



**This Week in USAF and PACAF History**  
**24 - 30 November 2008**



**U.S. AIR FORCE**

Late November or early December, 1913 **The first known aerial combat** occurred over Naco, Mexico between two pilots flying for opposing sides in the Mexican Revolution. About one dozen pistol shots were exchanged between Phil Rader, flying for General Victoriano Huerta, and Dean Ivan Lamb, flying for Venustiano Carranza. The exact date of this action is unknown.

25 Nov 1940 **First flight of the Martin B-26 Marauder.** The B-26 had superior speed and performance, but its small wing area made the B-26 a challenging plane to fly. The high wing loading caused several problems including the need for extra skill in takeoffs and unusually high landing speeds. It was not an aircraft for novices, but the Army Air Force needed many new pilots for the war. There were many training accidents, leading to unofficial nicknames such as "Widowmaker."



Martin B-26 Marauder

In early 1942, the B-26 became the first US medium bomber used in the Pacific Theater. After design modifications, the B-26 had the lowest loss record of any combat aircraft in World War II.



29 November 1941 The program for the 1941 **Army-Navy football game** included the picture at left with the caption: "A bow-on view of the *U. S. S. Arizona* as she plows into a huge swell. It is significant that despite the claims of air enthusiasts no battleship has yet been sunk by bombs."

Eight days later, Japanese aircraft bombed and sank four U.S. battleships, including *Arizona*, and heavily damaged four more.

29 Nov 1945 **The Army Air Forces School**, formerly the Army Air Forces School of Applied Tactics, moved from Orlando, Florida, to Maxwell Field, Alabama, and was assigned directly to the Army Air Forces as a major command. It later became **Air University**.

24 Nov 1944 **Target: Tokyo.** After plans to reach the Japanese capital from China failed, B-29s took off from the Mariana Islands to bomb aircraft factories, docks and other targets in Tokyo. This was the first time Tokyo had been bombed since the Doolittle raid of 1942.

28 Nov – 10 Dec 1950 **Combat airlift to the Chosin Reservoir.** When China intervened in the Korean War, about 120,000 enemy troops cut off 15,000 U.N. soldiers at the Chosin (Changjin) Reservoir in North Korea. Airlift was practically the only way to resupply these troops. C-119s and C-47s of the Far East Air Forces' Combat Cargo Command air-dropped and landed some 1,580 tons of equipment and supplies, including eight bridge spans to allow a withdrawal to the sea. The C-47s also





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evacuated almost 5,000 sick and wounded marines from Hagaru-ri and Koto-ri. The C-47 in the photo above was being unloaded at the tiny Hagaru-ri airstrip.

30 Nov 1951 In a **major Korean War air battle** over the island of Taehwa-do, F-86 pilots engaged a squadron of enemy bombers escorted by about 30 fighters. Only three damaged enemy bombers made it back to North Korea. Major George Davis Jr., USAF, achieved Korean War ace status by downing a TU-2 bomber and a MiG-15. He was the first to be an ace in two wars, since he already had seven kills in World War II. Major Winton Marshal, USAF, also became an ace, destroying a TU-2 and an LA-9 fighter. (F-86 photo above.)



USAF aircraft helped dislodge the enemy, enabling friendly forces to retake the island.

28 Nov – 10 Dec 1950 **Korean War airlift.** Combat Cargo Command C-119s and C-47s air-dropped and landed some 1,580 tons of equipment and supplies, including eight bridge spans, for the 1st Marine Division, which Communist Chinese forces had surrounded at the Chosin (Changjin) Reservoir area in northeastern North Korea. The C-47s also evacuated almost 5,000 sick and wounded marines from Hagaru-ri and Koto-ri.



26 Nov 1952 The **Northrop B-62 Snark**—a turbojet-powered, subsonic, long-range missile with a 5,500 nautical mile range—was first launched from a zero-length launcher. The name was taken from an “unimaginable” monster in a Lewis Carroll nonsense poem—a very ambitious creature with very little sense of humor. Operated by SAC from 1958-1961 but beset by technical problems, the Snark was the **only intercontinental surface-to-surface cruise missile deployed by the USAF.** In January of

1958 SAC began accepting operational missiles for training at Patrick AFB in Florida. Multiple launch failures led to the ocean off Cape Canaveral being described as “Snark infested waters.” The development of ICBMs made the Snark obsolete.

26 Nov 1956 The **Air Force was given responsibility for developing ICBMs.** SECDEF Charles E. Wilson issued a “Roles and Mission” memo to the Armed Forces Policy Council to fix jurisdiction over missile development. This gave the USAF control of surface-to-surface missiles with ranges over 200 miles and surface-to-air missiles with ranges over 100 miles, while the Army controlled missiles with ranges less than 200 and 100 miles, respectively.



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26 November 1968 **Medal of Honor.** First Lt. James P. Fleming (at left) exposed his UH-1F helicopter to intense hostile fire twice while rescuing a Green Beret reconnaissance team (RT) in Vietnam. Fleming went to the aid of the six-man patrol as they were in danger of being overrun by a large, heavily armed enemy force. Despite the loss of another helicopter and a dangerously low fuel level, Fleming descended and balanced his helicopter on a river bank with the tail boom hanging over open water. However, the patrol was pinned down under heavy fire. Fleming was forced to withdraw and then return to repeat his landing maneuver after the RT set up the last of their Claymore mines in a trip-wire line to cover their evacuation. As bullets ripped through his windscreen, Fleming remained in his exposed position and held his aircraft steady while the RT scrambled aboard in what the Air Force citation later called "a feat of unbelievable flying skill." Fleming took off through a hail of gunfire and recovered safely at a forward base, with the fuel gauge reading zero.



29 November 1975 The **first annual RED FLAG exercise** occurred at Nellis AFB. Red Flag was organized to improve the performance of USAF pilots in air-to-air combat after the Vietnam War revealed that the Air Force relied too much on beyond visual range capabilities. In addition, nearly all USAF pilots were unpracticed in maneuvering against dissimilar aircraft.

Analysis showed that a pilot's chances of survival in combat dramatically increased after completing ten combat missions, and Red Flag was created to offer U.S. pilots those ten missions in a realistic but safe training environment. Today's Red Flag exercises simulate entire air campaigns, and participants include other U.S. services as well as forces from allied countries. Cope Thunder, originally held in the Philippines, was PACAF's equivalent of this exercise. Cope Thunder has been moved to the Alaska Range Complex and is now known as Red Flag Alaska. Red Flag Alaska aggressor aircraft (below) are stationed at Eielson AFB.



26 Nov 1991 **Clark Air Base Transfer.** After disagreement on payments to the Philippine government and a series of volcanic eruptions, the U.S. Air Force transferred Clark AB to the Philippines. The withdrawal ended a U.S. military presence that dated back to 1903. A flying school had been established on the site in 1912, known at the time as Fort Stotsenburg.



28 November 2001 **Operation SWIFT FREEDOM.** C-17s landed in Afghanistan on an airstrip about 80 miles south of Kandahar to deliver Navy Seabees. The operation introduced U.S. ground forces into Afghanistan.