



**U.S. AIR FORCE**

## **This Week in USAF and PACAF History** **5 - 11 April 2010**



8 Apr 1942 **“Flying the Hump.”**  
A strategic objective of Allied forces in World War II was to supply Chinese forces fighting Japan. The Allies used an overland supply route that ran from India through Burma to China, but the Japanese cut this route in early 1942. On 8 April, two DC-3s (later purchased in huge numbers as C-47 Skytrains) transported gasoline and lubricating oil over the Himalaya Mountains from eastern India to southern China to begin World War II’s largest airlift operation. On one of the earliest missions, eight airplanes carried the fuel and oil to service the B-25



bombers from the “Doolittle Raid.” From December 1942 through the close of the operation in November 1945, the airlift delivered nearly 740,000 tons of cargo. Over half of this total was transported during the last eight months of the war. (Cockpit photo above from *LIFE*).

11 Apr 1942 The Curtiss-Wright Company unveiled its **first production C-46 Commando**. After deliveries began two months later, the C-46 eventually became the largest and heaviest twin-engined aircraft used by the US AAF. Due to its load capacity and high-altitude performance, the AAF primarily used it in the Pacific region and it became an important factor in the success of the “Hump” airlift over the Himalayas.

11 Apr 1944 **MEDAL OF HONOR.** Lt Edward Michael received his medal after cannon shells riddled his B-17 Flying Fortress, wounding himself, the copilot, and most crewmen. As the crew left the plane, he noticed that the bombardier's parachute was badly damaged. He decided to try a crash landing. For 45 minutes, he evaded German fighters before taking the crippled plane down to 100 feet above the ground over France and across the English Channel to a RAF base. With the wheels and flaps inoperable, and the bomb bay doors jammed open, the seriously wounded Michael still had enough strength left to bring the bomber in on its belly.

7 Apr 1945 Twentieth Air Force launched the **first fighter-escorted B-29 raid on Japan**. Acquisition of the island of Iwo Jima, after heavy fighting in February and March, made this raid possible by providing a base within fighter range of Japan.

10 Apr 1945 **Score: 10 U.S. bombers to 20 German jets.** About 50 German jet aircraft shot down ten U.S. bombers over the Berlin area—the **largest single-mission loss of bombers to enemy jets**. But the bombers and their escorts destroyed at least 20 of the German jets.



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11 Apr 1966 **MEDAL OF HONOR / AIR FORCE CROSS.** Near Cam My, South Vietnam, A1C William H. Pitsenbarger (photo at right), a pararescue jumper, hoisted nine soldiers to safety aboard a HH-43 Huskie and then remained behind to treat the wounded amid heavy mortar and sniper fire. Despite several gunshot wounds, he continued to treat the wounded soldiers until fatally shot. He became the first airman to receive the Air Force Cross posthumously. The Air Force later upgraded his award to the Medal of Honor. Read A1C Pitsenbarger's complete story in [airforce-magazine](http://airforce-magazine.com).



9 Apr 1967 Through 14 April, the 315 AD began the largest tactical unit move in the Vietnam War. In 351 sorties, **C-130s airlifted the entire 196th Light Infantry Brigade**, with 3,500 people and 4,000 tons of equipment, 375 miles from Tay Ninh to Chu Lai.



10 Apr 1967 **Operation POKER DICE.** SAC accomplished the beddown of B-52s at U-Tapao with the first 3 aircraft arriving during the day. Later in the day, the B-52s from U-Tapao flew their first bombing mission in the Vietnam War. Combat sorties averaged three hours in duration as compared to 12 hours for Guam-based aircraft. (See photo at left of a B-52 and KC-135 at U-Tapao).

7 Apr – 13 May 1972 **Operation CONSTANT GUARD I.** To stop a full-scale North Vietnamese invasion Military Airlift Command moved personnel and cargo from McConnell AFB, Kans., and Seymour Johnson AFB, N.C. to Thailand. Through 13 May, the USAF moved 12 squadrons and 200 aircraft to Southeast Asia.

11 Apr 1973 **Project SCOOT** (Support Cambodia Out of Thailand). Through October, USAF C-130s flew 1,290 sorties from U-Tapao AB to deliver 3,314 tons of rice to Phnom Penh, and 7,055 tons of ammunition to Cambodian forces. They also airdropped another 39.7 tons of rice.



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6 Apr 1975 **Operation EAGLE PULL.** The United States began the fixed-wing aerial evacuation of Phnom Penh, Cambodia, which was surrounded by Khmer Rouge forces. On 6 April, MAC flew more than 1,400 U.S. Marines and 1,561 tons of equipment from Kadena AB to Cubi Point, Philippines, in 29 C-141, 8 C-5, and 2 commercial contract missions. By April 11, some 875 Cambodians had flown to Thailand aboard USAF C-130s. On 12 April, USAF and Marine Corps helicopters, with escorts from USAF fighters and gunships, evacuated 287 people in the final airlift from Phnom Penh. The city fell to communist forces on 17 April.



10-25 April 1980 **Kiwis in COPE THUNDER.** The first participation by a third country in Cope Thunder was during CT 81-5, when the Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF) deployed 8 A-4Ks to Clark Air Base. HIANG F-4Cs from Hawaii took part in this exercise as well, and also flew in Combat Sage. (Photo at left of RNZAF A-4s at Clark AB.)

5-6 Apr 1986 **Osan fuel explosion.** After a tank of jet fuel exploded at Osan Air Base, four C-141 Starlifters and one H-3 Jolly Green Giant helicopter from the 63<sup>rd</sup> MAW delivered fire suppressant foam to the base. The aircraft also evacuated burn victims to Seoul for treatment.

5 Apr 1991 **Operation PROVIDE COMFORT.** From 5 Apr to 15 July, MAC units flew more than 7,000 tons of supplies to northern Iraq, southeastern Turkey, and western Iran to help more than a million Kurdish rebels who fled from Iraq after being defeated by Iraqi forces. U.S. Air Force C-5, C-141, and C-130 aircraft airlifted more than 7,000 tons of relief supplies to Kurdish refugees who had fled their homes after Iraqi forces threatened to exterminate them. The operation later provided aerial protection for a security zone in northern Iraq so that the Kurds could return to their homes. This area became a no-fly zone forbidden to Iraqi aircraft.



10 Apr 1994 Two F-16 Fighting Falcons struck a Bosnian Serb command post near Gorazde in Serbia after Bosnian Serbs attacked UN personnel in the enclave. This was the **first close air support mission of Operation DENY FLIGHT** and the **first air-to-ground bombing in NATO's history.** (F-16 photo left.)

9 Apr 1997 **F-22 roll-out.** Lockheed-Martin and Boeing rolled out the F-22 air superiority fighter in a ceremony at Marietta, Georgia.