 June 08 edition of *This Week in USAF and PACAF History* for more on the B-36.

3 August 1950 **Korean War**. General Stratemeyer ordered 5th Air Force to interdict all enemy transportation and destroy key transportation facilities between the 37th and 38th parallels.



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5 August 1950 Major Louis J. Sebille, flying on a combat mission in the Korean War, earned the **first Medal of Honor awarded to a member of the Air Force**. Sebille had flown 68 combat



missions in World War II as a B-26 bomber pilot. In the fall of 1948, he took command of the 67th Squadron, 18th Fighter-Bomber Group. When the Korean War began, his squadron was one of the first sent to Japan. Sebille's Medal of Honor citation includes the following excerpt:

During an attack on a camouflaged area containing a concentration of enemy troops, artillery, and armored vehicles, Major Sebille's F-51 aircraft was severely damaged by antiaircraft fire. Although fully cognizant of the short period he could remain airborne, he deliberately ignored the possibility of survival by abandoning the aircraft or by crash landing, and continued his attack against the enemy forces threatening the security of friendly ground troops. In his determination to inflict maximum damage upon the enemy, Major Sebille again exposed himself to the intense fire of enemy gun batteries and dived on the target to his death.



See the brief article in the 4 Sep 1950 edition of *Time* magazine, [“War: If You Have to Die . . .”](#)

6 August 1953 **Operation BIG SWITCH**. Through October, the USAF used C-124, C-54, C-46, and C-47 transports to airlift more than 800 former prisoners of war from Korea to the U.S. by way of Japan after an armistice that ended the Korean War. The operation ended in October.

4 August 1955 Captured on January 13, 1953, crew members of a special operations B-29 called *Stardust 40* were released by China. They were held longer than any other prisoners of war during the Korean conflict.

7 August 1959 The **Explorer VI**, NASA's “paddlewheel” satellite, was launched into orbit from Cape Canaveral by a Thor-Able III. It transmitted the first television pictures from space. In addition, Maj Robert C. Mathis used the satellite to relay the first intercontinental voice message. Mathis later became the VCSAF.

9 August 1960 The **first U.S. ICBM base** began functioning when SAC declared three Atlas D launching pads of the 564 SMS at Francis E. Warren AFB operational.



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3 August 1981 **USAF air-traffic controllers** began to man U.S. airport facilities, replacing striking federal civilian personnel. This action allowed commercial airlines to continue service despite the illegal but widespread strike.

4 August 1982 The first **KC-135R** with the new CFM-56 engines made its first flight.

7 August 1990 **Operation DESERT SHIELD**. In response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on 2 August, the US military initiated deployment actions to protect Saudi Arabia from Iraqi aggression and to liberate Kuwait. The 71 TFS deployed 24 F-15C Eagles on a 15-hour, 8,000-mile, non-stop flight from Langley AFB to Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, with 12 in-flight refuelings. The aircraft arrived on August 8.



9 August 1990 The **Alaskan Air Command** was redesignated as the **Eleventh Air Force** and concurrently its status changed from a USAF major command to a subordinate command of Pacific Air Forces.

6 August 1993 Dr. Sheila E. Widnall became the **first woman Secretary of the Air Force** and the first woman to head any of the military services.

5 August 1994 **Not-so-friendly persuasion**. Two A-10 Thunderbolt IIs destroyed an armored vehicle near Sarajevo after the Serbs took heavy weapons from a UN compound. The weapons were returned.

7 August 1995 **First B-52 PGM employment**. A B-52H bomber from the 2 BW at Barksdale AFB employed precision-guided munitions in a training mission for the first time.

9 August 2000 Andersen AFB, Guam, became the first installation outside the continental United States to store **conventional air-launched cruise missiles (CALCM)**. The 3,150-pound CALCM is capable of flying approximately 600 miles to strike targets while keeping the launch aircraft and crew out of harm's way.

The storage of CALCMs at Andersen was part of a continuing effort to build up the base's role as a bomber forward operating location. The significance of placing the CALCMs at Andersen was that they were forward deployed and immediately accessible.

(The photo at right of the AGM-86B is from the *Boeing* website.)

