



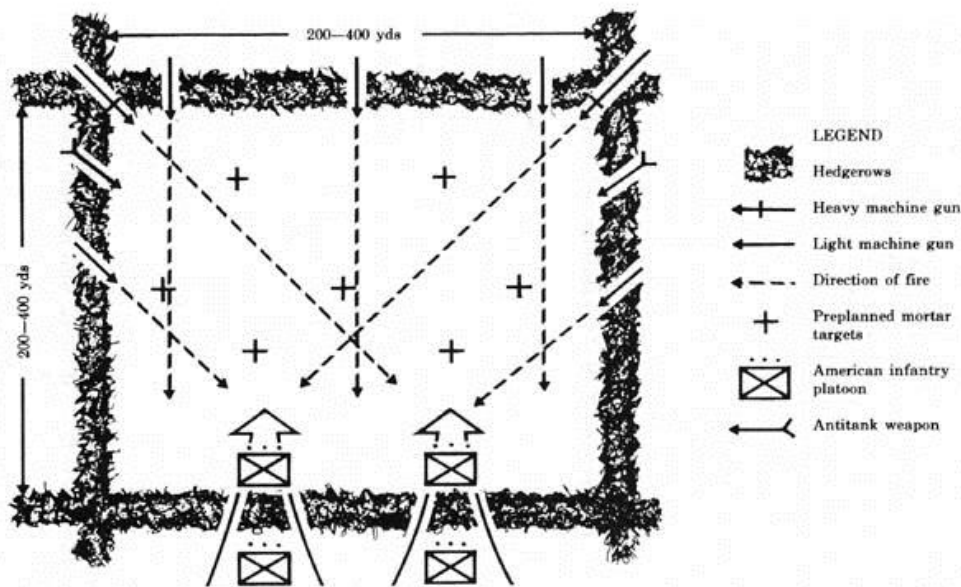
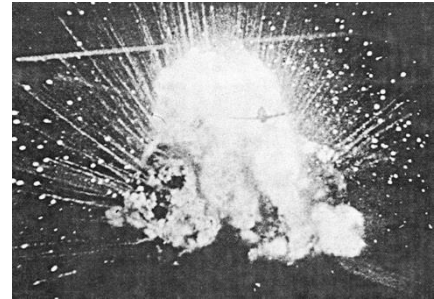
U.S. AIR FORCE

This Week in USAF and PACAF History 20 – 26 July 2015



24 July 1917 **Army Aviation Section expanded.** Following the U.S. declaration of war on Germany in April, Congress appropriated \$640 million for Army aviation and authorized the Aviation Section to grow to 9,989 officers and 87,083 enlisted men. No earlier appropriation had come close to this amount.

25 July 1944 In **Operation COBRA**, nearly 2,000 Eighth Air Force bombers conducted saturation bombing in northern France. Their objective was for Allied land forces to break through German hedgerow defenses (depicted below) that had stymied the Allied advance after D-Day. Unlike earlier “broad front” offensives, Operation COBRA and its heavy air support were concentrated on a narrow, four-mile front. Fighter-bombers and artillery hit the forward German defenses while General Spaatz's heavy bombers hit enemy defenders for more than a mile behind the lines. At right, an Allied fighter-bomber scores a direct hit on an enemy ammunition truck. This bombardment was an early example of “shock and awe,” and greatly weakened German resistance. Allied forces broke out of the Normandy hedgerow country and into fast-advancing maneuver warfare that overran German positions in northwest France.



Fratricide. Some 8AF bombers hit the wrong areas in bad weather, killing 100 U.S. troops and wounding 500 more. Lt. Gen. Lesley J. McNair, commander of the U.S. Army Ground Forces, was one of the fatalities. Fort McNair in Washington D.C. is named in his honor.

26 July 1947 President Harry S. Truman signed the **National Security Act**, which created a **Department of the Air Force** equal to the Army and Navy; a National Military Establishment under the Secretary of Defense; and an **Air National Guard** as a component of the Air Force.



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26 July 1954 Lt. General Hubert R. Harmon was appointed the **first Superintendent of the USAF Academy**. In 1943, Gen Harmon commanded the air forces of the South Pacific Area. After taking command of the 13th Air Force in January 1944, he commanded all the Allied air units in the Solomon Islands campaign.

23 July 1971 Hughes Aircraft Company was awarded a \$70 million contract to build 2,000 **AGM-65A Maverick** air-to-surface missiles for use on F-4E and A-7D aircraft.

The Maverick was developed due to the shortcomings of earlier missiles such as the AGM-12 Bullpup. These weapons had simple, radio-controlled guidance systems that required the launching aircraft to remain in direct line with the target – and exposed to enemy fire.

The AGM-65A was the first general purpose “fire-and-forget” tactical air-to-ground missile in service with the USAF. The Maverick’s “launch-and-leave” capability allowed a pilot to fire the weapon and immediately take evasive action or attack another target as the missile guided itself by optical, infrared or laser homing.



At left, an F-15E launches a Maverick.

21 July - 15 August 1972 **Operation SAKLOLO**. PACAF airlifted more than 2,000 tons of relief supplies for flood victims in the Philippines. C-130s, H-3 and H-43 helicopters moved more than 1,500 passengers, relief teams and evacuees. "Saklolo" is Tagalog for 'help' or 'aid.'

24 July 1990 **EC-135 Looking Glass flights ended** after nearly 30 years of continuous operation with over 250 million miles of accident-free flying. During the Cold War, the EC-135 Airborne Command Post (below) provided airborne nuclear command and control capability.



24 July 1994 **Operation SUPPORT HOPE**. USAF airlift aircraft started flying relief supplies to Rwandan refugees in Zaire in the wake of the Rwandan civil war. Through 11 September, AMC flew 700 airlift missions to transport over 11,000 passengers and 23,000 short tons. Nearly 400 KC-135 missions refueled the C-5s and C-141s, while KC-10s flew several dozen missions to ferry fuel from Harare, Zimbabwe, to Entebbe.



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26 July 2005 Col. Eileen M. Collins, USAF, flew as Mission Commander for STS-114 on Discovery, the **first “Return to Flight” mission after the Columbia disaster** on 1 Feb 2003.



(At left, Collins on Discovery during STS-114.)

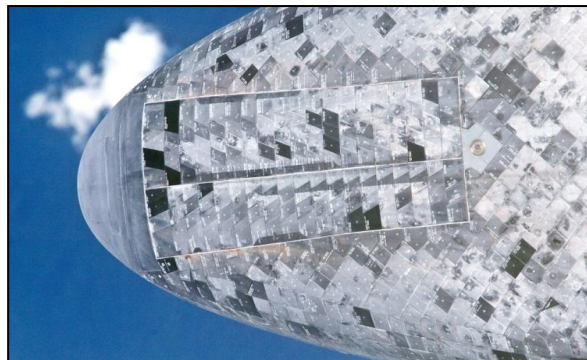
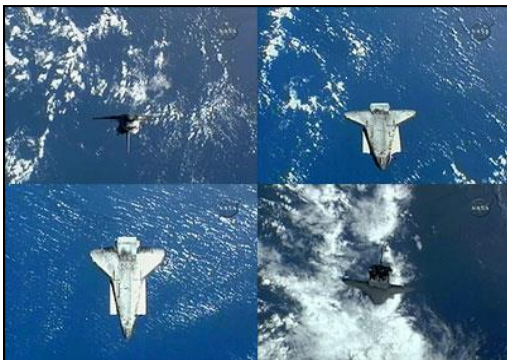
In 1995, Col. Collins had been the **first female pilot of a space shuttle**. On 23 July 1999, Col. Collins became the **first female Mission Commander of a space-shuttle mission**, commanding STS-93 on Columbia. The STS-93 mission deployed the Chandra X-Ray Observatory, designed to conduct comprehensive studies of the universe.

In the 2003 Columbia tragedy, the shuttle’s heat shield was damaged during liftoff by debris that broke off the external tank. The damaged heat shield did not protect Columbia during atmospheric reentry, and it broke apart.

Two and a half years were spent improving the safety of shuttle orbiters and external tanks. STS-114’s primary objectives were to test new safety procedures and to perform assembly and maintenance work on the International Space Station (ISS).

Before docking with the space station, Col. Collins performed the first R-bar pitch maneuver (RPM) in a space shuttle. Known as the “rendezvous pitch maneuver,” this became standard procedure for all shuttles docking with the ISS. During the RPM, the shuttle approached the ISS along the R-bar, or Earth Radius Vector – the imaginary line connecting the space station to the center of the Earth. At 600 feet from the ISS, Collins put the shuttle through a slow, 360-degree backflip so that the ISS crew could inspect and photograph the heat-resistant tiles forming the heat shield on the shuttle’s underside. If damage was found, the shuttle crew could conduct repairs or wait on the ISS for a rescue mission. The RPM required an outstanding pilot as the backflip was performed close to the ISS and the station was not always in full view.

The last space shuttle mission, STS-135 on Atlantis, returned to Earth on 21 July 2011.



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