



U.S. AIR FORCE

This Week in USAF and PACAF History 30 May – 5 Jun 2011



30 May 1912 **Wilbur Wright**, age 45, died of typhoid fever at Dayton Ohio. He was exhausted after a long series of patent infringement suits against other airplane builders, particularly Glen Curtiss.

31 May 1915 The **German Zeppelin LZ-38** dropped bombs on London for the first time. About 150 small bombs set approximately 41 fires that killed seven people and injured 35. Other bombing raids on London and Paris followed. The airships approached their targets silently at night at altitudes above the ceilings of British and French fighters. But higher-flying aircraft were built and armed with incendiary ammunition that set the hydrogen-filled zeppelins afire. Several zeppelins were also lost because of bad weather, and 17 were shot down because they could not climb as fast as the fighters. The crews also suffered from cold and oxygen deprivation when they maintained flight above 10,000 feet.



4 June 1920 The **National Defense Act** established the Air Service as a combatant arm of the Army – equivalent to the infantry, cavalry, and artillery. Congress also created the rating of “airplane pilot” and authorized flying pay at 50 percent above base pay.

31 May 1935 Hawaii's newest airfield, now known as **Hickam AFB**, was officially dedicated and named in honor of Lt Col Horace Meek Hickam, a distinguished aviation pioneer who was killed in an aircraft accident on 5 November 1934 at Fort Crockett in Galveston, Texas.

31 May 1945 The last of 18,188 **B-24 Liberators** was delivered to the USAAF. This bomber



was produced in larger numbers than any other U.S. aircraft and employed on more fronts than any other Allied or enemy bomber in World War II. Consolidated was originally asked to produce the B-17 under license, but submitted its own design for a more capable bomber. The placement of the B-24's fuel tanks throughout the upper fuselage and its lightweight construction optimized assembly line production (photo at left) and increased range and payload, but made the aircraft more difficult to fly and more vulnerable to battle damage.



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31 May 1951 **Operation STRANGLE**, a massive air interdiction campaign in Korea, was initiated by Fifth Air Force, the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing (MAW), and the Navy's Task Force 77. Operation STRANGLE was an attempt to paralyze enemy transportation between the 39th parallel and the front lines in Korea. The operation substantially interdicted the North Korean supply and communication lines, and it was highly successful against enemy rail-transportation. The bombing effort destroyed or damaged 40,000 trucks and prevented a Red Chinese buildup for future offensive operations. However, the operation failed to completely isolate communist forces on the front lines. Similar to an earlier campaign in Italy during World War II and later campaigns against the Ho Chi Minh trail in southeast Asia, Operation Strangle had diminishing success when the pressure on enemy ground forces was reduced. Two principal reasons for the mixed results of this operation were the resiliency and magnitude of enemy logistics efforts, and the lack of effective night and all-weather attack capabilities among the US joint air components.



2 June 1958 **First PACAF Fighter Symposium.** Through 6 June, PACAF held a US/Asian Fighter Weapons Symposium at the mountain resort of Baguio in the Philippines. PACAF Staff officers met with their counterparts from the Chinese Nationalist Air Force, Korean Air Force, Philippine Air Force, Royal Thai Air Force, and the Vietnamese Air Force. It was the first such conference on operational requirements and problems.

3 June 1959 The **Air Force Academy graduated its first class.** Of the 207 graduates, 205 were commissioned as regular USAF officers.

4-18 June 1977 **Cope Thunder Expanded.** Cope Thunder IX included units from PACAF, MAC, SAC, the U.S. Marine Corps, two U.S. Navy aircraft carriers, the Philippine Army; and the U.S. Army. A total of 632 sorties were flown in nine flying days. The realistic exercises filled a vital need in PACAF, and the exercise grew and expanded in subsequent years.

1 June 1992 In a **major reorganization**, the Air Force inactivated Strategic Air Command, Tactical Air Command, and Military Airlift Command; it then activated Air Combat Command and Air Mobility Command. ACC received SAC's bombers and missiles and TAC's fighters, while AMC inherited MAC's transports and SAC's tankers. Air Force Space Command assumed management responsibility for the Air Force Satellite Communications System, formerly managed by Strategic Air Command.



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The Department of Defense activated United States Strategic Command, which assumed wartime responsibility for U.S. nuclear forces and their long-range delivery systems. The last commander of Strategic Air Command, Gen. George L. Butler, USAF, became the first commander of United States Strategic Command.

On July 1, the Air Force continued its reorganization with the inactivations of Air Force Logistics Command and Air Force Systems Command; it then activated Air Force Materiel Command to replace them.

31 May 1996 The USAF awarded multi-year contracts to McDonnell-Douglas and Pratt & Whitney for 80 C-17 Globemaster III aircraft and engines. The contracts, valued at \$16.2 billion, were the **longest and the largest multi-year government contracts** to date and increased the number of USAF C-17s at the time to 120. The acquisition also enabled the retirement of C-141s from the active Air Force.



4 June 2003 Members of the Indian Air Force arrived at Eielson AF, Alaska for **Cooperative Cope Thunder**, marking the first time Indian military forces fully integrated and participated in the U.S. exercise. A Soviet-built Indian IL-76 transport also participated for the first time, and the exercise also marked the first time fighters from the Japanese Air Self Defense Force deployed to North America for an exercise.

2 June 2004 In a flight bringing home the remains of two American servicemen missing since the Vietnam War, Major General Edward Mechenbier (USAFR) piloted the '**Hanoi Taxi**,' a C-141 Starlifter that carried the first group of repatriated American prisoners of war in 1973. General Mechenbier had been a POW in Vietnam for six years and was on the Hanoi Taxi's first flight out of Vietnam.

1 June 2005 The "**General George C. Kenney Headquarters (Provisional)**" was activated at Hickam AFB, Hawaii and attached to HQ PACAF. On the same day, the Thirteenth Air Force moved to the Kenney Headquarters as the core of an operational-level component headquarters organization.