



U.S. AIR FORCE

## This Week in USAF and PACAF History 1 – 7 October 2012



5 October 1905 **The first “practical” airplane.** Even after the **Wright brothers** created separate, independent controls of the three flight axes—pitch, roll and yaw—their Flyer still had marginal performance. After Orville was nearly killed in a crash, they rebuilt the Flyer with the forward elevator and rear rudder both enlarged and placed several feet farther away from the wings. On 5 October 1905, the new *Wright Flyer III* flew for more than half an hour and covered nearly 24 miles near Dayton, Ohio.

Four days later, the Wright brothers wrote to the War Department, describing their new flying machine and offering it to the Army for purchase. Misunderstanding the offer as a request for research funds, the Board of Ordnance and Fortification turned them down.



2 October 1918 **The first successful unmanned air vehicle/ cruise missile** was flight-tested at Dayton, Ohio. Developed by inventor Charles Kettering and Orville Wright, the Kettering Aerial Torpedo, or “Kettering Bug,” was a small bi-plane with a 180-pound bomb, launched from a dolly running on a portable track. World War I ended before the weapon could be employed in combat.

5 October 1918 **The first sustained effort at aerial resupply** of a ground unit occurred during the Meuse-Argonne offensive of World War I. Planes from the 50th Aero Squadron dropped supplies and aided in determining the location of the famous “Lost Battalion” (elements of the



1Lt Harold E. Goettler

77th Division that were cut off from the Allies and besieged by the Germans). The following day, 1Lt Harold E. Goettler and 2Lt Erwin P. Bleckley, flying as an observer, were killed trying to drop supplies to a surrounded US Army battalion in the Argonne Forest near Binarivelle, France. Goettler and Bleckley flew as low as possible to deliver the supplies more precisely, but enemy ground fire brought them down. Both men received the **Medal of Honor.**



2Lt Erwin P. Bleckley

4-6 October 1946 Col Clarence S. Irvine and his crew flew the B-29 “Pacusan Dreamboat” to a **nonstop, unrefueled distance record** of 9,500 miles by flying from Honolulu to Cairo, Egypt, in 39 hours 36 minutes. The flight path took the aircraft over Arctic regions to test the crew through hazardous weather and with complicated navigation and communication problems.



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7 October 1949 **Andersen AFB, Guam** was named in honor of Brig Gen James Roy Andersen, who died on 26 Feb 1945 in an aircraft accident near Kwajalein Island, en route to Hawaii. Previous names for the base included North Field (Dec 1944) and North Guam AFB (Mar 1949). In 2007, the recently-discovered dedication plaque (pictured left) was re-installing in a ceremony front of the 36th Wing Headquarters.

1-14 October 1952 **Operation FOX PETER TWO.** A flight of 75 F-84Gs flew across the Pacific through the use of extended air refueling. The operation proved that fighters could be moved forward quickly in the U.S. Pacific Command AOR.

1 October 1957 General Thomas S. Power, the CINCSAC, initiated **ground alert** operations to counter the Soviet ICBM threat. SAC kept a third of its aircraft ready for takeoff with weapons loaded. It was under General Power that SAC adopted the slogan "*Peace Is Our Profession.*"

6 October 1961 Lowry Air Force Base, Colorado received the Air Force's **first Titan I missile** in the **first hardened ICBM silo**, a 165-foot deep missile launch facility.

4-5 October 1980 The Dutch cruise liner *M.S. Prinsendam* caught fire in the Gulf of Alaska,



forcing some 520 passengers and crew to abandon ship. Aircraft and ships from the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Air Force and Canadian forces, along with merchant vessels, rescued all the passengers and crew with no loss of life or serious injury. Elmendorf's 71st Aerospace Rescue Squadron dispatched an HH-3 helicopter accompanied by an HC-130 tanker. Enroute to the scene, Capt. John J.

Walters and his HH-3 crew squeezed under a 100-foot ceiling in a narrow opening in the mountains in order to cut hours from their flight to the *Prinsendam*. Through multiple air refuelings, Captain Walters and his crew were airborne for 11 hours and rescued scores of survivors. Captain Walters was awarded the **Mackay Trophy**. Two USAF pararescue jumpers, SSgt John Cassidy and Sgt Jose Rios, jumped into the frigid water and spent nearly 18 hours saving lives on one of the lifeboats. Both men were awarded the **Distinguished Flying Cross**.

2 October 1981 **"Rearming America."** President Reagan announced that the U.S. would build and deploy 100 B-1 bombers. (On 1 October 86, the B-1 achieved initial operating capability at Dyess AFB, Texas.) President Reagan also cancelled the multiple-shelter ICBM basing scheme for the M-X missile in favor of super-hard silos. He also announced programs to continue the air-launched cruise missile (ALCM) program and to develop an advanced stealth bomber.



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3-14 October 1993 **Operation RESTORE HOPE II.** By 1992, a half-million people had died of famine in Somalia. Armed factions controlled the food supply as a military tactic. In response, the USAF airlifted 1,300 troops, 18 M-1 Abrams tanks, and 44 Bradley fighting vehicles to Somalia to protect U.S. forces during the United Nations food distribution effort. Tankers flew 169 refueling missions in support.



During a battle in Mogadishu, an Army MH-60 Black Hawk helicopter was shot down. Despite his own injuries, para-rescueman TSgt Timothy Wilkinson, USAF (left) ran through enemy fire repeatedly to carry out five wounded Army Rangers. Shrapnel tore skin off his face, but TSgt Wilkinson did not falter. For his heroism, he earned the **Air Force Cross**.

7 October 2001 **Operation ENDURING FREEDOM.** The U.S. initiated airstrikes against terrorist and Taliban targets in Afghanistan. The 509th Bomb Wing at Whiteman AFB launched six B-2 bombers that flew from Missouri across the Pacific to drop bombs on targets in Afghanistan and recover at Diego Garcia. One flight took 44 hours – the **longest combat mission in history**. The operation also involved B-1Bs, B-52Hs, F-15Es, KC-10s and KC-135 tankers, E-3 AWACS, EC-130s, AC-130 gunships, and MC-130 and MH-53 special operations aircraft. Naval involvement included F-14s, F/A-18s, and AV-8 aircraft from three carriers in the Indian Ocean. Lt. Gen. Charles F. Wald, USAF, served as Operation ENDURING FREEDOM's first Joint Force Air Component Commander.

On the next day, two C-17s air-dropped some 35,000 humanitarian rations over Afghanistan. These were the **first C-17 airdrops in a combat zone**. The C-17s flew from Ramstein Air Base, Germany more than 6,500 miles in a 22-hour round trip and were air refueled multiple times. (At right, a C-17 landing at Bagram in 2004.)



2 October 2006 Air Combat Command declared an initial operating capability for the GBU-39B **Small Diameter Bomb (SDB)**, a low cost and low collateral damage 250-pound precision strike weapon for use by fighters, bombers and UAVs. Three days later, the SDB was used in combat for the first time when F-15E Strike Eagles carried the weapon on a close-air support mission in Iraq.

