



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



**U.S. AIR FORCE**

5 July 1912 **First military aviators.** Capt. Charles deForest Chandler, 2d Lt. Thomas D. Milling, and 2d Lt. Henry H. Arnold became the first Army pilots to qualify as military aviators.

7 July 1914 **Dr. Robert H. Goddard received a U.S. patent** for a two-stage solid-fuel rocket. On July 14, the government issued another patent to Goddard for a liquid-fueled rocket design.

Goddard realized that long-range missiles, especially ones that could go into outer space, could not be powered by TNT but required liquid fuels to allow combustion in an airless environment. Eventually he filed patents for everything from gyroscopic guidance systems to fin-stabilized steering. However, Goddard was ridiculed in the U.S. for his theories and his first successful liquid-fueled rocket did not fly until 1926 (photo at right).



In the late 1930s, German rocket engineers asked Goddard technical questions to which he gave casual responses. Goddard's warnings to the Army about German military rocketry were ignored. By the end of World War II, Goddard had filed more than 200 patent applications, all of which were available for inspection. When a captured German scientist was asked about the origin of the V-2 rocket, he was said to have responded, "Why don't you ask your own Dr. Goddard? He knows better than any of us."

Dr. Goddard died of throat cancer in late 1945. Known later as the "father" of American rocketry, he had 69 patents for his inventions and his designs laid the foundation for U.S. spaceflight. See this [Time® magazine article](#) for more information.

6 July 1937 Colonel Millard F. Harmon and 1st Lt. Robert Warren made an **inspection of Hickam Field** from a P-12 aircraft and then landed there. Satisfied with that visit, the Air Corps planned for eventual **transfer of other units to Hickam**. The commanding general of the 18th Wing issued an order assigning the 18th Wing Headquarters to Hickam Field.

The photo at left is Hickam Field on 21 July 1937, looking northeast over the flightline. The Pearl Harbor Navy Base was blanked for security reasons.



4 July 1942 **The Flying Tigers join the USAAF.** The 1st American Volunteer Group (AVG), also known as the Flying Tigers, joined the Army Air Forces as the 23rd Fighter Group under the China Air Task Force (later the 14th Air Force). The AVG Commander, Major General Claire Chennault (right) assumed command. Chennault was an outspoken advocate of "pursuit" (as fighter planes were then called) when the Army Air Force was dominated by strategic bomber theorists.



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Frustrated by his superiors, Chennault had retired from the Army Air Corps in 1937 and traveled to China where he helped Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek build the Chinese Air Force to fight the Japanese. With informal U.S. government help, Chennault had formed the AVG with U.S. pilots and P-40 Warhawks (below). Facing Japanese fighters that were far more maneuverable,



Chennault developed fighter tactics that capitalized on the P-40s' advantages: diving speed, firepower, and the ability to withstand battle damage. The Tigers trained to attack from an altitude advantage, make a diving pass, avoid dogfighting, and dive away to escape and set up for another attack. American pilots used these basic tactics throughout World War II in the Pacific.

7 July 1942 Flying a Lockheed Vega A-29 Hudson, 2d Lt Harry J. Kane of the 396 BMS attacked and sank a German submarine (U-701) off Cherry Point, N. C., to make the **first sure "kill" off the Atlantic Coast of the US.**

8 July 1944 Lt. Col. Clifford Heflin flew a C-47 on the **first mission into France to rescue Allied airmen** who had parachuted behind enemy lines.

6 July 1950 **First strategic air attacks of the Korean War.** Nine B-29 Superfortresses bombed the Rising Sun oil refinery at Wonsan and a chemical plant at Hungnam in North Korea.

6 July 1951 An Air Materiel Command KB-29M tanker, operated by a 43d Air Refueling Squadron crew, conducted the **first in-flight refueling over enemy territory under combat conditions.** The tanker refueled four RF-80s flying reconnaissance missions over North Korea.



8 July 1962 **STARFISH PRIME Test.** A Thor rocket launched from Johnston Island carried a 1.4 megaton hydrogen device to an altitude of 250 miles—the highest altitude for a U.S. thermonuclear blast. The detonation was 800 miles from Hawaii at 10:00 PM Hawaiian Standard Time. Because there is almost no air at an altitude of 250 miles, no fireball occurred. However, the sky was illuminated by an artificial aurora for more than seven minutes. The photo at left is from a KC-135 observation aircraft; the photo sequence below was taken from Hawaii on the night of the Starfish Prime Test.



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The electromagnetic pulse (EMP) from this test sent power surges throughout Oahu, causing the simultaneous failure of 30 strings of streetlights. Unofficial sources made various claims about the test, including blown fuses and circuit breakers, triggered burglar alarms, fused power lines, television and radio malfunctions, and even the crippling of satellites in low earth orbit.

8 July 1979 **Exercise GLOBAL SHIELD I.** Through 16 July, Strategic Air Command exercised every phase of its Single Integrated Operations Plan (SIOP). Global Shield involved both active forces and Air Force Reserve units. Nearly all bombers, tankers, and missiles were placed on alert. Some aircraft dispersed to pre-selected bases, while others flew sorties over bomb-scoring sites. On 10 July, SAC launched two Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missiles from Vandenberg AFB. At left, six unarmed Minuteman III Mark 12 reentry vehicles from those ICBMs are shown approaching targets near Kwajalein Atoll in the Western Pacific Ocean.

