



U.S. AIR FORCE

This Week in USAF and PACAF History 4 – 10 February 2013



10 Feb 1908 The Wright Brothers and Capt. Charles S. Wallace of the Signal Corps signed the **first government contract for a flying machine**. The price was \$25,000—more than half a million in today's dollars.

5 Feb 1918 Lieutenant Stephen W. Thompson scored the **first official American aerial victory**



Breguet bomber

(flying as an American and not as part of a foreign service). Thompson was filling in as an observer on a French Breguet bomber that day and shot down a German fighter over Saarbrücken. Because of Thompson's unique status on the mission, he was not granted credit for his victory during the war. With the assistance of the National Museum of the USAF, Thompson's victory was finally recognized in 1967.

8 Feb 1938 **The first bombardment unit based at Hickam**, the 31st Bombardment Squadron (Heavy) arrived from Hamilton Field, California and was assigned to the 5th Composite Group. The 31st Bomb Squadron emblem (at right) was the distinctive skull and cross-bones proper on a black triangle. Four members of the 31BS were killed in action on 7 December 1941, nine members were wounded, and all of



the squadron's B-18 Bolo bombers were either damaged or destroyed. Reequipped with B-17s, the squadron was assigned various maritime bombing and surveillance missions in the South Pacific. (B-18 photo at left).

10 Feb 1939 The **prototype for the B-25 Mitchell** bomber first flew. The B-25 (below) is the only U.S. military aircraft named for a person and was the type used by Lt. Col. James Doolittle for the Tokyo Raid on 18 April 1942. Designed for level bombing from medium altitudes, it was used extensively in the Pacific by Lt. Gen. George Kenney's 5th Air Force. Field-modified with extensive forward firepower by Major Paul I. "Pappy" Gunn, the B-25s were used for treetop-level attacks on Japanese airfields with parachute-retarded bombs as well as for strafing and skip-bombing against enemy shipping.



5 Feb 1942 **Redesignations**. The Hawaiian Air Force was redesignated as the 7th Air Force, the Far East Air Force (formerly the Philippine Dept. AF) was redesignated as the 5th Air Force, and the Alaskan Air Force was redesignated as the 11th Air Force.



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SPECIAL COMMEMORATION

3 February 1943 **The Four Chaplains**, also called the "Immortal Chaplains," were four U.S. Army chaplains who gave their lives to save others during the sinking of the U.S. Army troop ship *Dorchester* during World War II. Only about 230 of more than 900 persons aboard the ship were rescued. The water temperature was 34 °F, and hypothermia killed most men in the water.



ALEXANDER D. GOODE



GEORGE L. FOX



CLARK V. POLING



JOHN P. WASHINGTON

Photos from the *Four Chaplains Memorial Foundation* [website](#).

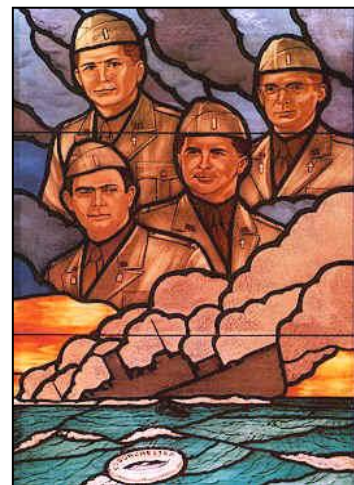
The four men were relatively new chaplains, all first lieutenants, who had met at the Army Chaplains School at Harvard University. They included Methodist minister the Reverend George L. Fox, Rabbi Alexander D. Goode, Roman Catholic priest the Reverend John P. Washington, and Reformed Church in America minister the Reverend Clark V. Poling. They were sailing on board the *Dorchester* to report to their new assignments in the European theater.

The *Dorchester* was torpedoed by a German U-boat off the coast of Newfoundland. The ship went dark and panic set in among many of the men, especially those trapped below decks. The chaplains devoted themselves to organizing an orderly evacuation of the ship, calming the men and helping them into lifeboats. As the end drew near, the chaplains gave their life jackets to men who had none, linked arms, prayed and sang hymns until they went down with the ship.

On 19 December 1944, all four chaplains were posthumously awarded the Purple Heart and the Distinguished Service Cross. In 1960, the U.S. Congress approved a special medal for the actions of the four chaplains intended to have the same weight and importance as the Medal of Honor. The Four Chaplains' Medal (left) was presented to their next of kin.



The four chaplains have been memorialized in many ways, including remembrance days, foundations, chapels, and a U.S. postage stamp. At right, one of many stained glass window commemorations; this window is in the A-Ring of the Pentagon.





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10 Feb 1952 **Medal of Honor.** Leading a flight of three F-86 Sabre jets on a combat air patrol mission near the Manchurian border, Maj. George A. Davis, Jr., engaged 12 enemy MiG-15 jet fighters in aerial combat. After shooting down two enemy aircraft and completely disrupting the enemy formation, Major Davis himself was shot down and killed. For engaging superior forces and shooting down enemy aircraft, he earned the Medal of Honor.

8 Feb 1953 The American Medical Association recognized **Aviation Medicine as a medical specialty**, the first specialty to evolve from military practice and research.

7 Feb 1954 **The Lockheed F-104 Starfighter first flew.** In December, 1951, Lockheed Chief Engineer Kelly Johnson was told by some USAF fighter pilots in Korea that they thought the MiG-15 was superior to the larger and more complex F-86. The pilots wanted a small, simple aircraft capable of high speeds and climb rates. In response, Lockheed put a single powerful engine into the lightest, most aerodynamically efficient airframe possible. Nicknamed “the missile with a man in it,” the F-104 could exceed speeds of Mach 2 and altitudes of 90,000 feet. However, the Starfighter had a short range, poor turn radius, and limited payload capacity. Employed for a few years by SAC as an interceptor and TAC as a fighter bomber, F-104 production stopped in 1959 and it was withdrawn from front-line service in 1960.

The updated F-104G featured much improved avionics and better low-level strike



capabilities, and it attracted customers in Europe and Asia as well as Canada. While only 296 Starfighters had been built for the USAF, an additional 2,282 upgraded F-104s were built for US allies and they served into the mid-1990s. (JASDEF F-104 at left.)

10 Feb 1954 **The Hawaii Air National Guard’s first group of F-86 Sabre Jets arrived** to replace their WWII-era P-47s. A large enthusiastic group of HIANG members were on hand to “de-cocoon” them of their waterproof protective coverings. One of the “new” F-86s was recognized by TSgt Simanu Afoa Jr., a Korean veteran, as F-86E No. 740, the jet flown by Major James Jabara, the world’s first jet ace. Four years later, the Hawaii Air National Guard traded its F-86E fighters for more modern radar-equipped F-86L all-weather interceptors. The initial shipment of F-86Ls arrived at Pearl Harbor on 5 February 1958. The new Sabres assumed air defense alert duty on 1 May.



8 Feb 1965 F-100 Super Sabres performed the **first retaliatory air strike in North Vietnam.** They flew cover for attacking South Vietnamese fighters, suppressing ground fire in the target area. (F-100 photo at left.)



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10 Feb 1992 **Operation PROVIDE HOPE** began the delivery of food and medical supplies to the former Soviet Union. In the first two phases of the operation, more than 27,000 tons of food and medical supplies were distributed to cities throughout the former Soviet Union. Phases III and IV saw distribution increasingly handed over to private organizations until the operation's successful conclusion in September 1994.

6 Feb 1991 Capt. Robert R. Swain, Jr., of the 706th Tactical Fighter Sqdn, Air Force Reserve, scored the **first A-10 Thunderbolt II air-to-air kill** by shooting down an Iraqi helicopter.

7 Feb 1994 The **first Titan IV/Centaur rocket** boosted the **first Military Strategic and Tactical Relay (MILSTAR) satellite** into geostationary orbit. This system would provide the U.S. military secure, survivable communications through all levels of conflict.

10 Feb 1994 Lt Jean Marie (Jeannie) Flynn (below, left) completed F-15 Eagle training to become the **first female fighter pilot in the U.S. Air Force**. Lt Flynn's call sign was "Tally," as in "Tally-ho." (See photo at left). On 1 June 2012, Colonel Jeannie (Flynn) Leavitt (below, right) became the Air Force's first female fighter wing commander when she assumed command of the 4th Fighter Wing at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, North Carolina. (F-15 photo – below, center.)



8 Feb 2006 **The first of eight C-17 Globemaster IIIs arrived at Hickam AFB**, greeted by a host of distinguished visitors and a cheering crowd in front of Base Operations. Hawaii Governor Linda Lingle christened the new C-17 the "Spirit of Hawaii - Ke Aloha." The aircraft were assigned to the 15th Airlift Wing. The maintainers were a composite of active duty and Hawaii Air National Guard.