



U.S. AIR FORCE

This Week in USAF and PACAF History 5 Sep – 11 Sep 2011



Countdown to 7 December 1941.



5 September 1941 **Emperor Hirohito**, angered by Japanese military leaders' preoccupation with war planning, ordered the Chiefs of the Army and Navy to make diplomacy the top priority in foreign relations. On the following day the Emperor, for the first time ever, personally spoke at an imperial conference – to uphold the ideal of international peace. Five days after that, the Emperor assumed direct command of the Japanese Army Headquarters. The U.S. Army's G-2 intelligence section confidently stated:

"...in view of the Emperor's action, it is probable that Japan will find a peaceful way out of one of the greatest crises in her history and seek a means to realign her foreign policy in an anti-Axis direction."

6 September 1941 The **Honolulu Star-Bulletin** said: "A Japanese attack on Hawaii is regarded as the most unlikely thing in the world, with one chance in a million of being successful... The Japanese fleet ... would have so far to come that American patrols would spot it long before it arrived."

11-20 September 1941 **The Japanese Navy's annual table-top wargames** began early in 1941 to rehearse attacks in southeast Asia and Hawaii. One of the most critical questions was the carrier task force route to Hawaii.

A southern route to a launch point south of Pearl Harbor offered calm seas and proximity to Japanese bases, but the route was regularly covered by U.S. air patrols and naval exercises. A northern route between Midway and the Aleutian Islands risked refueling problems in rough seas, but it was selected because it offered the best chance of achieving surprise.

In the first trial run of the attack on Pearl Harbor, the U.S. forces were on the alert and Japan lost two carriers after inflicting little damage. In a second run, the task force arrived 450 miles north of Oahu at dusk and achieved surprise – similar to what really happened. In this run, Japan sank two U.S. carriers, damaged a third and lost only one Japanese carrier. Admiral Nagumo, the task force commander, planned a fast getaway in each scenario. An invasion of Hawaii was never seriously considered.

10 September 1942 The **Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron (WAFS)** was formed, and female pilots began ferrying aircraft from factories to airfields in the U.S. In 1943, all women pilots flying for the Army Air Force were placed in the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP). By the end of the war, WASPs had flown all types of military aircraft, including AT-6, AT-10, AT-11, and BT-13 trainers; C-47, C-54, and C-60 transports; A-25 and A-26 attack aircraft; B-24, B-25, TB-26, and B-29 bombers; P-38, P-40, P-47, and P-51 fighters.



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All records of the WASPs were classified and sealed until 1977, when the G.I. Bill Improvement Act granted the WASP corps full military status for their service. In 1984, each WASP was awarded the World War II Victory Medal, and those who served for more than one year were also awarded American Theater Ribbon/Campaign Medal. On July 1, 2009 President Barack Obama and the U.S. Congress awarded the WASP the Congressional Gold Medal. Read more [here](#).

9 September 1967 Sgt. Duane D. Hackney, a pararescue-man in the Vietnam conflict, received the **Air Force Cross** for bravery, becoming the first living enlisted man to receive the award. For putting his own parachute on a rescued pilot after their helicopter was hit by enemy fire,



Hackney received the award, second only to the Medal of Honor. Hackney was the youngest person and the fourth enlisted member to receive the medal. During the Vietnam conflict, his helicopter was shot down five times; he earned four Distinguished Flying Crosses and 18 Air Medals for single acts of heroism. Hackney continued his distinguished Air Force career until his retirement in 1991 as a chief master sergeant. Hackney was [the most decorated airman in Air Force history](#).



9 September 1972 Capt. Charles B. DeBellevue (at right), flying as weapon system officer in the backseat of an F-4, earned his fifth and sixth aerial victories, becoming the **leading ace of the Vietnam War and the first non-pilot ace in the United States Air Force**. For this feat, DeBellevue shared the 1972 Mackay Trophy with his pilot, Captain Richard S. "Steve" Ritchie and with Captain Jeffrey S. Feinstein, the other two Air Force aces of the Vietnam War. DeBellevue was also awarded the Air Force Cross for his actions in Southeast Asia and he retired in January 1998 after 30 years of service.



5 September 1983 **Mackay Trophy**. Capt Robert Goodman and his KC-135 tanker crew (Capt Michael Clover, 1Lt Karol Wojcikowski and SSgt Douglas Simmons) refueled a group of F-4Es crossing the Atlantic. One of the F-4s had engine trouble and had to divert to Newfoundland. Goodman's crew took up escort duty. The F-4 pilot had to shut down one engine, reduce power in the other engine and jettison his centerline tank. Despite these measures, the F-4



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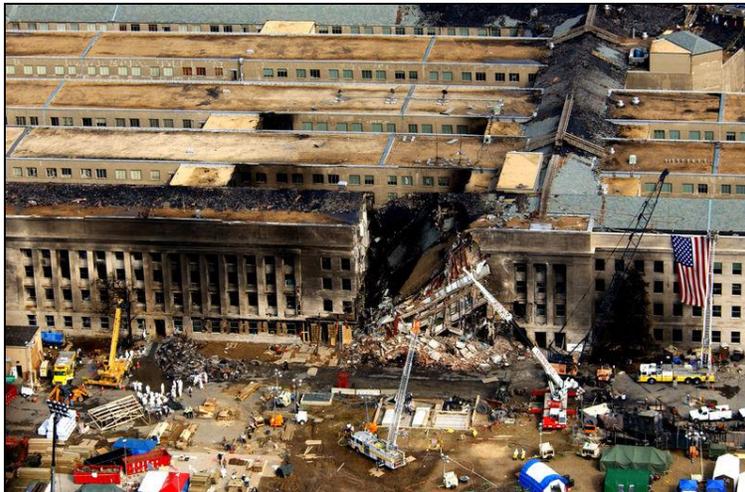


continued to lose altitude and airspeed. Through four refuelings and extreme peril as the fighter dropped to 2,000 feet, the KC-135 escorted the fighter to Gander, at times towing the fighter on the refueling boom. For this meritorious flight, the KC-135 crew received the Mackay Trophy.

8 Sep 1986 Having been inactivated in 1975, the **Seventh Air Force** was assigned to Pacific Air Forces on this day and re-activated at Osan AB, South Korea.

8 September 1990 [Marcelite Jordan Harris](#) became the **first black woman to hold the grade of Brigadier General in the Air Force**. At the time, she was the Vice Commander, Oklahoma City Air Logistics Center at Tinker AFB, and she went on to be the Director of Maintenance at Headquarters, Air Force. The General achieved many "firsts" for women in the Air Force.

11 September 2001 **Terrorists hijacked four commercial passenger aircraft** with the goal of destroying heavily-populated and highly symbolic targets in the United States. Two planes crashed into the twin towers of World Trade Center in New York City (below left). Both towers collapsed within two hours. The third plane crashed into the Pentagon (below right). Passengers and members of the flight crew on the fourth aircraft tried to retake control of their plane from the hijackers; that plane crashed into a field in rural Pennsylvania. The Federal Aviation Administration grounded all airliners in the U.S. for several days. Excluding the 19 hijackers, a confirmed 2,977 people died as a result of these attacks.



As part of America's response, **the Global War on Terror began**. President George W. Bush announced the war on terrorism and initiated homeland-defense efforts, including **Operation NOBLE EAGLE**, which involved combat air patrols within the United States and Guam.