



U.S. AIR FORCE

## This Week in USAF and PACAF History 14 – 20 Nov 2011



### Countdown to 7 December 1941.

14 November 1941 In an exercise, Oahu radars detected carrier-launched airplanes 80 miles out to sea. Pursuit aircraft took off within six minutes and intercepted the raiders 30 miles from Pearl Harbor. General Short's signal officer wrote: "All the general officers present were highly pleased . . ."

16 November 1941 An officer from U.S. Naval Operations visited the U.S. Pacific Fleet. He asked about possible hostile actions by **ethnic Japanese in Hawaii** at the outbreak of a war. An intelligence expert at Pearl Harbor discounted any such actions because war with Japan "would begin with an air attack on our fleet, and for that reason it would have to be conducted with the greatest secrecy, and therefore no Japanese . . . in the United States or Hawaii would be aware of the fact that such an attack was coming."

17 November 1941 **Admiral Yamamoto** spoke to the First Air Fleet for the last time before the task force sailed to rendezvous at Hitokappu Bay. He shocked the assembly with this **warning**: "You must take into consideration the possibility that the attack may not be a surprise after all. You may have to fight your way into the target." Afterwards, strike planners developed a contingency plan in case the Americans were alert. A single shot of the mission commander's flare pistol would mean surprise had been achieved and the slow, low-flying torpedo bombers would attack first. Two flare shots would mean surprise was lost and the torpedo bombers were to wait for the dive- and level-bombers to draw the American defenders' attention upwards.

17 November 1941 The **Taiyo Maru** passenger liner returned to Japan and



Photo # 80-G-182874 Pearl Harbor, looking southwest, 30 October 1941

the spies made their report. Not one ship had been seen on the round trip to Oahu and U.S. air patrols were weak north of Hawaii. Weather and sea conditions had been favorable. On Sundays, most of the U.S. Pacific Fleet's capital ships were docked in Pearl Harbor and there was little military air activity. The agents had seen many carrier-based aircraft but not the aircraft carriers themselves, and they had no information on U.S. carrier deployments.

Primary sources quoted in *At Dawn We Slept* by Gordon Prange, Penguin Books, New York, ©1981.



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18 Nov 1923 The **first aerial refueling-related fatality** occurred during an air show at Kelly Field, when the fuel hose became entangled in the wings of the refueler and the receiver aircraft. The ensuing crash killed the Army Air Service pilot of the refueler, Lt P. T. Wagner, and ended U.S. aerial refueling development until the flight of the *Question Mark* in 1929. (The photo at left depicts an early air refueling operation using a hose and nozzle system.)

14 Nov 1938 **President Franklin D. Roosevelt called for an Air Corps** of 20,000 airplanes at a secret White House meeting with his military leaders. Although he could not immediately request sufficient funds for the program from Congress, Roosevelt committed his administration to a vastly expanded air force.

15 Nov 1961 **The USAF officially entered the Vietnam War.** The 2nd Advanced Echelon, Thirteenth Air Force, activated in Saigon, Republic of (South) Vietnam. As part of **Operation FARM GATE**, a detachment of the 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron began deployment to Bien Hoa AB, South Vietnam with special-operations aircraft to help train the Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF). FARM GATE missions later expanded into combat sorties against the Viet Cong. (See photo at right of 4400th CCTS T-28A-NA aircraft wearing South Vietnamese markings over Vietnam, circa 1960s).



17 Nov 1961 SECDEF Robert S. McNamara approved USAF plans to name **SAC as the single manager for KC-135 air refueling operations**. This plan recognized the critical role of air refueling in the long-range bomber missions planned in the event of strategic nuclear warfare. However, SAC was also held responsible for meeting the increasing air refueling requirements of other major air commands, including TAC's needs during the Vietnam conflict and MAC's expanded use of air refueling beginning in the 1970s.

14 Nov 1966 A C-141 Starlifter became the **first jet aircraft to land in the Antarctic**. Commanded by Capt. Howard Geddes, 86th Airlift Sqdn, Travis AFB, California, the aircraft landed on the ice at McMurdo Sound after a 2,200-mile flight from Christchurch, New Zealand.

17 Nov – 29 Dec 1967 **Operation EAGLE THRUST**. MAC used 413 C-141 and C-130 sorties to complete the longest airlift of combat troops from the United States to a war zone to date. The planes moved 10,356 men of the 101st Airborne Division and nearly 5,118 tons of equipment, including 32 helicopters. This airlift from Fort Campbell, Kentucky to Bien Hoa Air Base, Vietnam covered more than 10,000 miles.



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15 Nov 1968 The USAF launched **COMMANDO HUNT**, an extensive interdiction campaign against enemy infiltration on the Ho Chi Minh trail in Laos. Partially offsetting a bombing halt two weeks earlier, this effort increased the sorties flown in Southeast Asia from 4,764 tactical and 273 B-52 sorties in October to 12,821 tactical and 661 B-52 sorties in November. The campaign ran into the spring of 1972.

Commando Hunt destroyed many enemy vehicles and vastly reduced the flow of supplies, but the communists were able to continue guerilla warfare in South Vietnam. Their success has been attributed to their skill at mobilizing personnel and vehicles, circumnavigating or repairing damaged roads and bridges, and dispersing, concealing and decentralizing their operations.



15 Nov 1973 **OIL EMBARGO**. Arab nations friendly to Egypt cut off the supply of oil to nations supporting Israel in the October War. The action significantly affected PACAF, which received almost 90 percent of its fuel from the Mideast. PACAF imposed restrictions on JP-4-fueled aircraft and ceased all sorties except combat, Medevac, and other essential missions.

19 Nov 1997 **Operation PHOENIX SCORPION I**. The U.S. deployed additional forces to augment Operation SOUTHERN WATCH and to answer Iraq's continued intransigence over UN inspections of weapons of mass destruction sites. Iraq's willingness to resume the inspection program ended the deployment on 24 November, and within days most forces returned home.

16 Nov 2006 The **first operational CV-22 tilt-rotor aircraft** was accepted by the 8th Special Operations Squadron and Air Force Special Operations Command at Hurlburt Field, Florida.

The V-22 program concept began with U.S. Marine Corps studies on replacing their Vietnam-era CH-46 and CH-53D helicopters. Then in 1980, the disastrous attempt to rescue American hostages in Iran using conventional helicopters highlighted the requirement for an aircraft with significantly greater capabilities. After a long and difficult development program, the V-22 became the world's first production tilt-rotor aircraft. U.S. Marine, Navy and Air Force units currently operate V-22 units. AFSOC CV-22s have deployed to support combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as training exercises in various locations around the world.



CV-22 in flight.



CV-22 firing countermeasures.