



U.S. AIR FORCE

## This Week in USAF and PACAF History 4 – 10 April 2011



8 Apr 1942 **“Flying the Hump.”** A strategic objective of Allied forces in World War II was to supply Chinese forces fighting Japan. The Allies used an overland supply route that ran from India through Burma to China, but the Japanese cut this route in early 1942. On 8 April, two DC-3s (later purchased in huge numbers as C-47 Skytrains) transported gasoline and lubricating oil over the Himalaya Mountains from eastern India to southern China to begin World War II’s largest airlift operation. On one of the earliest missions, eight airplanes carried the fuel and oil to service the B-25 bombers from the “Doolittle Raid.” From December 1942 through the close of the operation in November 1945, the airlift delivered nearly 740,000 tons of cargo. Over half of this total was transported during the last eight months of the war. (Cockpit photo from *LIFE*).



7 Apr 1945 Twentieth Air Force launched the **first fighter-escorted B-29 raid on Japan**. Acquisition of the island of Iwo Jima, after heavy fighting in February and March, made this raid possible by providing a base within fighter range of Japan.

10 Apr 1945 **Score: 10 U.S. bombers to 20 German jets.** About 50 German jet aircraft shot down ten U.S. bombers over the Berlin area—the **largest single-mission loss of bombers to enemy jets**. But the bombers and their escorts destroyed at least 20 of the German jets.

9 Apr 1967 Through 14 April, the 315 AD began the largest tactical unit move in the Vietnam War. In 351 sorties, **C-130s airlifted the entire 196th Light Infantry Brigade**, with 3,500 people and 4,000 tons of equipment, 375 miles from Tay Ninh to Chu Lai.



10 Apr 1967 **Operation POKER DICE.** SAC accomplished the beddown of B-52s at U-Tapao with the first 3 aircraft arriving during the day. Later in the day, the B-52s from U-Tapao flew their first bombing mission in the Vietnam War. Combat sorties averaged three hours in duration as compared to 12 hours for Guam-based aircraft. (See photo at left of a B-52 and KC-135 at U-Tapao).



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7 Apr – 13 May 1972 **Operation CONSTANT GUARD I.** This deployment helped stop a full-scale North Vietnamese invasion of the South. The USAF moved 12 squadrons and 200 aircraft from the CONUS to bases in Southeast Asia. The units were then in position to support the Operation LINEBACKER I aerial interdiction campaign against the enemy offensive.



4 Apr – 16 Sep 1975 **South Vietnam evacuation.** As communist forces took over South Vietnam, more than 130,000 refugees fled by sea and air. The Vietnamese refugee airlift, the largest aerial evacuation in history, encompassed a series of overlapping operations: Babylift, New Life, Frequent Wind, and New Arrivals. The Air Force, working with the Navy and private contractors, flew more than 50,000 refugees from Southeast Asia to islands in the Pacific Ocean and eventually to new homes in the United States. Aircraft involved included C-141, C-130, CH-53, HH-53 and C-9. Details are available in the USAF study, “*The United States Air Force and Humanitarian Airlift Operations, 1947-1994*” at <http://www.airforcehistory.hq.af.mil/Publications/Annotations/haulmanhuman.htm>. (Historynet.com photo at left provided by Ms. Kathy Manney.)

On 4 Apr 1975, a C-5 crashed in an emergency landing near Saigon while flying the first mission of **Operation Babylift**. It was carrying South Vietnamese children and their escorts from Tan Son Nhut AB in Saigon to Clark AB. Of the 314 passengers, 176 survived the crash. First Lieutenant Regina C. Aune, a flight nurse aboard the C-5, ignored her own injuries, which included a broken leg, to help evacuate nearly 80 children from the wreckage. She later received the 1975 Cheney Award. The C-5 pilot and copilot, Captains Dennis W. Traynor III and Tilford W. Harp, received the Air Force Cross for extraordinary heroism.



Despite this tragedy, the operation succeeded as C-141s and commercial planes moved 1,794 orphans from South Vietnam and Thailand to the U.S. through 9 May.

6 Apr 1975 **Operation EAGLE PULL.** The United States began the fixed-wing aerial evacuation of Phnom Penh, Cambodia, which was surrounded by Khmer Rouge forces. On 6 April, MAC flew more than 1,400 U.S. Marines and 1,561 tons of equipment from Kadena AB to Cubi Point, Philippines, in 29 C-141, 8 C-5, and 2 commercial contract missions. By April 11, some 875 Cambodians had flown to Thailand aboard USAF C-130s. On 12 April, USAF



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and Marine Corps helicopters, with escorts from USAF fighters and gunships, evacuated 287 people in the final airlift from Phnom Penh. The city fell to communist forces on 17 April.

10-25 Apr 1980 **Kiwis in COPE THUNDER.**  
The first participation by a third country in Cope Thunder was during CT 81-5, when the Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF) deployed 8 A-4Ks to Clark Air Base. HIANG F-4Cs from Hawaii took part in this exercise as well, and also flew in Combat Sage. (Photo at right of RNZAF A-4s at Clark AB.)



5-6 Apr 1986 **Osan fuel explosion.** After a tank of jet fuel exploded at Osan Air Base, four C-141 Starlifters and one H-3 Jolly Green Giant helicopter from the 63<sup>rd</sup> MAW delivered fire suppressant foam to the base. The aircraft also evacuated burn victims to Seoul for treatment.

5 Apr 1991 **Operation PROVIDE COMFORT.** From 5 Apr to 15 July, MAC units flew more than 7,000 tons of supplies to northern Iraq, southeastern Turkey, and western Iran to help more than a million Kurdish rebels who fled from Iraq after being defeated by Iraqi forces. U.S. Air Force C-5, C-141, and C-130 aircraft airlifted more than 7,000 tons of relief supplies to Kurdish refugees who had fled their homes after Iraqi forces threatened to exterminate them. The operation later provided aerial protection for a security zone in northern Iraq so that the Kurds could return to their homes. This area became a no-fly zone forbidden to Iraqi aircraft.

10 Apr 1994 Two F-16s struck a Bosnian Serb command post near Gorazde, Serbia after Bosnian Serbs attacked UN personnel. This was the **first close air support mission of Operation DENY FLIGHT** and the **first air-to-ground bombing in NATO's history.**



9 Apr 1997 The **F-22 roll-out ceremony** was held at Marietta, Georgia after many years of development.

The "Advanced Tactical Fighter" entered the Demonstration and Validation phase in 1986. The prototype aircraft first flew in late 1990. Engineering and manufacturing development began in 1991, low rate initial production in 2001 and full rate production in 2005.

The F-22 Raptor is an exponential leap in warfighting capabilities. Its combination of stealth, supersonic cruise, maneuverability and integrated avionics allows an F-22 pilot to kill air-to-air threats before being detected. The

F-22 also has a significant capability to attack surface targets. This capability will be enhanced in the future with an upgraded radar and carriage of up to eight small diameter bombs.

AETC, ACC and PACAF are the primary Air Force organizations flying the F-22.