This Week in USAF and PACAF History

17 Oct – 23 Oct 2011

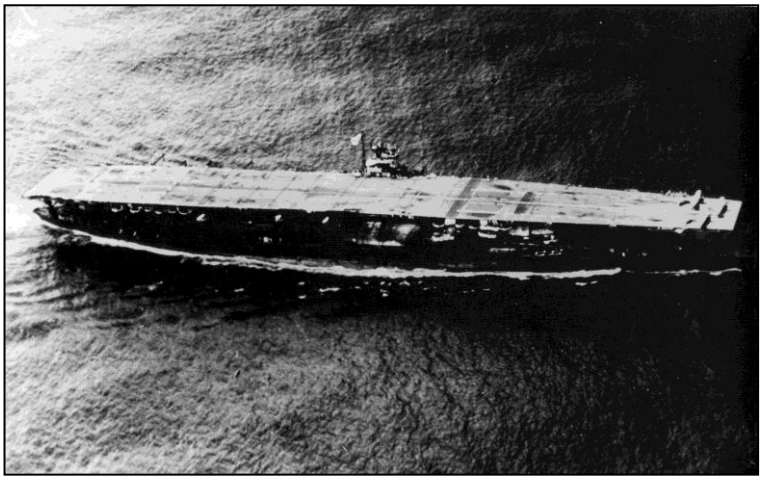
Countdown to 7 December 1941.

17 October 1941 The Hawaiian Department's G-2 produced an intelligence estimate on the Japanese situation. The report predicted that the Japanese would not change their foreign policy and that "Japan will shortly announce her decision to challenge militarily any nation or combination of nations which might oppose the execution of said policies." The report listed Japan's most likely moves, in order of probability:

1. Attack Russia from the east.
2. Pressure French Indo-China and Thailand for concessions.
3. Attack British possessions in the Far East.
4. Defend against an American attack in support of the British.
5. Attack simultaneously the American-British-Chinese-Dutch ("ABCD") block "at whichever points might promise her greatest tactical, strategic, and economic advantages." This last, supposedly least probable option was what the Japanese high command chose to do.

18 October 1941 At this time, Japanese plans allotted only three aircraft carriers for the Pearl Harbor attack force. The officers of the First Air Fleet who were planning and training for the Hawaiian Operation were alarmed that this small allocation would doom their mission. Admiral Yamamoto threatened to resign if he did not get six carriers, and the Imperial Japanese Navy's general staff in Tokyo caved in to his demand. The assignment of what would be the largest aerial strike force in naval history allowed the Japanese to mass their forces on the objective. Furthermore, the general staff's alignment with Yamamoto's vision put the entire Japanese Navy behind the mission to destroy the U.S. Pacific Fleet on day one of the war.

Pictured below is the *Akagi* – flagship of the Hawaiian Operation task force. She was sunk on 5 June 1942 during the Battle of Midway.



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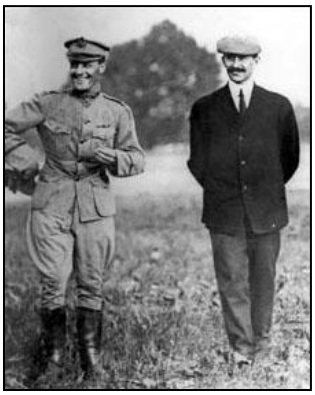

23 October 1909 Wilbur Wright gave **Lt Benjamin D. Foulois** his **first flying lesson**. Foulois (pronounced *Foo-loy*) was an observer on Orville Wright's record-breaking flight of 30 June, and Foulois had hoped to take flight instruction directly from the Wright brothers. When the Signal Corps ordered him to France for an international meeting on aeronautics, Lt. Frederick E. Humphreys replaced him in the training program. Returning in October, Foulois got one hour of instruction before Humphreys and Lt. Frank P. Lahm became the **first Army officers to solo** in a Wright airplane on 26 October. As cold weather set in, Foulois was sent to Fort Sam Houston and ordered to "teach yourself to fly." Foulois did just that, writing letters to the Wright brothers in order to correct his mistakes. Foulois achieved many firsts in military aviation and made major improvements to early flying machines, including seat belts, wireless communications and wheels instead of skids. (Photo above is Lt Foulois with Orville Wright.)

Foulois, like Billy Mitchell and other early airpower theorists, predicted the dominant role of airpower in warfare. The two men were strong-willed rivals and clashed often, but both fought to promote airpower—Mitchell to the public at large and Foulois specifically to Congress. Both men served as chief of the air service in Europe during 1918. Foulois rose to become Chief of the Air Corps, promoting airpower and especially long-range bombers such as the B-17 and B-24 during a time of economic hardships and severe budget cuts. Foulois accurately predicted the rise of German airpower prior to World War II.

19 October 1940 The **Hawaiian Air Force** was established. It was activated on 1 November 1940 at Fort Shafter and assigned to the Army's Hawaiian Department. The Hawaiian Air Force motto was the Hawaiian phrase Ku Kiai ("On Guard" – emblem at right). The Hawaiian AF was moved to Hickam Field in July 1941, and was redesignated as 7th Air Force on 5 February 1942.

21 October 1942 **Lieutenant Anne Fox, head nurse at Hickam Hospital**, **became the first woman to be awarded a Purple Heart** "for outstanding performance of duty and meritorious acts of extraordinary fidelity and essential service" during the attack on December 7, 1941. When the Purple Heart criterion changed to being wounded in action, Lt. Fox was awarded the Bronze Star instead.

At left, the Hickam Hospital nurses arrive on Oahu in November, 1941. The nurses who tended the wounded during the December 7, 1941 attack were in this group. Lt. Anne Fox is fifth from left.

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21 October 1947 The **YB-49 Flying Wing made its first flight.** The YB-49 was a product of Jack Northrop's pioneering work in the 1930s and a 1941 Army Air Corps requirement to bomb Europe from the U.S. if Britain fell. Its predecessor, the propeller-driven XB-35, could theoretically carry a greater payload faster, farther, and cheaper than a conventional bomber. The advent of the jet engine made the XB-35 obsolete and led to the jet-powered YB-49. The YB-49 had several severe design problems, chief of which was the fact that the very thick airfoil section caused a low Mach limit and yet could not hold the American atomic weapons of the day. The program was cancelled in favor of the more conventional B-36 Peacemaker. The YB-49s at right are lined up for destruction.

20-23 October 1950 In the **first airborne operation of the Korean War**, more than 100 C–119s and C–47s dropped some 4,000 troops of the Army's 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team and over 600 tons of materiel at Sukchon and Sunchon, 30 miles north of Pyongyang.

20 October 1961 **PROJECT PIPE STEM.** The 15th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron based at Kadena deployed four RF-101s to Tan Son Nhut AB. They flew 67 reconnaissance sorties over South Vietnam and Laos, developing their photographs with a photo-processing unit that also deployed from Kadena. These were the **first PACAF aircraft deployed to South Vietnam.** Another four RF-101s from the 45th TRS deployed to Don Muang, Thailand, along with their photo processing unit, in November under the name **ABLE MABLE**. By the end of 1961 the unit had flown 130 missions. At left, an RF-101A flies over Vietnam in 1967.

22 October 1962 **Cuban Missile Crisis.** DEFCON 3 was declared worldwide due to the crisis generated by the discovery of nuclear-capable Soviet missiles in Cuba. On 24 October, PACAF deployed six F-100s to Osan AB to beef up forces in Korea.

17 October 1980 **Cope North Expanded.** Exercise Cope North 81-1, held at Misawa AB, Japan, was the first of the series to be a joint and combined exercise – funded by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. U.S. Marine Corps A-4s and EA-6Bs joined PACAF F-4Es and OV-10s to combine with the Japanese Self-Defense Force F-1, F-4EJ, and F-104J aircraft. Previous exercises were PACAF-funded, and limited to PACAF and Japanese Self-Defense Force participation.

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