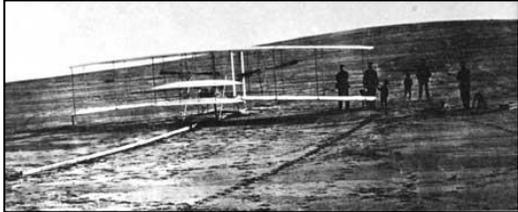




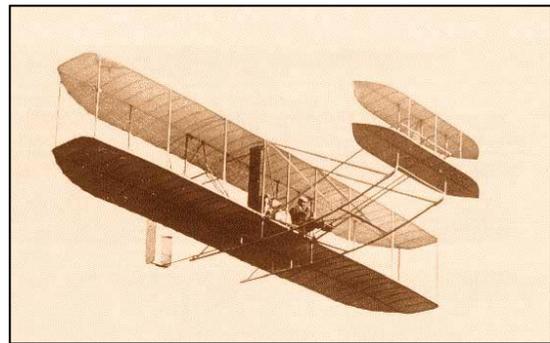
U.S. AIR FORCE

This Week in USAF and PACAF History 12 – 18 Dec 2011



14 Dec 1903 Wilbur Wright made the **first powered airplane flight** at Kill Devil Hills, Kitty Hawk, N.C. Although he flew 105 feet in 3.5 seconds, the plane crashed; therefore, this effort was not recognized as the first sustained or controlled flight.

Three days later, on 17 Dec 1903, Wilbur's brother Orville achieved the Wright brothers' goal of the **world's first manned, powered, sustained and controlled flight in a heavier-than-air vehicle**. The Wright *Flyer* lifted into the air at 10:35 a.m. and flew for twelve seconds, covering a distance of 121 feet. Orville's fourth and longest flight of the day was 852 feet in 59 seconds.



17 Dec 1925 Airpower pioneer **Billy Mitchell was found guilty** of "conduct of a nature to bring discredit on the military service" and sentenced to a five-year suspension of rank, pay and command. After World War I, Brig. Gen. Mitchell (at left) grew increasingly critical of senior military leaders for failing to recognize the potential of airpower in war. After the crash of a Navy dirigible, Mitchell accused senior leaders in the Army and Navy of incompetence and "almost treasonable administration of the national defense." He was court-martialed at the direct order of President Calvin Coolidge. After the verdict, Mitchell resigned from the Army and wielded far less influence thereafter. He died in 1936 at the age of 56.

Mitchell's predictions about the rise of airpower came true in World War II, including a specific prophecy that Japan would conduct an early morning aerial attack on Pearl Harbor. He was posthumously awarded a special Congressional Medal of Honor in 1946. Named in his honor, the B-25 "Mitchell" bomber is the only American military aircraft named after a specific person. In 2007, the Air Force first awarded the Air Force Combat Action Medal (at right), which is based on the insignia painted on Billy Mitchell's aircraft during World War I.



12 Dec 1940 The War Department designated a military reservation near Anchorage as Fort Richardson and a flying field as **Elmendorf Field**. The field was named in honor of Capt Hugh M. Elmendorf, killed in a flying accident near Wright Field, OH, on 13 Jan 1933. With the establishment of the Western Defense Command, **Alaska became a theater of operations**.



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13 Dec 1941 President Franklin D. Roosevelt authorized the Secretary of War to **take control of any civilian airline needed for the war effort**. Contracts with the airlines permitted the purchase of aircraft and airline services. Ten years later, on 15 Dec 1951, the USAF directed the Military Air Transport Service to develop the Civil Reserve Air Fleet (CRAF) program.

16 Dec 1941 Flying a P-40 Warhawk, 1st Lt. Boyd "Buzz" Wagner became the **first U.S. Army Air Forces ace of World War II** with his fifth aerial victory in the Philippines. Wagner had a total of eight kills in the war, the last three while flying the P-39 Airacobra. He later received the Distinguished Service Cross. (See photo of 1st Lt. Wagner at right.)



17 Dec 1944 Major Richard I. Bong of the U.S. Army Air Forces scored his 40th aerial victory in the Pacific, the **highest victory total of any U.S. ace**.

14 Dec 1946 President Truman approved the **Outline Plan establishing seven regional commands**, including Alaskan Command (ALCOM), Far East Command and Pacific Command. The Navy wanted a unified command for the entire Pacific, but the other services preferred that commands be established by mission rather than geographical area. A compromise was reached, resulting in the Outline Plan approved by President Truman.



Two days later, on 16 Dec 1946, the Joint Chiefs of Staff issued a **directive establishing Alaskan Command, Far East Command and Pacific Command** effective 1 January 1947. The executive agents for these commands respectively were Commanding General, Army Air Forces (later Chief of Staff, Air Force), the Chief of Naval Operations and the Chief of Staff, Army. Maj Gen Howard A. Craig, US Army Air Forces, became the first commander of Alaskan Command in addition to serving as the Commander of the Alaskan Department.

17 Dec 1950 **Far East Air Forces F-86s encountered North Korean MiG-15s** in combat for the first time. Lt. Col. Bruce H. Hinton scored the first F-86 victory over a MiG-15.

14 Dec 1964 **First Barrel Roll armed reconnaissance mission flown in Laos**. This mission initiated tactical fighter operations in Southeast Asia on a continuous basis.

18-29 Dec 1972 **Operation LINEBACKER II**. To force the North Vietnamese to return to negotiations, President Nixon ordered an 11-day all-out bombing campaign against targets in Hanoi and Haiphong. USAF aircraft dropped 20,370 tons of bombs, including 15,000 tons from B-52s. SSgt. Samuel O. Turner, USAF, became the first B-52 tail gunner to shoot down an enemy airplane.



OPR: PACAF/HO



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Altogether, the USAF flew 714 B-52 and 830 tactical fighter sorties, while the Navy and Marine Corps flew another 386 sorties in the 11 days. KC-135s flew more than 1,300 air refueling sorties. North Vietnam shot down 15 B-52s, 2 F-4s, and 2 F-111s in this operation. Linebacker II led to the North Vietnamese return to the peace table and a cease fire agreement.

17 Dec – 14 Feb 1990 **Operation JUST CAUSE.** USAF aircraft struck targets, airlifted troops, and flew special operations to restore democracy in Panama. F-117 Nighthawk stealth fighter-bombers flew in combat for the first time. In the largest night-combat airdrop since World War II, MAC flew 9,500 airborne troops from Pope AFB to Panama.

17 Dec 1993 The **first B-2 Spirit bomber** arrived at Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri. The B-2, essentially a flying wing, was the first “stealthy” heavy bomber.

16 Dec 1998 **Operation DESERT FOX** began with the launch of cruise missiles and air strikes by the U.S. and Great Britain after Iraq refused to allow United Nations weapons inspectors to continue their work. The four-day operation hit some 100 enemy weapons-production facilities. The largest air campaign against Iraq since DESERT STORM in 1991, Operation DESERT FOX involved the first combat use of B-1B Lancer bombers. (At right, a B-1 weapon release during training.)



13 Dec 2001 President George Bush provided a formal six-month notice to Russia of the **United States’ withdrawal from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty.** President Bush stated: “I have concluded the ABM treaty hinders our government’s ability to develop ways to protect our people from future terrorist or rogue state missile attacks.” It cleared the way for the construction of a missile defense system in Alaska. The plans called for basing a command center and silo-based missiles at Fort Greely and an advanced radar installation at Eareckson AS on Shemya. (Photo at left shows the first ground-based interceptor missile being lowered into its silo in 2004.)

15 Dec 2005 **The F-22A Raptor reached initial operating capability** for the 27th Fighter Squadron and the 1st Fighter Wing at Langley AFB. The F-22 has a low-observable, highly maneuverable airframe; advanced integrated avionics and aerodynamic performance allowing supersonic cruise without afterburner.

