



U.S. AIR FORCE

This Week in USAF and PACAF History 3-9 January 2011



9 January 1793 Jean Pierre Blanchard made the **first manned balloon flight in America** with a 46-minute trip from the Wall Street Prison in Philadelphia, Pa., to Debtford Township, N.J. He carried landing clearance orders signed by President George Washington and a small black dog as a passenger.

5 January 1916 The 1st Company, 2nd Aero Squadron, sailed from San Francisco, California for the Philippines. It was the **first Aero unit to serve outside the US**.

7 January 1931 In what became known as the **MacArthur-Pratt Agreement**—General Douglas MacArthur (CSA, at left) and Admiral William Pratt (CNO, at right) agreed that: “The



Naval Air Force will be based on the fleet and move with it as an important element in solving the primary missions confronting the fleet. The Army Air Forces will be land-based and employed as an essential element to the Army in the performance of its mission to defend the coasts at home and in our overseas possessions, thus assuring the fleet absolute freedom of action without any responsibility for coast defense.” Admiral Pratt believed that the Navy



should have maximum mobility and striking power, without being tethered to a static coastal defense role. While in effect, this agreement recognized the Army's primary responsibility for coastal defense. Two years later, MacArthur defined the Army Air Corps mission "to conduct the land-based air operations in defense of the United States and its overseas possessions."



4 January 1944 In **Operation CARPETBAGGER**, American and RAF planes dropped arms and supplies to French, Belgian, and Italian partisans for the first time. Most Carpetbagger flights were made by glossy black B-24 bombers flying on moonlit nights at low level to avoid enemy gunfire and to improve visual navigation. The nose guns were removed (photo at left) to further enhance visual navigation in which the crew used rivers, lakes, railroad tracks, and towns as check points. Drops

were also made using radio-navigation equipment. The B-24s had their waist guns replaced with blackout curtains and the belly turret removed to create a drop opening for agents and supplies. Supplies were also released in containers designed to be dropped from the existing equipment in the bomb-bay. Pilots often flew several miles farther into enemy territory after completing their drops to disguise the actual drop location in case enemy observers were tracking the plane's movements. Often operating in weather considered impossible for flying, the Carpetbaggers flew most of their missions to supply French partisan groups north of the Loire River in support of the upcoming D-Day invasion. The Carpetbaggers have been generally recognized as **the ancestors of today's Air Force Special Operations**.



U.S. AIR FORCE

This Week in USAF and PACAF History 3-9 January 2011



3 January 1945 The **Battle of the Bulge**: American and British forces counter-attacked the Germans under the protection of American airpower. While interdiction of supply lines and close air support of ground troops played a role in the Allied success, the most important benefit of Allied air superiority was to destroy 1000 Luftwaffe aircraft and thus prevent them from supporting the German army in the same ways.

German General von Mellenthin summed up his own feelings as well as those of Field Marshall von Rundstedt in stating: *"The Ardennes battle drives home the lesson that a large-scale offensive by massed armour has no hope of success against an enemy who enjoys supreme command of the air."*

Generalleutnant Adolf Galland, commander of the Luftwaffe fighter arm, wrote: *"The Luftwaffe received its death blow at the Ardennes offensive."*

7 January 1966 The 4200th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing at Beale AFB, California, received the **first operational SR-71 Blackbird strategic reconnaissance aircraft** (#61-7957). Strategic Air Command had SR-71 Blackbirds in service from 1966 through 1991. Of the 32 SR-71 aircraft in the inventory, 12 were destroyed in accidents, but none were lost to enemy action.



8 January 1973 In their F-4D Phantom, Capt Paul D. Howman and 1Lt Lawrence W. Kullman shot down a MiG southwest of Hanoi with a radar-guided AIM-7 missile. This was **the last aerial victory before the North Vietnamese signed the ceasefire agreement**, which went into effect on 29 January.

9 January 1973 Secretary of the Air Force, Dr. Robert C. Seamans, Jr., selected the **Fairchild-Republic's YA-10A** (NMUSAF photo left) and the General Electric TF-34 engine as the **A-X (attack experimental) competition winners for the Air Force close air support aircraft**.



9 January 1976 The first operational F-15 Eagle (#74-0083) arrived at the 1st Tactical Fighter Wing, Langley Air Force Base, VA. The F-15 was the **first fighter to have a thrust greater than its weight**, allowing it to accelerate while going straight up.

8 January 1977 The **first YC-141B (stretched C-141 Starlifter)** rolled out of the Lockheed-Georgia Marietta plant. Equipped with in-flight refueling capability, it was 23.3 feet longer than the original C-141A, enabling it to carry more troops and cargo.



This Week in USAF and PACAF History 3-9 January 2011



U.S. AIR FORCE

6 January 1979 The 388th Tactical Fighter Wing at Hill Air Force Base, Utah, received the **first General Dynamics F-16 delivered to the Air Force**. The F-16, the newest multirole fighter, could perform strike as well as air-superiority missions.

3 January 1993 President George Bush and Soviet President Boris Yeltsin **signed the second Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START)** to reduce nuclear bombers, missiles, bombs, and warheads.

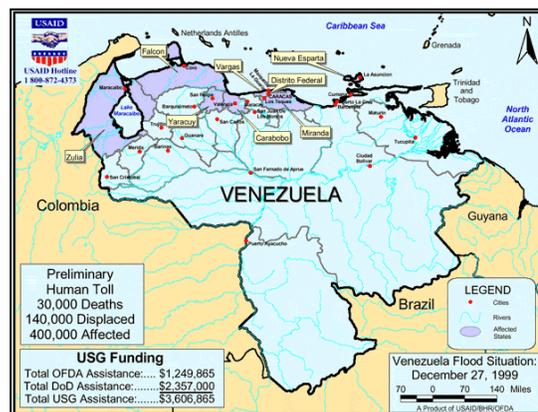
7 January-24 March 1995 In **Operation UNISOM II**, Air Mobility Command (AMC) supported the withdrawal of UN forces from Somalia by deploying US forces to Kenya to cover the withdrawal and then returning the forces to the US. The returning flights stopped at Moron AB, Spain, which served as a stage base and refueling site for the operation. Besides Moron, AMC units deployed to Mombasa and Nairobi, Kenya. KC-135s at Nairobi refueled AC-130 gunships. Altogether, AMC's airlifters and contracted commercial flights flew 59 missions to carry over 1,400 passengers and over 1,400 short tons of cargo.



C-17 loading in Ancona, Italy for Operation PROVIDE PROMISE

9 January 1996 After three-and-a-half years, Operation PROVIDE PROMISE officially ended. During this international operation—the **longest sustained humanitarian airlift to date**—the U.S. Air Force flew more than 4,500 sorties to deliver 62,802 metric tons of cargo to Sarajevo and other parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Altogether, aircraft from 21 nations participating in the UN humanitarian airlift flew nearly 13,000 sorties to deliver more than 160,000 metric tons of supplies to Sarajevo.

4 January-10 March 2000 In response to flood devastation that left 30,000 dead and 400,000 homeless in the district of Caracas, Venezuela, the U.S. Air Force supported **Joint Task Force FUNDAMENTAL RESPONSE**. Eleven C-17 missions and five C-5 missions airlifted 189 passengers and 527 short tons of cargo to Simon Bolivar International Airport (IAP) near Caracas in support of the relief efforts.



5 January 2002 In support of **Operation ENDURING FREEDOM**, a C-17 from the 437th Airlift Wing, Charleston AFB, arrived at NAS Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, with the first planeload of materials for US Navy Seabees to use in building a prison for 2,000 Taliban and Al Qaeda detainees captured in Afghanistan. In the early weeks of 2002, 21 C-17 missions from Charleston moved 1.2 short tons of equipment and supplies to Guantanamo.