



U.S. AIR FORCE

This Week in USAF and PACAF History **7 – 13 June 2010**



12 Jun 1918 The 96th Aero Squadron conducted the **first daylight bombing by an American unit** when it attacked enemy-held marshalling yards at Dommary-Baroncourt, France.

10 Jun 1943 The Royal Air Force and the Army Air Forces launched the **Combined Bomber Offensive** against Germany. Eighth Air Force struck enemy industrial targets by day, while the Royal Air Force attacked enemy cities by night. The around-the-clock bombing was designed to cripple and then destroy the Germans' ability and will to continue the war.

Three days later, in a raid on Kiel, Germany, Eighth Air Force lost 26 of 60 bombers, demonstrating the need for fighter escorts.

A similar bombing campaign in the Pacific was not possible until late summer, 1944, when U.S. forces captured the Marianas Islands and built air bases within range of Japan.

11 Jun 1943 After a month-long aerial bombardment that had commenced on May 8, some 11,000 Italian troops on the island of Pantelleria, between Italy and Tunisia, surrendered to the Allies without firing a shot. It was the **first large defended area to fall to air power**, and cleared the way for the Allies to move north from Africa to invade Sicily and Italy.

11 Jun 1948 **The USAF revised its aircraft designation system.** "P" for pursuit changed to "F" for fighter. Thus, the P-51 became the F-51; the P-80 became the F-80, etc.

8 June 1953 The **USAF Thunderbirds performed for the first time** at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. The team was named partly for the legendary Thunderbird of Native American folklore in the U.S., an awesome creature that shook the earth with the thunder of its great wings.

The first Thunderbird team of pilots and support personnel was carefully selected from the officer and enlisted ranks. The first Thunderbird aircraft was the straight wing F-84G Thunderjet (see photo at right).

With the move to the F-100 Super Sabre in 1956, the Thunderbirds became the world's first supersonic aerial demonstration team. Although never a routine part of the Thunderbird show, the solo flew supersonic at the request of the air show sponsor. Eventually, the Federal Aviation Authority banned all supersonic flight at air shows.



11 Jun 1957 The **first U-2** high-altitude, long-range reconnaissance aircraft was delivered to the 4080th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing at Laughlin Air Force Base, Texas. The U-2 could fly 10-hour missions at exceptionally high altitudes at a top speed of 600 miles per hour. Photo at left.



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9 June 1964 **First KC-135 Support for Vietnam Combat Operations.** Four KC-135s from Clark AB, Philippines, refueled eight F-100s from Da Nang on an attack against anti-aircraft batteries in northern Laos. PACAF RF-101Cs and KB-50Js supported the strike.



10 June 1969 **Project Misty Bronco.** Beginning in April, Misty Bronco tested the effectiveness of armed OV-10s providing an immediate USAF strike presence readily available to ground forces. The concept was deemed successful, and arming of all OV-10s was authorized on 10 June. (See photo of OV-10, left).

12 Jun 1970 **Photo-Reconnaissance, Heavy.** A USAF K-30, one of the largest reconnaissance cameras, retired to the Air Force Museum after more than 20 years in service. The camera measured 3' x 4.5' x 5', weighed 665 pounds, and used a 100-inch focal length optical system.

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.

8 June – 2 July 1991 The **eruption of Mount Pinatubo** in the Philippines buried Clark Air Base and two other U.S. military installations with volcanic ash, forcing the Air Force to evacuate some 15,000 people to Guam and the United States. FIERY VIGIL became the largest evacuation operation since the fall of South Vietnam in 1975. Clark Air Base, the oldest and largest USAF overseas base, closed permanently. The photos below show the eruption (left) and a part of Clark Air Base some weeks after the ash fall (right).





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11 Jun 1996 **JSTARS**. ACC acquired its first E-8 Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System (JSTARS) aircraft. The E-8, capable of providing detailed radar information on ground targets, had been tested during its development in Operations DESERT STORM and JOINT ENDEAVOR. Photo at left.

9 Jun 1997 **Expeditionary Air Force Unit Concept**. During Exercise CENTRAL ENTERPRISE (9-20 June), two B-1B bomber units became one force at a forward operating location—RAF Fairford, England. The 7th Bomb Wing from Dyess AFB and the 28th Bomb Wing from Ellsworth AFB, along with 350 people, formed the 7th Expeditionary Bomb Group.

10 Jun 1999 **Operation ALLIED FORCE**. NATO suspended air strikes against Yugoslavia after its President agreed in writing to withdraw Serb forces from Kosovo, allow their replacement with multinational peacekeeping forces, and allow the return of hundreds of thousands of ethnic Albanians to that province. During the early part of the air campaign, political restrictions on targets, inadequate air forces and poor weather led to disappointing results and continued Serb intransigence. Noted military historian John Keegan, a long-time critic of airpower, said that "airpower simply does not seem to be working."

After a 23 April NATO summit, a more robust NATO air component was employed. The set of targets was expanded to include more Serb military forces as well as "sustainment targets" – military-industrial plants, petroleum resources, lines of communication, electrical grids, and command and control facilities. USAF combat forces developed highly effective flex procedures for striking Serb military forces as soon as they were located by reconnaissance assets. When Serbia capitulated to NATO terms, Keegan stated that ALLIED FORCE was the first war in history won by air power alone.

