



This **MONTH**  
in

military history

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**1698** – The Abenaki Indians and Massachusetts colonists sign a treaty halting hostilities between the two.

**1863** – The Civil War Second Battle of Springfield Missouri. The battle involved urban and house-to-house, which was rare in the war.

**1942** – In the Philippines, the city of Manila and the U.S. Naval base at Cavite fall to Japanese forces.

**1951** – As almost half a million Chinese Communist and North Korean troops launched a new ground offensive taking Inchon and Kimpo Airfield in Seoul.

**1989** – Aircraft from the USS John F. Kennedy shoot down 2 hostile Libyan Migs over the Mediterranean.

**1993** – In Moscow, Russia, George Bush Sr. and Boris Yeltsin sign the second Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (STARTII).

**2003** – Bill Maudlin (b.1921), WW-II era cartoonist, died.

## The Palomares Incident

On Jan. 17, 1966, the United States Air Force dropped hydrogen bombs on Spain. Four of them to be exact.

What became known as the Palomares incident occurred when a B-52G bomber from the United States Air Force's Strategic Air Command collided with a KC-135 tanker during mid-air refueling at 31,000 feet over the Mediterranean Sea, off the coast of Spain. The KC-135 was destroyed when its fuel load ignited, killing all four crew members. The B-52G broke apart, killing three of the seven crew members aboard.

Of the four Mk28-type hydrogen bombs the B-52G carried, three were found on land near the small fishing village of Palomares. The non-nuclear explosives in two of the weapons detonated, resulting in the contamination of a 2-square-kilometer area by plutonium.

The fourth weapon could not be found despite an intensive search of the area. The only part that was recovered was the parachute tail plate, leading searchers to postulate that the weapon's parachute had deployed, and that the wind had carried it out to sea.

The B-52G began its mission from Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, North Carolina, on a Cold War airborne alert mission named Operation Chrome Dome. The flight plan took the aircraft east across the Atlantic Ocean

and Mediterranean Sea towards the European borders of the Soviet Union before returning home.

The planes collided at about 10:30 a.m. as the B-52 commenced its return-trip aerial refueling over southern Spain.

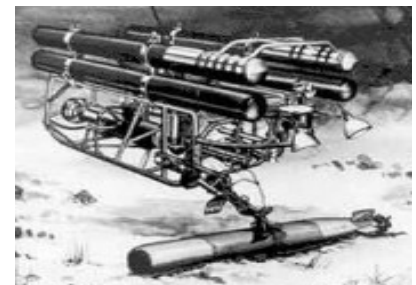
After an 80-day search, the fourth bomb was located by the submersible *Alvin*, but was dropped and temporarily lost when the Navy attempted to bring it to the surface.

*Alvin* located the bomb again on April 2 and it was brought to the surface by the *USS Petrel*. The *USS Cascade*, then ferried it back to the United States.

The empty casings of two of the bombs involved in the inci-



dent are now on display at the National Museum of Nuclear Science & History in Albuquerque, New Mexico.



Also of note, while serving on the salvage ship *USS Hoist* during recovery operations, Navy diver Carl Brashear lost the lower part of his left leg in an accident. His story was the inspiration for the 2000 film *Men of Honor*.

## ASC and Contracting

Currently the ASC has seven subordinate AFSBs plus the DMC. However, ASC organization charts for late FY2008 show eleven brigades. What were the other four brigades and where did they go?

When ASC stood up in October 2006 the command immediately began standing up the MTOE Army Field Support Brigades (AFSB) to provide better control of AMC missions in each theater of operations and CONUS. One of the advantages of ASC was that the command had a global footprint. The AFSBs were positioned to provide improved operations and planning links to the Army component commands in each region. At the same time AMC wanted ASC to better connect the acquisition organizations overseas.

For some time each theater had an Army contracting center, but the Army wanted a better link to units on the ground as they developed requirements. Therefore, the same early 2006 DA decisions that led to

creating the AFSBs, also approved creating Contracting Support Brigades (CSBs). Within two months of ASC activating in October 2006, orders were issued for the establishment of 408<sup>th</sup>, 409<sup>th</sup>, and 410<sup>th</sup> CSBs effective 16 September 2007. The effective dates were further in the future for the CSBs than the AFSBs mainly because of shortages of military contracting personnel to assign to the units. However, ASC rapidly converted the OCONUS contracting centers to provisional brigades using the same numbers that would become official in September 2007. By October 2007 the ASC commanded seven AFSBs and four CSBs in addition to several contracting battalions.

Nearly simultaneously to the stand up of ASC and the first AFSBs and CSBs a contracting scandal engulfed the Army. Contracting officers in Kuwait and other locations had been accepting bribes. Other irregularities emerged. Between August and December 2006 three military

contracting officials committed suicide after being questioned. In August 2007 another military contracting official was arrested in a high profile case. The Army reacted rapidly by creating the Gansler Commission to review the contracting system. The Gansler Report was released on 31 October of the same year, just after the fourth CSB activated. The report concluded that the Army contracting system was understaffed, had inadequate training, and was not led by contracting professionals. The commission recommended creating an Army Contracting Command (ACC) and putting all contracting activities under that command. By March 2008 ACC was provisionally activated and ASC began to transfer the CSBs to ACC. The ASC Acquisition Center also passed to ACC, becoming ACC-Rock Island. On 1 October, 2008 ASC officially lost the four brigades. Despite the reduction from eleven to seven, ASC remained the largest 2-star command in the Army, and had plenty of other missions to perform.