



U.S. AIR FORCE

This Week in USAF and PACAF History **7 – 13 December 2009**



10 Dec 1898 **The United States acquired Guam and the Philippines.** Under the Treaty of Paris, the U.S. acquired Puerto Rico and Guam and agreed to pay Spain \$20 million for the Philippines. This marked the beginning of the expansion of U.S. interests in the Pacific region. At the time of the turnover, the local population of Guam had grown to about 10,000 inhabitants.

11 Dec 1914 **First U.S. military two-way air-to-ground radio communication.** Army Signal Corps Lts. Herbert A. Dargue, pilot, and Joseph O. Maubornge, radio set designer, conducted the experiment in a Burgess-Wright biplane over Manila, the Philippines. During World War I and later, radio communications greatly increased the capabilities of combat aircraft to navigate, provide real-time reconnaissance and situation updates, adjust air taskings and coordinate massed air attacks on enemy air and surface forces.

12 Dec 1940 The War Department designated a military reservation near Anchorage as Fort Richardson and a flying field as **Elmendorf Field**. The field was named in honor of Capt Hugh M. Elmendorf, killed in a flying accident near Wright Field, OH, on 13 Jan 1933. With the establishment of the Western Defense Command, **Alaska became a theater of operations.**

7 Dec 1941 **Japanese carrier-based aircraft attacked U.S. military airfields on Oahu** along with the primary Japanese target—the **Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor**. The bombing and



strafing of Hickam, Wheeler, and other airfields crippled U.S. air defenses and prevented U.S. bombers from striking the Japanese aircraft carriers. The Army Air Forces on Oahu suffered 690 casualties, including 244 killed. Out of 234 AAF aircraft, 76 were completely destroyed and only 83 were still in commission after the attack.

The attack brought the United States into World War II against Japan and its allies, Germany and Italy. These photographs show Wheeler's flightline burning (above) and a pile of aircraft wreckage collected after the attack (right).



8 Dec 1941 The Japanese conducted the **first air raid on Wake Island**. This was followed by 16 more raids between 9-23 December, which destroyed all aircraft, severely damaged communications, surface buildings and guns, killing and injuring numerous personnel.



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8 Dec 1941 Within hours of the attack on Hawaii, **Japan attacked U.S. forces in the Philippines.** Japanese airplanes destroyed more than 100 U.S. Army aircraft at Clark and Iba Airfields, including 17 B-17s and 55 P-40s, mostly on the ground. The attack killed some 80 airmen, wounded about 150, and left the U.S. Army Air Forces in the Philippines without striking power. Five U.S. pilots shot down seven of the attacking airplanes. The photo at right shows Japanese bombers over Corregidor.



10 Dec 1941 Five B-17s of the 93d Bombardment Squadron, 19th Bombardment Group carried out the **first heavy bombardment mission of World War II**, attacking a Japanese convoy as it landed troops on the northern coast of Luzon.

13 Dec 1941 President Franklin D. Roosevelt authorized the Secretary of War to **take control of any civilian airline needed for the war effort.** Contracts with the airlines permitted the purchase of aircraft and airline services. Ten years later, on 15 Dec 1951, the USAF directed the Military Air Transport Service to develop the Civil Reserve Air Fleet (CRAF) program.

10 Dec 1954 **Highest G-forces.** In a rocket-propelled sled run, Lt. Col. John P. Stapp, USAF, reached 632 mph and sustained greater G forces (25 Gs with peaks to 40 Gs) than humans had ever endured in recorded deceleration tests—the equivalent of Mach 1.7 at 35,000 feet. The test determined that **humans could survive ejection from aircraft at supersonic speeds.**

7 Dec 1956 **The DoD placed all air transport operations under a single service manager** and named the Military Air Transport Service (MATS) as its operating agency. This directive required the Navy to transfer its transport aircraft, except for 30 four-engine land transports belonging to the Fleet Logistic Air Wings, to the Air Force.



9 Dec 1956 The Air Force received its **first C-130 Hercules** tactical airlifter. This four-engine turboprop had an unrefueled range of over 2,500 miles, could carry outsized cargo of almost 50,000 pounds or up to 92 troops, and could take off and land within about 3,600 feet. The photo at left is a C-130 “Blind Bat” flareship that lit up the night skies over the Ho Chi Minh trail during the Vietnam War.

11 Dec 1956 **Operation SAFE HAVEN began.** By June 30, 1957, cargo aircraft of the Military Air Transport Service had airlifted more than 10,000 Hungarian refugees from West Germany to asylum in the United States. The refugees fled their country as Soviet troops crushed an anticommunist rebellion there.



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8 Dec 1958 **Tilt-Wing Aircraft.** Hiller Aircraft Corp. unveiled its X-18 Propelloplane (right), a 16-ton tilt-wing aircraft capable of conventional and vertical takeoffs and landings, at Moffett Field, California. The X-18 eventually flew 20 test flights out of Edwards AFB from 1959 to 1961. The X-18 had several problems, including susceptibility to wind gusts when the wing was rotating. Also, the turboprop engines were not cross-linked, so the failure of one engine meant a crash. On the last flight, the aircraft had to be recovered from a spin. Ground testing of the tilting concepts continued until the plane was severely damaged when a test stand failed. The X-18 program was cancelled in January, 1964 and the X-18 was cut up for scrap.



7 Dec 1960 The first ten of 29 **F-102 “Delta Dagger”** aircraft joined the **Hawaii Air National Guard**, replacing their F-86s.

13 Dec 1973 General Dynamics rolled out the **YF-16** at its plant in Fort Worth.

8-9 Dec 1978 **Iran Air Evacuation.** As a result of tension in Iran, Military Airlift Command airlifted some 900 evacuees from Tehran to the U.S. and Germany. The airlift included 11 C-141 and C-5 missions. About 5,700 U.S. and third-country nationals left Iran on regularly scheduled MAC flights until Iran’s revolutionary government closed the airport in February 1979.

9 Dec 1992 **Operation RESTORE HOPE I.** Through 4 May 1993, AMC aircraft moved 51,431 passengers and 41,243 tons of cargo in more than 1,000 missions to support UN peacekeeping efforts in Somalia. The 28,000 deployed troops protected the food, supplies, and aid workers from armed factions in the country. AFRES crews flew 190 sorties to deliver 1,500 tons of supplies, while refuelers completed 1,170 missions to deliver 82.4 million pounds of fuel.



13 Dec 2001 President George Bush provided a formal six-month notice to Russia of the **United States’ withdrawal from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty.** President Bush stated: “I have concluded the ABM treaty hinders our government’s ability to develop ways to protect our people from future terrorist or rogue state missile attacks.” It cleared the way for the construction of a missile defense system in Alaska. The plans called for basing a command center and silo-based missiles at Fort Greely and an advanced radar installation at Eareckson AS on Shemya. (Photo at left shows the first ground-based interceptor missile being lowered into its silo in 2004.)