



## This Week in USAF and PACAF History 31 December 2012 – 6 January 2013



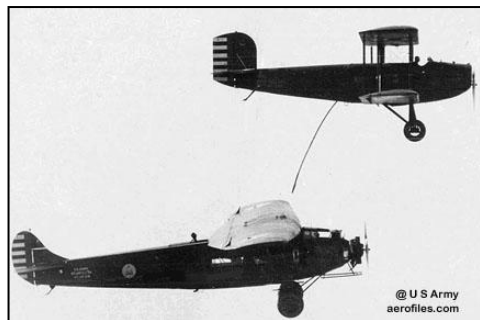
U.S. AIR FORCE

31 Dec 1910 The **first powered flight in Hawaii** took place as James “Bud” Mars (right) flew a Curtiss “Skylark” over Moanalua Polo Field. The P-18 biplane was built of spruce, ash, bamboo, steel tubing, and rubberized silk wings.



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**.

1-7 Jan 1929 **THE QUESTION MARK.** To test inflight refueling as well as crew and aircraft endurance, the *Question Mark*, a modified Fokker C2-3 with a Wright 220 HP engine, flew to a world duration record of 150 hours and 40 minutes.



Named for its unknown capacity to remain airborne, the *Question Mark* was refueled 43 times by two modified biplane tankers. It flew until engine problems forced a landing. The tankers passed 5,700 gallons of fuel plus oil, food, water, and other items (roughly 40 tons) to the *Question Mark*. All officers on the mission--Carl Spaatz, Ira Eaker, Harry Halverson, and Pete Quesada--became generals, as did two officers on the tankers: Ross G. Hoyt

and Joseph G. Hopkins. The crew of the *Question Mark* each received the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) for the mission. The refuelers received letters of commendation.

3 Jan 1933 **Roles and missions:** General Douglas MacArthur, Army Chief of Staff, sent a letter to the commanding generals of all armies, corps areas, and departments entitled "Employment of Army Aviation in Coast Defense." This letter was based on MacArthur's agreement two years earlier with Admiral Pratt, Chief of Naval Operations, giving the Army Air Corps responsibility for coastal defense. The letter stated that the Army air arm was "to conduct the land-based air operations in defense of the United States and its overseas possessions," and described this mission in operational phases both beyond and within the range of ground weapons, and in cooperation with land forces. With this mission in place, the Air Corps proceeded with plans to develop the necessary air forces, including long range bombers. Less than a year later, the Army Air Corps identified the requirement for a new heavy bomber, a requirement eventually filled by the B-17 (pictured at right).





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4 Jan 1944 **Operation CARPETBAGGER.** American and RAF planes dropped arms and supplies to French, Belgian, and Italian partisans for the first time. Most Carpetbagger flights were made by glossy black B-24 bombers with the nose guns removed to enhance visual navigation. Flying on moonlit nights at low level, the crews used rivers, lakes, railroad tracks, and towns as check points. Drops were also made using radio-navigation equipment.

The B-24s had their waist guns replaced with blackout curtains and the belly turret removed to create a drop opening for agents and supplies (see photo at right). Supplies were also released in containers designed to be dropped from the existing equipment in the bomb-bay. Pilots often flew several miles farther into enemy territory after completing their drops to disguise the actual drop location from enemy observers. Often operating in weather considered impossible for flying, the Carpetbaggers flew most of their missions to supply French partisan groups north of the Loire River in support of the upcoming D-Day invasion.



The Carpetbaggers have been generally recognized as **the ancestors of today's Air Force Special Operations.**

3 Jan 1945 **Battle of the Bulge:** American and British forces counter-attacked the Germans under the protection of American airpower. While interdiction of supply lines and close air support of ground troops played a role in the Allied success, the most important benefit of Allied air superiority was to destroy 1000 Luftwaffe aircraft and thus prevent them from supporting the German army in the same ways. German General von Mellenthin summed up his own feelings as well as those of Field Marshall von Rundstedt in stating:

*"The Ardennes battle drives home the lesson that a large-scale offensive by massed armour has no hope of success against an enemy who enjoys supreme command of the air."*

Generalleutnant Adolf Galland, commander of the Luftwaffe fighter arm, wrote:

*"The Luftwaffe received its death blow at the Ardennes offensive."*

The four Battle of the Bulge images and descriptions below are posted on the University of Missouri at Kansas City [website](#). They were provided courtesy of the Truman Presidential Museum and Library.



Left: B-17's bomb the Focke Wulf plant at Marienburg, Germany.

Right: Waist gunners take their positions in a B-17 Flying Fortress.





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Left: B-17's drop their bombs over Germany.  
Right: U.S. soldiers at an anti-aircraft artillery (AAA) battery watch aerial dogfights as they wait to fire on an incoming enemy strafers – Christmas Day, 1944.



Below, left: An A-26 Invader attack aircraft dropping bombs on the Siegfried Line (U.S. Air Force photo). Below right, a B-24 damaged by enemy AAA.



2 Jan 1953 **Cessna's T-37 design won the competition for the USAF's primary jet trainer** over 14 other entries. Side-by-side seating in the T-37 made it easier for the instructor to observe and communicate with the student. The T-37C, with provisions for armament and extra fuel, was built for export, and nearly 600 A-37 attack versions were produced. In all, nearly 1,300 T-37A, B and C models were built before production ended in the late 1970s. The aircraft officially retired from the active USAF inventory on 31 July 2009. See photo at right.



1 Jan 1967 **The USAF received 140 CV-2 Caribou aircraft from the US Army.** This was the first time that an entire aircraft inventory transferred between services. Redesignated as the C-7, the aircraft went to 7th Air Force, which assumed operational control of all fixed wing cargo aircraft in Vietnam.



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2 Jan 1967 **OPERATION BOLO.** F-4 Phantom pilots from the 8th Tactical Fighter Wing (TFW) shot down seven North Vietnamese MiG-21s in a sweep mission over the Red River valley to set a one-day aerial victory record. This MiG suppression operation was dubbed the



largest air battle of the war and the most dramatic use of tactical deception. In a successful ruse, the F-4C pilots simulated F-105 fighter-bombers to draw the MiGs out. The wing commander, Colonel Robin Olds, shot down a MiG and became the only USAF ace with aerial victories in World War II and the Vietnam War.

Above, an F-4C of the 8th TFW configured for the MiG combat air patrol (MiGCAP) escort role with Sparrow and Sidewinder air-to-air missiles and extra fuel tanks under the wings.



At left, Col. Olds is carried off the airfield after completing Operation Bolo. It was during Operation Bolo that Colonel Olds dubbed the 8th TFW the “Wolf Pack” because of its aggressive tactics and high degree of teamwork. At right, Robin Olds in a P-51 fighter in 1944 (photo from this [article](#) in *Air Force Magazine*).



1 Jan 1988 **SAC’s crew assignment policy changed** to permit mixed male/female crews in Minuteman and Peacekeeper launch facilities. One of the reasons for the end of segregated crews was to make missile-crew alert tour scheduling and substitutions more flexible.