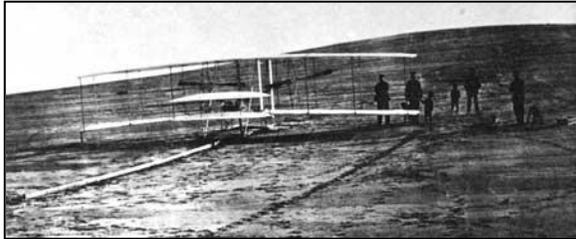




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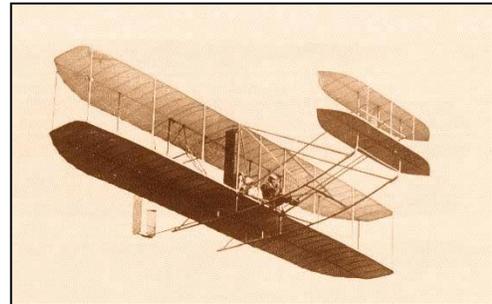
## This Week in USAF and PACAF History

14-20 December 2009



14 Dec 1903 Wilbur Wright made the **first powered airplane flight** at Kill Devil Hills, Kitty Hawk, N.C. Although he flew 105 feet in 3.5 seconds, the plane crashed; therefore, this effort was not recognized as the first sustained or controlled flight.

Three days later, Wilbur's brother Orville achieved the Wright brothers' goal of the world's **first manned, powered, sustained and controlled flight in a heavier-than-air vehicle**. The Wright *Flyer* lifted into the air at 10:35 a.m. and flew for twelve seconds, covering a distance of 121 feet. Orville's fourth and longest flight of the day was 852 feet in 59 seconds.



17 Dec 1925 Airpower pioneer **Billy Mitchell** was found guilty of "conduct of a nature to bring discredit on the military service" and sentenced to a five-year suspension of rank, pay and command. After World War I, Brig. Gen. Mitchell (at left) grew increasingly critical of senior military leaders for failing to recognize the potential of airpower in war. After the crash of a Navy dirigible, Mitchell accused senior leaders in the Army and Navy of incompetence and "almost treasonable administration of the national defense." He was court-martialed at the direct order of President Calvin Coolidge. After the verdict, Mitchell resigned from the Army and wielded far less influence thereafter. He

died in 1936 at the age of 56.

Mitchell's predictions about the rise of airpower came true in World War II, including a specific prophecy that Japan would conduct an early morning aerial attack on Pearl Harbor. He was posthumously awarded a special Congressional Medal of Honor in 1946. Named in his honor, the B-25 "Mitchell" bomber is the only American military aircraft named after a specific person. In 2007, the Air Force first awarded the Air Force Combat Action Medal (at right), which is based on the insignia painted on Billy Mitchell's aircraft during World War I.



16 Dec 1941 Flying a Curtiss P-40 Warhawk, 1st Lt. Boyd "Buzz" Wagner (17<sup>th</sup> Pursuit Squadron) became the **first U.S. Army Air Forces ace of World War II** by shooting down his fifth Japanese plane over the Philippines. Wagner had a total of eight kills in the war, the last three while flying the P-39 Airacobra. He later received the Distinguished Service Cross. (See photo of 1st Lt. Wagner at left.)



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## This Week in USAF and PACAF History 14 – 20 December 2009



20 Dec 1941 **The Flying Tigers entered combat for the first time** over Kunming, China. Colonel Claire Chennault's American Volunteer Group, flying P-40 Warhawks (at left), destroyed almost 300 enemy aircraft with a loss of only fourteen of their own. The Tigers scored innovative tactical victories when the war news back home was mostly reports of battles lost to the Japanese. Colonel Chennault was eventually promoted to the rank of Lieutenant General.

17 Dec 1944 Major Richard I. Bong of the U.S. Army Air Forces scored his 40<sup>th</sup> aerial victory in the Pacific, the **highest victory total of any U.S. ace**.

20 Dec 1944 **The Women's Airforce Service Pilot (WASP) program came to an end.** Women pilots had ferried 77 types of aircraft, including the P-38 and F-5, P-39, P-40, P-63, C-54, C-46, and B-24. The women encountered the same flying conditions and problems as were faced by male pilots, sometimes guarding their own planes at under-staffed airfields and frequently flying open-cockpit planes in subzero weather.



14 Dec 1946 President Truman approved the **Outline Plan establishing seven regional commands**, including Alaskan Command (ALCOM), Far East Command and Pacific Command. The Navy wanted a unified command for the entire Pacific, but the other services preferred that commands be established by mission rather than geographical area. A compromise was reached, resulting in the Outline Plan approved by President Truman.



Two days later, on 16 Dec 1946, the Joint Chiefs of Staff issued a **directive establishing Alaskan Command, Far East Command and Pacific Command** effective 1 January 1947. The executive agents for these commands respectively were Commanding General, Army Air Forces (later Chief of Staff, Air Force), the Chief of Naval Operations and the Chief of Staff, Army. Maj Gen Howard A. Craig, US Army Air Forces, was designated as the first commander of Alaskan Command in addition to serving as the Commander of the Alaskan Department.

17 Dec 1950 **Far East Air Forces F-86s encountered North Korean MiG-15s** in combat for the first time. Lt. Col. Bruce H. Hinton scored the first F-86 victory over a MiG-15.

14 Dec 1964 **First Barrel Roll armed reconnaissance mission flown in Laos.** This mission initiated tactical fighter operations in Southeast Asia on a continuous basis.



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18-29 Dec 1972 **Operation LINEBACKER II.** To force the North Vietnamese to return to negotiations, President Nixon ordered an 11-day all-out bombing campaign against targets in Hanoi and Haiphong. USAF aircraft dropped 20,370 tons of bombs, including 15,000 tons from B-52s. SSgt. Samuel O. Turner, USAF, became the first B-52 tail gunner to shoot down an enemy airplane. Altogether, the USAF completed 714 B-52 and 830 tactical fighter sorties, while the Navy and Marine Corps flew another 386 sorties in the 11 days. KC-135s flew more than 1,300 sorties to provide fuel to various aircraft. North Vietnam shot down 15 B-52s, 2 F-4s, and 2 F-111s in this operation. Linebacker II led to the North Vietnamese return to the peace table and a cease fire agreement.



17 Dec – 14 Feb 1990 In **Operation JUST CAUSE**, USAF aircraft struck targets, airlifted troops, and flew special operations to restore democracy in Panama. F-117 Nighthawk stealth fighter-bombers flew in combat for the first time. In the largest night-combat airdrop since World War II, MAC flew 9,500 airborne troops from Pope AFB to Panama.

17 Dec 1993 The **first B-2 Spirit bomber** arrived at Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri. The B-2, essentially a flying wing, was the first “stealthy” heavy bomber.

16 Dec 1998 **Operation DESERT FOX** began with the launch of cruise missiles and air strikes by the U.S. and Great Britain against Iraqi targets after Iraq refused to allow United Nations weapons inspectors to continue their work. The four-day operation hit some 100 enemy weapons-production facilities. The largest air campaign against Iraq since DESERT STORM in 1991, Operation DESERT FOX involved the first combat use of B-1B Lancer bombers. (The photo at right shows a B-1 weapon release during training.)



15 Dec 2005 **The F-22A Raptor reached initial operating capability** for the 27th Fighter Squadron and the 1st Fighter Wing at Langley AFB. The F-22 has a low-observable, highly maneuverable airframe; advanced integrated avionics and aerodynamic performance allowing supersonic cruise without afterburner.