

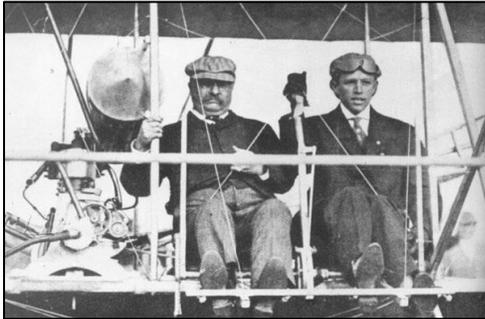


U.S. AIR FORCE

## This Week in USAF and PACAF History 8 – 14 October 2012



11 October 1910 Theodore Roosevelt became the **first President to fly**. Roosevelt, who left office in 1909, flew with Archibald Hoxsey in a Wright biplane while visiting an air meet in St. Louis, Missouri. Hoxsey had just completed a record flight from Springfield, Illinois. When



Hoxsey said he would like to have the former President as a passenger, Roosevelt accepted. After warning Roosevelt to hold on to a strut and a wire (photo at left), Hoxsey took off. As the crowd below watched in fear, the aircraft circled the field twice and made several short dives and climbs. After about four minutes of flight, Hoxsey landed the plane. A delighted Roosevelt said he wished they could have stayed in the air for an hour. (See [video](#) of the event.)

On 30 December, 80 days after flying the former President, Archibald Hoxsey set a flight altitude record of 11,474 feet at Los Angeles, California. On the following day, Hoxsey crashed and was killed in an attempt to fly even higher.

10 October 1911 At College Park, Maryland, Lt. Thomas DeWitt Milling conducted **the first Army tests of a bombsight and bomb-dropping devices**. These devices had been invented by Riley E. Scott, who accompanied Milling in a Wright Flyer to conduct the tests.

9 October 1918 During the Meuse-Argonne offensive, more than 250 bombers and 100 pursuit



planes, dropped 32 tons of bombs in the cantonment district between La Wavrille and Damvillers. This was the greatest massing of military aircraft to date. At left, the De Havilland DH-4, the only US-built plane to see combat in Europe – (NMUSAF photo).

12 October 1918 The 185th Aero Squadron flew the **first U.S. night pursuit operations** in France. The only U.S. unit designated for night operations, the 185th emblem was a bat against a yellow disk (at right). Night flying became essential as enemy bombers conducted raids at night and ground troops moved at night to avoid detection by aerial reconnaissance. Night flying put a priority on seeing the enemy by starlight, moonlight or searchlights (at 200-600 yards) and using aerodrome lights for landing at the home field. The most daunting prospect for a pilot was an emergency landing of a battle-damaged aircraft in unfamiliar territory.



11 October 1933 The War Department approved the **Drum Report**, which recommended creation of a General Headquarters Air Force (GHQ AF) equipped with more than 1,000 aircraft that could be used in combat. The report also recommended that Air Corps aircraft not assigned to GHQ AF be used for garrison duty, Army observation, and training.



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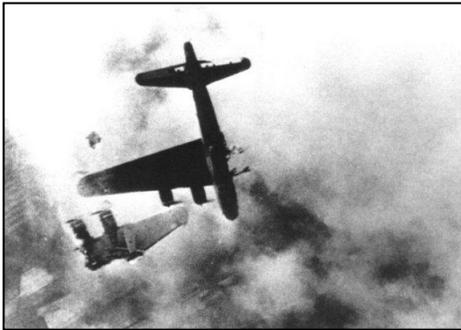
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14 Oct 1938 Edward Elliott conducted the **first flight test of the Curtiss XP-40** (below), the prototype of the P-40s used in World War II. The wartime P-40's semi-modular design was easy to maintain even in harsh conditions. Later versions were well-armored and equipped with self-sealing fuel tanks and more powerful engines. With good agility, very good dive speed, deadly armament and a durable structure, the P-40 had excellent results in head-on engagements with Japanese fighters and in ground attacks on surface forces. The P-40 saw action in many theaters of World War II, most famously with the American Volunteer Group's *Flying Tigers* in China.



8 October 1940 The Royal Air Force announced formation of the **first Eagle Squadron**, a fighter unit consisting of U.S. volunteers. This group later became the U.S. 4th Fighter Group.

14 October 1943 On "**Black Thursday**," the 8th Air Force conducted its second raid on **Schweinfurt**, the heart of the German ball bearing industry. Of 291 B-17 bombers in the attacking force, 60 were lost to fighter interceptors and flak, and 138 more were damaged, causing the Eighth to temporarily discontinue daylight bombing of targets deep in Germany.



When Hitler's minister of armaments and economics, Albert Speer, was interviewed after the war, he made this comment: "*The strategic bombing of Germany was the greatest lost battle of the whole war for Germany.*"

12 October 1944 **Ace in a Day**. Lt Chuck Yeager (right) shot down five of his 12.5 aircraft victories in a single engagement. As he closed on one Me-109, the German pilot broke left and collided with his wingman, giving Yeager two victories without firing a shot. In an intense dogfight, Yeager used his exceptional vision (20/10) and flying skills to get three more kills.



Three years later, on 14 October 1947, Captain Yeager became the **first man to fly through the sound barrier**. Yeager reached Mach 1.06 (807 mph) in the rocket-powered Bell XS-1 (left) after being dropped from a B-29. For this achievement, he received the Mackay Trophy.

11 October 1947 A transport variant of the B-29, the **C-97 Stratofreighter**, began service in the USAF.

14 October 1947 SECDEF James V. Forrestal approved **Air Force control over all "pilotless aircraft" and strategic missiles**. The Army gained control over all tactical missiles.



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10 October 1950 The USAF activated **the first Air National Guard units to support the Korean War**. Eventually, the U.S. mobilized 66 flying units and 45,000 guardsmen.



11 October 1961 **PROJECT FARM GATE**. President Kennedy authorized the deployment of a “Jungle Jim” detachment from the 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron (later the 1st Air Commando Group) to South Vietnam. The deployment included nearly 160 airmen and eight T-28s, four SC-47s, and four RB-26s carrying Vietnamese AF markings. The unit arrived in on 14 November and flew its first T-28 strike from Bien Hoa on 26 December. The aircraft were used until 1 April 1964.

14–15 October 1962 **The Cuban missile crisis** began when Maj. Richard S. Heyser and Maj. Rudolf Anderson, Jr., conducting U-2 reconnaissance flights over Cuba, proved that Soviet missile sites were under construction there. On October 18th, eight Air Force Reserve troop-carrier wings and six aerial-port squadrons were mobilized.



11 October 1970 The USAF’s **first undergraduate helicopter pilot student** entered training at Fort Wolters, Texas. The Army program was geared to train 225 Air Force pilots a year.

13 October 1972 **Air Force Ace**. An F-4 weapon system officer, Capt Jeffrey Feinstein, shot down his fifth MiG-21 to become the **third USAF ace of the Vietnam War**. Feinstein shared the 1972 **Mackay Trophy** with Captains Steven Ritchie and Charles DeBellevue.

14 October – 14 November 1973 **"The Airlift That Saved Israel."** Military Airlift Command



conducted **Operation NICKEL GRASS**, delivering over 22,000 tons of materiel to Israel during the 1973 “**Yom Kippur War**.” MAC completed this 30-day airlift, with a one-way distance of 6,450 miles by flying 567 missions with C-5 and C-141 aircraft. MAC and the USAF got no help from either U.S. civil aviation or the nations in Europe except for Portugal, which made a critical decision to allow the MAC aircraft to stage out of Lajes Field in the Azores. The MAC crews had to navigate carefully



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through the Straits of Gibraltar and across the length of the Mediterranean Sea. Air cover and navigational aids were provided by the U.S. Navy's 6th Fleet for most of the route and by Israel during the final portion of the flight.

Operation NICKEL GRASS validated the Air Force acquisition of the C-5 Galaxy with its aerial refueling and out-sized cargo capabilities. However, the airlift also revealed shortcomings in the C-141, specifically its lack of aerial refueling capability and the tendency for the cargo bay to fill up long before the aircraft reached maximum takeoff weight. In response, the entire C-141 fleet of 271 aircraft were given an aerial refueling capability and lengthened by three pallet lengths – adding the cargo capacity of 90 aircraft to the fleet. The operation also demonstrated the need for overseas staging bases for airlift and tanker operations.



Reader's Digest magazine called Operation NICKEL GRASS "The Airlift That Saved Israel." Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir said, "For generations to come, all will be told of the miracle of the immense planes from the United States bringing in the material that meant life for our people." For more on Operation NICKEL GRASS, read the Air Force Magazine [article](#).

12 October 1977 **First USAF female navigators.** The first class of USAF women navigators graduated, with three of the five assigned to Military Airlift Command aircrews.