



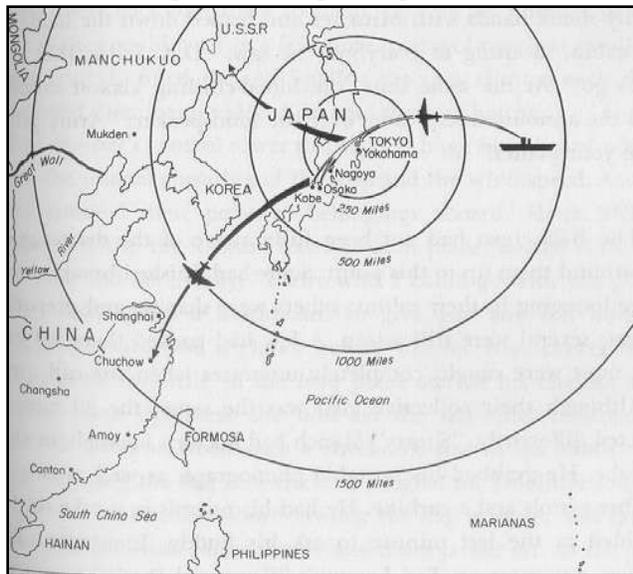
U.S. AIR FORCE

This Week in USAF and PACAF History 22 – 28 March 2010



22 Mar 1941 The Air Corps announced the formation of its **first-ever black air combat unit**, the 99th Pursuit Squadron. The unit was to include 47 officers and 429 enlisted men; ground crews trained at Chanute Field, Illinois, while pilots trained at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama.

28 Mar 1942 **Doolittle Raid Planning.** Without knowing the details or objectives of the top secret mission, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek granted final consent for American bombers to land at Chinese airfields. A few days later, President Chiang was told that at least twenty-five B-25's would be employed and that he should have fuel and flares ready at the Chinese bases. This was the final piece to be put in place for the Doolittle Raid. (Map and blood chit below.)



25 March 1944 Fifteenth Air Force attacked the Aviso Viaduct in the Brenner Pass, temporarily cutting the main highway between Italy and greater Germany. This raid was the **first Army Air Forces use of radio-guided bombs** – in this case, the VB-1 AZON (azimuth only), the only radio-guided bomb used by the U.S. Army Air Forces during WWII. AZON bombs were later employed in the European Theater in June 1944, and most successfully in China-Burma-India from November 1944 to August 1945. The AZON was the crude predecessor of the precision-guided munitions developed and used with great success in Vietnam.

24 Mar 1945 **Operation VARSITY, the Allied crossing of the Rhine River.** Eighth and Ninth Air Forces launched some 7,000 bombing, transport, reconnaissance, interdiction, close air support, and other sorties in support of this offensive. More than 2,000 transports and gliders dropped two Allied divisions on the other side of the Rhine near Wesel, Germany in daylight.

27-28 Mar 1945 **First B-29 mining operation against Japan.** Almost 100 B-29 Superfortresses from bases in the Mariana Islands dropped mines in the Shimonoseki Strait of Japan to stop shipping between the islands of Honshu and Kyushu.



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26 Mar 1949 **B-36D maiden flight.** Early versions of the B-36 were equipped with six propeller engines (below left). These aircraft burned fuel at an exorbitant rate, especially when fully loaded, and still lacked the required performance. The B-36D was the first version with jet



engines, and the first 10-engine aircraft in the world. (Photo of 10-engine B-36 - below right.)

23 Mar 1951 **Operation TOMAHAWK.** In the Korean War's second airborne operation and the largest to occur in one day, 120 USAF transports dropped more than 3,400 troops and 220 tons of materiel behind enemy lines at Munsan-ni, Korea. The operation attempted to catch the North Korean I Corps between the airborne troops and an armored attack across the front, but the enemy forces escaped northwards. Some believe the operation plan was leaked to the enemy.

24 Mar 1955 The **Seventh Air Force** established its headquarters at Wheeler AFB in the newly modified and rehabilitated Building 107.

28 Mar 1960 Hickam-based C-124 Globemaster IIs participated in “**Operation Big Slam/Puerto Rico,**” the largest peacetime air transport movement of US Army forces to that time. The exercise was designed to test the Air Force and Army capability to respond to a crisis anywhere in the world. Seventeen Hickam C-124s flew 6,000 miles from Hawaii to Ramey AFB and Roosevelt Roads Naval Station. (Photo of MATS C-124 at right).



28 March 1964 After a massive earthquake in the area of Anchorage, Alaska, the United States launched **Operation HELPING HAND.** By April 17, USAF cargo aircraft, including C-124s, C-123s, C-130s, and C-97s, had delivered 1,850 tons of relief equipment and supplies.

28 Mar 1966 Having been inactive for almost nine years, **Seventh Air Force was re-activated** on this day and assigned to PACAF. A few days later Seventh AF was organized at Tan Son Nhut Airfield, South Vietnam and designated the Air Component Command of Military Assistance Command, Vietnam. From April 1966 through 1973, the command assumed responsibility for most Air Force operations in Vietnam and shared responsibility with Thirteenth Air Force for operations from Thailand as 7/13 Air Force.



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23 Mar 1977 Tactical Air Command's **first E-3A Sentry aircraft** arrived at Tinker Air Force Base, Oklahoma. The Sentry, the Air Force's first airborne warning and control system aircraft, carried a large rotating radar disk above its fuselage.

24 Mar - 20 Jun 1999 **Operation ALLIED FORCE / NOBLE ANVIL**. To prevent the forced eviction and genocide of ethnic Albanians living in Kosovo, NATO launched this operation against Yugoslavia. It was exclusively an air campaign and NATO's first combat operation against a sovereign nation. The U.S. operation was named NOBLE ANVIL. The USAF used the B-2 for the first time in combat, and F-15s shot down two MiG-29s on the first day.

27 Mar 1999 **Operation ALLIED FORCE – F-117 Shootdown**. The Serbians shot down an F-117 in Yugoslavia—the only combat loss of a stealth fighter. The leader of the rescue effort was Capt John A. Cherrey, an A-10 pilot on his first combat mission. Capt Cherrey located the downed F-117 pilot and later received the Silver Star.

There are many theories about the F-117 shootdown: Serbian experience with F-117 operations and routes, relocation of Serbian air defense systems, failure of U.S. intelligence to detect those movements, Serbian use of long wavelength radars to string together a track of momentary sightings, Serbian luck at getting a look at the F-117 with its bomb bay doors open (increasing its radar signature), and the use of infrared or optical tracking systems to sight the aircraft. General John P. Jumper, USAF Commander at the time, said "the shootdown was mostly the result of 'a lucky shot.' Those limited times of exposure that we know exist" - when the F-117 opens its bomb bay doors, or presents certain angles to a radar - lasted just a little bit too long. We were targeted by a SAM site that we didn't have precisely located." Ref: Air Force magazine article [Two Decades of Stealth](#).



27 Mar 1999 **The "Melissa" computer virus** called swept across the Internet, destroying electronic programs and databases. Air Force systems escaped serious damage with the help of an Air Combat Command antivirus program.

26 Mar 2003 **Operation IRAQI FREEDOM**. Nearly 1,000 U.S. Army soldiers based at Vicenza, Italy, parachuted from C-17 Globemaster IIIs into the Kurdish-controlled area of northern Iraq. It was the C-17's first insertion of paratroopers into combat, and the largest mass combat jump since WWII. The aircraft and aircrews came from Charleston and McChord AFB. (C-17 airborne drop photo at left.)

