



U.S. AIR FORCE

This Week in USAF and PACAF History **31 May – 6 June 2010**

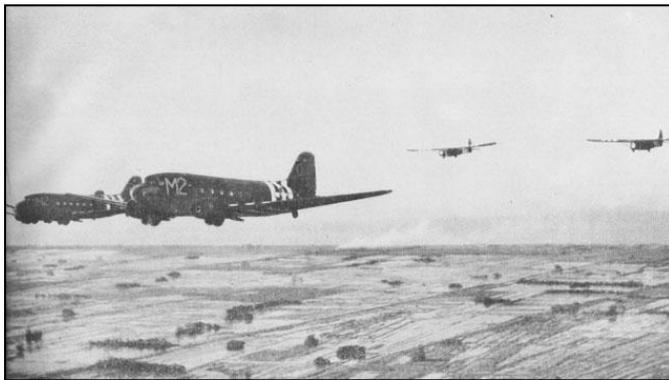


4 June 1920 The **National Defense Act** established the Air Service as a combatant arm of the Army – equivalent to the infantry, cavalry, and artillery. Congress also created the rating of “airplane pilot” and authorized flying pay of 50 percent above base pay.

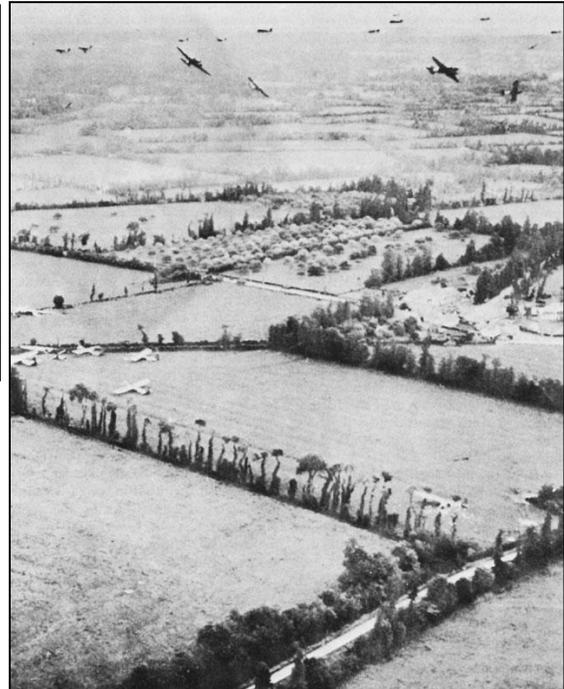
31 May 1935 Hawaii's newest airfield, now known as **Hickam AFB**, was officially dedicated and named in honor of Lt Col Horace Meek Hickam, a distinguished aviation pioneer who was killed in an aircraft accident on 5 November 1934 at Fort Crockett in Galveston, Texas.

5-6 June 1944 **D-Day: Operation OVERLORD**, the Allied invasion of northwest Europe, began on 6 June. The Ninth Air Force had been organized to support the invasion with a tactical air offensive, and had grown rapidly from a small nucleus in January to the largest single force of medium and fighter-bombers in the world. From 1 May to 6 June it flew more than 35,000 tactical sorties, over a thousand a day, in preparation for the amphibious and airborne assaults. Its targets were enemy airfields, railroad yards, transport, coastal gun positions, communications, and bridges stretching from the Netherlands to the Pyrenees. The Allied air attacks largely prevented the Luftwaffe from countering the invasion and cut German transportation arteries, isolating the beachheads from German forces.

On D-day and the night before, Eighth and Ninth Air Forces and the Royal Air Force supported the invasion with some 15,000 interdiction, close air support, and airlift sorties. More than 1,400 C-47s, C-53s, and gliders of Ninth Troop Carrier Command dropped or landed three full airborne divisions (13,000 troops) and artillery in German-occupied France on the night before and during the Allied amphibious invasion of Normandy. The airborne troops' mission was to secure the land approaches to and from the beaches.



The photo above shows C-47 tow planes and their gliders, flying low over flooded lowlands near Ste. Mère-Eglise as they approach their landing zones. The photo at right shows tow planes and gliders in the air and gliders on the ground in the hedgerow countryside of Normandy.





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31 May 1945 The last of 18,188 **B-24 Liberators** was delivered to the USAAF. This bomber



was produced in larger numbers than any other U.S. aircraft and employed on more fronts than any other Allied or enemy bomber in World War II. Consolidated was originally asked to produce the B-17 under license, but submitted its own design for a more capable bomber. The placement of the B-24's fuel tanks throughout the upper fuselage and its lightweight construction optimized assembly line production (photo at left) and increased range and payload, but made the aircraft more difficult to fly and more vulnerable to battle damage.

2 June 1958 **First PACAF Fighter Symposium.** Through 6 June, PACAF held a US/Asian Fighter Weapons Symposium at the mountain resort of Baguio in the Philippines. PACAF Staff officers met with their counterparts from the Chinese Nationalist Air Force, Korean Air Force, Philippine Air Force, Royal Thai Air Force, and the Vietnamese Air Force. It was the first such conference on operational requirements and problems.

3 June 1959 The **Air Force Academy graduated its first class.** Of the 207 graduates, 205 were commissioned as regular USAF officers.

6 June 1960 **Electronic Flight Planning.** An operational development of major importance was successfully tested when two F-100s took off from Itazuke Air Base, Japan on what was **PACAF's first computer-planned mission.** The computer-produced frag orders were more detailed and accurate and could be produced in a few seconds. The time and money saving features of the new system were obvious, but most important was the quick reaction to changes in combat profiles, a factor which was to prove a vital ingredient of combat missions to come.

31 May 1967 **Mackay Trophy.** A KC-135 Stratotanker from the 902nd Air Refueling Squadron carried out a spectacular series of emergency refuelings that saved six fuel-starved Navy aircraft. As reported in *Air Force* magazine:

"A crew consisting of aircraft commander Maj. John H. Casteel, copilot Capt. Richard L. Trail, navigator Capt. Dean L. Hoar, and boom operator MSgt. Nathan C. Campbell was assigned a refueling track over the Gulf of Tonkin. Soon after they had established their track, Major Casteel's crew was alerted to refuel a pair of Air Force F-104 fighters on a support mission north of the DMZ. While refueling the F-104s, Casteel was informed that two Navy KA-3 tankers, desperately short of fuel, were on the way to his tanker. Both KA-3s had fuel they could transfer but could not use themselves. After receiving a partial load, the F-104s stayed with Casteel's KC-135 to defend it against possible MiG attacks while it refueled the Navy aircraft.



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The first Navy tanker took on a minimum of fuel then broke off to allow the second KA-3 to hook up. At this point, two Navy F-8s were vectored to the KC-135 for emergency refueling. One F-8 was so low on fuel that the pilot could not wait for the second KA-3 to complete refueling. The Navy pilot hooked up to the KA-3 that still was taking on fuel from the KC-135. That is believed to have been the first tri-level refueling ever. While the dual transfer was in progress, the first KA-3 passed fuel to the second F-8, and then returned to the KC-135 to complete its own refueling.

This joint-service operation was still in progress when two Navy F-4s with bingo fuel were vectored to the KC-135 for emergency service. While waiting for the F-4s to appear, Casteel's crew gave the two Air Force F-104s another shot of fuel, then transferred enough to the Navy F-4s to get them to their carrier.

After this series of 10 refuelings, the KC-135 did not have enough fuel to return to its base in Thailand. It headed for an alternate in South Vietnam while refueling the two F-104s a third time to provide enough fuel to get them to their base.”

Casteel's crew all received Distinguished Flying Crosses for the action, and they were subsequently awarded the Mackay Trophy. Source: *Air Force* magazine article [Valor: Tribute to the Tankers](#), January 1996.



7-24 June 1976 **First TEAM SPIRIT Exercise.** Team Spirit was a joint and combined field training exercise designed to evaluate and improve the interoperability of the ROK and U.S. forces. One of the specific objectives of this first Team Spirit was to test and evaluate the Korea Tactical Air Control System. A total of 608 U.S. and ROK aircraft flew 2,418 sorties.

4-18 June 1977 **Cope Thunder Expanded.** Cope Thunder IX, conducted 4-18 June, included units from PACAF, MAC, SAC, the U.S. Marine Corps; two U.S. Navy aircraft carriers, the Philippine Army; and the U.S. Army. A total of 632 sorties were flown in nine flying days. The realistic exercises filled a vital need in PACAF, and the exercise grew and expanded in subsequent years.

1 June 1992 In a **major reorganization**, the Air Force inactivated Strategic Air Command, Tactical Air Command, and Military Airlift Command; it then activated Air Combat Command and Air Mobility Command. Air Combat Command received SAC's bombers and missiles and TAC's fighters, while Air Mobility Command inherited MAC's transports and SAC's tankers. Air Force Space Command assumed management responsibility for the Air Force Satellite Communications System, formerly managed by Strategic Air Command.

The Department of Defense activated United States Strategic Command, which assumed wartime responsibility for U.S. nuclear forces and their long-range delivery systems. The last commander of Strategic Air Command, Gen. George L. Butler, USAF, became the first commander of United States Strategic Command.



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On July 1, the Air Force continued its reorganization with the inactivations of Air Force Logistics Command and Air Force Systems Command; it then activated Air Force Materiel Command to replace them.

31 May 1996 The USAF awarded multi-year contracts to McDonnell-Douglas and Pratt & Whitney for 80 C-17 Globemaster III aircraft and engines. The contracts, valued at \$16.2 billion, were the **longest and the largest multi-year government contracts** to date and increased the number of USAF C-17s at the time to 120. The acquisition also enabled the retirement of C-141s from the active Air Force.

6 June 1996 At NAS Whidbey Island, Washington, the first Air Force aircrew graduated from the Navy's EA-6B Fleet Replacement Squadron to join one of five new **Navy/Air Force EA-6B "Prowler" squadrons**. The joint venture between the Air Force and Navy consolidated the airborne threat radar jamming mission and led to the retirement of the EF-111 Raven.



EA-6B Prowler



EF-111 Raven

4 June 2003 Members of the Indian Air Force arrived at Eielson AF, Alaska for **Cooperative Cope Thunder**, marking the first time Indian military forces fully integrated and participated in the U.S. exercise. A Soviet-built Indian IL-76 transport also participated for the first time, and the exercise also marked the first time fighters from the Japanese Air Self Defense Force deployed to North America for an exercise.

2 June 2004 In a flight bringing home the remains of two American servicemen missing since the Vietnam War, Maj. Gen. Edward Mechenbier (USAFR) piloted the '**Hanoi Taxi**,' a C-141 Starlifter that carried the first group of repatriated American prisoners of war in 1973. Gen. Mechenbier himself had been a POW in Vietnam for six years and was on the Hanoi Taxi's first flight out of Vietnam.

1 June 2005 The "General George C. Kenney Headquarters (Provisional)", Hickam AFB, HI, was activated and attached to HQ PACAF. On the same day, the Thirteenth Air Force, Hickam AFB, HI, was attached to Kenney Headquarters.