



U.S. AIR FORCE

This Week in USAF and PACAF History 28 June – 4 July 2010



2 July 1926 The Air Corps Act redesignated the Army Air Service as the **Army Air Corps** and created an Assistant Secretary of War for Air. On the same day, Maj. Gen. Mason M. Patrick, chief of the Air Service, became chief of the Air Corps. Gen. Patrick (at left) was an important early airpower advocate. Patrick AFB in Florida is named in his honor.

Congress also created the **Distinguished Flying Cross** (at right) to honor heroic acts or extraordinary flight achievements by armed services' members, retroactive to 6 April 1917. The first Distinguished Flying Cross was awarded to Captain Charles A. Lindbergh. The Wright



Brothers retroactively received the Distinguished Flying Cross through a special Act of Congress, since the law precluded award to civilians.

1 July 1949 **The USAF Medical Service** was established under Maj. Gen. Malcolm Grow, the first USAF Surgeon General. Malcolm Grow Medical Center on Andrews AFB is named for him.

4 July 1942 **The Flying Tigers join the USAAF.** The 1st American Volunteer Group (AVG), also known as the Flying Tigers, joined the Army Air Forces as the 23rd Fighter Group under the China Air Task Force (later the 14th Air Force). The AVG Commander, Major General Claire Chennault (right) assumed command of the Task Force. Chennault was an outspoken advocate of "pursuit" (as fighter planes were then called) when the Army Air Force was dominated by strategic bomber theorists. Frustrated by his superiors, Chennault had retired from the Army Air Corps in 1937 and traveled to China where he helped Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek build the Chinese Air Force to fight the Japanese. With informal U.S. government support, Chennault had formed the AVG with U.S. pilots and P-40 Warhawks (left).



Facing Japanese fighters that were far more maneuverable, Chennault developed fighter tactics that capitalized on the Warhawks' advantages: diving speed, firepower, and the ability to withstand battle damage. The Tigers trained to attack from an altitude advantage, make a diving pass, avoid dogfighting, and dive away to escape and set up for another attack. American pilots used these basic tactics throughout World War II in the Pacific.

28 June 1950 **Korean War.** North Korean forces streamed south and occupied Seoul, the South Korean capital, and nearby Kimpo Airfield. FEAF launched its first successful airstrike as more than 20 B-26s from the 3 BG bombed the Munsan rail yards near the 38th parallel and the rail and road traffic between Seoul and North Korean border. One B-26 was lost to enemy fire.



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29 June 1950 **Korean War.** President Truman authorized General MacArthur to strike targets in North Korea. MacArthur directed General Stratemeyer to concentrate air attacks on the Han River bridges and North Korean troops massing north of the river. B-26s attacked the bridges, and 5th Air Force F-80s patrolled the Han River area. The 35th and 80th FBS shot down five North Korean aircraft that were attacking Suwon, while eight B-29s from the 19th BG attacked enemy-held Kimpo Airfield and the Seoul railroad station, killing a large number of enemy troops.

(Photo at right is a B-29 bombing mission during the Korean War.) As the B-29s turned toward Kadena AB, enemy aircraft attacked and B-29 gunners shot down an enemy airplane for the first time. Later that day, the 3rd BG launched 18 B-26s to attack Heijo Airfield near Pyongyang, North Korea, claiming up to 25 enemy aircraft destroyed on the ground.



1 July 1950 **North Korean forces occupied Suwon Airfield**, the last major airfield in the Seoul area, ending the airlift from there and forcing U.S. fighters to operate from bases much farther south. Also, the first U.S. troops arrived in South Korea by airlift, carried by 374th Troop Carrier Wing transports from Japan to Pusan.

2-15 July 1953 **Humanitarian relief.** The typhoon season brought torrential rainfall to Japan in 1953, producing the worst flooding in Japanese history. From July 2nd to the 13th, the 483rd Troop Carrier Wing used C-119 Flying



Boxcars to transport relief equipment and supplies from Tachikawa AB in the Tokyo area to Kyushu. The C-119s transported five-ton water purification machines, electric generators, food, shoes, clothing, and medical supplies. The 483rd belonged to FEAF, and later PACAF, before inactivating in 1970.

(Above, C-119s at Hickam, circa 1960.)

1 July 1954 The “**Pacific Air Force**” was activated at Hickam AFB, Territory of Hawaii, and assigned to Far East Air Forces (FEAF), which was still headquartered in Japan at that time. Major General Sory Smith assumed command of the Pacific Air Force, which functioned primarily as the Air Force staff component and planning element of **U.S. Pacific Command**.

On 1 July 1956, Pacific Air Force was redesignated Pacific Air Force/FEAF (Rear). Headquarters FEAF began preparations to move from Japan to Hawaii. Major General Smith assumed additional responsibilities as Deputy Commander, Far East Air Forces.



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28 June 1957 The first **KC-135 Stratotanker**, assigned to the 93d Air Refueling Squadron, arrived at Castle AFB, California. The jet tanker could cruise at the same speed as jet bombers while refueling, drastically reducing the time for in-flight refueling missions. The photo above is a KC-135 refueling a B-52.



1 July 1957 **FEAF becomes PACAF.**

Far East Air Forces completed its move from Japan to Hawaii and was redesignated as Pacific Air Forces. The FEAF Commander, General Laurence Kuter, assumed command of PACAF. Pacific Air Force/FEAF (Rear) was inactivated. Major General Smith was appointed commander, 4th Air Force, at Hamilton AFB, California.



29 June 1955 The first **B-52 Stratofortress** to enter USAF operational service arrived at the 93rd Bomb Wing, Castle AFB, CA. The B-52 is still a critical asset in the USAF inventory.

30 June 1968 The **C-5A Galaxy**, the world's largest aircraft at the time, flew on a 94-minute maiden test flight from Dobbins AFB, Ga. On 5 July 1970, the first C-5A aircraft arrived at Hickam AFB, Hawaii. The C-5 (right) was designed for higher overall performance than previous airlifters, but also with a specific objective to carry the outsized equipment of the US Army. The C-5 cargo bay could carry 36 cargo pallets or two M1-A1 Abrams main battle tanks or seven UH-1 Huey helicopters or one U.S. Army 74-ton mobile scissors bridge or 270 passengers in the air-bus configuration.



29 June 1972 **MEDAL OF HONOR.** Capt Steven L. Bennett, a forward air controller, and his observer found enemy troops attacking a friendly unit. Bennet strafed the enemy forces until they retreated. A surface-to-air missile hit and crippled his OV-10 Bronco and shredded his observer's parachute. The structural weakness of the OV-10 was well-known to aircrews; back-seaters had survived OV-10 ditchings, but no pilot ever had. Nevertheless, Bennet decided to ditch the aircraft rather than bail out and leave his observer to die in the back seat. Capt Bennet was killed in the ditching, but his observer survived. Bennett received the Medal of Honor posthumously.



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30 June 1977 President Carter announced the **cancellation of the B-1A bomber program** after the production of four prototypes, citing the continuing reliability of B-52s and the development of cruise missiles to penetrate enemy airspace. Another factor in the decision was the on-going development of stealth technology that eventually produced the B-2 Spirit.

In the 1980s, the B-1 program was revived and the design was modified into the B-1B. The most significant improvements were a low-radar cross-section, automatic terrain-following high-speed penetration, and precise weapons delivery. With an empty weight just 3% larger than the B-1A, the B-1B increased its gross takeoff weight limit from 395,000 to 477,000 pounds and added a movable bulkhead between the forward and intermediate weapons bays, allowing the B-1B to carry a wide variety of nuclear and conventional munitions.

On 4 July 1987, four USAF crewmembers took off in a B-1B from the Rockwell plant at Palmdale for its initial acceptance flight. They set a speed and payload record off the Pacific Coast by traveling 1,080 nautical miles with a 66,140-pound payload at 685 mph. Then, through 17 September, two B-1Bs from Detachment 15, Air Force Plant Representative Office and the System Program Office set 72 world and national speed, distance, and payload records. For this achievement, the detachment won the **Mackay Trophy**.

On 1 July 1994, the 184th Bomb Group in Kansas became the first **Air National Guard** unit to be equipped with the B-1B Lancer. (B-1 photo below.)



3 July 1992 **Operation PROVIDE PROMISE** began delivering food, medical supplies, and other relief cargo to Sarajevo and other communities in newly independent Bosnia-Herzegovina, which was suffering a civil war in the wake of its independence from Serbia. **PROVIDE PROMISE** became the longest sustained relief operation in USAF history. By early January 1996, when the operation ended, C-130s, C-141s, C-5s, and C-9s had delivered nearly 160,000 tons of relief supplies, some of them by airdrop and some by landing on airfields under hostile gunfire.