

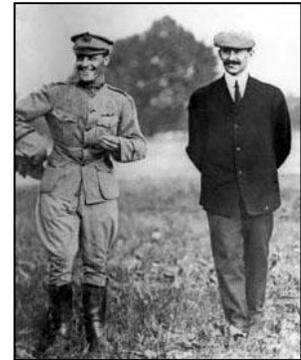


U.S. AIR FORCE

This Week in USAF and PACAF History 22 – 28 October 2012



23 October 1909 Wilbur Wright gave **Lt Benjamin D. Foulois** his **first flying lesson**. Foulois (pronounced *Foo-loy*) was an observer on Orville Wright’s record-breaking flight of 30 June, and Foulois had hoped to take flight instruction directly from the Wright brothers. When the Signal Corps ordered him to France for an international meeting on aeronautics, Lt. Frederick E. Humphreys replaced him in the training program, and it was Humphreys and Lt. Frank P. Lahm who became the **first Army officers to fly solo**. Returning in October, Foulois got one hour of instruction before cold weather set in. Foulois was then sent to Fort Sam Houston and ordered “teach yourself to fly.” Foulois did just that, writing letters to the Wright brothers and using their answers to correct his mistakes. Foulois achieved many firsts in military aviation and made major improvements to early flying machines, including seat belts, wireless communications and wheels instead of skids. (Photo above is Lt Foulois with Orville Wright.)



Foulois, like Billy Mitchell and other early airpower theorists, predicted the dominant role of airpower in warfare. The two men were strong-willed rivals and clashed often, but both fought to promote airpower—Mitchell to the public at large and Foulois specifically to Congress. Both men served as chief of the air service in Europe during 1918. After the war, Foulois held many positions in the air service and air corps including leadership of Air Corps exercises, for which he earned the 1931 MacKay Trophy. Foulois was the Chief of the Army Air Corps from 1931 until his retirement in 1935, promoting military airpower during a time of economic hardships and severe budget cuts. Foulois accurately predicted the rise of German airpower prior to World War II. For Foulois’ complete biography, click on this [link](#).

25 October 1925 The **court-martial of Brigadier General Billy Mitchell** began (photo below). Frustrated for years by the mismanagement of airpower, Mitchell was outraged when the Navy dirigible *Shenandoah* crashed despite her commander’s pleas to cancel the fatal flight due to bad weather. The commander was one of the 14 killed in the crash. Mitchell publicly accused senior military leaders of incompetence and "almost treasonable administration of the national defense." During his trial, Mitchell argued for the independence of military air forces. On 17 December, Mitchell was found guilty of insubordination and suspended from active duty for five years. Two months later, General Mitchell resigned from the Army.



The painting at left, “Billy Mitchell Court Martial,” was painted from the photograph above. The painting is on display in the Headquarters building of Pacific Air Forces on Hickam Air Force Base. It is currently located in Room I-324 (the PACAF/A4 Conference Room).



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28 October 1941 **Predecessor of Fifth Air Force.** The Philippine Department Air Force was redesignated the “Far East Air Force” – which later became 5th Air Force. The U.S. was rushing a deterrent force to the Philippines, and on 7 December 1941 the Far East Air Force had 81 P-40s and 35 B-17s. However, these units were decimated by Japanese attacks in December, 1941. (This was not the *Far East Air Forces* organized in Australia in 1944 that later became PACAF.)

27 October 1944 The **first US Army aircraft to be stationed in the Philippines since 1942** landed on the Tacloban airstrip. Thirty-four P-38s of the 9th Fighter Squadron (FS) landed, refueled and shot down four enemy aircraft before the end of the day. The 9th FS was under the 49th Fighter Group (FG) and the Fifth Fighter Command, and the unit included such notable aces as Richard Bong and Thomas McGuire. During 27 October - 31 December, the Japanese flew almost 1,050 sorties over Leyte. Pilots from the **5th Fighter Command shot down 314 confirmed aircraft** and received credit for 45 probables, yet suffered only 16 losses.

27 October 1954 Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., became the **first African-American general officer in the USAF** (photo at left). Davis graduated from West Point,



served in the infantry and taught military science at Tuskegee. In May 1941 he transferred to the Air Corps. After earning his wings he advanced rapidly and assumed command of the 332nd Fighter Group, the “Tuskegee Airmen” – the first fighter group with black pilots. During World War II, he and his men flew P-40s and P-51s in combat. Davis himself earned the Silver Star.

After military segregation ended, Davis commanded the fighter wing at Suwon Air Base in Korea and the Thirteenth Air Force during the Vietnam War. Lieutenant General Davis retired on Feb. 1, 1970, and was advanced to General on Dec. 9, 1998.

22 October 1962 **Cuban Missile Crisis - Defense Condition 3 (DEFCON 3)** was declared worldwide due to the crisis generated by the discovery of nuclear-capable Soviet missiles in Cuba. On 24 October, PACAF deployed six F-100s to Osan AB to beef up forces in Korea.

On 27 October, Major Rudolf Anderson, Jr., flying a U-2 reconnaissance mission over Cuba, was shot down by a surface-to-air missile. Anderson died when shrapnel decompressed his pressure suit at high altitude. He received the [first Air Force Cross](#) posthumously by direction of President John F. Kennedy.



(By regulation, the Bronze Star was the highest decoration allowed for Cold War action.)



The options facing the U.S. during the Cuban Missile Crisis all required indisputable proof of Soviet missiles in Cuba to our allies in NATO and the Americas. Photographs taken by Major Anderson on an earlier mission and other USAF pilots generated worldwide support for America’s refusal to allow Soviet nuclear-armed missiles in the western hemisphere. Without that support, the Cuban Missile Crisis could have had ended in a catastrophe.



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27 October 1962 Also on this day, **Strategic Air Command placed the first ten Minuteman I intercontinental ballistic missiles on alert** in hardened silos at Malmstrom AFB, Montana. On the following day, Soviet Premier Khrushchev agreed to recall Russian ships enroute to Cuba and withdraw the missiles if the United States agreed not to invade the island. (Minuteman I photo at left.)

24 October 1967 **Phuc Yen, the main fighter airfield in North Vietnam**, was attacked by U.S. Air Force and Navy aircraft for the first time. Previously, North Vietnamese airbases had been “off-limits” as targets. Twelve MiGs were damaged or destroyed, one runway was rendered unserviceable, and the Air Force downed its 69th MiG in aerial combat.

24 October – 3 November 1983 In **Operation URGENT FURY**, American military forces raided the Caribbean island of Grenada to evacuate U.S. citizens, restore democracy, and eliminate a hostile Cuban/Soviet base. MAC and Air Force Reserve C-5, C-141 and C-130 aircraft flew 496 missions to transport 11,389 passengers and 7,709 tons of cargo to Grenada. SAC tankers and TAC fighters, as well as ANG EC-130Es, supported the operation. Lt. Col. James L. Hobson, Jr., USAF, led a flight of MC-130 Hercules aircraft that successfully completed an airborne assault on Point Salinas, dropping paratroopers at the exact planned time over target in a hail of antiaircraft fire. For his actions in assuming the assault lead from a disabled aircraft, Lt. Col. Hobson earned the **Mackay Trophy**.



Major General Hobson commanded Air Force Special Operations Command from 1994 to 1997.



24 October 2000 **First flight of the F-35A Joint Strike Fighter**. The F-35 Lightning II (left) was designed to replace older fighters including U.S. Air Force A-10s and F-16s, U.S. Navy F/A-18s, U.S. Marine Corps AV-8B Harriers and F/A-18s, and U.K. Harrier GR-7s and Sea Harriers. The F-35 was first U.S. combat aircraft acquisition program to have had international participation from its inception.