



U.S. AIR FORCE

This Week in USAF and PACAF History 15 – 21 October 2012



17 October 1918 **Early Airborne Operations Plan.** Brigadier General Billy Mitchell briefed General John J. Pershing, Commander of the American Expeditionary Forces, on an ambitious plan to airdrop the 1st Infantry Division behind German lines. At the time, Allied parachute use was generally limited to the crews of observation balloons (left). Pershing gave his consent to begin work on the plan, which would employ nearly all the bombers and fighters available on the Western Front. However, World War I ended before the plan could be developed.

19 October 1940 The **Hawaiian Air Force** was established. It was activated on 1 November 1940 at Fort Shafter and assigned to the Army's Hawaiian Department. The Hawaiian Air Force motto was the Hawaiian phrase **Ku Kiai** ("On Guard" – emblem at right). The Hawaiian AF was moved to Hickam Field in July 1941, and was redesignated as 7th Air Force on 5 February 1942.



21 October 1942 **Lieutenant Anne Fox, head nurse at Hickam Hospital, became the first woman to be awarded a Purple Heart** "for outstanding performance of duty and meritorious acts of extraordinary fidelity and essential service" during the attack on 7 Dec 1941. When the Purple Heart criterion changed to being wounded in action, Lt. Fox was awarded the Bronze Star instead. At left, the Hickam Hospital nurses arrive on Oahu in November, 1941. Lt. Fox is fifth from left.

20 October 1944 **RETURN TO THE PHILIPPINES.** Southwest Pacific Area forces, including the U.S. Sixth Army, landed at two points on the east coast of Leyte in the Philippines. Elements of the 308th Bombardment Wing were the first major FEAF units in the country. Headquarters elements of Fifth Air Force landed on 22 October, while ground echelons of the 49th and 475th Fighter Groups landed on the 24th. The landings were defended by U.S. Naval forces in the Battle of Leyte Gulf, the largest naval battle in history. With bases in the Philippines, U.S. forces interdicted the flow of oil from the East Indies to Japan and conducted operations northward towards Iwo Jima and Okinawa. At right, a P-38 fighter.





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21 October 1947 The **YB-49 Flying Wing made its first flight**. The YB-49 was a product of Jack Northrop's pioneering work in the 1930s and a 1941 Army Air Corps requirement to bomb Europe from the U.S. if Britain fell. Its predecessor, the propeller-driven XB-35, could theoretically carry a greater payload faster, farther, and cheaper than a conventional bomber. The advent of the jet engine made the XB-35 obsolete and led to the jet-powered YB-49. The YB-49 had several severe design problems, chief of which was the fact that the very thick airfoil section caused a low Mach limit and yet could not hold the American atomic weapons of the day. The program was cancelled in favor of the more conventional B-36 Peacemaker. The YB-49s at right are lined up for destruction.



20-23 October 1950 In the **first airborne operation of the Korean War**, more than 100 C-119s and C-47s dropped some 4,000 troops of the Army's 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team and over 600 tons of materiel at Sukchon and Sunchon, 30 miles north of Pyongyang.

15 October 1952 A **B-47 photo reconnaissance mission** out of Eielson AFB flew near the Chukotsky Peninsula in the Soviet Union. The mission confirmed that the development of Soviet staging bases on the Arctic peninsula from which their bombers could easily reach targets on the North American continent.



20 October 1961 **PROJECT PIPE STEM**. The 15th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron based at Kadena deployed four RF-101s to Tan Son Nhut AB. They flew 67 reconnaissance sorties



over South Vietnam and Laos, developing their photographs with a photo-processing unit that also deployed from Kadena. These were the **first PACAF aircraft deployed to South Vietnam**. Another four RF-101s from the 45th TRS deployed to Don Muang, Thailand, along with their photo processing unit, in November under the name **ABLE MABLE**. By the end of 1961 the unit had flown 130 missions. At left, an RF-101A flies over Vietnam in 1967.

16 Oct 1964 **China exploded its first nuclear device**. The Air Force collected data on the explosion using Air Weather Service C-130, WB-50, and WB-57 aircraft from Yokota AB, Japan; Wheelus AB, Libya; Eielson AFB, Alaska; and McClellan AFB, CA.



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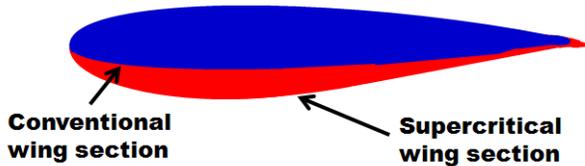


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15 October 1964 General Dynamics unveiled its **TFX Fighter** at Fort Worth. The USAF version became the F-111A. On 16 October 1967, the **first operational F-111A supersonic tactical fighter** landed at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada. Notable features of this aircraft included terrain-following-radar flight controls for low-altitude flight and variable-geometry wings that swept forward for takeoffs, landings or slow speed flight, and rearward for high-speed flight. The F-111 could operate from tree-top level to 60,000 feet and hit targets in darkness and bad weather; it could also go Mach 1 (supersonic) at sea level and Mach 2 at high altitude.



On 18 October 1985 the F-111 made its first flight with the **Mission Adaptive Wing (MAW)** at Edwards AFB, California. The MAW had no flaps, slats, ailerons, or spoilers; it used internal hydraulic actuators to change its curvature in flight. The MAW flexed the outer wing skin to produce a more curved surface section for subsonic speeds, a supercritical section for transonic speeds, and a symmetrical section for supersonic speeds. Combined with a flexible composite skin, these features improved stability and efficiency across a broad range of flight envelopes – especially as the aircraft approached or transited the speed of sound. The benefits included increased range and payload, improved handling, tighter sustained maneuvers for evasive action and survivability, increased fatigue life and a more stable weapons platform.



In a supercritical wing, the upper surface is relatively flat in the middle but curved substantially downward near the trailing edge, while the lower surface is more curved with a substantial cusp (point) at the rear.

17 October 1980 **Cope North Expands.** U.S. Marine Corps A-4s and EA-6Bs joined PACAF and Japan Air Self-Defense Force (JASDF) fighters in Exercise Cope North 81-1, which became a joint exercise funded by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

15 October 1999 **First flight of a C-17 to McMurdo Naval Air Station, Antarctica.**



An Air Force C-17 landed on an airstrip of frozen seawater and delivered cargo including mail, vegetables, fresh fruit and a telescope for National Science Foundation use at the South Pole. The telescope was to help in the study of black holes in the Milky Way galaxy. (Photo from cires.colorado.edu.)