



U.S. AIR FORCE

This Week in USAF and PACAF History 3 Oct – 9 Oct 2011



Countdown to 7 December 1941.

2 October 1941 A U.S. Senate resolution called for investigation of Japanese subversion and intelligence activities, specifically citing the Japanese consulate in Honolulu. However, the State Department warned that this would upset ongoing diplomatic talks, and no hearings were held. Japanese intelligence gathering continued, and so did the attack planning.

6 October 1941 The Japanese Army's High Command set policy that Japan would not withdraw its forces from China or French Indochina, and that war with the U.S. was inevitable. They stated that the Japanese foreign office must obtain U.S. acceptance of these terms by 15 October to avoid conflict. At about this time, the plan to strike at Pearl Harbor was briefed to a much wider circle of First Air Fleet officers – the men who would lead the training and the operation itself. These men were determined to succeed on their historic mission, confident that U.S. forces would not expect such an attack. Pilots trained hard and exclusively on their specific missions – aerial combat, strafing, or a specific type of bombing. The best pilots were picked for the most difficult tasks, such as torpedo runs or high-level bombing against the American ships. Japanese civilians near some military bases were now regularly disturbed by military aircraft flying low and fast over their rooftops and diving down across their harbors. Shells from 16-inch naval guns were modified as high level bombs to penetrate U.S. battleships' deck armor.



5 October 1905 **The first “practical” airplane.** Even after the **Wright brothers** created separate, independent controls of the three flight axes—pitch, roll and yaw—their Flyer still had marginal performance. After Orville was nearly killed in a crash, they rebuilt the Flyer with the forward elevator and rear rudder both enlarged and placed several feet farther away from the wings. On 5 October 1905, the new *Wright Flyer III* flew for more than half an hour and covered nearly 24 miles near Dayton, Ohio.

Four days later, the Wright brothers wrote to the War Department, describing their new flying machine and offering it to the Army for purchase. Misunderstanding the offer as a request for research funds, the Board of Ordnance and Fortification turned them down.



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5 October 1918 **The first sustained effort at aerial resupply** of a ground unit occurred during the Meusse-Argonne offensive of World War I. Planes from the 50th Aero Squadron dropped supplies and aided in determining the location of the famous “Lost Battalion” (elements of the



1Lt Harold E. Goettler

77th Division that were cut off from the Allies and besieged by the Germans). The following day, 1Lt Harold E. Goettler and 2Lt Erwin P. Bleckley, flying as an observer, were killed trying to drop supplies to a surrounded US Army battalion in the Argonne Forest near Binarivelle, France. Goettler and Bleckley flew as low as possible to deliver the supplies more precisely, but enemy ground fire brought them down. Both men received the **Medal of Honor**.



2Lt Erwin P. Bleckley

9 October 1918 During the Meusse-Argonne offensive, more than 250 bombers and 100 pursuit planes, dropped 32 tons of bombs in the cantonment district between La Wavrille and Damvillers. This was the greatest massing of military aircraft to date.

8 October 1940 The Royal Air Force announced formation of the **first Eagle Squadron**, a fighter unit consisting of U.S. volunteers. This group later became the U.S. 4th Fighter Group.

4-6 October 1946 Col Clarence S. Irvine and his crew flew the B-29 “Pacusan Dreamboat” to a **nonstop, unrefueled distance record** of 9,500 miles by flying from Honolulu to Cairo, Egypt, in 39 hours 36 minutes. The flight path took the aircraft over Arctic regions to test the crew through hazardous weather and with complicated navigation and communication problems.



7 October 1949 **Andersen AFB, Guam was named** in honor of Brig Gen James Roy Andersen, who died on 26 Feb 1945 in an aircraft accident near Kwajalein Island, en route to Hawaii. Previous names for Andersen AFB included North Field (Dec 1944) and North Guam AFB (Mar 1949). On 6 September 2007, Brig Gen Douglas Owens, 36WG/CC, presided over a ceremony re-installing the recently-discovered dedication plaque (pictured left) in front of the 36th Wing Headquarters.

6 October 1961 The 724th Strategic Missile Squadron at Lowry AFB, Colorado received the Air Force’s **first Titan I missile** in the **first hardened ICBM silo**, a 165-foot deep missile launch facility.



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4-5 October 1980 The Dutch cruise ship **M.S. Prinsendam** caught fire in the Gulf of Alaska, forcing 519 passengers and crew to abandon ship. Elmendorf's 71st Aerospace Rescue Squadron sent an HH-3 helicopter and an HC-130 to the disaster site. Piloting the HH-3, Capt. John J. Walters, USAF, and his crew rescued 61 passengers and crewmen, hoisting and airlifting them from lifeboats to a supertanker. For this rescue, Captain Walters earned the **Mackay Trophy**. The abandoned *Prinsendam* sank on 11 October.



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3-14 October 1993 **Operation RESTORE HOPE II**. By 1992, a half of a million people had died of famine in Somalia and many more were in danger. Armed factions controlled the food supply as a military tactic. In response, the USAF airlifted 1,300 troops, 18 M-1 Abrams tanks, and 44 Bradley fighting vehicles to Somalia to protect U.S. forces during the United Nations food distribution effort. Tankers flew 169 refueling missions in support.

During a battle in Mogadishu, an Army MH-60 Black Hawk helicopter was shot down. Despite his own injuries, para-rescueman TSgt Timothy Wilkinson, USAF (right) ran through enemy fire repeatedly to carry out five wounded Army Rangers. Shrapnel tore skin off his face, but TSgt Wilkinson did not falter. For his heroism, he earned the **Air Force Cross**.



7 October 2001 **Operation ENDURING FREEDOM**. The U.S. initiated airstrikes against terrorist and Taliban targets in Afghanistan. The 509th Bomb Wing at Whiteman AFB launched six B-2 bombers that flew from Missouri across the Pacific to drop bombs on targets in Afghanistan and recover at Diego Garcia. One flight took 44 hours – the **longest combat mission in history**. The operation also involved B-1Bs, B-52Hs, F-15Es, KC-10s and KC-135 tankers, E-3 AWACS, EC-130s, AC-130 gunships, and MC-130 and MH-53 special operations aircraft. Naval involvement included F-14s, F/A-18s, and AV-8 aircraft from three carriers in the Indian Ocean. Lt. Gen. Charles F. Wald, USAF, served as Operation ENDURING FREEDOM's first Joint Force Air Component Commander.

On the following day, two C-17s airdropped about 35,000 humanitarian rations over Afghanistan. These were the **first C-17 airdrops in a combat zone**, and the first humanitarian airdrops of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. The C-17s flew from Ramstein AB, Germany more than 6,500 miles in a 22-hour round trip and were air refueled multiple times. (At left, a C-17 landing at Bagram in 2004.)



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