



U.S. AIR FORCE

## This Week in USAF and PACAF History 27 September – 3 October 2010



29 September 1918 **MEDAL OF HONOR.** Frank Luke was a copper miner and bare-knuckle boxer before enlisting in the Army during World War I. After flight training, he was given the specific mission of destroying observation balloons. Luke earned the nickname “the Arizona balloon buster” after destroying 14 enemy balloons and airplanes in 17 days of combat. On 29 September, Luke fought through eight enemy fighter escorts to shoot down three more balloons. Severely wounded, Luke dropped close to the ground and fired on German ground forces before crash landing. Once on the ground, Luke drew a pistol and fired at enemy soldiers until he died. At the time of his death, Frank Luke was 21 years old and the leading ace among U.S. pilots. He received the Medal of Honor posthumously.



*"Man, how that kid could fly! No one, mind you, no one, had the sheer contemptuous courage that boy possessed. I know he's been criticized for being such a lone-hander, but, good Lord, he won us priceless victories by those very tactics. He was an excellent pilot and probably the best flying marksman on the Western Front. We had any number of expert pilots and there was no shortage of good shots, but the perfect combination, like the perfect specimen of anything in the world, was scarce. Frank Luke was the perfect combination." - Harold Hartney, Commander, 1st Pursuit Group*

*"He was the most daring aviator and greatest fighter pilot of the entire war. His life is one of the brightest glories of our Air Service. He went on a rampage and shot down fourteen enemy aircraft, including ten balloons, in eight days. No other ace - Britain's Bishop from Canada, France's Fonck or even the dreaded Richthofen - had ever come close to that." - Eddie Rickenbacker*



2 October 1918 The **first successful unmanned air vehicle/ cruise missile** was flight-tested at Dayton, Ohio. Developed by inventor Charles Kettering and Orville Wright, the Kettering Aerial Torpedo, or “Kettering Bug,” was a small bi-plane with a 180-pound bomb, launched from a dolly running on a portable track. The Kettering Bug made several successful test flights, but World War I ended before the weapon could be employed in combat.

29 September 1938 Maj. Gen. Henry H. Arnold became **chief of the Army Air Corps**, replacing Maj. Gen. Oscar Westover, who died in an airplane crash on September 21st.



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30 September 1940 **Hickam’s “Big Barracks,”** also known as “**Hale Makai,**” was completed. The world’s largest single military barracks at the time, it could house 3,200 personnel and feed them in shifts in the central mess hall. The building is now home to Headquarters PACAF.

27 September 1943 For the first time, **P-47s escorted B-17s all the way to their targets** in Germany. The P-47s flew over 600 miles by carrying additional fuel tanks.

27 September 1951 **In Operation PELICAN,** a **C-124 Globemaster II** flew for the first time from Japan to Korea, delivering 30,000 pounds of aircraft parts to Kimpo Airfield and demonstrating the potential of very large transport aircraft in a combat theater.

1-14 October 1952 **Operation FOX PETER TWO.** A flight of 75 F-84Gs flew across the Pacific through the use of extended air refueling. The operation proved that fighters could be moved forward quickly in the U.S. Pacific Command AOR.

28 September 1954 The **YF-101A Voodoo first flew** at Edwards AFB. The heaviest, fastest single-seat U.S. fighter of this period, the “one-oh-wonder” had roles as a bomber escort, nuclear fighter-bomber, air-defense interceptor and was the first fighter used for supersonic photo reconnaissance. The F-101 also had a large role in the development of its replacement – the F-4 Phantom.



27 September 1956 **MACH 3.** Capt. Milburn G. Apt, USAF, became the first pilot to fly at three times the speed of sound, but the flight ended in tragedy. Capt. Apt flew a Bell X-2 rocket-plane dropped from a bomber launched at Edwards AFB. (At left, Capt Apt is in the X-2 cockpit and Capt. Iven Kinchloe is on the ladder.)

Military jet designs had smaller wings and tails to reduce drag. No one knew that the higher speeds and lower stability of these designs would cause **inertia coupling** – a phenomenon in which control inputs on the wings met resistance from fuselage inertia, throwing the aircraft into extremely violent, uncontrolled motion.

Capt. Apt was an experienced test pilot but he was new to the x-craft program. On this flight, Capt. Apt ran low on fuel and turned back towards Edwards while still above Mach 3. The X-2 tumbled out of control, and Capt. Apt was unable to free himself from the escape capsule before impact. The lessons learned from Capt. Apt’s flight and other tests led to improved airframe designs, stability augmentation systems and other improvements to high-performance aircraft.



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1 October 1957 General Thomas S. Power, the CINCSAC, initiated **ground alert** operations to counter the Soviet ICBM threat. SAC kept a third of its aircraft ready for takeoff with weapons loaded. It was under General Power that SAC adopted the slogan "*Peace Is Our Profession.*"

2 October 1981 "**Rearming America.**" President Reagan announced that the U.S. would build and deploy 100 B-1 bombers. (On 1 October 86, the B-1 achieved initial operating capability at Dyess AFB, Texas.) President Reagan also cancelled the horizontal multiple-shelter basing scheme for the M-X inter-continental ballistic missile in favor of super-hard silos, and announced programs to continue the ALCM program and to develop an advanced stealth bomber.

27 September 1991 President George H. W. Bush ordered termination of SAC alert, initiated in October 1957, during which crews had stood ready around the clock to launch nuclear strikes. This event heralded the **end of the Cold War** between the United States and the Soviet Union.



3-14 October 1993 **AIR FORCE CROSS.** An Army MH-60 Black Hawk helicopter was shot down during a battle in Mogadishu, Somalia. Despite his own injuries, Para-rescueman TSgt Timothy Wilkinson, USAF (at left) ran through enemy fire repeatedly to carry out five wounded Army Rangers. Even when shrapnel tore a chunk of skin off his face, Wilkinson did not falter. For his heroism, he earned the Air Force Cross.

**Operation RESTORE HOPE II.** Over the next nine days, the USAF airlifted 1,300 troops, 18 M-1 Abrams tanks, and 44 Bradley fighting vehicles from the United States to Somalia to protect U.S. forces during the United Nations food distribution effort. Tankers flew 169 refueling missions to support the airlift.

1 October 1999 The USAF deployed Aerospace Expeditionary Force 1 (AEF 1) to Southwest Asia. It was the **first AEF to deploy** under a new rotational system for 10 AEFs. The new system allowed the Air Force to respond more effectively with ready forces for operations overseas and increased morale by making deployments more predictable.

27 September 2001 SECDEF Donald Rumsfeld announced that President George W. Bush had given certain military commanders the **authority to destroy hijacked civilian airliners.**

29 September 2001 The **U.S. launched satellites from Alaska** for the first time, using the Kodiak Launch Complex. Previous U.S. space launches were only from Florida or California.

2 October 2006 ACC declared an initial operating capability for the GBU-39B **Small Diameter Bomb**, a low cost and low collateral damage 250-pound precision strike weapon for use by fighters, bombers and UAVs. Three days later, the 494th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron used the GBU-39/B in combat for the first time when an F-15E Strike Eagles carried the new weapon on a close-air support mission in Iraq.