



**U.S. AIR FORCE**

## **This Week in USAF and PACAF History** **11 – 17 June 2012**



14 June 1912 After training at the Army Air School in the Philippines, Corporal Vernon Burge became the Army's **first enlisted pilot**.

16 June 1936 **P-35 Fighter Contract.** Seversky Aircraft Company won the contract to provide P-35 airplanes—the Army's first all-metal, single-seat fighters with enclosed cockpits and retractable landing gear (see photo). In action against the Japanese in the Philippines early in World War II, P-35s shot down about 60 Japanese aircraft and destroyed another 30 on the ground. However, their lack of armor and self-sealing fuel tanks made them vulnerable. After two days of battle, only a few remained and those were unfit for combat. The P-35 was the forerunner of the P-47 Thunderbolt.



16 Jun 1941 **The B-24 Liberator**, a four-engine bomber that could fly faster and farther than the B-17, **entered the Air Corps inventory**. B-24s were produced in larger numbers than any



other U.S. aircraft and employed on more fronts than any other Allied or enemy bomber in World War II. Consolidated was originally asked to produce the B-17 under license, but submitted its own design for a more capable bomber. The placement of the B-24's fuel tanks throughout the upper fuselage and its lightweight construction optimized assembly line production (photo at left) and increased range and payload, but made the aircraft more difficult to fly and more vulnerable to battle damage. On 31 May 1945, the last of 18,188 B-24s was delivered to the USAAF.

11 Jun 1943 After a month-long aerial bombardment, some 11,000 Italian troops on Pantelleria, an island between Italy and Tunisia, surrendered to the Allies. It was the **first large defended area to fall to air power**, and allowed the Allied move north from Africa to Sicily and Italy.

15 June 1944 Sixty-eight B-29 Superfortresses took off at night from staging bases at Chengdu, China, to bomb the Imperial Iron and Steel Works at Yawata on Kyushu, more than 1,500 miles away. This was the **first raid on the Japanese home islands since the Doolittle attack** of April 1942, but they caused little damage because of poor aiming. This mission marked the **beginning of the strategic bombardment campaign against Japan**. Coincidentally, on this same day the U.S. Marines invaded the Marianas Islands – which would serve as more effective B-29 bases.

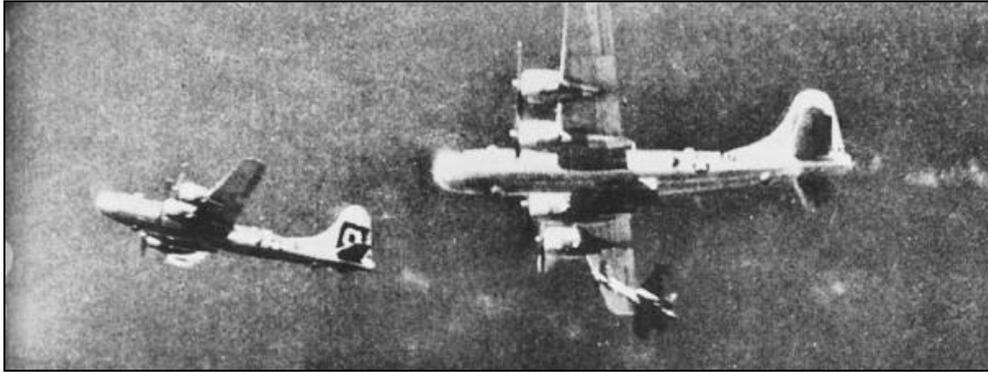


U.S. AIR FORCE

## This Week in USAF and PACAF History 11 – 17 June 2012



Below, Marianas-based B-29s on a mission with a Japanese fighter making a diving pass.



15 June 1944 **Far East Air Forces (Provisional)** was established at Brisbane, Australia as the single air headquarters in the Southwest Pacific Area. It became Far East Air Forces (FEAF) on 20 June 1944 with War Dept. approval of its designation. FEAF was formally activated on 3 August. **Lt Gen George C. Kenney**, Commander of 5th Air Force, became **FEAF's first commander**, and he remained commander until 30 Dec 1945.

FEAF was the predecessor to Pacific Air Forces (PACAF).

11 Jun 1948 **The USAF revised its aircraft designation system.** “P” for pursuit changed to “F” for fighter. Thus, the P-51 became the F-51; the P-80 became the F-80, etc.

16 June 1948 Col. Geraldine May became the **first director of Women in the Air Force**. The WAF program ended in 1976 when women were put on an equal basis with men in the USAF.



11 Jun 1957 The **first U-2** high-altitude, long-range reconnaissance aircraft was delivered to the 4080th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing at Laughlin Air Force Base, Texas. The U-2 could fly 10-hour missions at exceptionally high altitudes.



16 June 1963 Jr. Lt. Valentina Tereshkova (left), a Soviet cosmonaut, became the **first woman in space** with her three-day flight on *Vostok 6*. Twenty years later, on 18 June 1983, Sally K. Ride (right) became the **first U.S. woman in space**. She was a crew member on *Challenger* during the seventh space-shuttle mission.



16 June 1966 A Titan IIIC boosted seven experimental communications satellites and one gravity-gradient satellite into orbit 18,000 nautical miles above the equator. The satellites demonstrated the **feasibility of a global military communications satellite system**.



U.S. AIR FORCE

## This Week in USAF and PACAF History 11 – 17 June 2012



17 June 1968 The **first C-9 Nightingale** aeromedical-evacuation aircraft rolled out at McDonnell Douglas Corporation, Long Beach, California. The requirement for an aero-medical



transport had arisen in World War II and other wars since then. Eight McDonnell Douglas DC-9's were ordered with modifications such as a special care section and a hydraulic lift to load litters onto the aircraft. This first C-9 aircraft was christened with water from the Sea of Galilee by Ms. Elsie Ott, the flight nurse on the first intercontinental movement of military patients on 17 Jan 1943. For her actions that day and her contribution to realizing the potential of aeromedical evacuation, she became the first woman ever awarded the Air Medal.

17 June 1983 The **Peacekeeper intercontinental ballistic missile**, carrying multiple warheads, **launched for the first time** at Vandenberg AFB, California. The unarmed warheads landed in the Kwajalein target area in the Pacific Ocean.

14 June 1993 **The first C-17 Globemaster III** arrived at its operational wing, the 437th Airlift Wing at Charleston AFB, South Carolina. Capable of delivering outsized cargo to a tactical environment (below, left); the C-17 increased the USAF's airlift capability into relatively small airfields, eliminating the need to shift cargo from larger to smaller transports. Below right, the interior of a C-17 configured for the aeromedical evacuation mission.



17 June 1993 Lt. Col. Patricia Fornes, USAF, became the **first woman commander of a combat missile squadron** – the 740th Missile Squadron at Minot AFB, North Dakota,

11 Jun 1996 **JSTARS**. ACC acquired its first E-8 Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System (JSTARS) aircraft. The E-8, capable of providing detailed information on ground targets, had been tested during Operations DESERT STORM and JOINT ENDEAVOR.