



U.S. AIR FORCE

## This Week in USAF and PACAF History 12 – 18 January 2015



18 Jan 1778 **Captain James Cook and the crew of HMS Endeavor became the first Europeans to sight the Hawaiian Islands.** Cook named them the Sandwich Islands after his



anmm.gov.au

patron, the Earl of Sandwich.

Also on this day in history, General George Washington and the Continental Army were at winter quarters in Valley Forge, PA. At left, a modern replica of Cook's ship. At right, replica huts at Valley Forge National Historic Park.



valley.forge.national-park.com

18 Jan 1911 Eugene Ely became the **first pilot to land on the deck of a ship**, bringing his aircraft to a stop on an ad hoc landing deck aboard the *USS Pennsylvania* in San Francisco harbor. Two months earlier, Ely had performed the first shipboard aircraft takeoff when he launched from the deck of the *USS Birmingham* at Hampton Roads, Virginia. Photos below from *history.navy.mil*.

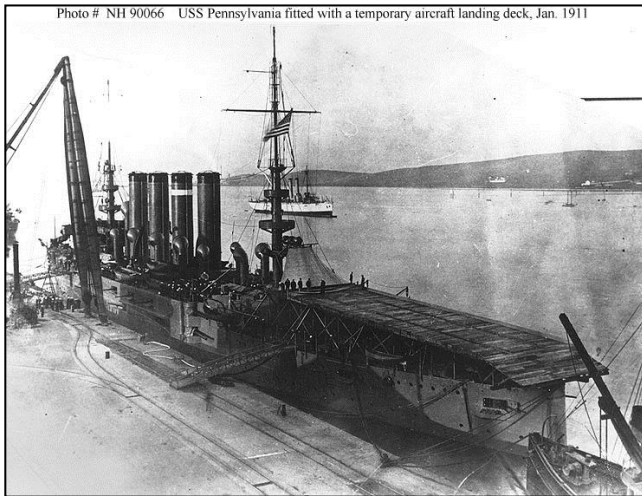


Photo # NH 90066 USS Pennsylvania fitted with a temporary aircraft landing deck, Jan. 1911



Photo # NH 82737 Eugene Ely about to land on USS Pennsylvania, 18 January 1911

15 Jan 1914 The Signal Corps Aviation School issued the **first Army aviation safety regulation**. It required pilots to wear helmets and leather coats for overland flights, and unsinkable coats for over-water flights.



12 Jan 1939 In response to the international situation, President Franklin D. Roosevelt (left) asked Congress for \$525 million in defense spending, with \$300 million earmarked for aircraft. Roosevelt recommended the **expansion of the Army Air Corps** to a force of 5,500 planes, 3,200 officers, and 45,000 men, stating:



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*“There must be a complete revision of our estimates for aircraft... our existing forces are so utterly inadequate that they must be immediately strengthened... Military aviation is increasing today at an unprecedented and alarming rate. Increased range, increased speed, increased capacity of airplanes abroad have changed our requirements for defensive aviation. The additional planes recommended will considerably strengthen the air defenses of the continental United States, Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the Canal Zone.”*



15 Jan 1942 **The Alaskan Air Force was activated** at Elmendorf Field, Alaska, replacing the “Air Force, Alaskan Defense Command” that had been established 17 October 1941. Less than a month later, the Alaskan AF was redesignated as the **Eleventh Air Force**.

13 Jan 1943 **The Thirteenth Air Force was activated** on New Caledonia Island.

Thirteenth Air Force began operations as an organization composed of many widely separated and independent units scattered throughout the Pacific. From 1943 to 1945, 13AF earned the nickname "**The Jungle Air Force**," staging out of jungle airstrips on more than forty islands. Initially defending against advancing enemy forces, 13AF later took the offensive and traveled northeast from the Solomons to the Admiralty Islands, New Guinea, Morotai and the Philippines. At right, Tontouta Airfield on New Caledonia in 1943. Image at right from *history.amedd.army.mil*.

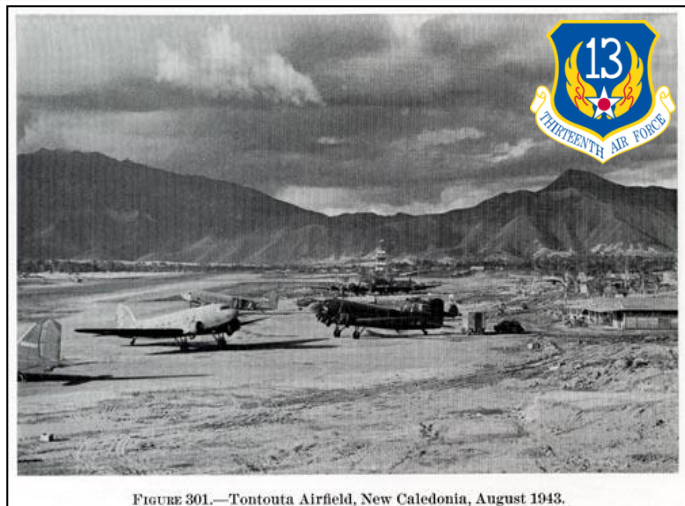


FIGURE 301.—Tontouta Airfield, New Caledonia, August 1943.

13 Jan 1951 The Far East Air Forces (FEAF) flew the **first effective TARZON mission**, destroying 58 feet of an enemy-held bridge at Kanggye, Korea. The Tall Boy Range and Azimuth Only (TARZON) bomb program combined the 12,000 pound British *Tall Boy* bomb



with radio controls in the bomber. The bombardier radioed flight corrections to the bomb based on visual sightings or on television sightings from a camera in the nose of the weapon.

The development of **radio-controlled smart bombs** had begun during World War II.



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13 Jan 1953 A dozen North Korean fighters shot down a USAF B-29 on a psychological warfare leaflet-drop mission over North Korea (*Stardust 40*). The **captured crew members were held longer than any other prisoners of war during the Korean War**. China did not release the crew until 4 Aug 1955.

17 Jan 1956 The DoD revealed the existence of **SAGE (semiautomatic ground environment)**, an automated, electronic air defense system. Its radar transmitted data rapidly via telephone lines to control centers, where large computers processed the information for fighter interceptors.

18 Jan 1961 **Operation CHROME DOME**. SAC announced continuous airborne alert missions for B-52 bombers with KC-135s handling the refueling. SAC first tested the airborne alert mission in 1958, and the program ended in 1968 after two alert bombers had crashed. SAC cited escalating costs and the emergence of the ICBM force as reasons for the termination.

13 Jan 1962 **PROJECT RANCH HAND**. The Ranch Hand test project began to determine if aircraft could destroy jungle foliage by spraying chemicals. The Tactical Air Command deployed six C-123 aircraft, modified with chemical tanks and spray bars, to Clark Air Base on 5 Dec 1961, and they began operations in Vietnam on 13 January 1962.



17 Jan 1991 **Operation DESERT STORM**, the liberation of Kuwait from Iraqi military occupation, opened with a massive barrage of air and cruise missile strikes against targets in Iraq and Kuwait. USAF special operations MH-53 helicopters initiated combat by leading an Army helicopter force that destroyed enemy radar sites. (At right, MH-53 Pave Lows flying over Iraq on their last combat missions, 27 Sep 2008, after nearly 40 years of service).





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During the first 14 hours of **DESERT STORM**, aircraft from a U.S.-led coalition flew more than 1,200 combat sorties. B-52G Stratofortress crews flew from Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, to launch 35 cruise missiles against targets in Iraq and returned home – the longest bombing mission in history. Constituting less than 2.5 percent of all coalition aircraft, the F-117A stealth fighter-bomber (left) successfully attacked over 31 percent of Iraqi strategic targets on the first day.



13 Jan 1993 Major Susan Helms, USAF (left), a member of the space shuttle *Endeavour* crew, became the **first U.S. military woman in space**. Major Helms was also the first woman to live on the International Space Station. [Lt. Gen. Helms](#) (right) retired in 2014 as the Commander of 14th Air Force at Vandenberg AFB, California.



16 Jan 1998 **Humanitarian airlift to China.** After a devastating earthquake hit China's Northern Hebei Province, a USAF C-17 left Kadena AB, Japan, for Beijing with 40 tons of relief supplies, consisting of blankets, sleeping bags, medical supplies, rations, and cold-weather clothing.



**C-17 Globemaster III**

16 Jan 2002 **War on Terror in the Philippines.** At the request of the Philippine government, the DoD deployed U.S. forces to train, advise, and assist Filipino troops in combating the indigenous Abu Sayyaf – designated a foreign terrorist group by the U.S. State Department. Through 30 September, AMC flew 78 missions to transport nearly 1,600 troops and more than 3,000 short tons of cargo to the Philippines.