



U.S. AIR FORCE

This Week in USAF and PACAF History 27 December-2 January 2011



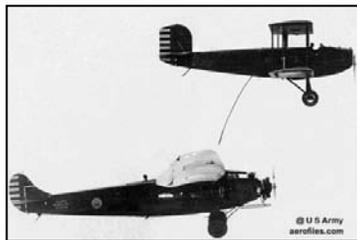
31 December 1910 The **first powered flight in Hawaii** took place as James C. "Bud" Mars flew a Curtiss "Skylark" over Moanalua Polo Field. The P-18 biplane was constructed of spruce, ash, bamboo, steel tubing, and rubberized silk wings.



30 December 1914 The Army Signal Corps accepted their **first inherently stable armored aircraft**, the Burgess-Dunne S.C. 36. An inherently stable airplane will normally return to the original condition of flight (except when in a bank) if disturbed by a force such as air turbulence. Thus, an inherently stable airplane will require less effort to control than an inherently unstable one.



1-7 January 1929 To test inflight refueling as well as crew and aircraft endurance, **the Question Mark**, a modified Fokker C-2A with a Wright 220 HP engine, flew to a world duration record of 150 hours and 40 minutes until engine problems forced a landing. Named for its unknown capacity to remain



airborne, the *Question Mark* was refueled 43 times by two Douglas C-1 biplane transport aircraft modified as tankers. The C-1s passed 5,700 gallons of fuel plus oil, food, water, and other items (roughly 40 tons) to the *Question Mark*. The *Question Mark* crewmembers were awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) for the mission, while the tanker crewmembers received letters of commendation. In 1976, the two surviving tanker crewmembers, Brig Gen Ross Hoyt and Brig Gen Joseph Hopkins, were also awarded DFCs.



(L-R) Lt Harry Halvorsen, Capt Ira Eaker, SSgt Roy Hooe, Maj. Carl Spaatz (mission commander), and Lt Elwood "Pete" Quesada

27 December 1935 The lava flow from the Mauna Loa volcano eruption threatened the water works for the city of Hilo on the island of Hawaii. Aircraft of the 23d and 72d Bombardment Squadrons were credited with diverting the lava flow when they dropped twenty 600-pound bombs in its path. Capt Joe J. Ladd led the flight of five Keystone LB-5s from Luke Field on Ford Island.



Keystone LB-5 Bombers





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28 December 1941 The **Alaskan Air Force**, (predecessor to the Eleventh Air Force) was established. It was activated at Elmendorf Field, Alaska, on 15 January 1942.

27 December 1942 Flying a P-38 Lightning against the Japanese in the Pacific, **2Lt Richard I. Bong scored the first two of his 40 aerial victories**. Most of Bong's victories were in the earlier stages of the war against very experienced Japanese pilots. Bong would be later awarded the Medal of Honor, and he remains the top U.S. ace in any war. He died in 1945, while conducting an acceptance flight for the P-80 Shooting Star.



28 December 1943 VIII Bomber Command formed a “Radio Countermeasure Unit” with 24 specially-equipped heavy bombers. Working with their British counterparts, this unit jammed German radars and radios, dropped chaff and flew “spoofing” missions in support of bombing missions, the D-Day invasion, and other allied operations.

30 December 1945 Lt Gen Ennis G. Whitehead became the commander of Pacific Air Command, US Army taking over from Lt Gen George C. Kenney. Gen Whitehead remained as commander until 25 April 1949.

1 January 1947 The Pacific Air Command, U.S. Army, was redesignated as the **Far East Air Forces** (FEAF). On 15 December 1947, the Seventh Air Force in Hawaii was redesignated Pacific Air Command. The Pacific Air Command was inactivated on 1 July 1957, as FEAF was redesignated as the Pacific Air Forces.

29 December 1949 Jacqueline Cochran (former head of the Women’s Airforce Service Pilots) set a 436.995 MPH international record for 500 kilometers (310.685 miles) in an F-51 without payload at the Mount Wilson Course.

2 January 1953 **Cessna’s T-37 design won the competition for the Air Force's primary jet trainer** over 14 other entries. Side-by-side seating in the T-37 made it easier for the instructor to observe and communicate with the student. The T-37C, with provisions for armament and extra fuel, was built for export, and nearly 600 A-37 attack versions were produced. In all, nearly 1,300 T-37As, -Bs and -Cs were built before production ended in the late 1970s. The aircraft officially retired from the active U.S. Air Force inventory on 31 July 2009.



1 January 1958 The Air Force moved the 1st Missile Division and the 704th Strategic Missile Wing—SAC’s first ballistic missile wing—to Cooke AFB (renamed Vandenberg AFB in October 1958), California. The 704th operated the Thor IRBM, and later the Atlas ICBM.



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1 January 1967 The **USAF received 140 CV-2 Caribou aircraft from the US Army**. This marked the first time that an entire inventory of aircraft transferred from one service to another. The aircraft was redesignated the C-7 and went to 7th Air Force, which gave the NAF operational control over all fixed wing cargo aircraft in Vietnam.



Col Robin Olds

2 January 1967 In **OPERATION BOLO**, F-4 Phantom pilots from the 8th Tactical Fighter Wing shot down seven North Vietnamese MiG-21s in a sweep mission over the Red River valley to set a one-day aerial victory record. This MiG suppression operation was dubbed the largest air battle of the war and the most dramatic use of tactical deception. In a successful ruse, the F-4C pilots simulated Rolling Thunder F-105 strike aircraft to draw the MiGs out. The wing commander, Col Robin Olds, shot down one of the MiGs and became the only USAF ace with aerial victories in World War II and the Vietnam War.

27 December 1968 The **first men to circle the moon** – Apollo 8 astronauts, USAF Colonel Frank Borman, Navy Captain James A. Lovell Jr., and USAF Major William A. Anders, splashed down at 10:51 approximately 1,000 miles southwest of Hawaii. The crew arrived at Hickam AFB on 28 December 1968, en route to the Manned Spacecraft Center in Houston, Texas. They received a large and festive welcome as they set foot on American soil for the first time since their liftoff from Florida.



CGM-13B at Okinawa
Photo courtesy of
[498 TMG Website](#)

31 December 1969 The 498th Tactical Missile Group inactivated on Okinawa to end the deployment of CGM-13B Mace tactical missiles there.

30 December 1990 – 6 July 1991 During the Gulf War, the **374th Tactical Airlift Wing deployed** C-130s, aircrews, and support personnel to **Desert Shield and Desert Storm** operations in Southwest Asia. Concurrently, the wing provided airlift and aeromedical aircraft for the evacuation of Clark AB, Philippines, following the eruption of Mount Pinatubo (8 June-1 July 1991). On 1 April 1992, with the implementation of the objective wing, the 374th was reassigned to Fifth Air Force and redesignated the 374th Airlift Wing.

27 December 1992 During Operation SOUTHERN WATCH, two F-16 Fighting Falcons from the 363rd Fighter Wing at Shaw AFB intercepted two MiG-25s in the “no-fly” zone in Southern Iraq. Lt Col Gary North, the 33rd Fighter Squadron Commander, fired an AIM-120A missile to shoot down a MiG-25. It was the **first combat use of the AIM-120A**, the beyond visual range kill, and the **first USAF F-16 air-to-air victory**.