



U.S. AIR FORCE

This Week in USAF and PACAF History 4 - 10 October 2010



5 October 1905 **The first “practical” airplane.** Even after the **Wright brothers** created separate, independent controls of the three flight axes—pitch, roll and yaw—their Flyer still had marginal performance. After Orville was nearly killed in a crash, they rebuilt the Flyer with the forward elevator and rear rudder both enlarged and placed several feet farther away from the wings. On 5 October 1905, the new *Wright Flyer III* flew for more than half an hour and covered nearly 24 miles near Dayton, Ohio. Four days later, the Wright brothers wrote to the War Department, describing their new flying machine and offering it to the Army for purchase. Misunderstanding the offer as a request for research funds, the Board of Ordnance and Fortification turned them down.

5 October 1918 **The first sustained effort at aerial resupply** of a ground unit occurred during World War I. Planes from the 50th Aero Squadron dropped supplies and aided in determining the location of the “Lost Battalion,” elements of the 77th Division that were cut off from the Allies and besieged by the Germans during the Argonne Forest offensive.



1Lt Harold E. Goettler

6 October 1918 Near Binarivelle, France, 1Lt Harold E. Goettler and 2Lt Erwin P. Bleckley, flying as an observer, were killed trying to drop supplies to a surrounded U.S. Army battalion in the Argonne Forest (the famous “lost battalion” of the Meusse-Argonne offensive). Goettler and Bleckley flew as low as possible to deliver the supplies more precisely, but enemy ground fire brought them down. Both men received the **Medal of Honor**.



2Lt Erwin P. Bleckley

9 October 1918 During the Meusse-Argonne offensive of World War I., more than 250 bombers and 100 pursuit planes, dropped 32 tons of bombs in the cantonment district between La Wavrille and Damvillers. This was the greatest massing of military aircraft to date.

7 October 1931 Army personnel observed the Navy test of the **Norden bombsight**—the product of ten years of development by inventor Carl Norden. The Navy immediately ordered a number of units and later provided some units to the Air Corps. Norden subsequently applied for a patent on his bombsight, which the U.S. Patent Office issued 16 years later, on 10 October 1947. Norden had worked for the Sperry Corporation before forming his own company, and both firms provided bombsights to the U.S. Army Air Forces during World War II.

8 October 1940 The Royal Air Force announced formation of the **first Eagle Squadron**, a fighter unit consisting of U.S. volunteers. This group later became the U.S. 4th Fighter Group.



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4-6 October 1946 Col Clarence S. Irvine and his crew flew the B-29 “Pacusan Dreamboat” to a **nonstop, unrefueled distance record** of 9,500 miles by flying from Honolulu to Cairo, Egypt, in 39 hours 36 minutes. The flight path took the aircraft over Arctic regions to test the crew through hazardous weather and with complicated navigation and communication problems.



7 October 1949 **Andersen AFB, Guam was named** in honor of Brig Gen James Roy Andersen, who died on 26 Feb 1945 in an aircraft accident near Kwajalein Island, en route to Hawaii. Previous names for Andersen AFB included North Field (Dec 1944) and North Guam AFB (Mar 1949). On 6 September 2007, Brig Gen Douglas Owens, 36th Wing Commander, presided over a ceremony re-installing the recently-discovered dedication plaque (pictured left) in front of the 36th Wing Headquarters.

10 October 1950 The USAF activated **the first Air National Guard units to support the Korean War**. Eventually, the U.S. mobilized 66 flying units and 45,000 guardsmen.

6 October 1961 In the **first hardened ICBM silo**, the 724th Strategic Missile Squadron of Lowry AFB, Colorado received the Air Force’s **first Titan I missile**. The 165-foot deep silo was the first of its kind.

7 October 1966 The Air Force selected the University of Colorado to conduct independent investigations of **Unidentified Flying Objects (UFOs)**.

8 October 1969 Gen Bruce K. Holloway accepted **Strategic Air Command’s first FB-111A** (No. 67-7193) at Carswell AFB, for the 340th Bomb Group. This aircraft replaced the F-105 and the B-58 as a high speed nuclear bomber. The FB-111 could carry the AGM-69 Short-Range Attack Missile as well as gravity weapons. A unique feature of the FB-111A was the integration of the terrain-following radar into the automatic flight control system, allowing "hands-off" flight at high speeds and low levels (down to 200 feet), even in adverse weather.





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4-5 October 1980 The Dutch cruise ship *M.S. Prinsendam* caught fire in the Gulf of Alaska, forcing all 519 passengers and crew aboard to abandon ship. Elmendorf's 71st Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron sent an HH-3 helicopter and an HC-130 to the disaster site. Piloting the HH-3, Capt. John J. Walters, USAF, and his crew rescued 61 passengers and crewmen, hoisting and airlifting them from lifeboats to a supertanker. For this rescue, Captain Walters earned the **Mackay Trophy**. The abandoned *M.S. Prinsendam* sank on 11 October.



10 October 1986 The Air Force placed the LGM-118A, also called the **Peacekeeper** or **MX missile**, on alert duty. Each of these new intercontinental ballistic missiles could deliver warheads to 10 different targets.

10 October 1994 **Operation VIGILANT WARRIOR.** After Iraqi troops massed near the Kuwaiti border, USAF cargo planes began flying additional U.S. forces to the Persian Gulf region. During October the number of USAF aircraft in-theater increased from 77 to 270, including F-15E Eagles, F-16 Fighting Falcons, and A-10 Thunderbolt IIs.

7 October 2001 **Operation ENDURING FREEDOM.** The U.S. initiated airstrikes against terrorist and Taliban targets in Afghanistan. The 509th Bomb Wing at Whiteman AFB launched six B-2 bombers that flew from Missouri across the Pacific to drop bombs on targets in Afghanistan and recover at Diego Garcia. The longest flight took 44 hours, **the longest combat mission in history**. The operation also involved B-1Bs, B-52Hs, F-15Es, KC-10s and KC-135 tankers, E-3 AWACS, EC-130s, AC-130 gunships, and MC-130 and MH-53 special operations aircraft. Naval involvement included F-14s, F/A-18s, and AV-8 aircraft from three carriers in the Indian Ocean. Lt. Gen. Charles F. Wald, USAF, served as Operation ENDURING FREEDOM's first Joint Force Air Component Commander.

8 October 2001 As part of ENDURING FREEDOM, two C-17s airdropped about 35,000 humanitarian rations over eastern and northern Afghanistan. These two airdrops were the **C-17's first combat missions**, first combat airdrops, and first humanitarian airdrops of ENDURING FREEDOM. The C-17s flew from Ramstein AB, Germany more than 6,500 miles in a 22-hour roundtrip and were air refueled multiple times.



C-17 landing at Ramstein AB, Oct 2001