



U.S. AIR FORCE

This Week in USAF and PACAF History **17 – 23 August 2009**



18 August 1910 At Fort Sam Houston, Texas, Oliver G. Simmons, the Army's first civilian airplane mechanic, and Cpl. Glen Madole added wheels to Signal Corps Airplane No. 1, producing a **tricycle landing gear** and eliminating the need for a launching rail or catapult.

20 August 1910 **Origins of Close Air Support.** Second Lieutenant Jacob Fickel fired a .30-06 Springfield rifle from a Curtiss biplane at the Sheepshead Bay Race Track, near New York City. Taking careful aim from an altitude of 100 feet, Fickel scored two hits on a 3-foot by 5-foot target and became the first U.S. military member to shoot a firearm from an airplane.

19 August 1933 Waimanalo Military Reservation (Oahu) was redesignated as **Bellows Field** in honor of 2Lt Franklin B. Bellows, 50th Aero Squadron. Lt Bellows was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for extraordinary heroism in action near St. Mihiel, France. He was killed 13 September, 1918 while performing a reconnaissance mission.

19 August 1940 The North American **B-25 Mitchell** first flew. This medium bomber, named in honor of General Billy Mitchell, was the only American military aircraft named after a specific person. By the end of its production, nearly 10,000 B-25s in numerous models had been built.

The B-25 was made famous when it flew on the April 1942 Doolittle Raid on Japan (see photo at right of B-25s on the deck of the *USS Hornet*). Mitchell bombers played a major role in the Southwest Pacific theater, conducting low-level strafing and dropping parachute-retarded fragmentation bombs on Japanese airfields in New Guinea and the Philippines. These field-modified, heavily-armed Mitchells were also used on strafing and skip-bombing missions against Japanese shipping.



The B-25 was a safe and forgiving aircraft to fly and extremely sturdy aircraft in combat.

"Patches," a famous B-25C of the 321st Bomb Group completed over 300 missions, belly-landed six times and had over 400 patched holes. Patches' airframe was bent so much that level flight required her to crab across the sky with 8° of left aileron trim and 6° of right rudder.

On the morning of 28 July 1945, a B-25D flying in thick fog crashed into the north side of the Empire State Building, hitting between the 79th and 80th floors. Eleven people in the building were killed along with the aircrew. This accident was part of the reason that the twin towers of the World Trade Center were designed to withstand the impact of a Boeing 707.

17 August 1942 **Eighth Air Force conducted its first heavy bomber raid in Europe.** Twelve B-17s under the command of Col. Frank Armstrong bombed railroad marshalling yards at Rouen in German-occupied France. The raid demonstrated the feasibility of daylight bombing, depending on factors such as weather and enemy defenses (see the next item below).



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17 August 1943 **Schweinfurt-Regensburg raid.** More than 300 B-17s took off from the United Kingdom without fighter protection to attack ball-bearing factories at Schweinfurt and aircraft plants at Regensburg on the deepest U.S. air raid into Germany to date. Although the bombers dropped 724 tons of bombs, many did not hit their targets, and 60 of the Flying Fortresses were lost, mostly to enemy fighters. The high loss rate shook the confidence of Eighth Air Force leaders in the ability of heavy bombers to protect themselves on daylight raids. Eighth Air Force bombers did not return to raid a target in Germany until September 6.



17 August 1946 **First U.S. ejection.** Sgt Lawrence Lambert at Wright Field became the first person in the U.S. to escape from an aircraft by ejection seat. He ejected from a P-61 flying at 302 MPH at 7,800 feet in altitude.

21 August 1948 In his final report as CSAF, Gen Carl Spaatz disclosed the development of a **supersonic guided atomic missile** with a 5,000-mile range.

20 August 1953 Dr. Werner von Braun and his team joined US Army personnel at Cape Canaveral in firing the first Redstone (Redstone No. 1). It was our **first truly ballistic missile**.



23 August 1958 **The Second Taiwan Strait Crisis.** Communist Chinese forces launched another large artillery attack on the islands of Quemoy and Matsu. When the Chinese threatened to invade the islands, the USAF moved a Composite Air Strike Force (CASF) into the Far East Theater (**Operation Jonah Able**) to assist the Nationalist forces in the event the Communists invaded. The invasion never took place, and the CASF eventually returned to the United States. (Photo at left shows an F-104A of the 83rd FIS at Tao Yuan AB, Taiwan in September, 1958).

21 August 1959 **Hawai'i was admitted as the 50th state** of the United States of America on August 21, 1959 by proclamation of President Dwight D. Eisenhower. In anticipation, the Hawaii Air National Guard had four pilots standing by at Honolulu Airport. When the official proclamation was delivered, HIANG pilots scrambled to waiting F-86Ls and delivered the documents to the mayors of neighboring islands.



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19 August 1960 Flying a specially-modified C-119, the 6593d Test Squadron, 6494th Recovery Control Group, made the first successful mid-air catch of a DISCOVERER satellite capsule. For



this accomplishment, the 6593rd TS received the 1960 Mackay Trophy. Based at Hickam since 1958, the test group's satellite capsule recoveries were part of the **classified CORONA project**, America's first operational space reconnaissance effort. History and images from the CORONA project were declassified in 1995 and are available at the National Reconnaissance Office @ <http://www.nro.gov/corona/facts.html>. In the photo at left, a C-119 catches the parachute canopy of a descending capsule (the capsule itself is below the frame).

21-28 August 1960 In August, a severe **polio epidemic in Hokkaido**, Japan's northernmost main island, struck more than 600 people. Fifty died, many from paralysis of the lungs. President Eisenhower authorized an airlift of iron lungs and chest respirators from the U.S. to Japan. C-130s of the 315th Air Division delivered eight iron lungs and 12 chest respirators from the United States to Hokkaido.

19 August – 16 September 1969 In **one of history's largest humanitarian airlift operations**, the USAF airlifted more than 5,900 tons of equipment and supplies to southern Mississippi to relieve the victims of **Hurricane Camille**, the strongest hurricane ever to hit the United States.

21 August 1970 Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird announced the **Total Force Concept** of the armed services. Under this concept, the Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard replaced the draft as the initial sources for augmentation of the active force.

20 August 1975 SECDEF James R. Schlesinger directed the **USAF to refuel U.S. Navy and Marine Corps** tactical aircraft involved in peacetime training and trans-oceanic movements. He also tasked the USAF to provide refueling support to general-purpose forces in periods of increased tension. The directive **allowed SAC to acquire additional tankers**.

19-21 August 1976 **Operation PAUL BUNYAN**. After the North Korean murder of two U.S. Army officers in the DMZ, MAC airlifted 212 F-4 air and ground crewmembers and 132 tons of equipment from Kadena AB to Kunsan AB. Later, MAC used tankers to conduct a non-stop airlift of an F-111 force of 348 people and 299 tons of cargo from Idaho to Taegu AB, Korea. Two more C-141 missions moved resources from Eglin AFB to Osan AB.



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20 August 1986 Having been inactivated in 1975, the **Seventh Air Force** was assigned to Pacific Air Forces on this day and re-activated at Osan AB, South Korea, on 18 September 1986.

17 August 1990 **Operation DESERT SHIELD/STORM.** President Bush activated the Civil



Reserve Air Fleet (CRAF) for the first time since it was established in 1952. CRAF aircraft transported 709,613 passengers and 126,309 tons of cargo for the campaign. (At left, land forces disembark from a CRAF airliner.)

22 August 1990 President George H. W. Bush authorized a **90-day call-up** of 200,000 reservists for **Operation DESERT SHIELD**. Eventually, more than 20,000 USAF reservists and 12,000 Air National Guard personnel served in that operation and DESERT STORM.

18 August 1992 **Operation SOUTHERN WATCH began.** The operation restricted Iraqi flights south of 32 degrees north latitude. AMC airlifted US forces to Saudi Arabia to support the operation. The command also deployed tankers to refuel fighters flying combat air patrols.

21 August 2002 The first Lockheed-Martin Atlas V lifted off from Cape Canaveral to inaugurate the USAF's **Evolved Expendable Launch Vehicle Program**. The system used a standard primary booster and added supplemental boosters to handle various payloads.

18 August 2005 **JASSM IOC.** The 7th Bomb Wing became the first unit to achieve initial operational capability of the Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile (JASSM). The JASSM is an all-weather, low observable, standoff cruise missile capable of taking out heavily defended, high-priority enemy targets deep behind enemy lines. A key mission for the JASSM is to destroy enemy threats early in a conflict, allowing manned aircraft to penetrate enemy airspace.

