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6 Oct 43 - Attempt made to repeat Yamamoto air ambush



Following the successful American operation in April 1943 that killed Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, the Commander-in-Chief of the Japanese Combined Fleet, while flying into southern Bougainville on an inspection visit, a similar attempt was made by RAAF fighters to shoot down a Japanese general off New Guinea on this day. When information was obtained through signals intelligence that a general would be flying from Wewak to Rabaul on this date, eight Kittyhawks from No 77 Squadron (on temporary detachment to Nadzab) -- led by Squadron Leader Ian Kinross -- were sent to position themselves over Karkar Island, a volcano off the north coast, in the hope of intercepting the general's aircraft as it passed across this point. Unfortunately, no enemy aircraft turned up at the anticipated time. Wewak was the site of the headquarters of the Japanese 18th Army commanded by Lieutenant General Hatazo Adachi.

6 Oct 58 - RAAF Chief became first Australian to fly Mach 2



USAF F-104B Starfighters

On this day, the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Marshal Sir Frederick Scherger, became the first Australian to fly at Mach 2 – twice the speed of sound. Scherger had travelled to the USA as part of a Department of Defence team to evaluate replacements for the Avon Sabre fighter. While visiting the Lockheed testing facility at Palmdale, California, he was invited to pilot an F-104B two-seater version of the Starfighter, accompanied by Lockheed test pilot Louis Schalk. During the 25 minute fight, Scherger achieved Mach 2. Two years later, Scherger flew at Mach 2.15 in a Mirage IIIB fighter while on a visit to France, although he wasn't the first RAAF pilot to fly this aircraft at Mach 2. Scherger's flight in the F-104B came only five years after the Air Force's first Avon Sabre exceeded Mach 1 near Melbourne on 14 August 1953.

6 Oct 66 - First flight of Mirage IIID



The Government placed an order for Mirage aircraft to replace the CAC-27 Sabre aircraft; the first order in December 1960 for 30 aircraft (A3-1 to A3-30), was followed in 1962 by an order for a further 30 (A3-31 to A3-60). In 1963 the order was increased by another 40 (A3-61 to A3-100) followed by 10 two-seat trainers -- similar to the French Mirage IIIB and designated IIID -- A3-101 to A3-110. The first two-seater Mirage IIID -- A3-101 -- flew on this day and was accepted by the RAAF at Avalon on 10 November, followed by a further nine over the next year. The trainer version did not have the Cyrano II nose radar; a second cockpit was added behind the first and the avionics equipment previously stored there was relocated in the nose. The Mirage trainers were assembled by the Government Aircraft Factory (GAF) from imported French-built fuselages and Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation (CAC)-built wings and vertical tail surfaces.

6 Oct 66 – 9SQN supported Operation CANBERRA



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

VN/66/0074/13

Undated photo of A2-1023 delivering water, rations and ordnance to 5RAR

On this day, Vung Tau-based No 9 Squadron Iroquois began flying in support of the Australian Army's 'Operation Canberra', a search and destroy operation conducted in the Nui Thi Vai hills, Vung Tau province, South Vietnam. Unit helicopters inserted and extracted SASR patrols which acted as a killer shadow force. During a large contact with Viet Cong (VC) forces, No 9 Squadron aircraft also supplied the 5th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (5RAR), with water, rations and ordnance as helicopters were the only means of access in the rugged terrain. In two days the six RAAF helicopters flew in over 2,000 mortar rounds and completed over 400 sorties. The Iroquois also flew MEDEVAC sorties, recovering wounded Australians (mainly from claymore mine booby traps). OpCanberra concluded on 10 October 1966.

6 Oct 68 - 38SQN Caribou crashed in PNG



Tapini, Dec 12

On this day, No 38 Squadron Detachment A (PNG) Caribou A4-147, flown by Flight Lieutenant Field and Flying Officer Judges, crashed whilst on approach at Tapini, PNG. The loadmaster and some passengers sustained injuries; the aircraft was written off and aircraft remnants were used as spares and to construct a field training simulator/training aid at RAAF Richmond-based No 38 Squadron.