

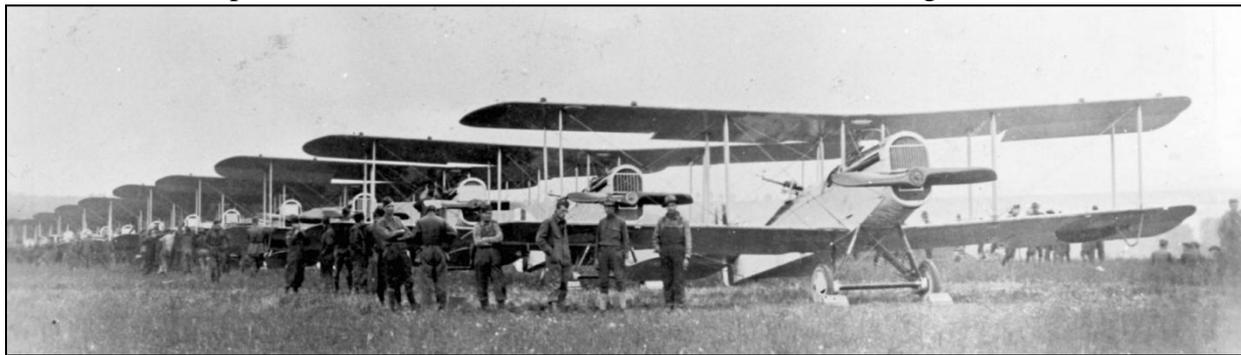


This Week in USAF and PACAF History
29 October – 4 November 2012



U.S. AIR FORCE

29 October 1917 The **first US-built DH-4 aircraft** was flown at Dayton, Ohio. Modeled from a combat-tested British De Havilland design, the DH-4 was the only US-built aircraft to see action during World War I – mainly as a bomber and artillery spotter. After the war, improved versions flew missions such as transport, trainer, air ambulance, aerial photography, target towing, and flying test bed. DH-4s also carried the first airmail for the U.S. Post Office. Below, DH-4s are lined up for their first mission over the western front on 7 August 1918.



1 November 1940 The Air Corps activated the **Hawaiian Air Force** at Fort Shafter to provide air defense of the Hawaiian Islands. At the time of the attack on 7 December 1941, it had two pursuit groups at Wheeler Field (P-36s and P-40s), two bomber groups at Hickam Field (B-17s and B-18s), and some transports, observation planes and A-20 light bombers. This unit later became the Seventh Air Force. At left, a P-40 at Bellows Field, Oahu.



2 November 1943 The **Fifth Air Force attacked Japanese shipping and bases at Rabaul** to protect the U.S. invasion of Bougainville. Three B-25 Groups escorted by seventy P-38s sank three Japanese destroyers, eight merchant ships, and destroyed 80 enemy aircraft. During this action, Major Raymond Wilkins won a posthumous **Medal of Honor**. Major Wilkins led his B-25 squadron in the attack and put his own airplane in the position of greatest risk. Despite battle damage, he continued his attack, strafing harbor vessels and scoring direct bomb hits on an enemy destroyer and a transport. Bombs expended, he was withdrawing his squadron when he saw a heavy cruiser barring their path. Wilkins went in for a strafing run to neutralize the cruiser's guns and attract its fire, which brought him down. (The photo above shows B-25s attacking Japanese shipping at Rabaul.)





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3 November 1944 **Japanese balloons with bombs attached were first launched against the United States.** The Japanese hoped the jet stream would carry them eastward across the Pacific. (Photo at right.)

The Japanese launched some 9,000 balloon bombs against the U.S. during the war. The bombs were meant to start forest fires, produce chaos and divert U.S. manpower from the war effort. They were also a reprisal for the Doolittle raid on Tokyo. The hydrogen-filled balloons were 33 feet in diameter and carried ballast and hydrogen release mechanisms to maintain altitude across the North Pacific. They were armed with incendiary and anti-personnel bombs. Only about 300 were ever observed in North America (mapped [here](#)). The easternmost balloon reached the Detroit suburbs.

Analysts estimate that as many as 1,000 Japanese balloon bombs reached the U.S. mainland. Fighters in the U.S. intercepted about 20 of the balloons. The only fatal attack occurred in Oregon when a pastor's wife and six children were killed.

The U.S. strategy was to keep the Japanese from knowing that any balloons had reached the mainland. The press cooperated by not publishing any incidents. The Japanese learned of only one bomb that got to Wyoming but failed to explode, so they stopped the launches after less than six months. After the war, the press blackout was lifted and the public was warned about the potential danger of finding unexploded bombs. The last balloon with a still-lethal payload was discovered in 1955, and balloon remnants have been found as late as 1992.

On March 10, 1945, one of the balloons came down at the Manhattan Project's Hanford Site in Washington state. It short-circuited power lines to the nuclear reactor cooling pumps, but backup devices quickly restored power. The Hanford Site was the world's first plutonium production facility, and it provided materials for the Trinity test and the Nagasaki weapon.

31 October 1965 Strategic Air Command accepted its **first ten Minuteman II intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs)** at Grand Forks AFB, North Dakota. Minuteman II missiles had longer range, larger payloads and better accuracy than the Minuteman I, but were deployed in the same silos. At left, a test launch of a Minuteman II ICBM.





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3 November 1965 A B-52 successfully fired an **AGM-28 Hound Dog missile** over Green River, Utah on a route to White Sands Missile Range.

The mission of the Hound Dog was to attack segments of the Soviet Union's air-defense system so that the launching B-52 could penetrate to its primary target. It had a maximum speed over Mach 2, a 49,000 foot ceiling and a range of nearly 600 nautical miles. It could conduct high or low altitude attacks with either air or surface detonations. The Hound Dog was deployed for 15 years until the missile was replaced by newer weapons including the AGM-69 Short Range Attack Missile and the AGM-86 Air-Launched Cruise Missile.



At left, U.S. Air Force artwork “Hound Dog” by Herb Mott. This painting is on display in the PACAF Headquarters building, I-wing, first floor.

2 November 2001 During Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, an MH-53 Pave Low helicopter crew rescued another MH-53 crew whose helicopter had crashed on a mission in the mountains of Afghanistan. The crew of **Knife 04** (shown here with their Pave Low MH-53) from the 20th Special Operations Squadron, Hurlburt Field, Florida, received the 2001 **Mackay Trophy** for performing “extraordinary acts of valor and heroism” behind enemy lines in extremely bad weather in the mountains of Afghanistan.

