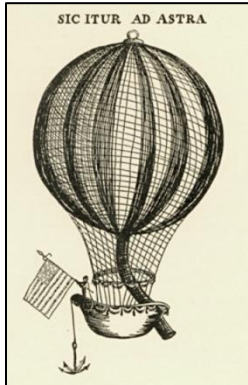




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9 Jan 1793 Jean Pierre Blanchard, a French inventor and pioneer in balloon flight, made the **first manned balloon flight in America** with a 46-minute trip from Philadelphia to Debtford Township, N.J. President George Washington was on hand to witness the launch along with future Presidents John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and James Monroe. Since Blanchard did not speak English, Washington gave him an open introduction letter for use wherever he happened to land. The letter has been called the first airmail delivery and the first flight clearance in the United States of America. Blanchard's only passenger was a small black dog. The image at left is from the frontispiece to Blanchard's *Journal of my Forty-Fifth Ascension, Being the First Performed in America*.

Blanchard was already the first person to balloon across the English Channel. He flew under the adopted motto *sic itur ad astra*, meaning "thus one goes to the stars."

5 Jan 1916 The 1st Company, 2nd Aero Squadron, sailed from San Francisco, California for the Philippines. It was the **first Aero unit to serve outside the US**.

9 Jan 1917 **New Air Commanders.** Capt Henry H. Arnold was ordered from Aviation School duty at San Diego to Panama to organize and command the 7th Aero Squadron. Capt John F. Curry was ordered to Fort Kamehameha, Hawaii, to command the 6th Aero Squadron.

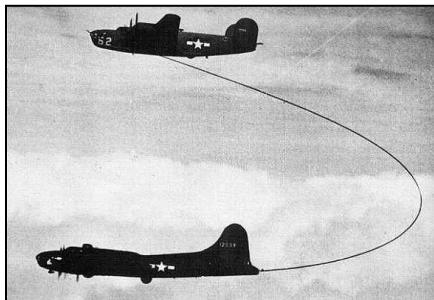
7 Jan 1931 **The MacArthur-Pratt Agreement.** General Douglas MacArthur (CSA, at left) and Admiral William Pratt (CNO, at right) agreed that: "The Naval Air Force will be based on



the fleet and move with it as an important element in solving the primary missions confronting the fleet. The Army Air Forces will be land-based and employed as an essential element to the Army in the performance of its mission to defend the coasts at home and in our overseas possessions, thus assuring the fleet absolute freedom of action without any responsibility for coast defense."



Pratt wanted the Navy to have maximum mobility and striking power, without being tethered to coastal defense. While in effect, this agreement gave **the Army primary responsibility for coastal defense**. Two years later, MacArthur defined the Army Air Corps mission "to conduct the land-based air operations in defense of the United States and its overseas possessions."



10 Jan 1942 The Army Air Forces Materiel Center started investigating **ways to use aerial refueling in the war against faraway Japan**. Planners wanted to launch B-17 bombers from Midway Island to attack Tokyo, refueling them with modified B-24 bombers (see photo at left of an inflight test of this tactic). Planners also considered using B-24s launched from Hawaii, with refueling by US Navy seaplanes.



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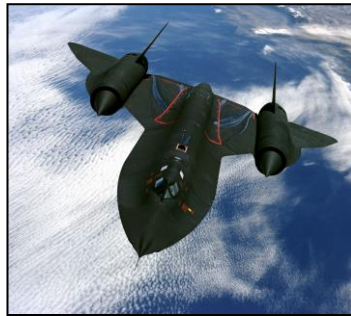
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A third option involved fuel-filled gliders, towed by B-17s, which would serve as tankers for the bombers. However, the Army Air Forces put greater efforts into establishing air bases in China and on islands in the Pacific, and developing aircraft with large internal fuel capacity, such as the B-29 Superfortress. No air refueling proposals were implemented until after World War II.

7 Jan 1966 The 4200th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing (SRW) at Beale AFB, California received the **first operational SR-71 Blackbird strategic reconnaissance aircraft**. SR-71 Blackbirds served in Strategic Air Command from 1966 through 1991. Of the 32 SR-71 aircraft in the inventory, twelve were destroyed in accidents, though none was lost to enemy action.

SR-71s first arrived at the 9th SRW's Operating Location at Kadena Air Base, Okinawa on 8 March 1968. On 21 March 1968, Major (later General) Jerome F. O'Malley and Major Edward D. Payne flew the first operational SR-71 sortie from Kadena. From 1968 until 1972, the Blackbird's sortie rate in reconnaissance missions over enemy territory (North Vietnam, Laos, etc.) gradually increased from one sortie a week to nearly one sortie every day. While deployed in Okinawa, the SR-71s and their aircrew members gained the nickname **Habu** because the Okinawans thought the plane resembled a dangerously venomous pit viper native to the island.



9 Jan 1976 The first operational F-15 Eagle arrived at the 1st Tactical Fighter Wing, Langley Air Force Base, Virginia. The F-15 was the **first fighter to have a thrust greater than its weight**, allowing it to accelerate while going straight up (left).

F-15s accounted for 32 of 36 USAF air-to-air victories in Operation DESERT STORM and also downed three Serbian MiG-29 fighters in Bosnia during Operation ALLIED FORCE. F-15s flew combat over Iraq in the 1990s and in Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM in the 2000s.



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11 Jan 1981 Boeing delivered the **first USAF air-launched cruise missiles (ALCMs)** to the 416th Bombardment Wing at Griffiss Air Force Base, New York. Capable of delivering a nuclear weapon to a target 1,500 miles away, the new missiles contained a terrain-contour-matching system that allowed extremely low-altitude flight to avoid detection by enemy radar. In the photo at right, a B-52 Stratofortress carries ALCMs on external pylons.



8 Jan 1986 Military Airlift Command accepted delivery of its **first C-5B Galaxy** (an improved version of the C-5A) at Altus Air Force Base, Oklahoma. The C-5B had stronger, redesigned wings, improved avionics, upgraded turbofan engines and more than 100 additional system modifications to improve reliability and maintainability.



9 Jan 1996 After three-and-a-half years, Operation PROVIDE PROMISE officially ended. During this international operation—**the longest sustained humanitarian airlift in history**—the U.S. Air Force flew more than 4,500 sorties to deliver 62,802 metric tons of cargo to Sarajevo and other parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina.