

Commander's Call Topics



Dec. 6, 2012

"The environment inside our Air Force is changing. It's been changing for the last 25 to 30 years, but it hasn't changed enough and [it hasn't changed in all the right ways to ensure integration of all Airmen](#)," -- Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A. Welsh III as he met with more than 140 wing commanders from across the Air Force Nov. 28 at Joint Base Andrews, Md., to underscore, face-to-face, his expectations of them as leaders and to discuss Air Force issues.

► CURRENT ISSUES

[SecAF declares 'Modernization can't wait'](#)

The Air Force's senior civilian addressed the importance of modernization and the challenges ahead for the Air Force.

[AF competes in second 'Cyber Flag'](#)

24th Air Force, the U.S. Air Force's cyber component to U.S. Cyber Command, took part in the Cyber Flag 13-1 training exercise at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev. Oct. 29 - Nov. 8.

[OTS shortens course length, increases efficiency](#)

Beginning in January, the Air Force Officer Training School's Basic Officer Training course will be shortened by three weeks.

[Three Airmen win 'Best in Show' photography contest](#)

Defense Department leaders honored three Airmen Nov. 30, for their participation in the Arts in Embassies program.

► PERSONNEL ISSUES

[AF names PhD program participants](#)

Six Air Force company-grade officers have been selected for the Chief of Staff's prestigious PhD program, Air Force Personnel Center officials said.

[290-plus selected for academic, career broadening opportunities](#)

More than 290 officers have been selected for advanced academic degree and career broadening opportunities, Air Force Personnel Center officials announced today.

► FAMILY, HEALTH AND SAFETY

[Deployed father controls airspace over son in Afghanistan](#)

Maj. Christopher Gering worries like any other parent whose child deploys downrange.

► ENVIRONMENT, SPACE AND TECHNOLOGY

[AF receives space award](#)

Space and Missile Systems Center Commander Lt. Gen. Ellen Pawlikowski accepted the donation of the Dr. Robert H. Goddard Memorial Trophy from Dr. Bradford Parkinson on behalf of SMC and the GPS Directorate.

[Secrets of universe revealed thanks to AF research complex](#)

Looking skyward, scientists worldwide now know the universe's size, composition, approximate age and rate of expansion, thanks in part to "essential" data derived from a time-sensitive test conducted at the Arnold Engineering Development Complex's (AEDC) Mark 1 Aerospace Space Chamber.

► RESOURCES

AF.mil

<http://www.af.mil>

Airman magazine

<http://www.airmanonline.af.mil/>

Air Force Outreach

<http://www.afoutreach.af.mil/>

Military OneSource

<http://www.militaryonesource.com/>

Military HOMEFRONT

<http://www.militaryhomefront.dod.>

Air Force Personnel Center

<https://mypers.af.mil>

<http://www.afpc.af.mil>

Air Reserve Personnel Center

<http://www.arpc.afrc.af.mil/>

Department of Defense News

<http://www.defense.gov>

Department of Veterans Affairs

<http://www.va.gov>

TRICARE

<http://www.tricare.mil>

U.S. Government Website

<http://www.usa.gov/>

Employment Opportunities

www.usajobs.gov

www.nafjobs.org

Air Force Association Scholarships

<http://www.afa.org/aef/aid/scholars.asp>

Air Force Safety Center

www.afsec.af.mil

Day of “infamy” helped transform today’s Air Force

With a rather auspicious beginning as an auxiliary service of the Army during World War I, it would take a fateful event that took place 71 years ago on Dec. 7, one that President Franklin Roosevelt said would go on to “...live in infamy” to transform the Air Force to the service we see today.

After World War I, any thought of a cohesive separate military service would languish with dramatic budget cuts and drawdowns and a congressional belief that there was little to no threat of an attack from the air by the enemy. Named the Army Air Corps, the branch was relegated to aircraft procurement, base maintenance and normal supply and training missions.

The Great Depression imposed its financial limitations on the corps, just as it did every other aspect of life at the time. Yet, the evolution of military aeronautics could not be stymied, and the looming possibility of a second world war led to the training of military pilots.

With the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939 and the danger of war in the western Pacific, it was becoming increasingly more obvious that the U.S. was not as well prepared for war as it could be, and there were problems of defense in both oceans.

Throughout these difficult times, the U.S. maintained its peaceful stance, attempting to settle the Sino-Japanese conflict diplomatically, rather than through harsh embargoes that would most certainly incite Japan into an escalated military attack. Concurrent with Japan’s expansion efforts, the German armies were defeating France, Belgium and the Netherlands.

Until May 1940, the U.S. battle fleet was stationed on its West Coast. During the summer of that year, the fleet was instructed to take an “advanced” position at Pearl Harbor in the U.S. territory of Hawaii. And in the winter of 1940-41, the “moral embargo” that had been imposed by the U.S. on Japan in 1938-39 was declared ineffective. An all-out embargo of exports to Japan ceased shipments of many strategic commodities, petroleum products, machine tools, iron and other metals, and commodities important to a war effort.

As diplomatic efforts failed in Europe and Japan, and with the obvious approach of a second world war, the Army Air Corps began a large buildup of aircraft. At first, concentrating on acquiring bombers, the development of cargo and transport aircraft was placed at a low priority during the late 1930s and early 1940s. Adapting civilian aircraft to military needs—in keeping with a mission of peaceful diplomacy—provided a depth of knowledge of these aircraft that would allow for rapid modifications in time of war and jumpstart a military aircraft industry.

The “day that would live in infamy,” would prove to be the point in history marking the beginning of more modern wars, fought defensively and offensively, not only on land and on the sea, but in the air. Although it would be a few years until the National Security Act of 1947, this war would also provide, once and for all, a sound and demonstrable proof for an air force as a separate military entity: The United States Air Force.

(More about the “day of infamy” can be seen here:

<http://www.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123328776>.)

A First-hand Account of Arrogance, Denial, Surprise, and Terror, December 7, 1941

Only the memories of September 11, 2001 rival that fateful morning of Dec. 7, 1941, when America's world was shattered by an attack on our soil. On that memorable morning, Pvt. William Burke, an aircraft armorer assigned to the 72d Pursuit Squadron, gives a first-hand account of what Airmen witnessed when the Japanese first attacked:

My boss, Sgt. Forest Wills woke me up around 7 a.m. This was the one morning of the week I could sleep late and I wanted to stay in bed, but I did tell Wills that I would go to church with him.

Wills had become a good friend of mine and was concerned with my spiritual welfare, having observed that I was a worthless fellow given to drinking beer.

We ate breakfast in an unusually empty mess hall then, since we had time before church started, joined a group of men in the middle of the tent area to shoot the bull for a while.

We watched a flight of planes pass to the west of Wheeler heading towards Pearl Harbor. Someone said that it was the Navy, but then we were surprised as black puffs of anti-aircraft fire filled the sky.

Our surprise turned into terror when a Japanese aircraft from overhead began diving directly towards us.

The diving planes released their bombs from one end of the hangar line to the other. No one was in sight at first except weary guards who had maintained an all-night vigil against possible sabotage, but others quickly began arriving on the scene.

Officers and enlisted alike were battling fires, tending to the wounded and dying, dragging equipment and supplies from burning hangers, and pushing or towing undamaged aircraft toward dispersal bunkers. Even Gen. Davidson was in the midst of his Airmen pushing planes around.

We fled from the strafing attack on the flight line area, scattering in all directions. I fled toward a housing area thinking it was a safer place when a bomb struck the pavement behind me and killed several fleeing Airmen.

When I found a place to rest against a building wall, I looked back on the carnage and devastation. The dive bombers had dropped all their bombs and had regrouped and were methodically strafing planes lined-up by squadron, wingtip to wingtip, in precise rows. The thick black smoke from the exploding planes served as a screen for a row of P-36 planes on the west end of Wheeler's flight line.

After the firing ceased I went back to my tent, horrified to find dead bodies lying around. I picked-up my helmet as did others and we all had to stop and lace together the helmet linings of the old-fashioned World War I tin hats. That's how unprepared we were.

I was helping casualties when I heard the alarm that the Japanese were attacking again. I ran to the housing area again and got a clear view of the enemy planes firing their machine guns at aircraft on the ramp. I couldn't help from being impressed with their skill. They had been portrayed as little near-sighted men wearing glasses and this arrogance led to this debacle. The enemy was not to be considered lightly.

► THIS WEEK IN AIR FORCE HISTORY

Dec. 6, 2002 - The Air Force Flight Test Center at Edwards AFB had the X-45A unmanned combat air vehicle and a Global Hawk airborne on test missions at the same time. This marked the first time that two unmanned aircraft from two different programs were airborne simultaneously.

Dec. 7, 1941 - The Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and brought America into World War II. Two waves of Japanese fighters sank four U.S. battleships and damaged nine others. Overall, the surprise attack killed 2,390 personnel, including 193 Airmen at Hickam, Wheeler, and Bellows Fields. They also destroyed 64 Hawaiian Air Force planes. Six Army Air Force pilots shot down 10 enemy planes with 2nd Lt. George S. Welch garnering four kills.

Dec. 8, 1976 - The full-scale development version of the F-16A Fighting Falcon made its maiden flight at Fort Worth, Texas

Dec. 9, 2006 – TSgt. Eric M. Olson, a loadmaster from the 313th Airlift Squadron, helped his aircrew safely land a C-17 hit by enemy fire while leaving Baghdad International Airport. Olson executed his emergency checklists, tended to a wounded passenger, and calmly readied the other passengers for an emergency landing. For his actions, he received the Distinguished Flying Cross Jan. 11, 2005.

Dec. 10, 1965 - Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara announced the development of the FB-111, a strategic and tactical F-111 bomber to replace the retiring B-58s and B-52s.

Dec 11, 1986 - The F-15E dual-role fighter made its first flight at St. Louis.

Dec. 12, 1944 – Maj. Richard I. Bong, 49th Fighter Group, 9th Fighter Squadron, with 38 aerial victories, received the Medal of Honor from General MacArthur in ceremonies at Tacloban in the Philippines.

Dec. 13, 1958 - Gordo, a one-pound squirrel monkey, survived a flight to a height of 300 miles in a Jupiter missile nose cone. The nose cone returned and landed in the Atlantic Ocean some 1,700 miles southeast of the Cape Canaveral launching site; however, Gordo died before the nose cone could be recovered.

For more information on Air Force heritage, visit <http://www.airforcehistory.af.mil>.

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