



**U.S. AIR FORCE**

## **This Week in USAF and PACAF History** **13 – 19 Jun 2011**



14 June 1912 After training at the Army Air School in the Philippines, Cpl. Vernon Burge became the Army's **first enlisted pilot**.

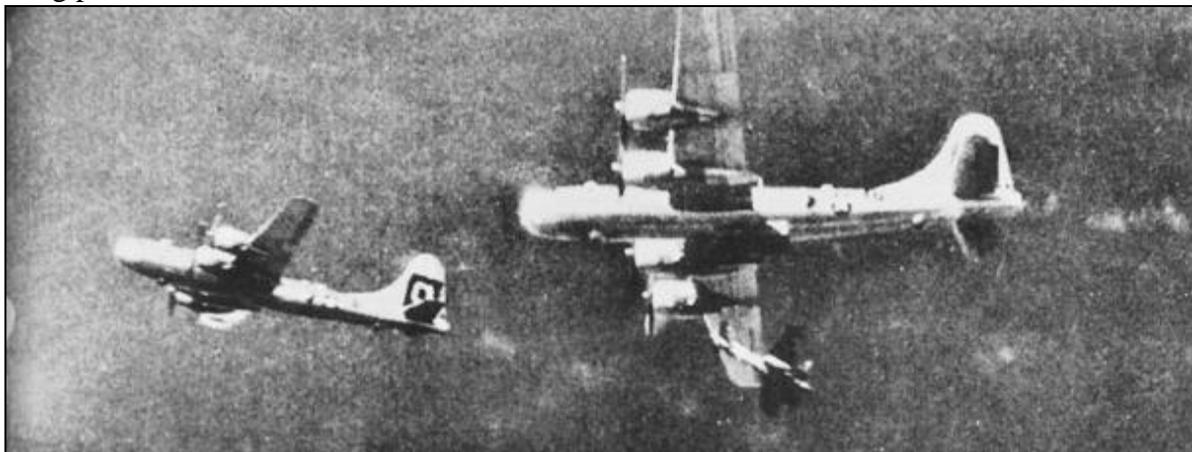
16 June 1936 **P-35 Fighter Contract**. Seversky Aircraft won a contract to provide the Air Corps with P-35 airplanes—the Army's first all-metal, single-seat fighters with enclosed cockpits and retractable landing gear (see photo). Seversky later marketed his aircraft to many nations, including Japan—an extremely unpopular action as war with Japan loomed. Further U.S. sales were cancelled, and aircraft meant to be sold to Sweden were embargoed and impounded. About 57 of the P-35s were eventually sent to the Philippines. Ten of these were quickly lost in accidents, and the rest fought in the futile defense of the islands when war broke out in December, 1941. Although the P-35s shot down about 60 Japanese aircraft and destroyed another 30 on the ground, their lack of armor and self-sealing fuel tanks made them vulnerable. After two days of battle, only eight remained and they were subsequently rated as unfit for combat.



The P-35 aircraft was the forerunner of the P-47 Thunderbolt.

15 June 1944 Sixty-eight B-29 Superfortresses took off at night from staging bases at Chengdu, China, to bomb the Imperial Iron and Steel Works at Yawata on Kyushu, more than 1,500 miles away. This was the **first raid on the Japanese home islands since the Doolittle attack** of April 1942, but they caused little damage because of poor aiming. This mission marked the **beginning of the strategic bombardment campaign against Japan**. Ironically, on the same day, U.S. Marines invaded the Marianas—lands that would host more effective B-29 bases.

The photo below shows Marianas-based B-29s on a mission with a Japanese fighter making a diving pass.





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15 June 1944 The Commander in Chief, Southwest Pacific Area, established **Far East Air Forces (Provisional)** at Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, as the single air headquarters in the Southwest Pacific Area (SPWA). It became **Far East Air Forces** on 20 June 1944 when the new command received War Dept. approval of its designation, and was formally activated on 3 August (the official anniversary date). **Lt Gen George C. Kenney**, commander of 5th Air Force, became **FEAF's first commander**. Gen Kenney remained commander until 30 Dec 1945.

18 June 1957. The Air Force received its **first KC-135 Stratotanker** at Castle AFB, CA.

18 June 1965 **First ARC LIGHT mission.** The 320th and 7th Bomb Wings sent 28 B-52Fs From Andersen AFB, Guam to hit a Viet Cong stronghold near Saigon. This was the first use of B-52s in combat. Thirty KC-135s provided aerial refueling.



In the first three years of Vietnam operations, B-52s flew more than 25,000 sorties and dropped more than 630,000 tons of bombs. Enemy ground forces could not see or hear approaching B-52s, which typically released bombs from 30,000 feet.

16 June 1966 A Titan IIC boosted seven experimental communications satellites and one gravity-gradient satellite into orbit 18,000 nautical miles above the equator. The satellites demonstrated the **feasibility of a global military communications satellite system**.

17 June 1968 The **first C-9 Nightingale** aeromedical-evacuation aircraft rolled out at McDonnell Douglas Corporation, Long Beach, California. The requirement for an aero-medical transport arose early in the Vietnam War. As an initial, relatively low-cost answer, eight McDonnell Douglas DC-9's were ordered with modifications that included a special care section and a built-in hydraulic lift to load litters onto the aircraft.



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19 June 1970 The **first Minuteman III missile unit** became operational at Minot AFB, North Dakota. The Minuteman III could launch multiple, independently targetable warheads.

19 June 1973 The U.S. Congress passed the **Case-Church Amendment** which banned any further U.S. military involvement in Southeast Asia, effective August 15, 1973. The veto-proof vote was 278-124 in the House and 64-26 in the Senate. On August 14th, U.S. bombing of Khmer Rouge forces in Cambodia was halted in accordance with the Congressional ban resulting from the Case-Church amendment. North Vietnam conquered the South in 1975.

18 June 1981 The **F-117 Nighthawk**, the world's first stealth combat aircraft, flew for the first time at Tonopah Test Range, Nevada. The revolutionary aircraft presented very little radar image,

The theory of stealthy (low radar cross-section) aircraft was developed in the 1960s by scientists in several countries, but the actual designs of stealth aircraft were inherently unstable. With American advances in flight computers and software, stealthy aircraft designs became practical. The decision to develop the F-117 was made in 1973, and the decision to produce the aircraft was made in 1978.



14 June 1993 **The first C-17 Globemaster III** arrived at its operational wing, the 437th Airlift Wing at Charleston Air Force Base, South Carolina. Capable of delivering outsized cargo to a tactical environment, the Globemaster III increased the Air Force's ability for airlift into relatively small airfields, eliminating the need to shift cargo from larger to smaller transports.

19 June 2006 The **first C-5M test aircraft** made its first flight at Edwards AFB. The former C-5B received a complete avionics modernization, reliability enhancement, and new engines.

19-23 June 2006 **Exercise Valiant Shield** was conducted as the largest joint exercise in the Western Pacific. Over 290 aircraft, three carrier strike groups and approximately 22,000 U.S. military personnel participated in the exercise. Valiant Shield focused on joint training among U.S. military forces while responding to a range of mission scenarios. B-2 and B-52 bombers; F-15C, F-15E, F-16CJ, and F/A-18 fighters; E-3 AWACS aircraft as well as KC-10 and KC-135 tankers launched from Andersen AFB to support exercise events.

