



U.S. AIR FORCE

## This Month in USAF and PACAF History February



1 Feb 1943 **General Officer rescue.** Navy crews in PBY-5 Catalina aircraft rescued Thirteenth Air Force commander Maj. Gen. Nathan F. Twining and 14 others near the New Hebrides Islands after they were forced to ditch their aircraft and spend six days in life rafts.

1 Feb 1961 The **ballistic missile early warning system** (BMEWS) site at Thule, Greenland, became fully operational. Later, other sites became operational at Clear, Alaska and RAF Flyingdales in the United Kingdom. Operated by NORAD, the system could provide warning of an impending Soviet missile attack on the United States in time to respond.

1 Feb 2012 **U.S.-Singapore Joint Vision Statement.** U.S. SECSTATE Hillary Rodham Clinton and republic of Singapore Minister for Foreign Affairs K. Shanmugam met to review the array of close bilateral, regional and global engagement between the two countries, then issued a joint statement of a strategic partnership for “continued cooperation on economic, political and military, environment, security, education and cultural exchanges.”

1-3 Feb 1966 **HA/DR support to American Samoa following Typhoon.** At the end of January, a strong typhoon hit American Samoa, devastating the capital city of Pago Pago and leaving 90 people dead and hundreds without adequate shelter or electricity. Between February 1 and 3, the 61st Mil Alft Wg (Hickam AFB) flew over 13 tons of relief cargo to Pago Pago, 2,300 miles away, employing three C-124 Globemaster IIs.

2 Feb 1962 **First USAF Loss in Vietnam/Operation RANCH HAND.** The first USAF aircraft loss in South Vietnam occurred when a C-123 crashed while spraying defoliant on a Viet Cong ambush site. The crew of three became the **first USAF combat fatalities in Vietnam.**

2 Feb 1974 The **YF-16 fighter prototype made its first official flight** at Edwards AFB, CA. The Vietnam War showed that America needed better fighters to face the latest Soviet designs. The YF-16 won the competition to be the USAF’s next fighter – an agile, light-weight, low-cost, long-range air superiority fighter acquired in greater numbers than larger, more costly jets such as the F-15 and Navy F-14. The YF-16 had superior acceleration, climb rates, maneuverability, range and field of view. It was also less expensive – partly due to its use of the same engine as the F-15. **The YF-16’s main competitor was the twin-engine/twin-tail YF-17 – which became the Navy’s F/A-18 Hornet.**

3 Feb 1944 Colonel Philip Cochran led five P-51s on the **first Air Commando attack** on Japanese forces in the China-Burma-India theater. The 1st Air Commando Group was a self-contained force of fighters, cargo planes, light aircraft, and support personnel. With the motto "Anytime, Anywhere," the 1st ACG attacked enemy forces, resupplied British commandos and evacuated injured soldiers. (At left, Col. Cochran in his P-51 over Burma.)





U.S. AIR FORCE

## This Month in USAF and PACAF History February



The Air Commandos were prototypes for many modern USAF Special Operations concepts, including Combat Control Teams and Airborne Forward Air Controllers. In Vietnam, Air Commandos performed a variety of missions such as close air support, interdiction, civic affairs, psychological operations and defoliant operations. Five of the 12 Air Force Medals of Honor awarded during the Vietnam War went to Air Commando/Special Operations members.

3 Feb 1961 **Project LOOKING GLASS.** After six months of tests, SAC initiated continuous airborne command post operations. From this date, a Looking Glass aircraft (below, left) was in the air continuously for more than 29 years, logging more than 281,000 accident-free flying hours. The EC-135 Airborne Command Post gave the nation added capability to launch bombers and ICBMs in the event of a nuclear attack. The nickname “Looking Glass” arose from the mission to mirror ground-based command, control, and communications. On 2 Feb 1965, the USAF announced that Minuteman IIs could be launched by radio signal from the airborne command post. (Photo of aircraft interior below, right.) On July 24, 1990, Looking Glass ceased continuous airborne alert, but it remained on ground or airborne alert 24 hours a day. On Oct. 1, 1998, the Navy's E-6B Mercury replaced the EC-135 in the Looking Glass mission.



5 Feb 1918 Lieutenant Stephen W. Thompson scored the [first official American aerial victory](#)



Breguet bomber

(flying as an American and not as part of a foreign service). Thompson was filling in as an observer on a French Breguet bomber that day and shot down a German fighter over Saarbrucken. Due to his unique status on the mission, Thompson was not granted credit for his victory during the war. With the assistance of the National Museum of the USAF, Thompson’s victory was finally recognized in 1967.

5 Feb 1942 **Redesignations.** The Hawaiian Air Force was redesignated as the 7th Air Force, the Far East Air Force (formerly the Philippine Dept. AF) was redesignated as the 5th Air Force, and the Alaskan Air Force was redesignated as the 11th Air Force.

6 Feb 1991 Capt. Robert R. Swain, Jr., of the 706th Tactical Fighter Sqdn, Air Force Reserve, scored the **first A-10 Thunderbolt II air-to-air kill** by shooting down an Iraqi helicopter.



U.S. AIR FORCE

## This Month in USAF and PACAF History February



7 Feb 1954 **The Lockheed F-104 Starfighter first flew.** In December, 1951, Lockheed Chief Engineer Kelly Johnson was told by some USAF fighter pilots in Korea that they thought the MiG-15 was superior to the larger and more complex F-86. The pilots wanted a small, simple aircraft capable of high speeds and climb rates. In response, Lockheed put a single powerful engine into the lightest, most aerodynamically efficient airframe possible. Nicknamed “the missile with a man in it,” the F-104 could exceed speeds of Mach 2 and altitudes of 90,000 feet. However, the Starfighter had a short range, poor turn radius, and limited payload capacity. Employed for a few years by SAC as an interceptor and TAC as a fighter bomber, F-104 production stopped in 1959 and it was withdrawn from front-line service in 1960.

The updated F-104G featured much improved avionics and better low-level strike capabilities, and it attracted customers in Europe and Asia as well as Canada. While only 296 Starfighters had been built for the USAF, an additional 2,282 upgraded F-104s were built for US allies and they served into the mid-1990s. At left, an F-104 of the Japan Air Self Defense Force (JASDF).



7 Feb 1994 The **first Titan IV/Centaur rocket** boosted the **first Military Strategic and Tactical Relay (MILSTAR) satellite** into geostationary orbit. This system would provide the U.S. military secure, survivable communications through all levels of conflict.

8 Feb 1962 **USMACV Formed.** The US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) was established on 8 February as a subordinate unified command under control of CINCPAC. The command was regarded as only a temporary headquarters that would be withdrawn once the Viet Cong insurgency was brought under control.

7-8 Feb 2008 **PACAF conducts China snow relief.** China was hit by the fiercest winter in half a century during Jan-Feb 2008 timeframe. When China accepted the offer of U.S. humanitarian aid, USPACOM ordered PACAF to provide it. One C-17 (15 AW) delivered 29 STONS of HDRs to Chinese officials at Shanghai’s Pudong Airport on 7 Feb. Another C-17 (3 WG) delivered 50 STONS of MRE’s to Pudong the next day.

8 Feb 1938 **Hickam Field’s first bombardment unit**, the 31st Bombardment Squadron (Heavy) arrived from Hamilton Field, California. The 31st Bomb Squadron emblem (right) was a distinctive skull and cross-bones proper on a black triangle – still used by the 31st Test and Evaluation Squadron at Edwards AFB, CA. Four members of the unit were killed in action on 7 December 1941, nine members were wounded, and all of the unit's B-18 Bolo bombers were damaged





**U.S. AIR FORCE**

## **This Month in USAF and PACAF History** **February**



or destroyed. Re-equipped with B-17s, the squadron was assigned various maritime bombing and surveillance missions in the South Pacific.

8 Feb 1953 The American Medical Association recognized **Aviation Medicine as a medical specialty**, the first specialty to evolve from military practice and research.

8 Feb 2006 **The first of eight C-17 Globemaster IIIs arrived at Hickam AFB**, greeted by a host of senior officials and a cheering crowd at Base Operations. Hawaii Governor Linda Lingle christened the new C-17 the "Spirit of Hawaii - Ke Aloha." These aircraft were assigned to the 15th Airlift Wing and the maintainers were a composite of active duty and Hawaii Air National Guard.



8-23 Feb 1962 **HA/DR Support to Philippines following the Mindano Flood.** In early February, torrential rains in Mindanao, the southernmost of the major Philippine islands, produced flooding. High water cut roads, isolating cities and towns from adequate food supplies. The Philippine government in Manila contacted USAF at Clark AB for an airlift to Mindanao of food from warehouses in Luzon. The Pacific Air Forces assigned the relief operation to the 315th Air Div, which employed C-124 (two), C-130 (two), C-123 (one), and H-19 (two) to move 39 tons of rice, sugar, medicine, medical personnel, and equipment, including two H-19 helicopters.

9 Feb – 9 Mar 1965 **Dependent Evaluation from Republic of Vietnam.** As military involvement in the Republic of Vietnam escalated, attacks on U.S. military installations increased. In early February 1965, a Viet Cong raid on Pleiku left more than 100 U.S. casualties, prompting President Johnson to order a rapid air evacuation of U.S. dependents, primarily wives and children of personnel of the State and Defense Departments. Although USEMB Saigon and USMACV employed civilian aircraft contracted from Pan MAmerican, American and IUnited Airlines, contract carriers could not evacuate dependents quickly enough. Air Force C-130s from the MATS serving the 315th Air Div, and C-54s from the 2d Air Div carried over 300 of 1,600 U.S. dependents evacuated from South Vietnam between February 9 and March 9, 1965.

10 Feb 1908 The Wright Brothers and Capt Charles S. Wallace of the Signal Corps signed the **first government contract for a flying machine**. The price was \$25,000—more than half a million in today's dollars.

10 Feb 1939 The **prototype for the B-25 Mitchell** bomber first flew. The B-25 (below) is the only model of U.S. military aircraft named for a person and was the type used by the Doolittle Tokyo raid on 18 April 1942. Designed for level bombing from medium altitudes, it was used extensively in the





U.S. AIR FORCE

## This Month in USAF and PACAF History February



Pacific by Lt Gen George Kenney’s 5th Air Force. Field-modified with extensive forward firepower by Major Paul I. "Pappy" Gunn, the B-25s were used for treetop-level attacks on Japanese airfields with parachute-retarded bombs as well as for strafing and skip-bombing against enemy shipping.

10 Feb 1952 **Medal of Honor.** Leading a flight of three F-86 Sabre jets on a combat air patrol mission near the Manchurian border, Maj George A. Davis, Jr., engaged 12 enemy MiG-15 jet fighters in aerial combat. After shooting down two enemy aircraft and completely disrupting the enemy formation, Major Davis himself was shot down and killed. For engaging superior forces and shooting down enemy aircraft, he earned the Medal of Honor.



10 Feb 1992 **Operation PROVIDE HOPE** began the delivery of food and medical supplies to the former Soviet Union. In the first two phases of the operation, more than 27,000 tons of food and medical supplies were distributed to cities throughout the former Soviet Union. Phases III and IV saw distribution increasingly handed over to private organizations until the operation's successful conclusion in September 1994. At left, a USAF C-17 taxis for departure during Operation PROVIDE HOPE.

10 Feb 1994 Lt Jean Marie (Jeannie) Flynn (below, left) completed F-15 Eagle training to become the **first female fighter pilot in the U.S. Air Force.** Lt Flynn’s call sign was “Tally,” as in “Tally-ho.” On 1 June 2012, Colonel Jeannie (Flynn) Leavitt (below, right) became the Air Force’s first female fighter wing commander when she assumed command of the 4th Fighter Wing at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, North Carolina. (F-15 photo – below, center.)





## This Month in USAF and PACAF History February



**U.S. AIR FORCE**

11 Feb 2015 A resurrected B-52 Stratofortress bomber flew from the “Boneyard” to Barksdale AFB, Louisiana. This was the first time the U.S. Air Force refurbished and returned to duty a B-52 Stratofortress bomber from the Boneyard, aka the 309th Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Group (AMARG) at



Davis-Monthan Air Force Base in Arizona. The B-52, called "Ghost Rider," is a strategic long-range bomber that had been held since its decommission in 2008. The dry desert climate helps preserve thousands of aircraft stored at the AMARG. While some of the aircraft are used for spare parts, the Ghost Rider was the **first B-52 to be returned to duty from the Boneyard.**

12 Feb 1973 **Operation HOMECOMING.** MAC flew the first of 590 released American POWs from Hanoi, North Vietnam, to Clark Air Base in the Philippines, and then on to various military hospitals in the United States. Altogether, MAC used 118 C-9A and C-141 missions to support the operation and earned the **MacKay Trophy.**



13 Feb 1917 Captain John F. Curry of the Army Air Service arrived in Honolulu to command the **first aviation unit established in Hawaii**—the 6th Aero Squadron — organized for the aerial coast defense of Oahu. The squadron was first stationed at Fort Kamehameha, and then moved to Ford Island. The unit was eventually equipped with Curtiss N-9 seaplanes.



13-16 Feb 1951 **Combat airlift.** The 315th Air Division (Combat Cargo) used more than 100 airlift aircraft to air-drop supplies (photo at left) to the 23rd Regimental Combat Team and a French battalion in central Korea at **Chipyong-ni**. Flying through heavy ground fire, C-119 Flying Boxcars delivered 400 tons of ammunition. H-5 helicopter pilots from the 3rd Air Rescue Squadron flew through a blinding snowstorm



**U.S. AIR FORCE**

## **This Month in USAF and PACAF History February**



and 40-knot winds to deliver blood plasma and medical supplies. They also evacuated 52 wounded men.

The fighting around the village of Chipyeong-ni followed the United Nations withdrawal from North Korea after the Chinese intervention in 1950. Chipyeong-ni was the key to stabilizing the Eighth Army's front against the Chinese offensive. The siege of this village was one of the most bitterly contested engagements of the Korean War. The Army's 23rd Regimental Combat Team inflicted tremendous casualties on elements of five Chinese infantry divisions. This battle was the **first operational defeat of Communist Chinese forces in the Korean War**.

13-17 Feb 1968 **Tet Offensive – Airlift Response**. After the Commander of U.S. Forces in Vietnam asked for more troops to check the Tet Offensive, the Military Airlift Command (MAC) airlifted 10,500 troops and equipment of the 82nd Airborne Division and a regimental landing team of the 5th Marine Division to Vietnam. During this operation, Air Force Reserve airlift units assigned to the Continental Air Command flew sorties in the United States to assist MAC.

15 Feb – 14 Mar 1974 **Bulk Fuel Delivery to Australia**. In early February, heavy rain descended on central Australia, flooding highways and railroads that linked Alice Springs with other parts of the country. The Australian government asked the U.S. for an emergency airlift of an aerial bulk fuel delivery system. A 63d Mil Alft Wg C-141 Starlifter carried the fuel delivery system from MacDill AFB halfway around the world to Australia. Between February 15 and March 14, the C-141 crew transported 76,369 gallons of fuel in 10 missions from a Royal Australian Air Force airfield at Edinburg to a airfield at Alice Springs.

15 Feb 1942 – 12 Sep 1945. **Japan occupies Singapore**. To capture natural resources vital to its war efforts, Japan attacked and defeated British forces defending Singapore and occupied the country. **Winston Churchill** called the loss “**the worst disaster and largest capitulation in British history**.” The so-called **Sook Ching Massacre** by the Japanese occupying forces claimed 25,000-50,000 ethnic Chinese lives in Singapore and Malaya. Japan renamed Singapore “Syonan” (Light of the South).

16 Feb 1945 **Army Air Forces C-47s dropped 2,065 paratroopers** on the Japanese-held island of Corregidor in Manila Bay in conjunction with a U.S. amphibious landing on the island. The goal was to secure the harbor of Manila, the capital city of the Philippines.

17 Feb 1912 The Army published its **first physical examination requirements for pilots**. These standards included normal vision, normal hearing and ability to visually determine distances. Candidates were disqualified for respiratory, circulatory or nervous system diseases, color blindness, or for any serious middle or inner ear problems.

17 Feb – 16 Mar 1979 **Third Indochina war (China and Vietnam)**. The Third Indochina War was a brief conflict between China and Vietnam, lasting less than four weeks – from 17 February to 16 March 1979. The background to this conflict was Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia in



**U.S. AIR FORCE**

## **This Month in USAF and PACAF History February**



1978. Vietnam invaded Cambodia to end Cambodian raids into Vietnamese territory, as well as to end the genocidal reign of the Khmer Rouge. At this point in time, China and the Soviet Union had already split. The Soviet Union had become the key ally to Vietnam, while China was supporting Cambodia. In February 1979 China mounted an invasion of northern Vietnam, with some 200,000 to 400,000 PLA troops. After driving to within sight of Hanoi, on 6 March 1979 China claimed the “gate to Hanoi was open” and that the goals of its punitive mission had been achieved. China then withdrew back to its side of the border.

17 Feb 1997 The **Air Force Reserve became a major command**—the Air Force Reserve Command—reflecting the growing integration of Reserve and active forces and the increasing role of the Reserve in USAF operations.



18 Feb 1918 Pilots from the “**Lafayette Escadrille**” transferred to U.S. forces as part of the 103rd Pursuit Squadron. The 103rd began combat operations on the front still under the tactical control of the French. The Lafayette Escadrille, now disbanded, had been a French unit of American volunteers who joined the fight before the U.S. entered World War I.

18 Feb 1938 **Jacqueline “Jackie” Cochran** received the General William Mitchell Memorial Plaque for her achievements in aeronautics, based on her speed records. In 1937, Cochran set a



national air speed record from New York to Miami in 4 hours, 12 minutes, 27 seconds, and she achieved a new women's national speed record at 204 miles per hour.

Cochran led the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs) during World War II and was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal. After the war, Cochran was the first woman to break the sound barrier and held various aviation positions including consultant to NASA. At the time of her death in 1980, Jackie Cochran held more speed, altitude and distance records than any other male or female pilot in aviation history.



18 Feb 1965 **USAF jets flew their first missions without Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF)** crewmembers in an attack against enemy targets in South Vietnam. The USAF flew B-57 Canberras and F-100 Super Sabres against the Viet Cong near An Khe.

18 Feb 1972 **PACAF assigned its first C-9A aeromedical aircraft** to the 20th Operations Squadron at Clark Air Base in the Philippines. The C-9 “Nightingales” replaced C-118 “Liftmasters.”





U.S. AIR FORCE

## This Month in USAF and PACAF History February



18 Feb – 1 Apr 2000 USAF personnel and cargo aircraft participated in **Operations ATLAS RESPONSE** and **SILENT PROMISE**, airlifting humanitarian relief supplies to Mozambique and South Africa following severe flooding in those nations. In the photo at right, a U.S. Air Force MC-130P “Combat Shadow” aircraft performs reconnaissance of damaged roads in central Mozambique during March of 2000.

19 Feb 1945 After six months of **Operation Scavenger** bomber raids based and three days of naval bombardment, **Iwo Jima was invaded** by the Marines’ 5th Amphibious Corps. On 26 March, organized Japanese resistance ended. (photo at right).

Iwo Jima was strategically important to the Japanese. It provided warning of U.S. bomber raids, served as an airbase for their interceptors, and provided a haven for their naval units. Its capture provided a staging area for a potential U.S. invasion of the Japanese mainland, a diversion base for U.S. bomber raids and a forward base for P-51s to escort the bomber raids.



20 Feb 1934 **The Army Air Corps** made its first airmail flight



as it **took over all U.S airmail operations**. President Franklin Roosevelt had issued Executive Order 6591 on the 9th of February canceling existing airmail contracts because of fraud and collusion. The Air Corps flew the nation’s airmail until July, 1934. Four B-7s were lost with their pilots during the 1934 Airmail

Emergency. (B-7 photo at left.)

20 Feb 1944 **BIG WEEK**. Through 25 February, Eighth and Fifteenth Air Forces attacked German aircraft production. The planners wanted to lure the Luftwaffe into a decisive battle, achieve air superiority and then proceed with the invasion of Europe. Although damage to the German aircraft industry was only moderate, the new P-51 escorts (right) decimated German fighter pilot ranks, lowered U.S. bomber losses from 30 to six percent and won air superiority over Europe for the rest of the war.





**U.S. AIR FORCE**

## **This Month in USAF and PACAF History February**



20 Feb 2003 The 65th Airlift Squadron at Hickam AFB, Hawaii achieved the **initial operational capability of its new C-40B Special Mission Aircraft**. The C-40B/C transports U.S. leaders to locations around the world and performs other operational support missions. The C-40 B/C is a modified Boeing 737-700 with winglets.



21-28 Feb 1972 **President Richard Nixon visits People's Republic of China**. President and Mrs. Nixon, SECSTATE Henry Kissinger and other American officials made a historic visit to China, aimed at ending 20 years of frosty relations between China and the United States. Nixon and Kissinger met with **Chairman Mao Zedong** in an unscheduled, hour-long meeting that involved a "serious and frank discussion." Nixon called the visit "**The week that changed the world.**" For eight days and nights, American television audiences tuned in to a spectacular parade of images from China, the first they had seen in more than twenty years.

21 Feb 2001 An **RQ-1 Predator** fired a **Hellfire missile to hit a tank** at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada, becoming the **first unmanned aerial vehicle to destroy a ground target**.

22 Feb 1967 **First paratroop drop of the Vietnam War**. Over 700 Army paratroopers were dropped by some 26 PACAF C-130s into South Vietnam during **Operation JUNCTION CITY**. The C-130s were from USAF Troop Carrier Wings: the 374th (Okinawa), 314th (Taiwan) and 463rd (Philippines). The paratroopers were followed by drops of heavy equipment and supplies.

22 Feb 1973 **CEASE FIRE IN LAOS**. After the South Vietnam cease-fire of 27 January, the U.S. redirected most of its air operations against enemy forces in Laos. Besides 4,482 attack sorties flown by the Royal Lao Air Force, the USAF flew fifty B-52 ARC LIGHT sorties and 4,000 tactical sorties in January. After the 22 February cease-fire in Laos, the Laotians requested three B-52 strikes on 23 February in response to North Vietnamese violations. B-52s flew 41 more sorties during 15-17 April. These were the final B-52 strikes against targets in Laos.



22 Feb 1978 The first test satellite in the USAF's Navstar **Global Positioning System (GPS)** was launched into orbit. The GPS constellation of satellites provides extremely accurate 3-D location information, velocity and precise time to an unlimited number of users and areas.



U.S. AIR FORCE

## This Month in USAF and PACAF History February



23 Feb 1998 **B-2 bombers deployed overseas for the first time**, flying from Whiteman AFB, Missouri to Andersen AFB, Guam. This strategic show of force enhanced PACAF's assets in the theater. The B-2's stealth and extensive range make it an invaluable asset capable of rapid, global precision strike with both nuclear and conventional weapons. (B-2 photo below.)



24 Feb 1967 **Medals of Honor.** Flying an unarmed and unarmored O-1 Bird Dog aircraft near Di Linh, South Vietnam, forward air controller Capt. Hilliard A. Wilbanks, USAF, attacked a large body of Vietcong who had ambushed a smaller force of South Vietnamese rangers. Repeatedly flying over the enemy force, Captain Wilbanks used smoke rockets and an M-16 rifle to slow the enemy advance until U.S. fighters could arrive to protect the rangers. Wilbanks was shot down and died during his evacuation.

Two years later, on 24 Feb 1969, an enemy mortar shell struck an AC-47 gunship on a night mission in South Vietnam. A1C John L. Levitow, the loadmaster, was seriously wounded and stunned. Despite his injuries, Airman Levitow flung himself on a smoking magnesium flare that was rolling in the cargo compartment, dragged it to an open cargo door, and threw it out of the aircraft. Almost immediately the flare ignited. For this selfless heroism, Levitow became the fourth enlisted airman to receive the Medal of Honor.



24 Feb 1991 **DESERT STORM Ground Offensive.** After 39 days and nights of air strikes had severely weakened Iraqi forces, the US-led coalition launched its ground offensive. C-130s had already airlifted elements of the Army XVIII Airborne Corps from eastern Saudi Arabia to the Iraqi border. Flying more than 300 sorties a day in 10-minute intervals, the C-130s delivered 13,843 troops and 9,396 tons of cargo. Within 100 hours, coalition ground forces and air attacks overwhelmed the Iraqi troops. During 24-28 February, the Air Force flew 3,000 reconnaissance, close air support, and interdiction sorties in the air-ground battle.

Operation DESERT STORM ended on 28 Feb 1991 at 0800 hours with a coalition-declared cease-fire. During the war, coalition forces released approximately 16,000 precision-guided munitions against Iraqi forces and dropped some 210,000 unguided bombs. In 42 days of around-the-clock operations, USAF aircraft flew 59 percent of the nearly 110,000 combat sorties. U.S. aerial strength of approximately 1,990 aircraft comprised 75 percent of the total coalition air power. Extensive use of satellite technology led some USAF leaders to label DESERT STORM as the **"first space war."**



U.S. AIR FORCE

## This Month in USAF and PACAF History February



26 Feb 1945 **Lt Gen Millard F. Harmon**, Commander of Army Air Forces, Pacific Ocean Areas, **disappeared on a B-24 flight** from the Marshall Islands to Hawaii. Despite an intensive search, no trace of the plane was ever found. Brig Gen James R. Andersen, Harmon's Chief of Staff, was also on the flight. Andersen AFB is named in his honor.



26 Feb 1974 **The A-10 first fired its GAU-8/A "Avenger" gun system** during an inflight test at Edwards AFB, CA. The GAU-8/A is a seven-barrel, 30-millimeter cannon designed for use against hard targets such as armor and bunkers. The complete system is 20 feet long and weighs 4,000 pounds. It is mounted in the A-10's nose slightly left of center (displacing the nose gear to the pilot's right) so that each cannon barrel fires when it rotates under the aircraft centerline.

28 Feb 1959 As part of the CORONA reconnaissance program, the Air Force launched **Discoverer I – the first polar orbiting satellite**. Polar orbits pass over, or close to, both poles of the Earth, allowing a satellite to observe all points on the Earth during a 12-hour period. Discoverer I was a prototype satellite without a camera.

28 Feb 1994 **Operation DENY FLIGHT**. Two U.S. Air Force F-16s, flying a NATO mission, shot down four Serbian J-21 Jastreb-Galeb attack aircraft after the Serbs dropped bombs on targets in Bosnia. In accordance with the rules of engagement, the F-16s had ordered the Serbian aircraft to "land or exit the No-Fly Zone or be engaged." The Serbian aircraft ignored the orders, dropped their bombs, and were shot down by the F-16s. This was the **first combat action in NATO history**. (Photo at right is a J-21 Jastreb of the Armed Forces of Bosnia-Herzegovina.)



28 Feb 1998 **The RQ-4 Global Hawk first flew**. This new unmanned aerial vehicle, designed for high-altitude, long-range, long-endurance reconnaissance missions, took off from Edwards AFB, California, on a 56-minute flight. With a wingspan of 116 feet, the RQ-4 was built to fly at an altitude of up to 65,000 feet and photograph an area the size of Kentucky in 24 hours. (RQ-4 photo at left.)