



This Week in USAF and PACAF History 28 March – 3 April 2011



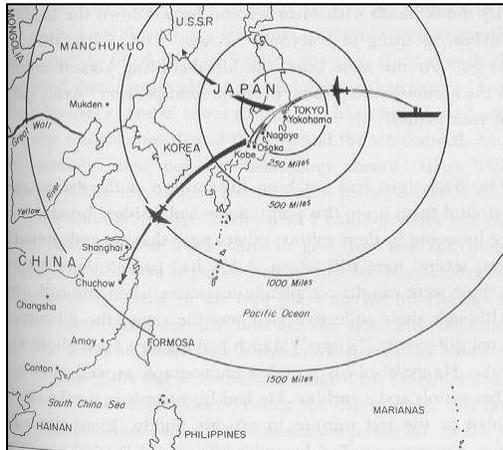
U.S. AIR FORCE

1 Apr 1935 **The North American AT-6 Texan prototype first flew.** One of the most widely used aircraft in history, the AT-6 advanced trainer was known as the **“Pilot Maker”** because the U.S. Army Air Forces used it extensively in flying schools. Of the 15,495 Texans built between 1938 and 1945, over 10,000 went to the AAF while the others went to the Navy and more than 30 Allied nations. British “Battle of Britain” pilots trained in Texans that were pushed across the Canadian border to comply with neutrality laws. When war broke out in Korea (1950), T-6s flew missions spotting enemy troops and guns and marking them for attack by fighter-bombers.

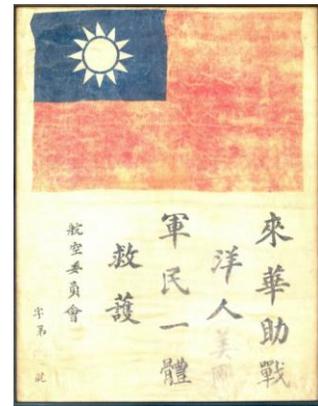


3 Apr 1939 President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the **National Defense Act of 1940**, which provided the Army Air Corps more than 48,000 personnel, a \$300 million budget, and 6,000 airplanes. It also authorized the Air Corps to train black pilots.

28 Mar 1942 **Doolittle Raid Planning.** Without knowing the details or objectives of the top secret mission, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek granted final consent for American bombers to land at Chinese airfields. A few days later, Chiang was told that at least twenty-five B-25’s would be employed and that he should have fuel and flares ready at the Chinese bases. This was the final piece to be put in place for the Doolittle Raid.



Doolittle mission planning map



Doolittle mission blood chit

1 Apr 1952 **Sabres score big; Gabreski repeats as an ace.** Fifth Air Force Sabre pilots in the Korean War destroyed ten MiGs while losing one F-86. Colonel Francis S. Gabreski, USAF, Commander of the 51st FIW, destroyed a MiG to become the eighth jet ace of the war.



On December 7th, 1941 Gabreski was on Oahu pushing airworthy aircraft away from burning and exploding aircraft after the Japanese attack. He was one of the few P-36 pilots to get airborne in case the Japanese attackers returned. He served in the European theater of World War II and scored 28 kills—the most of any pilot fighting the Luftwaffe. In the Korean War, Colonel Gabreski scored 6.5 kills and was one of only seven pilots to become an ace in two wars.



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Colonel Gabreski on wingmen:

"The wingman is absolutely indispensable. I look after the wingman. The wingman looks after me. It's another set of eyes protecting you. That's the defensive part. Offensively, it gives you a lot more firepower. We work together. We fight together. The wingman knows what his responsibilities are, and knows what mine are. Wars are not won by individuals. They're won by teams."

28 Mar 1964 After a massive earthquake in the area of Anchorage, Alaska, the United States launched **Operation HELPING HAND**. By April 17, USAF cargo aircraft, including C-124s, C-123s, C-130s, and C-97s, had delivered 1,850 tons of relief equipment and supplies.

28 Mar 1966 **Seventh Air Force was re-activated** and assigned to PACAF. A few days later Seventh AF was organized at Tan Son Nhut Airfield, South Vietnam and designated the Air Component Command of Military Assistance Command, Vietnam. From April 1966 through 1973, the command assumed responsibility for most Air Force operations in Vietnam and shared responsibility with Thirteenth Air Force for operations from Thailand as 7/13 Air Force.



3 Apr 1967 **First Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force (CMSAF)**. Chief Paul W. Airey (at left) was installed as the first CMSAF. During World War II, Airey was a radio operator and gunner on B-24 bombers and is credited with 28 combat missions in Europe. He had to bail out of his flak-damaged aircraft, was captured and became a prisoner of war from July 1944 to May 1945. Airey spent much of his career as a first sergeant. In 1966, the Air Force began a search for "the best qualified and most impressive individual" in the service to be the first CMSAF. Chief Airey passed away on March 11, 2009. Read his biography in [Air Force Magazine](#).

The CMSAF serves as the personal adviser to the Chief of Staff and the Secretary of the Air Force on the welfare, readiness, morale, and proper utilization and progress of the enlisted force.

29 Mar 1972 **OPERATION LINEBACKER**.

North Vietnam began a massive invasion of the South. In response, the U.S. discarded most of the previous restrictions on U.S. air power.

Operation LINEBACKER I struck targets throughout North Vietnam, including Hanoi and Haiphong. Military commanders, rather than the White House, selected targets based on military objectives and far less on political considerations. U.S. airpower bombed rail and road networks and mined harbors to severely reduce enemy supply shipments while simultaneously attacking enemy forces in the field. The U.S. air strikes were the primary factor in the defeat of the North Vietnamese offensive.



F-4 strike aircraft



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31 Mar 1975 **Consolidation of military airlift.** One of the "lessons learned" in the Vietnam War was the large duplication of airlift effort between Military Airlift Command (MAC), Tactical Air Command (TAC), and PACAF. In December 1974, the Air Force had consolidated TAC's airlift resources with those of MAC, which became the single airlift manager. On 31



March 1975, the USAF's overseas tactical airlift resources in PACAF, USAFE, and the Alaskan Air Command were also transferred to MAC. However, during the Air Force reorganization of 1992, most CONUS-based tactical airlift was redistributed to Air Combat Command (ACC), while overseas tactical airlift was reassigned to PACAF and USAFE. (The photo at left is a Yokota-based C-130.)

28 Mar-15 Apr 1979 **Three-Mile Island Disaster.** After the Three-Mile Island nuclear power plant failed near Harrisburg, Pa., MAC flew 15 support missions (two C-5s, one C-130, and 12 C-141s). The aircraft delivered a 40,000-pound rawinsonde station (to measure wind speed to calculate radioactivity patterns), lead bricks and shielding, a water filtration unit, and potassium iodine for the cleanup. Later, the aircraft flew out barrels of contaminated water. The incident was the most serious in U.S. commercial nuclear power plant operating history, though it led to no deaths or injuries to plant workers or members of the nearby community.

30-31 Mar 1979 **Mackay Trophy.** Maj James E. McArdle, Jr., and his four-man H-3 helicopter crew (Det 1, 33ARRS) saved 28 Taiwanese sailors from their shipwrecked freighter *Ta Lai* in the Yellow Sea after their ship ran aground. The H-3 crew made three trips delivering Taiwanese sailors to Kwang-ju AB, fighting waves of 12 to 15 feet and winds in excess of 15 knots. For this event, McArdle earned the MacKay Trophy.

1 Apr 1997 **B-2s became operational** at Whiteman AFB, Missouri, where six of the aircraft were initially based to serve with the 509th Bomb Wing. General Richard Hawley, Commander of ACC, announced the initial operational capability of the 509th's B-2s after they successfully tested Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAMs) and GPS-Aided Munitions (GAMs). At right, a B-2 releases a 5,000-pound GAM-113.

