



16-22 April

22 Apr 1940: The *Anchorage Times* featured an article reporting that Russia was constructing bases on the coast of Siberia, which posed a threat to Alaska. It cited Congressional sources and stated that the War Department would ask the Senate to restore \$12,000,000 to construct a base near Anchorage. The article quoted Delegate Dimond as saying "It is a great pity, it may be a tragedy that the committee has not provided at least enough money to start work on an air base." He stressed that the base would not duplicate the Navy base being constructed on Kodiak or the Air Corps cold weather test base under development near Fairbanks. ("Russian AB Spurs Demands for Alaska Base," *Anchorage Daily Times*, 22 Apr 1940, p. 1.)

22 Apr 1940: *The Anchorage Times* reported that the transportation of supplies for the construction of Ladd Field was proceeding on schedule according to Alaska Railroad officials and that the U.S. Army Transport *St. Mihiel* had departed the day before for another load of materials. The Alaska Railroad had transported between 100 and 150 car loads of construction material that included 5,000 barrels of cement, 250,000 feet of lumber, 12 portable barracks, 17,000 feet of wood stave pipe, a 25,000 gallon gas tank and locomotive unit weighing 24 tons. ("Construction of Ladd," *Anchorage Daily Times*, Apr 22, 1940, p. 8.)



16 Apr 1942: The Japanese Imperial Headquarters issued its Midway-Aleutian Directive. It called for the occupation of the western Aleutian Islands and Midway Island. The overall plan required the establishing of a defensive line in three phases. The first phase required the seizure of Port Moresby on the south coast of New Guinea Island in mid-May in order to complete the conquest of New Guinea and the Bismarck Archipelago. The next phase called for the occupations of the western Aleutians and Midway Island and the destruction of the remainder of the Pacific Fleet in early June. The final phase involved seizing the Samoan, Fiji and New Caledonia Islands by late July, which would isolate Australia. (Japanese Monograph No. 88, Aleutian Naval Operations, p. 3.)



17 Apr 1942: General William O Butler and his staff concluded that the Eleventh Air Force did not have enough fighters to defend Umnak and Dutch Harbor. Basing fighters on Umnak would strain resources elsewhere. They decided to wait until the Western Defense Command could provide more. In addition, the facilities on Umnak had not reached standards for operating fighters. There was no early warning radar system in place, communications was lacking. These conditions also prompted the decision to delay deploying combat aircraft to the island until additional forces were provided and conditions approved there. (Ransohoff, Hist, 11 AF, pp. 135-136.)

18 Apr 1942: A U.S. carrier task force consisting to the carriers *Enterprise* (CV-6) and *Hornet* (CV-8), four cruisers and eight destroyers under the command of RADM William Halsey launched the first of 16 B-25Bs led by Lt Col James "Jimmy" Doolittle, 623 miles off the Japanese coast at 0818, about ten hours ahead of schedule. Originally, the plan had been to launch 300 miles off the Japanese coast. The Japanese Number 23 picket boat, the *Nitto Maru*, however, was encountered 800 miles off the coast Honshu and sunk by the cruiser *Nashville*. Because of the concern that the crew radioed the sighting, Admiral Halsey decided to launch





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early. The medium bomber crews dropped general purpose and incendiary bombs on Tokyo, Kobe, Nagoya and Yokohama and then headed for landing fields in eastern China with a favorable tail wind behind them. The crew of one B-25, running low on fuel, elected to land at Vladivostok, Russia. The other crews ran into darkness and deteriorating weather. Unable to find the airfields, the crews either forced landed or bailed out. The Japanese captured two crews and tried the eight members as war criminals, executing three of them. The other five were imprisoned. Four survived the war. Planning for the raid had started shortly after Pearl Harbor with the aim of denting Japanese confidence and boosting American morale. President Roosevelt awarded Colonel Doolittle the Medal of Honor. (Goralski, *World War II Almanac*, pp. 212-213.)

Although the damage inflicted proved minimal, the psychological effect was great. The Japanese homeland had never before been attacked by a foreign power. Admiral Yamamoto was mortified. The Army and Navy who had not agreed on the Midway-Aleutian operations set aside their differences. (Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun*, p. 155; Agawa, *The Reluctant Admiral* p. 299.)

President Roosevelt quipped "*Shangri-La*," when asked by reporters where the raid had come from, and some believed the Aleutians. The Japanese knew otherwise. They had monitored radio transmissions and the picket ship *Nitto Maru* spotted the carrier task force and got off a position report before being sunk by a cruiser in the task force. (Thomas E. Grass, editor, *The West Point Military History Series: The Second World War, Asia and the Pacific*, Wayne NJ, 1984, pp. 7-11.)

The weekly *Alaska Weekly*, featured an article, "Full Life Story of Nome-Town Boy Made Good," on Colonel Doolittle, who had spent his boyhood in Nome, which stated..."today that boy won the Congressional Medal of Honor...and the two qualities, fighting and flying, which have distinguished his every act since childhood, were acquired in that hell-roaring mining camp of Nome." (Jean Potter, *Alaska Under Arms*, p. 146.)



17 Apr 1943: Seven B-24 sorties were flown against the runway on Attu, scoring hits on it and nearby gun emplacements. One B-24 and two F-5As abort due to weather. Four B-25, fourteen P-40 and thirty-one P-38 sorties were flown against Kiska, bombing installations and strafing gun emplacements and three parked aircraft. (Carter and Mueller, *Combat Chronology*, p. 122.)



18 Apr 1943: Major John W. Mitchell, Thirteenth Air Force, led a flight of 16 P-38s on a low-level, circuitous, over-water flight from Guadalcanal to a spot off the coast of Bougainville Island near Kahili airfield in an intercept mission against a "Betty" bomber carrying Fleet Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, Commander-in-Chief of the Japanese Combined Fleet. United States intelligence had learned that he was making an inspection trip and was scheduled to land at Kahili at 0935. He was well known for his punctuality. The planners calculated the P-38 flight to arrive 35 miles off Kahili at 0935 two hours and fifteen minutes after takeoff. The flight of P-38s encountered the flight of the two bombers and six Zero escorts as scheduled. A four P-38 attack flight under the command of Capt. Thomas G. Lanphier went after the bombers. The Zero pilots spotted the attacking P-38s

about a mile away, but were unable to prevent Admiral Yamamoto's bomber from being shot down. Captain Lanphier and 1/Lt Rex T. Barber received joint credit for shooting it down. The flight had been launched to "get Yamamoto" after the U.S. had intercepted a radio message providing his itinerary. The Japanese were apparently unaware that their communications code had been broken and no effort was made to change it



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afterwards. The loss of Admiral Yamamoto came as a shock to the Japanese people demoralizing everyone. He ordered the attack on Pearl Harbor. He had also opposed the war on the ground that America possessed an overwhelming material advantage. (Haulman, *One Hundred Years of Flight*, p. 48; Goralski, *World War II Almanac*, p. 263.)



19 Apr 1943: Fourteen B-24, twelve B-25, twenty-three P-38 and thirty-two P-40 sorties were flown against Kiska in nine missions. The first mission was weathered out against the primary target, Attu, and diverted to Kiska. The attacks concentrated against the four beached ships in the harbor and the submarine base. One ship, believed to have served as a source of power, was set afire. (Carter and Mueller, *Combat Chronology*, p. 124.)

The American intelligence estimates of how many Japanese were on Attu continued to go up based on additional information. The Western Defense Command estimated it to be a 1,350 and Admiral Kinkaid at 1,587. The Japanese on Attu received no additional reinforcements since the last ship load of supplies and equipment arrived on 9 March. On the eve of invasion they had around 2,350 on the islands and they were on half-rations due to a shortage of food. (Hist, *Aleutian Campaign*, p. 73.)

The Japanese Infantry forces defending Attu consisted of the 644 man 303rd Independent Infantry Battalion commanded by Major Tokuji Watanabe with three rifle companies, a heavy machine gun company, an infantry-artillery company and an attached transportation unit; and the 430 man Northern Kuriles Fortress Infantry Unit (also referred to as 83rd Infantry Battalion) with two rifle companies and an infantry gun company commanded by Lt Col Hiroshi Yonekawa. The first battalion had initially been intended for Shemya in November 1942, but the operation had been called off due to high seas near Shemya and an unsuitable landing area. It arrived at Attu from Paramushiru Island in the Kuriles on 31 January 1943. The second battalion had been defending a sector of Shimushu Island in the Kuriles when it was sent to Attu, arriving there 29 October 1942. (Intelligence Memo 8.)

21 Apr 1943: The air component, Task Force 16.1 was formed under Maj. Gen William O. Butler, Commander, Eleventh Air Force. It consisted of Eleventh Air Force units and designated the Army Striking Unit with the mission of neutralizing Japanese positions on Attu and Kiska, acquiring aerial photographs, providing an air combat patrol over the battlefield and serving as a reserve striking force. Task Group 16.1.2, made up of units from Fleet Air Wing Four and designated Naval Air Search Unit was responsible to providing search patrol and anti-submarine coverage for the amphibious assault force. The escort carrier *Nassau* (CVE-16), operating independently from General Butler, was responsible for providing close air support. Colonel William O. Eareckson was responsible for coordinating air operations over Attu from an airborne B-24 command and communications center. Liaison officers were exchanged and forward air control parties were assigned to the 7th Infantry Division to accompany the assaulting battalions. (Hist, *Aleutian Campaign*, p. 70.)



16 Apr 1947: Headquarters, AAC General Order 11, assigned the 57th Fighter Group to Fort Richardson, under the operational control of the Yukon Sector. The group completed its move from Shemya to Elmendorf AAFB and was housed in Hangar Two. Morale soared. The group provided 20 P-51 fly-over for Army Day observance held 7 April. The 65th Fighter Squadron provided the fighters. Army Day was held at Ladd Field 12 April with similar participation. (1/Lt Myron A. Borland, Hist, 57FG, Apr 1947.)



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21 Apr 1948: The Hobson Plan, calling for the reorganization of AAC, was implemented. The Yukon Sector was redesignated the Yukon Air Division and the Ladd AFB Composite Wing, the Eielson AFB Wing and the Marks AFB (at Nome) Detachment were assigned to it. The provisional status was dropped from the 57th Fighter Wing at Elmendorf AFB. The Davis AFB Composite Wing was organized at Davis AFB on Adak Island. All other bases became Air Force Base detachments. The Army service units at all the bases were inactivated and the personnel were assigned to newly activated Air Force squadrons. All Army enlisted personnel were given the opportunity to transfer to the Air Force. The highest-ranking Army officer in each squadron and location regardless of Service branch became the commander. At the time, it was anticipated that with normal rotations, the plan to convert to Air Force personnel would be completed in two years. (Maxwell, Hist, AAC, 1948, p. 1.)



16 Apr 1949: The Alaskan Air Command transferred Thornbrough AFB at Cold Bay on the Alaska Peninsula, and Cape AFB on Umnak Island, from the jurisdiction of the 5020th Air Base Wing at Davis AFB, Adak Island to the jurisdiction of 57th Fighter Wing on Elmendorf AFB and reduced the bases to minimum operations as part of the withdrawal from the Aleutians. By the end of the year Davis AFB and Shemya AFB had been slated for reduction to minimum operations and transfer to the control of the 57th Fighter Wing. (HQ AAC GO 35, 7 Apr 1949; Thomblison, Hist, AAC, 1949, pp. 47 and 51.)

2-25 Apr 1951: The Alaskan Command conducted joint training exercise Firestep with emphasis on defending the main bases in Alaska. The scenario involved an aggressor seizing forward bases on the Seward Peninsula and the Cold Bay, Galena, McGrath and Bethel areas. The aggressor then brought in additional forces and established air superiority as a preliminary for capturing the main bases, with the intention of uses them to launch strategic bomber attacks against North American targets. The exercise involved air land and airborne operations. The Military Air Transport Service airlifted a battalion combat team from the 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, NC, to Alaska to serve as an aggressor force. Air Force Col. E.R. Manierre served as exercise director. The exercise cost \$456,913.00. The exercise uncovered weaknesses in the air defense system. The radar stations were unable to cover all the approaches, communications was limited, and the laborious aircraft identification system hindered operations. The need for Air Defense Identification Zones was identified. There were not enough aircraft. (Chart and Staff, Hist, AAC, Jan-Jun 1951, p. 183-229; Hist, ALCOM, Jan 1947-Dec 1951, pp. 216-.)

16 Apr 1952: *The Anchorage Daily News* reported that during a luncheon for Representative James I. Dolliver (R-IO) hosted by Lt. Gen. William E. Kepner, Commander-in-Chief, Alaskan Command, that General Kepner's aid, Col. A. Field, had stated that General Twining had recommended that Marks AFB at Nome be closed. He also stated the Marks AFB might be used as an advance base for fighters. Congress, however, had not appropriated the funding. Those living in Nome expressed concern about the fate of Marks AFB because of its impact on their livelihood and concerns that the Air Force was abandoning the defense of Nome. (The base was outside the Eisenhower Line, which established a defensive line in Alaska.) (Chart, Hist, AAC, Jan-Jun 1952, pp. 115-116.)



16 Apr 1954: *The Anchorage Times*, in response to Air Force plans to close Shemya AFB by 1 July 1954 and turn it over to the Civil Aeronautics Administration, reported that Representative Pelley (R-WA) had declared that the loss of Shemya was equivalent to the loss of Hawaii on the Central Pacific Air Route. He stressed the fact that its closure would threaten Pacific Northwest trade. Secretary of Air Force the Air Force Talbot issued a statement, which also appeared



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in the Anchorage paper, stating the Central Pacific provided a better route because of its favorable weather and that Shemya and Thornbrough AFBs were vulnerably to air and sea attacks. Both were also expensive to maintain just for commercial use and Adak provided a better alternative. The Department of Defense, however, found itself under increasing pressure from political and commercial interest in the Northwest to keep Shemya open. The Civil Aeronautics and Northwest Airlines stated that they were not interested in maintaining Shemya and were planning to switch their operations to Thornbrough, which they referred to as Cold Bay. The Alaskan Air Command agreed to leave all its power generating equipment at Cold Bay. The Senate Appropriations Committee, on 12 June 1954, instructed AAC to keep Shemya open until the switch could be made. Senator Magnuson, (D-WA) had made the request, stating that the "maintenance of the North Pacific Air route was essential because of the unsettled conditions in the Far East." Officially, AAC had not received direction not to close the base and continued actions to that end. The plans called for transferring the installation to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and giving the Air Force to right to remove useable materials and for the Corps to conduct semi-annual inspections. No provisions were made to leave a caretaker force on the island. (Chart, Hist, AAC, Jan-Jun 1954, pp. 16-18.)

21 Apr 1951: The 3rd Bombardment Wing received credit for the first U.N. Counteroffensive, 25 January-21 April, which resulted in driving the Communist forces out of most of South Korea. (Ravenstein, *Air Force Combat Wings*, p.12)

22 Apr 1957: A C-124 air dropped an M-129 Weasel on Drifting Station Alpha followed by other equipment and supplies for the establishing a camp on the drifting ice island. It included prefabricated Jamesway huts and a 5000 by 200 foot runway. The Air Force maintained the ice island for scientific research in the Arctic during the 1957 Geophysical Year. The scientific program embraced ten areas of study: aurora and airglow phenomenon, geomagnetism, gravity, seismology, oceanography, ocean currents, navigation, ice drift and meteorology by the Lamont Observatory of Columbia University. (Miller, Hist, AAC, Jan-Jun 1957, pp. 70-72; Miller, Hist, AAC, Jan-Jun 1957, p. 77.)



17 Apr 1967: The 10th FCS, assigned to the 3 TFW, inactivated at Bien Hoa AB, South Vietnam. All F-5C freedom fighter aircraft were transferred to the Vietnamese Air Force (VMAF.) During its short tenure, the 10th flew 7,321 sorties, losing 8 aircraft and 5 pilots. (Hist, 3rd TFW, 1 Apr-30 Jun 1967, pp.21-22)



18 Apr 1968: Two F-100s, 531st TFS, scrambled to destroy an enemy-controlled village 100 miles southwest of Can Tho. All friendly villagers had been evacuated from the village and two companies of enemy soldiers now occupied it. The pilots destroyed 23 military fortifications and damaged 16. (Hist, 3 TFW, Apr-Jun 68, pp. 42-43)

21 Apr 1975: EC-118A, 53-3245, departed for the Military Aircraft Storage and Disposition Center, Davis-Monthan AFB, AZ. The crew consisted of: Capt. David R. Fushee, aircraft commander; Maj. Ronald Skinner, first pilot; Capt. Gordon Goodman, pilot; Lt. Cols. George R. Pitzke, III and Richard A. Barron, electronic warfare officers, TSgt. George A. Wilkie, flight engineer; and SSgt. Clement Demuth, flight steward. The EC-118 was the last of its kind and had been used for electronic countermeasures training for ground control intercept at the remote Aircraft Control and Warning stations. (Cloe, Hist, AAC, Jul 1974-Jun 1975, p. 92.)



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22 Apr 1975: The Alaskan Command published the CINCAL Disestablishment Schedule followed by the AAC Program Action Directive 75-1 eight days later. The two plans provided for a time phased transfer of functions and responsibilities from ALCOM to AAC and the termination of those ALCOM functions that were not needed.

16 Apr 1980: Colonel Royce U. Jorgensen, Deputy Chief of Staff, Plans, hosted the first planning conference on the beddown of the F-15A and A-10A. They decided that the 43rd Tactical Fighter Squadron would be equipped with the F-15E and the 18th Tactical Fighter Squadron moved to Eielson AFB and equipped with the A-10A. (Cloe, Hist, AAC, 1980, p. 233.)



22 Apr 1982: Vice President George Bush stopped at Elmendorf AFB while en route to Tokyo for a series of official state visits with leaders of several Asian and South Pacific nations. During the three-day stay, Vice President Bush attended two Republican fund raising activities at the Anchorage Westward Hilton Hotel. (Cloe, Hist, AAC, 1982, p. 507.)

17-30 Apr 1993: Air combat training exercise Cope Thunder 93-1 took place, the first of four during the year.. The Royal Air Force participated for the first time, deploying seventeen Tornado fighters, a C-130 and a VC-10. Four C-130s arrived from Yokota AB, Japan. The Air Force Reserves provided three KC-135s and the Alaska Air National Guard, two KC-135s. The Eleventh Air Force participated with thirty-six F-15s, F-16s and A-10s. It also provided eleven C-130s for the first time. A total of 75 aircraft participated. (Cloe, Hist, 11AF, 1993, p. 109.)

16 May 1997: The Air Force announced that the 517th Airlift Squadron would gain an additional six C-130Hs and 200 personnel. (Hist, 3 WG, 1997, Chron)

17 Apr 2003: The 3rd Wing Public Affairs Office released information that an Air Force-wide mandated reduction in force would result in 59 civilian positions being eliminated on Elmendorf AFB. (The actual number was 58.) It was part of a PACAF-wide reduction to eliminate 775 military and civilian positions. The planned reductions resulted from a higher number of personnel being assigned against what was authorized. The imbalance, in part, was caused by increased responsibilities incurred as a result of 9/11. The Secretary of the Air Force and the Chief of Staff, USAF, ordered that the books be rebalanced. (New Release No. 03-04-06, 3 WG/PA, "Base Officials Announce Civilian Personnel Reductions," 17 Apr 2003.)

20 Apr 2005: Brigadier General Michael Snodgrass, 3 WG Commander, announced the annual Airshow, known as Arctic Thunder, was canceled because of budgetary constraints. General Snodgrass said canceling the Airshow would save roughly \$200,000 of the \$15 million the base had been ordered to cut from its budget during FY05. (Miller, 3 WG Hist 2005, 2006.)

20 Apr – 5 May 2005: The 90 FS deployed 12 F-15E aircraft to Eielson AFB in support of COPE THUNDER 05-1. The 90 FS remained at Eielson for an additional 10 days to make up for lost sorties during the runway construction at Elmendorf. The squadron generated 287 sorties with no maintenance aborts. In addition to the 90 FS, the 962 AACS participated in COPE THUNDER with one E-3 and two crews totaling 28 personnel. (Miller, 3 WG Hist 2005, 2006.)

