



This Week in USAF and PACAF History 26 December 2011 – 1 January 2012



U.S. AIR FORCE

31 Dec 1910 The **first powered flight in Hawaii** took place as James “Bud” Mars (right) flew a Curtiss “Skylark” over Moanalua Polo Field. The P-18 biplane was built of spruce, ash, bamboo, steel tubing, and rubberized silk wings.

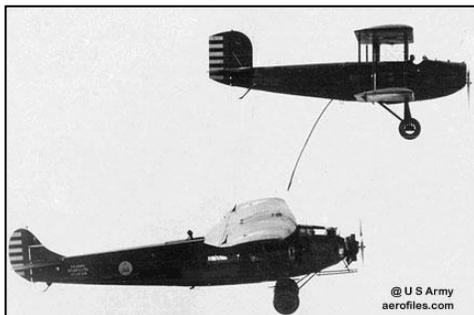


30 Dec 1914 The Army Signal Corps accepted its **first inherently stable aircraft**, the Burgess-Dunne S.C. 36 (at left).



An inherently stable airplane will usually return to the original condition of flight (except when in a bank) if disturbed by a force such as air turbulence. Thus, an inherently stable airplane will require less effort to control than an inherently unstable one.

1-7 Jan 1929 **THE QUESTION MARK.** To test inflight refueling as well as crew and aircraft endurance, the *Question Mark*, a modified Fokker C2-3 with a Wright 220 HP engine, flew to a world duration record of 150 hours and 40 minutes.



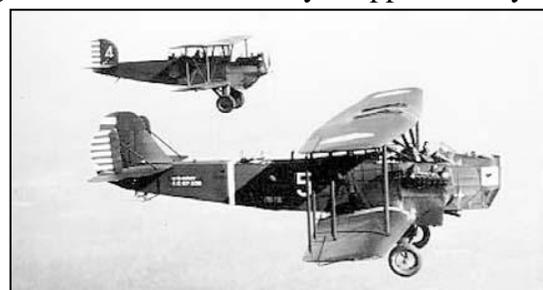
Named for its unknown capacity to remain airborne, the *Question Mark* was refueled 43 times by two modified biplane tankers. It flew until engine problems forced a landing. The tankers passed 5,700 gallons of fuel plus oil, food, water, and other items (roughly 40 tons) to the *Question Mark*. All officers on the mission--Carl Spaatz, Ira Eaker, Harry Halverson, and Pete Quesada--became generals, as did two officers on the tankers: Ross G. Hoyt and Joseph G. Hopkins.

The crew of the *Question Mark* each received the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) for the mission. The refuelers received letters of commendation.

27 Dec 1935 **Lava flow diversion.** After Mauna Loa volcano on the island of Hawaii erupted, its lava flow threatened the water works for the city of Hilo. Aircraft of the 23rd and 72nd Bombardment Squadrons were credited with diverting the lava flow when they dropped twenty



600-pound bombs in its path. Capt Joe J. Ladd led the flight of five Keystone LB-5s from Luke Field on Ford Island. The 23rd emblem is at left and LB-5 bombers are pictured at right.





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28 Dec 1941 The **Alaskan Air Force**, (predecessor to the Eleventh Air Force) was established. It was activated at Elmendorf Field, Alaska, on 15 January 1942.



27 Dec 1942 Flying his P-38 Lightning against the Japanese in the Pacific, **2Lt Richard I. Bong scored the first two of his 40 aerial victories.** Bong was later awarded the Medal of Honor, and he remains the top U.S. ace in any war. (Bong’s photo is at left). Bong was known for his love of flying and his analytical nature. He got the most from the P-38 aircraft, knew its limitations and never pushed it beyond. He also analyzed the situation before engaging in combat, and did not hesitate to break off an engagement in order to regain the tactical advantage.

28 Dec 1943 **Early Electronic Warfare unit.** VIII Bomber Command formed a “Radio Countermeasure Unit” with 24 specially-equipped heavy bombers. Working with their British counterparts, this unit jammed German radars and radios, dropped chaff and flew “spoofing” missions in support of bombing missions, the D-Day invasion, and other operations.

26 Dec 1944 **Major Thomas B. McGuire, Jr., reached 38 aerial victories** in the Pacific theater by shooting down four enemy planes, making him the second leading ace in World War II. He died in combat 12 days later. (At right, Richard Bong and Thomas McGuire in front of a P-38 Lightning.)



1 Jan 1967 **The USAF received 140 CV-2 Caribou aircraft from the US Army.** This was the first time that an entire aircraft inventory transferred between services. Redesignated as the C-7, the aircraft went to 7th Air Force and gave the NAF operational control over all fixed wing cargo aircraft in Vietnam.

1 Jan 1988 **SAC’s crew assignment policy changed** to permit mixed male/female crews in Minuteman and Peacekeeper launch facilities. One of the reasons for the end of segregated crews was to make missile-crew alert tour scheduling and substitutions more flexible.



29 Dec 1988 The Air Force received its **first operational F-15E Strike Eagle.** The F-15E was a radical departure from earlier, air superiority models of the F-15. The two-seat Strike Eagle is a dual-role fighter capable of engaging enemy aircraft and surface targets simultaneously, without escorting fighters or support jamming.



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27 Dec 1992 A USAF F-16 pilot patrolling the southern United Nations no-fly zone in Iraq shot down an Iraqi MiG-25. This was the **first aerial victory by an F-16 Fighting Falcon**, and also the first victory using the **AIM-120 AMRAAM** (advanced medium-range air-to-air missile).

26 Dec 2001 The Pentagon approved the low-rate initial production of the **Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile (JASSM)**. JASSM is a precision cruise missile designed to be launched at ranges beyond enemy air defenses against both fixed and relocatable targets. After launch, it flies autonomously over a low-level, circuitous route—guided by inertial navigation with updating from a global positioning system. Target recognition and terminal homing is via an imaging infrared seeker. (See photo at right).



26 Dec 2004 **UNIFIED ASSISTANCE TSUNAMI RELIEF.**



A 9.0 earthquake in the Indian Ocean triggered an enormous tsunami with 30-foot-high waves that slammed into the coasts of 13 nations and killed at least 300,000 people. The quake's epicenter was approximately 65 miles south of the Indonesian island of Sumatra. The death toll was greatest in Indonesia where at least 100,000 people perished. (Photos of Banda Aceh, Indonesia, before and after the tsunami are shown at left.) The tsunami also killed more than 29,000 people in Sir Lanka, 10,000 in India, and 4,600 in Thailand. Another three to five million people in South Asia and Southeast Asia were left without clean water, food, shelter, and sanitation. By the end of Operation Unified Assistance on 23 Feb 2005, AMC aircraft had

flown 106 missions to airlift 2,768 passengers and 3,370 short tons of cargo to Bandaranaike IAP in Colombo, Sir Lanka, U-Tapao AB, Thailand, and Banda Aceh and Jakarta IAPs in Indonesia.