



U.S. AIR FORCE

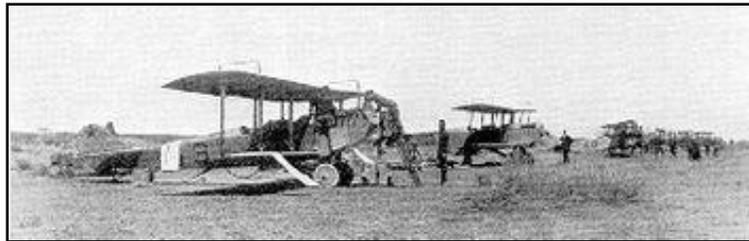
This Week in USAF and PACAF History **15 – 21 March 2010**



19 Mar 1910 Orville Wright opened the **first Wright Flying School** on a site at Montgomery, Alabama that later became **Maxwell Air Force Base**.

21 Mar 1912 Lt. Frank P. Lahm flew Signal Corps No. 7, a Wright Model B aircraft, at Fort William McKinley in the Philippines—the **first flight of an airplane at an overseas base**.

15 March 1916 The 1st Aero Squadron (AS) became the **first U.S. aviation unit to engage in field operations**. Equipped with eight Curtis JN-3 aircraft (photo below), the 1st AS arrived in New Mexico to join the punitive expedition against Mexican revolutionary leader Pancho Villa. The following day, Capt Townsend F. Dodd, pilot, and Capt Benjamin D. Foulois, observer and unit commander, flew over Mexico in the first American military reconnaissance flight over foreign territory. The 1st Aero Squadron performed reconnaissance and communications missions in some of the worst weather and poorest conditions imaginable. By the end of April all eight of the 1st AS airplanes had been destroyed.



21 Mar 1916 The French air service authorized formation of the Escadrille Americaine, later known as the **Lafayette Escadrille**. Composed of pilots from the United States, many of whom later served in U.S. air units, this French unit trained Americans in aerial combat.

19 Mar 1944 **Operation STRANGLE began**. Allied progress north through Italy was blocked by German defenses at the “Gustav Line.” The Allies tried to go around these defenses with an amphibious landing at Anzio, but this attack was also blocked. The Mediterranean Allied Air Forces (MAAF) drafted a plan calling for thousands of aircraft to attack every enemy rail route and starve the German army of supplies. Operation STRANGLE differed from earlier air campaigns as the MAAF simultaneously targeted whole systems of bridges, yards, tunnels, and even open stretches of track (photo below). The German transport capacity was reduced from 80,000 to 4,000 tons per day delivered to the front. However, with a lack of Allied progress on the ground, the static battlefield permitted the Germans to maintain their forces in central Italy by



strict rationing, foraging for food, and moving supplies and reinforcements after dark. When rested and refitted Allied armies assaulted the Gustav Line on May 12th, they enjoyed the support of Allied air forces striking both the front and rear enemy areas. American and British ground forces finally breached the Gustav Line and forced the Germans to retreat. On the evening of June 4, 1944, American patrols entered Rome.

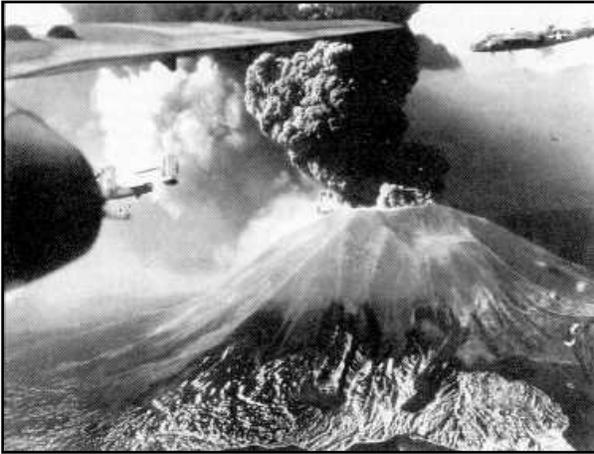


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20 Mar 1944 On the day after Operation STRANGLE began, **Mount Vesuvius erupted and buried the Pompeii airdrome**, the base of the 340th Bomb Group conducting operations against German forces. Lava cinders destroyed or damaged some 88 B-25s in one of the worst single losses of aircraft in the war.



18 Mar 1945 About 1,250 U.S. bombers escorted by 670 fighters dropped 3,000 tons of bombs on Berlin. In numbers of bombers, this daylight mission was the **largest air attack of the war**.

21 Mar 1946 **Major Air Commands established.** Tactical Air Command was activated to support ground forces, Continental Air Forces was redesignated Strategic Air Command and given the atomic bombing mission, and Air Defense Command was established for air defense of the U.S.

15 March 1950 The JCS gave the USAF formal and exclusive **responsibility for strategic guided missiles** in a basic decision on the role and mission of guided missiles.



17 Mar 1961 Northrop delivered the **first T-38 Talon jet trainer** to ATC at Randolph AFB. Some 50,000 military pilots have trained on this aircraft. The USAF remains one of the few armed forces using dedicated supersonic final trainers. Upgrades and modifications should extend the T-38 service life to 2020.



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15 March 67 The **Sikorsky HH-53B**, the largest and fastest helicopter in the USAF inventory, made its **first flight** at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio.

The HH-53 was the first helicopter specifically designed for combat search and rescue (CSAR) operations, and it succeeded the HH-3 Jolly Green Giant as the primary CSAR asset in Vietnam. The "Super Jolly" was faster, more heavily armed, and had nearly triple the take-off weight of the HH-3. With almost double the shaft horsepower, it had better overall performance and hover capability, especially at altitude. For its CSAR role, the HH-53B was equipped with armor plating, self-sealing fuel tanks, three 7.62 miniguns and an external rescue hoist with 250 feet of cable and a 20,000-pound capacity. It could transport 38 combat-equipped troops – or 22 litter patients with four medical attendants – or 18,500 pounds of freight. The improved performance of rescue helicopters like the HH-53 made terrain an ally rather than a hindrance. Ridgelines, karst, and jungle canopy in Vietnam were used to minimize the effectiveness of enemy fire.



17 Mar 1981 McDonnell-Douglas delivered the **first KC-10A Extender** tanker/cargo aircraft to Strategic Air Command. Substantially larger than the KC-135, the Extender could carry more fuel and cargo and could refuel more types of aircraft, including other KC-10s.

15-28 March 83 **U.S. Air Force anti-ship capability.** Three AGM-84 Harpoon missiles were launched from a B-52 at the Pacific Missile Test Range on Kwajalein Atoll. The Harpoon is an all-weather, over-the-horizon, anti-ship missile. Its low-level, sea-skimming cruise trajectory, active radar guidance and warhead design assure high survivability and effectiveness. Fitted with eight AGM-84Ds externally and U.S. Navy sea mines internally, the B-52H bomber becomes a long-range, rapid response platform for sea control and area denial.

20 Mar 2006 The **first operational CV-22 Osprey** was delivered to the 58th Special Operations Wing (58th SOW) at Kirtland AFB, New Mexico. This and subsequent aircraft became part of the 58th SOW's fleet of aircraft used for training CV-22 aircrews.



MH-53 Pave Low and CV-22 Osprey

The V-22 Osprey is a tilt-rotor vertical/short takeoff and landing (VSTOL), multi-mission aircraft developed to fill multi-Service combat operational requirements. The Air Force variant, the CV-22, will replace MH-53J and MH-60G helicopters and augment the MC-130 fleet in the long-range insertion and extraction mission. The tilt-rotor design combines the vertical flight capabilities of a helicopter with the speed and range of a turboprop airplane and permits aerial refueling and world-wide self deployment.