



U.S. AIR FORCE

## This Week in PACAF and USAF History 7-13 September 2009



12-15 September 1918 Brig. Gen. William “Billy” Mitchell commanded Allied air forces during the **first major American offensive of World War I at Saint-Mihiel, France.** This air force supported a plan by General Pershing to remove a dent in Allied lines, capture fortresses to the east, and then invade Germany.



Pershing knew control of the air was necessary, and he gave the job to an airman, Brig. Gen. Billy Mitchell, rather than more senior Army commanders with no aviation experience. Mitchell planned an air campaign that set many precedents for air doctrine and operations. He commanded 1,481 aircraft—at the time the largest air force ever assembled for a single battle. This force consisted of 366 observation airplanes, 323 day bombers, 91 night bombers, and 701 pursuit aircraft. (See photo of bombers above.)

Despite poor weather, Mitchell’s air forces made a critical contribution to the successful attack on the Saint-Mihiel salient. Pershing’s First Army captured 15,000 enemy troops and more than 250 heavy guns at the cost of 7,000 casualties, and they liberated 200 square miles of French territory. The U.S. attack only faltered when the infantry outran their slow-moving artillery support and food supplies on the muddy roads eastward.

10 September 1942 The Secretary of War formed the **Women’s Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron (WAFS).** In October, female pilots began ferrying aircraft from production sites to airfields in the U.S. In 1943, all women pilots flying for the Army Air Force were consolidated into another new organization — the Women’s Airforce Service Pilots (WASP). By the end of the war, WASPs had flown all types of military aircraft.



14 September 1951 Capt. John S. Walmsley, Jr., USAF (at left), lost his life illuminating an enemy supply train while piloting a searchlight-equipped B-26 Invader in Korea. After stopping the train with bombs, Captain Walmsley repeatedly passed over it to guide other aircraft to the target. His actions earned him the **Medal of Honor.**

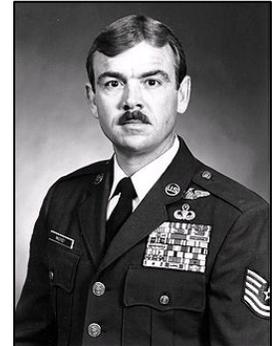


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9 September 1967 Sgt. Duane D. Hackney (photo at right), a pararescue-man in the Vietnam conflict, received the **Air Force Cross** for bravery, thereby becoming the first living enlisted man to receive the award. For putting his own parachute on the rescued pilot after their helicopter was hit by enemy fire, Hackney received the award, second only to the Medal of Honor. Hackney was the youngest person and the fourth enlisted member to receive the medal. During the Vietnam conflict, his helicopter was shot down five times, and he earned four Distinguished Flying Crosses and 18 Air Medals for single acts of heroism. Hackney continued his distinguished Air Force career until his retirement in 1991 as a chief master sergeant. Hackney was **the most decorated airman in Air Force history**. In 1993, at the age of 46, he died of a heart attack in his Pennsylvania home.



9 September 1972 Capt. Charles B. DeBellevue (at left), flying as a weapon system officer in the backseat of an F-4, earned his fifth and sixth aerial victories, becoming the **leading ace of the Vietnam War and the first non-pilot ace in the United States Air Force**. For this feat, DeBellevue shared the 1972 Mackay Trophy with Captains Richard S. "Steve" Ritchie and Jeffrey S. Feinstein, the other two Air Force aces of the Vietnam War. DeBellevue was also awarded the Air Force Cross for his actions in Southeast Asia. Captain DeBellevue retired in January 1998 after 30 years of service.

8 September 1990 Marcelite Jordan Harris became the **first African-American female to hold the grade of brigadier general in the Air Force**. She held a variety of assignments, many of which resulted in "firsts" for women in the Air Force. She was the first woman aircraft maintenance officer, one of the first two women air officers commanding at the U.S. Air Force Academy, and the first woman deputy commander for maintenance. One of her assignments was at Kadena AB, Japan where she served as the director of maintenance, Pacific Air Forces Logistic Support Center.

12 September – 18 October 1992 Following **Typhoon Iniki**, which devastated Kauai in the Hawaiian archipelago, Air Mobility Command, Pacific Air Forces, Air Force Reserve, and Air National Guard aircraft and crews airlifted 6,888 tons of relief equipment and supplies to Hawaii. The operation also airlifted more than 12,000 passengers, including evacuees as well as military and civilian relief workers.

7 September 1997 At Dobbins Air Reserve Base, Georgia, test pilot Paul Metz piloted the extremely maneuverable **F-22 Raptor in its first flight**. A new stealth fighter with the ability to cruise supersonically, the F-22 would replace the venerable F-15 for air-superiority missions.



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**11 September 2001** Terrorists hijacked four commercial passenger aircraft with the goal of destroying heavily-populated and highly symbolic targets in the United States. Two planes crashed into the twin towers of World Trade Center in New York City. Both towers collapsed within two hours. The third plane crashed into the Pentagon (see photo, below). Passengers and members of the flight crew on the fourth aircraft attempted to retake control of their plane from the hijackers; that plane crashed into a field near the town of Shanksville in rural Pennsylvania. Excluding the 19 hijackers, a confirmed 2,973 people died and another 24 remain listed as missing as a result of these attacks.

As part of America's response, the Global War on Terror began. The Federal Aviation Administration grounded all airliners in the United States for several days. President George W. Bush announced a war on terrorism and initiated homeland-defense efforts, including **Operation NOBLE EAGLE**, which involved combat air patrols within the United States and Guam.



**10 September 2005** The **first-ever C-130 combat mission by an all-female crew** was flown from a forward location in Southwest Asia to airlift 151 Marines and their equipment. The six women were all assigned to the 43 AW at Pope AFB and were deployed to the 737th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron to fly troops and cargo in and out of Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Horn of Africa.