



This Week in USAF and PACAF History 14 - 20 February 2011



U.S. AIR FORCE

Countdown to 7 December 1941.

15 February 1941 Admiral Harold R. Stark, Chief of Naval Operations, to Admiral Husband E. Kimmel, Commander and Chief, Pacific Fleet: "Consideration has been given to the installation of A/T baffles within Pearl Harbor for protection against torpedo plane attacks. It is considered that the relatively shallow depth of water limits the need for anti-torpedo nets in Pearl Harbor. In addition the congestion and the necessity for maneuvering room limit the practicability of the present type of baffles."

17 February 1941 In a speech to the Japanese Parliament, Yosuke Matsuoka, Japan's Foreign Minister, said: "I believe the white race must cede Oceania to the Asiatics." The region has sufficient natural resources to support 600-800 million people. "I believe we have a natural right to migrate there." (While Oceania usually referred to the islands of the Pacific, an Oceania for 600-800 million would have also included Australasia.)



17 February 1913 The Army first tested an **automatic pilot** device called a **gyrostabilizer** by its inventor, Lawrence Sperry (left). His automatic pilot used gyroscopes to stabilize an airplane's controls. When they sensed movement, the gyros activated compressed air, which acted on pistons to activate the aircraft controls. In 1914, Lawrence Sperry's device won an award of 50,000 francs from the French when he demonstrated the device in a flight over Paris. On the first pass, he took his hands off the controls and held them visible to the crowd below. On the second pass, he held his hands out while a mechanic walked out on the plane's wing. On the third pass, both Lawrence Sperry and the mechanic were out on the wings with an empty cockpit.

18 February 1918 The "**Lafayette Escadrille**" transferred to American forces as the 103rd Pursuit Squadron and began operations on the front under tactical control of the French. The "Lafayette Escadrille" was a unit in the French military comprised of American volunteers who joined the fight before the United States entered World War I. On this same date, the first proper U.S. fighter unit (95th Aero Squadron) arrived in France.



Four of these Douglas B-7s with their pilots were lost during the 1934 Airmail Emergency

20 February 1934 The Army Air Corps was designated to take over all **U.S. airmail operations** and made its first airmail flight. President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 6591 on 9 February canceling existing airmail contracts because of fraud and collusion. The Air Corps continued to operate airmail services until July 1934.

19 February 1936 **Brig Gen William "Billy" Mitchell died** in a Doctor's Hospital, New York City. He was buried in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.



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18 February 1943 The first class of 39 flight nurses graduated from the U.S. Army Air Force School of Air Evacuations at Bowman Field, Kentucky.



20-25 February 1944 Eighth and Fifteenth Air Forces began **Big Week air raids on German aircraft production**. The planners intended to lure the Luftwaffe into decisive battle, achieve air superiority, and then proceed with the invasion of Europe. Although damage to the German aircraft industry was only moderate, the newly arrived P-51 escorts decimated the pilot ranks of the heavy, twin-engined German fighters. These fighter escorts lowered U.S.

bomber losses from 30 to six percent and won air superiority over Europe for the rest of the war.

19 February 1945 After six months of aerial bombardment and three days of naval bombardment, **Iwo Jima was invaded** by the Marines 5th Amphibious Corps. On 26 March, organized Japanese resistance ended. Bomber raids from the Marianas had struck the island as part of **Operation Scavenger** (photo at right).

Iwo Jima was strategically important to the Japanese because it provided warning of B-29 bomber raids, it served as an airbase for their interceptors, and it provided a haven for their naval units. The U.S. capture of Iwo Jima provided a staging area for a potential invasion of the Japanese mainland, cut the length of B-29 raids nearly in half, and made a base available for P-51 escorts to protect the U.S. bomber raids.



20 February 1950 Construction started on the new **Hickam Elementary School**, which was bid at \$323,750.

16 February 1958 **North Korean agents hijacked a South Korean DC-3 airliner**. As the Korean National Airlines plane neared Seoul, armed hijackers forced the American civilian pilot, Willis Hobbs, to fly to Pyongyang, North Korea. With Hobbs were his copilot, USAF Lt. Col. Howard McClellan (logging flying hours with Air Force permission) and 32 passengers. The hijacked aircraft was not intercepted on either side of the DMZ. North Korea demanded that South Korea enter into direct negotiations for return of the airliner (and thus officially recognize North Korea—something the South had refused to do). Hobbs, McClellan, and 26 passengers were released in early March. The six remaining passengers were assumed to be North Korean agents. (Willis Hobbs, also a Civil Air Transport pilot, had flown six C-119 missions to resupply French forces at the 1954 siege of Dien Bien Phu in North Vietnam.)

OPR: PACAF/HO



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**HIANG F-102s over
Hickam facilities in 1960s**

17 February 1962 Formal dedication of **new Hawaii Air National Guard facilities** at Hickam included participation by the Governor, State Adjutants of the Army and Air Force National Guards, and the Hickam Base Commander. A fly-by of HIANG F-102 jets closed the morning's ceremony. An open house in the afternoon was attended by an estimated 10,000 people.

20 February 1962 Lt Col John H. Glenn, Jr. (USMC) flew three orbits around the earth in his "Friendship 7" Mercury capsule to become the **first American orbital flyer**. The capsule parachuted into the Atlantic, east of the Bahamas, after a 4-hour 56-minute flight.

17 February 1972 Air Force One, a VC-137 aircraft assigned to the 89th Military Airlift Wing at Andrews AFB, carried President Nixon on his **historic trip to China** to meet Chinese Premier Chou En-Lai.



18 February 1972 **PACAF assigned its first C-9A aeromedical aircraft** to the 20th Operations Squadron at Clark AB, Philippines. The C-9 Nightingales replaced the propeller driven C-118 Liftmasters.

20 February 1972 In **Operation LONG FLIGHT**, a 57th Air Rescue and Recovery Squadron aircrew flew an HC-130 Hercules from Chung Chuan Kang AB, Taiwan, to Scott AFB, IL, (8,732.09 miles) without refueling in 21 hours 12 minutes to set a nonstop straight-line distance record for turbo-prop aircraft. The pilot, Lt Col Edgar L. Allison, Jr., was later awarded the 1973 Harmon International Aviation Trophy for the flight.

17 February 1997 The **Air Force Reserve became a major command**—the Air Force Reserve Command—reflecting the growing integration of Reserve and regular forces and the increasing role of the Reserve in regular USAF operations.

18 February 1999 The **last US Navy LC-130 left Antarctica** to end naval support of Operation DEEP FREEZE. Operational support switched in 1998 to the New York ANG's 109th Airlift Wing.

20 February 2003 The 65th Airlift Squadron marked the **initial operational capability of its new C-40B (#01-0015)** with a dedication ceremony. Aeronautical Systems Center, Boeing, and 15 AW personnel attended and toured the aircraft. The C-40 B/C transports U.S. leaders to locations around the world and performs other operational support missions. The C-40 B/C is based on the Boeing 737-700, but it has winglets.

