



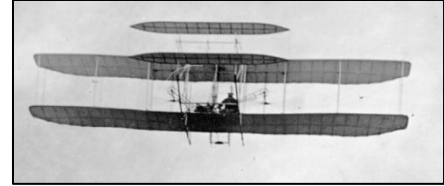
This Week in USAF and PACAF History

5 – 11 October 2015

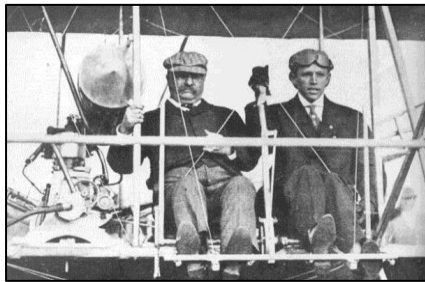


U.S. AIR FORCE

5 October 1905 **The first “practical” airplane.** Even after the **Wright brothers** created separate, independent controls of the three flight axes—pitch, roll and yaw—their Flyer still had marginal performance. After Orville was nearly killed in a crash, they rebuilt the Flyer with the forward elevator and rear rudder both enlarged and placed several feet farther away from the wings. On 29 September 1905, the new *Wright Flyer III* flew 14 circuits of their field near Dayton, Ohio, landing only when their one-gallon fuel tank was empty. On 5 October, with a new three-gallon tank, the Flyer III flew for more than half an hour and covered nearly 24 miles. Four days later, the Wright brothers wrote to the War Department, describing their new flying machine and offering it to the Army for purchase. Misunderstanding the offer as a request for research funds, the Board of Ordnance and Fortification turned them down. (Photo from wright-brothers.org.)



11 October 1910 Theodore Roosevelt became the **first President to fly**. Roosevelt, who left office in 1909, flew with Archibald Hoxsey in a Wright biplane while visiting an air meet in St. Louis, Missouri. Hoxsey had just completed a record flight from Springfield, Illinois. When



Hoxsey said he would like to have the former President as a passenger, Roosevelt accepted. After warning Roosevelt to hold on to a strut and a wire (photo at left), Hoxsey took off. As the crowd below watched in fear, the aircraft circled the field twice and made several short dives and climbs. After about four minutes of flight, Hoxsey landed the plane. A delighted Roosevelt said he wished they could have stayed in the air for an hour. Video of the event is at this [link](#).

On 30 December, 80 days after flying the former President, Archibald Hoxsey set a flight altitude record of 11,474 feet at Los Angeles, California. On the following day, Hoxsey died in a crash attempting to fly even higher.

10 October 1911 At College Park, Maryland, Lt. Thomas DeWitt Milling conducted **the first Army tests of a bombsight and bomb-dropping devices**. These devices had been invented by Riley E. Scott, who accompanied Milling in a Wright Flyer to conduct the tests.

5 October 1918 **The first sustained effort at aerial resupply** of a ground unit occurred during the Meuse-Argonne offensive of World War I. Planes from the 50th Aero Squadron located and dropped supplies to the famous “Lost Battalion” (elements of the U.S. Army’s 77th Division cut



off from the Allies and besieged by the Germans). The following day, 1Lt Harold E. Goettler (pilot, left) and 2Lt Erwin P. Bleckley (observer, right) were killed trying to drop supplies to the surrounded battalion. Goettler and Bleckley flew as low as possible over the Argonne Forest to deliver the supplies more precisely, and enemy ground fire brought them down. Both men received the **Medal of Honor**.





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9 October 1918 **Massed airpower.** During the Meuse-Argonne offensive, more than 250



bombers and 100 pursuit planes, dropped 32 tons of bombs in the cantonment district between La Waville and Damvillers. This was the greatest massing of military aircraft to date. At left, the De Havilland DH-4, the only type of US-built plane to see combat in Europe.

11 October 1933 The War Department approved the **Drum Report**, which recommended creation of a General Headquarters Air Force (GHQ AF) equipped with more than 1,000 aircraft that could be used in combat. The report also recommended that Air Corps aircraft not assigned to GHQ AF be used for garrison duty, Army observation, and training.

8 October 1940 **“First in the Air.”** The Royal Air Force (RAF) announced the formation of the first of the **Eagle Squadrons**, fighter units consisting of U.S. volunteers flying British Hurricanes and Spitfires. The name "Eagle Squadron" was taken from the uniform patch (right) designed to be worn on RAF uniforms.



The eagle was similar to the one on US passports. After Pearl Harbor, some Eagle Squadron members asked to go to the Pacific Theater to fight the Japanese, but their request was denied. On 29 Sep 1942, the three existing Eagle Squadrons transferred from the RAF to the USAAF and formed the U.S. 4th Fighter Group. At left, Eagle Squadron pilots scramble to their planes (NMUSAF photo).

8 October 1941 **Night Witches at War.** On this date, Russian leader Joseph Stalin ordered the creation of three women's flying units in the Soviet Air Force. All personnel were to be women, from the maintenance crews to the pilots and unit commanders. The three units were the 586 Regiment outfitted with Yak-series fighters, the 587 Regiment equipped with Pe-2 twin-engine bombers, and the 588 Regiment flying Po-2 night bombers. Of these three units, only the 588th remained an all-women regiment throughout the war.

The 588 Regiment bombed German forces from mid-1942 to the end of the war. The unit grew to 40 two-person crews, flew over 23,000 sorties and dropped some 3,000 tons of bombs. The regiment was the most highly decorated female unit in the Soviet Air Force, with each pilot flying over 800 missions and twenty-three members cited as a **Hero of the Soviet Union**. Thirty members died in combat. (Photo at right from *The Atlantic*.)





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The 588 Regiment flew in Polikarpov-2 wood and canvas biplanes (below) – a 1928 design built for flight training and crop-dusting. The Po-2 could carry only six bombs at a time, and each pilot flew multiple sorties per night. The women flew into combat without a parachute due to the Po-2's weight limitations and the slim chance of successful bailout at the low altitudes flown. Although the Po-2 was old and slow, German pilots found it hard to engage due to its exceptional maneuverability and the fact that its maximum speed was slower than the stall speed of the German fighters. (The same aircraft and tactics were used in North Korean "Bed-Check Charlie" attacks ten years later.)



A favorite maneuver of the Po-2 pilots was to idle the engine on bomb runs, gliding almost silently to the bomb release point. Searching for the incoming aircraft, Germans on the ground heard only the wind noise of the Po-2 airframe, a sound they likened to sweeping broomsticks. This sound led to the German nickname for the 588 Regiment, *Nachthexen* or "**Night Witches.**" (Po-2 photo above from *War History Online.*)

10 October 1950 The USAF activated **the first Air National Guard units to support the Korean War.** Eventually, the U.S. mobilized 66 flying units and 45,000 guardsmen.

11 October 1961 **PROJECT FARM GATE.** President Kennedy authorized the deployment of a "Jungle Jim" detachment from the 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron (later the 1st Air Commando Group) to South Vietnam. The deployment included nearly 160 airmen and eight T-28s, four SC-47s, and four RB-26s carrying Vietnamese Air Force markings. The unit arrived on 14 November and flew its first T-28 strike from Bien Hoa on 26 December. The aircraft were used until 1 April 1964.



11 October 1970 The USAF's **first undergraduate helicopter pilot student** entered training at Fort Wolters, Texas. The Army program was geared to train 225 Air Force pilots a year.

7 October 2001 **Operation ENDURING FREEDOM.** The U.S. initiated airstrikes against terrorist and Taliban targets in Afghanistan. The 509th Bomb Wing at Whiteman AFB launched six B-2 bombers that flew from Missouri across the Pacific to drop bombs on targets in Afghanistan and recover at Diego Garcia. One flight took 44 hours – the **longest combat mission in history.** The operation also involved B-1Bs, B-52Hs, F-15Es, KC-10 and KC-135 tankers, E-3 AWACS, EC-130s, AC-130 gunships, and MC-130 and MH-53 special operations aircraft. Naval involvement included F-14s, F/A-18s, and AV-8 aircraft from three carriers in the Indian Ocean. Lt. Gen. Charles F. Wald, USAF, served as Operation ENDURING FREEDOM's first Joint Force Air Component Commander.



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On the next day, two C-17s air-dropped some 35,000 humanitarian rations over Afghanistan. These were the **first C-17 airdrops in a combat zone**. The C-17s flew from Ramstein Air Base, Germany more than 6,500 miles in a 22-hour round trip and were air refueled multiple times. (At left, a C-17 lands at Bagram in 2004.)

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