



U.S. AIR FORCE

This Week in USAF and PACAF History **6-12 December 2010**



10 December 1898 **The United States acquired Guam and the Philippines.** Under the Treaty of Paris, the U.S. acquired Puerto Rico and Guam and agreed to pay Spain \$20 million for the Philippines. This marked the beginning of the expansion of U.S. interests in the Pacific region. At the time of the turnover, the local population of Guam had grown to about 10,000 inhabitants.

11 December 1914 Army Signal Corps Lt Herbert A. Dargue, pilot, and Lt Joseph O. Maubornge, radio set designer, conducted the **first U.S. military two-way air to ground radio communication** in a Burgess-Wright biplane over Manila, the Philippines. During World War I and later, radio communications greatly increased the capabilities of combat aircraft to navigate, provide real-time reconnaissance, adjust air taskings, and coordinate massed air attacks on enemy air and surface forces.

12 December 1940 War Department General Order 9 designated the military reservation near Anchorage, Fort Richardson, and flying field, **Elmendorf Field**. The Army named the post in honor of Brig Gen Wilds P. Richardson, former head of the Alaska Road Commission, and the field after Capt Hugh M. Elmendorf, killed in a flying accident near Wright Field, OH, on 13 January 1933. With the establishment of the Western Defense Command, Alaska became a theater of operations.

7 December 1941 Imperial **Japanese forces attacked Army Air Fields at Wheeler, Bellows, and Hickam** before attacking their main target, the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard. When the Japanese attacked Oahu's military installations, Hickam Field suffered extensive property damage, aircraft losses, and personnel casualties totaling 189 killed and 303 wounded. The bombing and strafing of Hickam Field was an important objective, because the success of the Japanese attack on the Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor was dependent on eliminating air opposition and precluding U.S. planes from following their aircraft back to their carriers and bombing the task force.



U.S. flag in front of Hickam's "Big Barracks," today's PACAF HQ

8 December 1941 The U.S. Congress declared war on Japan.

8 December 1941 The Japanese conducted the **first air raid on Wake Island**. This was followed by 16 more raids from 9-23 December. The attacks injured/killed numerous personnel, destroyed all the aircraft, and severely damaged communications, surface buildings, and guns.

8 December 1941 Within hours of the attack on Hawaii, **Japan attacked U.S. forces in the Philippines**. Japanese airplanes destroyed more than 100 U.S. Army aircraft at Clark and Iba Airfields, including 17 B-17s and 55 P-40s, mostly on the ground. The attack killed some 80 airmen, wounded about 150, and left the U.S. Army Air Forces in the Philippines without striking power. Five U.S. pilots were able to shoot down seven of the attacking airplanes.



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9-28 December 1948 On 9 December, an arctic storm forced the crew of a C-47 Skytrain to land on the Greenland ice cap, stranding a crew of seven. Subsequent rescue attempts by a B-17 and a towed glider failed, stranding five rescuers as well. On 28 December, **Lt Col Emil Beaudry landed a ski-equipped Skytrain on the Greenland ice cap**, rescuing the 12 airmen and subsequently won the Mackay Trophy for the mission.

10 December 1954 In a rocket-propelled sled run, Air Force Lt Col John P. Stapp, reached 632 mph and sustained greater G forces (25 Gs with peaks to 40 Gs) than humans had ever endured in recorded deceleration tests—the equivalent of Mach 1.7 at 35,000 feet. The test determined that **humans could survive ejection from aircraft at supersonic speeds.**



7 December 1956 **The DoD placed all air transport operations under a single service manager** and named the Military Air Transport Service (MATS) as its operating agency. This directive required the U.S. Navy to transfer to the Air Force all its transport aircraft, except for 30 four-engine land transports belonging to the Fleet Logistic Air Wings. (See MATS emblem at left.)

9 December 1956 The Air Force received its **first C-130 Hercules** tactical airlifter. This four-engine turboprop had an unrefueled range of over 2,500 miles, could carry oversized cargo of almost 50,000 pounds or up to 92 troops, and could take off and land within about 3,600 feet. The photo at left is a C-130 “Blind Bat” flareship that lit up the night skies over the Ho Chi Minh trail during the Vietnam War.



11 December 1956-30 June 1957 During **Operation SAFE HAVEN** cargo aircraft of the Military Air Transport Service airlifted more than 10,000 Hungarian refugees from West Germany to asylum in the United States. The refugees fled their country as Soviet troops crushed an anticommunist rebellion there.

8 December 1958 At Moffett Field, California, Hiller Aircraft Corp. unveiled its X-18 Propelloplane (right), a 16-ton **tilt-wing aircraft** capable of conventional and vertical takeoffs and landings. The X-18 eventually flew 20 test flights out of Edwards AFB from 1959 to 1961. But the X-18 had several problems, including susceptibility to wind gusts during wing rotation. Also, since the turboprop engines were not cross-linked, the failure of one engine meant a crash. On the last flight, the aircraft had to be recovered from a spin. Ground testing of the tilting concepts continued until the plane was severely damaged after a test stand failed. The X-18 program was cancelled in January 1964, and the X-18 was cut up for scrap.





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7 December 1960 The first ten of 29 F-102 “Delta Dagger” aircraft, replacing F-86s of the Hawaii Air National Guard, arrived.

7 December 1961 The Hawaii Air National Guard moved into new facilities on 60 acres of land on what was previously Fort Kamehameha. The land was acquired from the Army in 1960 in a trade for Wheeler Field.

8-9 December 1978 As a result of rising tensions in Iran, Military Airlift Command conducted 11 C-141 and C-5 missions to evacuate 900 people from Tehran, to the U.S. and West Germany. About 5,700 more left Iran on the regularly scheduled MAC missions that continued until February 1979, when Iran’s revolutionary government closed the airport.

12 December 1979 NATO ministers voted to deploy the Ground-Launched Cruise Missile (GLCM) and Pershing II missiles in Europe, countering Soviet missiles in eastern Europe.

8 December 1987 The U.S. and USSR signed the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, agreeing to remove all intermediate-range (620–3,415 statute miles) missiles from Europe. The agreement resulted in the inactivation of 6 GLCM equipped USAF tactical missile wings.

9 December 1992-4 May 1993 In **Operation RESTORE HOPE I**, AMC aircraft moved 51,431 passengers and 41,243 tons of cargo in more than 1,000 missions in support of UN peacekeeping efforts in Somalia. The 28,000 deployed troops protected the food, supplies, and aid workers from armed factions in the country.

6 December 1995 In support of **Operation JOINT ENDEAVOR**, the first airmen arrived in Tuzla, Bosnia, to prepare the airfield for the 20,000 U.S. and 40,000 NATO troops coming to enforce the Dayton Peace Accord reached at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio, between Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia.

7 December 2001 The Distinguished Visitor lounge in Hickam’s Base Operations was dedicated in memory of Lt Gen Gordon Blake. Blake (a Major at the time of the 7 Dec 41 attack) is credited with saving a flight of B-17s by redirecting them to other landing areas across Oahu.



“Hell in Paradise by Thomas Segars.
Maj Blake is shown waiving off the aircraft.

8 December 2002 **Super Typhoon Pongsona struck Guam** with wind gusts of more than 180 mph, causing extensive structural damage across the island and downing scores of power and telephone poles. Three fuel storage tanks caught fire. Pongsona left Andersen AFB with waist-high water, loss of power, major damage to base structures, and more than 1,000 downed trees. Hickam AFB sent a 19-member team including civil engineers and services members to Guam aboard a Hawaii Air National Guard KC-135 to help restore power production and work at structural repair, fencing, and signage.