



This Week in USAF and PACAF History
20 – 26 August 2012



U.S. AIR FORCE

25 August 1909 The U.S. Army leased land at College Park, Maryland, for the **first Signal Corps airfield**. Pilot training began on 8 October 1909.

25 August 1943 Twelfth Air Force sent 140 P-38s on the **first mass, long-range, low-level strafing raid in World War II**. Flying from Sicily, the P-38s flew tree-top level to attack airfields at Foggia, where they claimed 143 planes destroyed or damaged.



25-29 August 1952 **Operation HAJJI BABA or MAGIC CARPET**. U.S. Air Force C-54s airlifted 3,763 Muslim pilgrims to Saudi Arabia for the Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca). Mideast airlines had overbooked flights from Beirut to Saudi Arabia, stranding thousands of travelers in Beirut, Lebanon and other locations. The USAF airlift averted a disaster at Beirut Airport, enabled faithful Muslims to fulfill the Hajj, and helped restore America’s standing in the Middle East after U.S. support for the establishment of Israel in 1948. The photo at left shows Muslim pilgrims aboard a C-54. For more information, see the AFA article [The Pilgrim Airlift](#).

23 August 1958 **The Second Taiwan Strait Crisis**. Republic of China (ROC) forces on Quemoy Island were shelled and threatened with invasion by the Chinese Communists. PACAF asked for part of the TAC Composite Air Strike Force (CASF). On 29 August, all but two of the F-86Ds from 5AF’s 16th FIS at Kadena flew to Tainan Air Base, Taiwan, and the JCS directed the 388th TFS, with 16 F-100s, to fly to Clark Air Base. President Eisenhower also authorized the delivery of the new Sidewinder air-to-air missile to the ROC F-86 Sabres,



giving them an advantage over their MiG opponents.

The invasion never took place and a ceasefire between the two Chinas was called on 6 Oct 1958. The CASF eventually returned to the United States. The photo above shows an F-104 at Tao Yuan Air Base, Taiwan, in September, 1958. At left, an F-86D at the National Museum of the USAF.



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21-28 August 1960 A severe **polio epidemic struck Hokkaido**, Japan. C-130s of PACAF's 315th Air Division delivered eight iron lungs and 12 chest respirators to Hokkaido.



26 August 1967 The North Vietnamese captured **Major George E. "Bud" Day**, USAF, after downing his F-100 Super Sabre. Severely wounded, he was taken to a prison camp for interrogation and torture. Despite his crippling injuries, Major Day escaped and evaded the enemy for two weeks. He had crossed the demilitarized zone and was within two miles of a Marine Corps base when he was shot and



recaptured. Back in prison and in poor health, he continued to resist his captors until he was released in 1973. For his bravery, he earned the **Medal of Honor**.

21 August 1970 Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird announced the **Total Force Concept** of the armed services. Under this concept, the Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard replaced the draft as the initial sources for augmentation of the active force.

26 August 1976 Two groups of **women pilot candidates** began flight screening at Hondo Municipal Airport, prior to entering undergraduate pilot training at Williams AFB, Arizona on 29 September. The 77-08 class included Capts Susan Rogers, Connie Engle and Mary Donahue (at right) and also Capts Kathy La Sauce and Christine Schott; 1st Lts Sandra Scott and Victoria Crawford; and 2nd Lts. Mary Livingston, Carol Scherer and Kathleen Rambo. On 2 September 1977, the first class of women pilots graduated at Williams AFB, Arizona.



26 August 1980 **Exercise PACIFIC CONSORT**. Held in Australia from 26 August to 11 September, this exercise was the **first deployment of the F-15/E-3A team to the Southwest Pacific**. Exercises in Australia and New Zealand, like other Asia exercises, had been severely curtailed during the Southeast Asia war. At left, Kadena F-15s fly with Royal Australian Air Force Mirages during an Exercise PACIFIC CONSORT.



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23 August 1985 Air Force Systems Command successfully conducted its **first “cold launch”** of



an inter-continental ballistic missile (ICBM) from an underground silo at Vandenberg AFB, California. The cold-launch technique ejected the missile from the silo by gas pressure, and the propellant ignited after it became airborne. This technique caused less damage to the silo and reduced the time needed for another launch. On this date, an LGM-118 Peacekeeper (“MX”) ICBM was cold-launched from a Vandenberg AFB silo. (At left, a Peacekeeper ICBM test launch from Vandenberg AFB, California.)

22 August 1990 President George H. W. Bush authorized a **90-day call-up** of up to 200,000 reservists for **Operation DESERT SHIELD**. Eventually, more than 20,000 USAF reservists and 12,000 Air National Guard personnel served in that operation and in DESERT STORM.

25 August 1992 **Hurricane Andrew** smashed into southern Florida with sustained 140-mph winds, destroying Homestead AFB. The Air Force embarked on one of its largest domestic **humanitarian airlift** operations. By 28 October, Air Mobility Command, Air Force Reserve, and Air National Guard transports, augmented by airliners under contract, had delivered more than 21,000 tons of relief supplies and had transported more than 13,500 passengers.

26 August 1992 The United States launched **Operation SOUTHERN WATCH** to enforce United Nations sanctions against Iraq. USAF aircraft began patrolling a no-fly zone south of 32 degrees north latitude in southern Iraq to provide protection to Shiite Muslims living there and to discourage any renewed Iraqi military activity against Kuwait or Saudi Arabia.

