



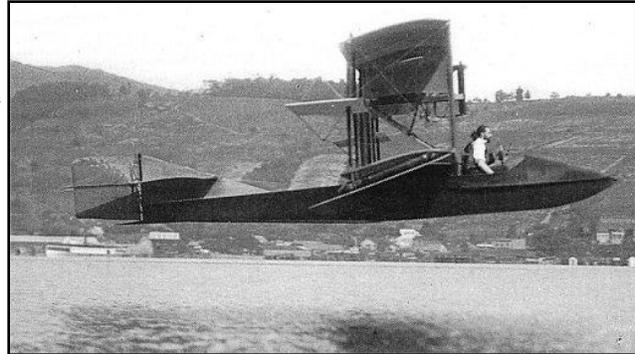
U.S. AIR FORCE

## This Week in USAF and PACAF History 22 – 28 February 2010



### 24 Feb 1914 **Pusher aircraft condemned.**

Due to the large proportion of deaths in pusher airplane accidents, an Army board at the Signal Corps Aviation School condemned all such aircraft. On these aircraft, the engine was mounted behind the pilot, and the propeller behind the engine. In a crash, the power plant was almost certain to break loose from its mountings and crush the pilot.



26 Feb 1945 Lt. Gen. Millard F. Harmon, Commanding General, Army Air Forces, Pacific Ocean Areas, disappeared on a B-24 flight enroute from the Marshall Islands to Hawaii. Despite an intensive search by aircraft and surface vessels, no trace of Harmon's plane was ever found.

27 Feb 1947 **Longest non-stop un-refueled flight by a fighter aircraft.** Lt. Col. Robert Thacker (pilot) and Lt. John M. Ard (copilot) set the record for the longest nonstop flight by a



propeller-driven fighter aircraft when they flew "Betty Jo," a modified P-82B Twin Mustang (no guns or armor) some 5,051 miles from Hickam Field to LaGuardia Airport in New York City, in 14 hours and 33 minutes. The crew started with 2,215 gallons of fuel and landed with only 60 gallons left.

24 Feb 1952 **Wheeler AFB was reactivated** following a period of minimum caretaker status since 1949. This reactivation was part of the Air Force expansion during the Korean Conflict.

28 Feb 1959 The Air Force successfully launched **the Discoverer I satellite** into polar orbit from Vandenberg Air Force Base, California. A polar orbit allows a satellite to fly over all surface points because of Earth's rotation.

26 Feb 1960 **US Missile Launch.** On 26 February a TM-61C Matador tactical missile was successfully launched from Pad 1, Osan Air Base, Korea. The missile failed to destruct on command and was shot down by an F-100D chase plane which fired a Sidewinder missile.

22 Feb 1967 **First paratroop drop of the Vietnam War.** Over 700 US paratroopers of the 173d Airborne Brigade were dropped by PACAF C-130s into War Zone C, South Vietnam, in **Operation JUNCTION CITY**. The personnel drops were followed by heavy drops of equipment and supplies. Photo ©TIME, Inc.



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23 Feb 1967 **End of the Charging Sparrow test program.** The AIM-7 was a radar-guided air-to-air missile first developed shortly after World War II. During the Vietnam War, the AIM-7D/E had been virtually useless against maneuvering fighter-size targets, especially at low altitude. The Charging Sparrow program was designed to evaluate the Sparrow missile capabilities of the Southeast Asia fighter force, and it required that every F-4C aircraft launch an AIM-7 against an aerial target. The results indicated only two thirds of the F-4C force could successfully launch an AIM-7, and that only 80 percent of the missiles met functional requirements. The AIM-7F joined the Air Force inventory in 1976 as an almost completely new missile, and each new Sparrow version substantially improved the missile's performance.

24 Feb 1967 **Medals of Honor.** Flying an unarmed and unarmored O-1 Bird Dog aircraft near Di Linh, South Vietnam, forward air controller Capt. Hilliard A. Wilbanks, USAF, attacked a large body of Vietcong, who had ambushed a smaller force of South Vietnamese rangers. Repeatedly flying over the enemy force, Captain Wilbanks used smoke rockets and an M-16 rifle to slow the enemy advance until U.S. fighters could arrive to protect the rangers. Wilbanks was shot down and died during his evacuation, earning the Medal of Honor.



Two years later, on 24 Feb 1969, an enemy mortar shell struck an AC-47 gunship on which A1C John L. Levitow served as loadmaster during a night mission in South Vietnam. Although seriously wounded and stunned, Airman Levitow flung himself on a smoking magnesium flare that was rolling in the cargo compartment, dragged it to an open cargo door, and threw it out of the aircraft. Almost immediately the flare ignited. For this selfless heroism, Levitow became the fourth enlisted airman to win the Medal of Honor and the only enlisted airman to win the nation's highest military honor in Vietnam.

22 Feb 1973 **CEASE FIRE IN LAOS.** After signing the cease-fire for South Vietnam on 27 January, the US redirected most of its air operations against North Vietnamese forces in Laos. Besides the 4,482 attack sorties flown by the Royal Lao Air Force, the USAF flew 50 B-52 Arc Light sorties and 4,000 tactical sorties in January. After the 22 February cease-fire, the Laos requested three B-52 strikes on 23 February to answer North Vietnamese violations. B-52s flew 41 more sorties during 15-17 April. These were the final B-52 strikes against targets in Laos.

22 Feb 1978 The first test satellite in the Air Force's Navstar **Global Positioning System** was launched into Earth orbit.

26 Feb 1980 **Exercise RIMPAC 80.** PACAF hosted and participated in the first multinational exercise, RIMPAC 80, in Hawaiian waters. The exercise included Japanese forces.



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24 Feb 1991 **DESERT STORM Ground Offensive.** After more than a month of air strikes that severely weakened Iraqi forces, the U.S.-led coalition launched a ground offensive from Saudi Arabia. C-130s had already airlifted elements of the Army XVIII Airborne Corps from eastern Saudi Arabia to Rafha, on the Saudi-Iraqi border. Flying more than 300 sorties a day in 10-minute intervals, the C-130s delivered 13,843 troops and 9,396 tons of cargo. This movement enabled coalition forces to encircle Iraq's Republican Guard in what Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf, combatant commander of US Central Command, described as the "Hail Mary maneuver." Within 100 hours, coalition ground forces, coupled with continued air attacks, totally overwhelmed the Iraqi ground troops. Between February 24 and 28, the Air Force flew 3,000 reconnaissance, close air support, and interdiction sorties.

Operation DESERT STORM ended on 28 February at 0800 hours with a coalition-declared cease-fire. During the war, coalition forces released approximately 16,000 precision-guided munitions against Iraqi forces and dropped some 210,000 unguided bombs. In 42 days of around-the-clock operations, USAF aircraft flew 59 percent of the nearly 110,000 combat sorties. U.S. aerial strength of approximately 1,990 aircraft comprised 75 percent of the total coalition air power. Extensive use of satellite technology during DESERT STORM persuaded some USAF leaders subsequently to refer to the operation as **the "first space war."**

28 Feb 1994 **Operation DENY FLIGHT.** Two F-16 Fighting Falcons from the 526 FS, 86th Wing, at Ramstein AFB shot down four Serbian J-21 Jastreb-Galeb attack aircraft over Bosnia. In accordance with the rules of engagement, the F-16s ordered the Serbian aircraft to "land or exit the No-Fly Zone or be engaged." The Serbian aircraft ignored the orders, dropped bombs, and were engaged by the F-16s. This action was the first aerial combat in NATO history. (Photo at left is a J-21 Jastreb of Armed Forces of Bosnia-Herzegovina.)



23 Feb 1998 **B-2s deployed overseas for the first time,** flying from Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri, to Andersen Air Force Base, Guam.

28 Feb 1998 **The RQ-4 Global Hawk first flew.** This new unmanned aerial vehicle, designed for high-altitude, long-range, long-endurance reconnaissance missions, took off from Edwards AFB, California, on a 56-minute flight. The aircraft, with a wingspan of 116 feet, was built to fly at an altitude of up to 65,000 feet and photograph an area the size of Kentucky in 24 hours.

22-25 Feb 2002 **Senior leaders from the USAF and Indian AF** joined for a conference at PACAF — the first between the Air Forces since the U.S. lifted anti-nuclear sanctions against India in October 2001.