



U.S. AIR FORCE

This Week in USAF and PACAF History 7 – 13 January 2013



9 Jan 1793 Jean Pierre Blanchard made the **first manned balloon flight in America** with a 46-minute trip from Philadelphia to Debtford Township, N.J. He carried landing clearance orders signed by President George Washington and one passenger – a small black dog.

9 Jan 1917 **New Air Commanders.** Capt Henry H. Arnold was ordered from Aviation School duty at San Diego to Panama to organize and command the 7th Aero Squadron. Capt John F. Curry was ordered to Fort Kamehameha, Hawaii, to command the 6th Aero Squadron.

7 Jan 1931 **The MacArthur-Pratt Agreement.** General Douglas MacArthur (CSA, at left) and Admiral William Pratt (CNO, at right) agreed that: “The Naval Air Force will be based on



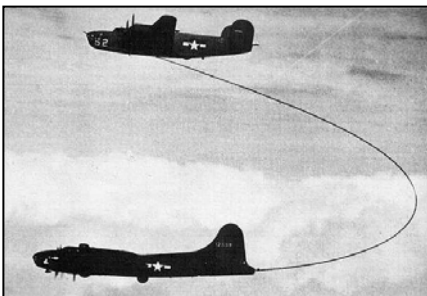
the fleet and move with it as an important element in solving the primary missions confronting the fleet. The Army Air Forces will be land-based and employed as an essential element to the Army in the performance of its mission to defend the coasts at home and in our overseas possessions, thus assuring the fleet absolute freedom of action without any responsibility for coast defense.”



Pratt wanted the Navy to have maximum mobility and striking power, without being tethered to coastal defense. While in effect, this agreement gave **the Army primary responsibility for coastal defense.** Two years later, MacArthur defined the Army Air Corps mission "to conduct the land-based air operations in defense of the United States and its overseas possessions."

12 Jan 1939 In response to the international situation, President Franklin D. Roosevelt 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:

“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.”



10 Jan 1942 The Army Air Forces Materiel Center started investigating **ways to use aerial refueling in the war against faraway Japan.** Planners wanted to launch B-17 bombers from Midway Island to attack Tokyo, refueling them with modified B-24 bombers (see photo at left of an inflight test of this tactic). Planners also considered using B-24s launched from Hawaii, with refueling by US Navy seaplanes.



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A third option involved fuel-filled gliders, towed by B-17s, which would serve as tankers for the bombers. However, the Army Air Forces put greater efforts into establishing air bases in China and on islands in the Pacific, and developing aircraft with large internal fuel capacity, such as the B-29 Superfortress. No air refueling proposals were implemented until after World War II.

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.

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 conflict**. China did not release the crew until 4 Aug 1955.

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.



7 Jan 1966 The 4200 SRW at Beale AFB received the **first operational SR-71 Blackbird strategic reconnaissance aircraft**. Strategic Air Command had SR-71 Blackbirds in service from 1966 through 1991. Of the 32 SR-71 aircraft in the inventory, 12 were destroyed in accidents, though none was lost to enemy action. SR-71s first arrived at the 9th SRW's Operating Location at Kadena Air Base, Okinawa on 8 March, 1968. On 21 March 1968, Major (later General) Jerome F. O'Malley and Major Edward D. Payne flew the first operational SR-71 sortie from Kadena. From 1968 until 1972, the Blackbird's sortie rate in reconnaissance missions over enemy territory (North Vietnam, Laos, etc.) gradually increased from one sortie a



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week to nearly one sortie every day. While deployed in Okinawa, the SR-71s and their aircrew members gained the nickname *Habu* because the Okinawans thought the plane resembled a dangerously venomous pit viper native to the island.



10 Jan 1975 **The first E-3A Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS)** aircraft rolled out. The premier command and control battle-management aircraft in the world, the E-3's jam-resistant radar and IFF systems provide a highly detailed picture of the battlespace.

9 Jan 1976 The first operational F-15 Eagle arrived at the 1st Tactical Fighter Wing, Langley Air Force Base, VA. The F-15 was the **first fighter to have a thrust greater than its weight**, allowing it to accelerate while going straight up (left).

11 Jan 1981 Boeing delivered the **first USAF air-launched cruise missiles (ALCMs)** to the 416th Bombardment Wing at Griffiss Air Force Base, New York. Capable of delivering a nuclear weapon to a target 1,500 miles away, the new missiles contained a terrain-contour-matching system that allowed extremely low-altitude flight to avoid detection by enemy radar. Below, a B-52 Stratofortress carrying ALCMs on external pylons.





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8 Jan 1986 Military Airlift Command accepted delivery of its **first C-5B Galaxy**, an improved version of the C-5A, at Altus Air Force Base, Oklahoma. The C-5B had stronger, redesigned wings, improved avionics, upgraded turbofan engines and more than 100 additional system modifications to improve reliability and maintainability.



13 Jan 1993 Major Susan Helms, USAF, 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 is currently the Commander, 14th Air Force (Air Forces Strategic), Air Force Space Command.

9 Jan 1996 After three-and-a-half years, Operation PROVIDE PROMISE officially ended. During this international operation—**the longest sustained humanitarian airlift in history**—the U.S. Air Force flew more than 4,500 sorties to deliver 62,802 metric tons of cargo to Sarajevo and other parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina.