



Remembering Our Heritage



August 13-19

13 Aug 1919: The 90th Aero Squadron was redesignated the 90th Squadron (Surveillance). (90 FS L&H)

15 Aug 1919: The Army Surveillance Group was redesignated the First Surveillance Group at Kelly Field, TX. The Group was activated by War Department General Order No. 102. Today, this group is known as the 3rd Operations Group. (Hist, Third Bombardment Group (Light), Activation to 31 December 1941, p. 2, Maurer *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, p. 30; Lineage and Honors History of the 3rd Operations Group)



13 Aug 1920: The Black Wolf Squadron landed at Wrangell, Alaska, linking the territory for the first time by air with the rest of the United States. Additionally, it was the first landing of a military aircraft in Alaska. Eleven days later, on 24 August, the squadron landed at the former Army installation, Fort Davis, immediately south of Nome. Then, on 20 October 1920, the Black Wolf Squadron returned to Mitchell Field by the same route after covering 9,329 miles in 119.41 flying hours. The War Department later awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross to the pilots and mechanics making the flight. The Black Wolf Squadron flight demonstrated the feasibility of deploying military aircraft over great

distances with minimum preparation, providing a precedent for future military and commercial operations, and testing engines and equipment in a cold weather climate. In addition, the participating personnel gained valuable experience and collected information and meteorological data. From a training standpoint, the flight ranked at the time as one of the most important peacetime air maneuvers yet undertaken. (Street, "The First Alaska Air Expedition," Flight Log, Black Wolf Squadron, undated, copy in Eleventh Air Force History Office; Report in Air Force Historical Research Agency archives at Maxwell AFB, No. 168, 3952-155; 1920-29-1914-19, not dated.)

15 Aug 1928: Major John H. Jouett assumed command of the 3rd Attach Group from Major Frank Lackland. (Hist, Third Bombardment Group (Light), Activation to 31 December 1941, p. 15)

16 Aug 1934: The Alaska Flight departed Fairbanks for Juneau on the first leg of its return journey to Bolling Field. During its stay in Alaska, the YB-10 crews flew photographic surveys, looked for possible airfield sites and gathered information on Alaska. Using Fairbanks as a base, the Alaska Flight conducted flights to Anchorage and Fort Yukon. Three days later, they departed Juneau for Seattle, flying over water for most of the 943-mile route demonstrating the Army Air Corps capability to deploy aircraft to Alaska without having to fly over Canada. While in Alaska, they had flown their O-38s to Nome by way of Ruby and returned to Fairbanks by way of Unalakleet. In Anchorage, a YB-10 experienced engine problems and had to land it Cook Inlet. The bomber was retrieved and repaired in time for the flight back to Bolling. On arrival back at Bolling Field, Colonel Arnold submitted his report, which recommended the construction of an air base at Fairbanks to serve primarily as an advance supply depot for air units on deployment to Alaska. He further recommended the initial assignment of an air unit should be at this base. Further recommendations included developing bases at Juneau, Anchorage, Nome and Point Barrow once more knowledge was





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acquired on air operations in the Arctic. The Arnold Flight flew the 7,360 mile flight without major incident. While in Alaska, it had photographed 23,000 square miles of the territory and pinpointed strategic areas for future military airfield development and validated the feasibility of deploying large formations of aircraft to Alaska. (Army Air Forces Study No. 4, "Alaska Air Defense and the Japanese Invasion of the Aleutians," Apr 1943, p 5; Hist, A-2, Fourth Air Force, "The Army Air Corps Alaskan Flight," 27 Oct 1943; Army Air Corps Newsletter, Aug 23, 1934; Hugh Knerr, "Washington to Alaska and Back," *Aerospace Historian*, Spring 1972.)



19 Aug 1941: *The Anchorage Daily Times* noted that Major Talley had reported that approximately 3,300 men were working on Fort Richardson and Elmendorf Field and that a cubic yard of concrete was being poured every 1.8 minutes. Work was proceeding seven weeks ahead of schedule. Gravel was being spread 24 hours a day. The east-west runway, which had been declared operational for aircraft in the fall of 1940, was being widened and lengthen. Crews completed work on the north-south runway and apron. Major Talley noted that the end of the construction period did not mean work would stop and that he planned to shift workers to other jobs. (*Anchorage Daily Times*, 19 Aug 1941, p 1.)

17 – 18 Aug 1943: The 3rd Bombardment Group participated in a low-level air strike against four Japanese air fields in the Wewak area as part of a Fifth Air Force plan to destroy the Japanese air capability on the north coast of New Guinea, and as preparation for the seizing of Lae by Allied ground troops. The 90th, 13th, and 8th Squadrons attacked with parafrags, leaving numerous aircraft burning on the tarmac. The attacks cost the Japanese approximately 200 planes destroyed on the ground and another 50 in the air. They also paved the way for an airborne drop of American troops, and an amphibious landing of Australian soldiers, who seized Lae and Nadzab in early September. The 3rd Bombardment Group received its second Distinguished Unit Citation for its support of the operation. (Hist, Third Bombardment Group (Light), 1 January 1942 to 31 March 1944, p. 64, *History of the 3rd Wing*, p.14, *Grim Reapers*, pp.58-62)

19 Aug 1943: Major General William O. Butler, Commander, Eleventh Air Force, informed the men of the 344th Fighter Squadron on Shemya that the retaking of the Aleutians was the first stage on "the northern road to Tokyo." The squadron historian noted: "Consequently, after Kiska the road builders began a project of extending the super-highway. And the 344th stayed around to look after the road builders." (1/Lt. Clair E. Ewing, Hist, 344th Fighter Sq, 10 Oct 1942-1 Jan 1944, p. 34.)



12-13 Aug 1944: The two B-24 crews on returning to Shemya found the island and nearby Attu covered in fog and were unable to land. They continued on to Adak 400 miles away. Low on gas, Capt Chadbourn Steward, the pilot of one B-24 oriented on a volcano and made an instrument approach to an emergency strip on Tanaga Island landing safely. By the time Lt Corbin U. Terry and his copilot, Lt. Ted Buszek, in B-24D, 41-11850, arrived, the emergency strip was completely fogged in. Initially, he decided to ditch in the ocean. After letting down to 200 feet, his crew spotted the one mile long by half a mile wide Iliak Island, the top of a submerged volcano immediately south by south west of Tanaga. With not enough gasoline to go around, Lieutenant Terry decided to make a wheels-up, strait in approach, which was accomplished safely with no injuries. The radio operator contacted the nearby Tanaga Test Range. A Coast and Geodetic survey boat picked the crew up two hours later. The bomber was stripped of all usable parts and



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abandoned. It was later used for target practice. (1/Lt H. D. Leland, Hist, 404th Bombardment Squadron, Aug 1944, p. 20; Ranschoff, Hist, 11AF, pp. 354-55; Rhodes Arnold, letter to editor, *Warbirds International*, Jan-Feb 1990.)



13 Aug 1945: The 404th Bombardment Squadron flew its last combat mission of World War II. The flight of six B-24s led by 1/Lt. Frank W. Long Jr. dropped 54 500-pound incendiary cluster bombs on the Kashiwabara Staging Area by radar from 17,600 feet, leaving a huge column of smoke rising 5,000 feet in the air. Major General John B. Brooks, Commander, Eleventh Air Force, flew on the mission as an observer. Post bombing assessments revealed 16 buildings destroyed. Two days later, President Truman announced the unconditional surrender of Japan according to terms established at Potsdam. (Final Edition, Monthly Intelligence Summary, 1-31 Aug 1945, HQs

Eleventh Air Force, Task Force 90, North Pacific Area; Capt Thomas T. Adams Jr., Hist, 404th Bombardment Squadron, Aug 1945, pp. 29 and 43.)

15 Aug 1945: The Soviet Union allowed the 175 Eleventh Air Force and 63 Fleet Air Wing Four Airmen to “escape” after they had been interned in Russia during World War II. The men were sworn to secrecy and kept it for over 40 years until 1988 when Congress was persuaded to pass legislation that removed the secret status and allowed them to qualify for Veterans Administration disability compensation and other benefits that former prisoners of war received. In 1992, the Department of Air Force followed by the Department of Navy officially designated them as former prisoners of war. (Hays, *Alaska's Hidden Wars*, p. 127.)

15 Aug 1947: The Arctic Indoctrination Survival School (later referred to as Cool School) was formed at Marks Army Air Base under the leadership of Capt Harold W. Strong. Plans called for it to be manned by 9 officers and 42 enlisted with the students limited to 60 a week. The training was directed to air crews with subjects taught on survival on sea ice and tundra. (Hist, AAC, 1946-1947, p. 94; Maxwell, Hist, AAC, 1948, p. 59.)



14 Aug 1950: Colonel Virgil L. Zoller assumed command of the 3rd Bombardment Wing from Colonel Strother B. Hardwick, Jr. (Ravenstein, *Air Force Combat Wings*, pp. 10-11)

14 Aug 1950: The 3rd Bombardment Wing moved to Yokota Air Base. The 3rd Bombardment Group remained at Iwakuni Air Base. (Ravenstein, *Air Force Combat Wings*, p. 10; Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units, WW II*, p. 31)

10-20 Aug 1952: The 3rd Bombardment Wing flew training missions that stressed daylight formation and nighttime bomber stream flying. Selected crews received retraining on night intruder operations against enemy supply routes with altitude restriction of 4,000 feet above ground level instead of the low-level missions previously flown. Other, more experienced crews, who specialized in attacking railroad targets, received a waiver to the altitude restrictions. (Hist, 3BW, Jul-Dec 52, p. 7)



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15 Aug 1953: Headquarters, USAF advised Alaskan Air Command that because of the end of the Korean War and the reduced Military Air Transport Service flights across the Great Circle Route, Shemya AFB and Thornbrough AFB (Cold Bay) would be closed. The Military Air Transport Service had virtually ceased using the facilities. Thornbrough would be closed to transient aircraft on 15 September 1953 and the airbase unit inactivated. Phase out of Shemya AFB would commence 1 September 1953 with minimum personnel retained until 1 April. The base would be closed not later than 1 July 1954. Plans were made to transfer both Aleutian bases to the Civil Aeronautics Administration. (Ravenstein, Hist, AAC, Jul-Dec 1953, p. 41.)

13 Aug 1957: Mr. W.E. Burk, Vice President, Western Electric Company, presented Brig Gen. Stanley Wray, Chief of U.S. Air Force Electronic Defense System, a certificate which stated: "On this date the land-based section of the Arctic Distant Early Warning Line stands ready to preserve peace and aid defense of people of the free world." The official turn over of the DEW Line to the Air Force at Point Barrow was attended by the press. The day began when the media was given a demonstration in the darkened console room where they watched a pinpoint on the luminous screen indicating an approaching B-47 from 140 miles over the Arctic Ocean. Following the demonstration, General Wray held a news conference in which he informed those gathered that a series of tests had already been conducted and the system declared operational ready. He also stated that an unknown track had already been identified which turned out to be an off-course friendly aircraft. He stated that no Soviet aircraft had been identified to date. (Miller, Hist, AAC, Jul-Dec 1957, pp. 82-83.)

14 Aug 1958: Major General C. F. "Nick" Necrason assumed command of AAC from Brig Gen Kenneth H. Gibson, who had held the position since 19 August 1957. General Necrason had first assigned as the ALCOM Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations in March 1957, and then promoted to brigadier general, he assumed command of the 11th Air Division (Defense) in September 1957. (Miller, Hist, AAC, Jul 1958-Jun 1959, p. 46.)

17 Aug 1962: The Alaskan Command Civilian Advisory Board held its first meeting. It was composed of 16 prominent Alaskan business and professional men and organized as a group who could exchange information of subjects of mutual interest between civilian and military leaders. (Truman R. Strobridge, ALCOM History Office, "Strength in the North, The Alaskan Command, 1947-1967," 1966, p. 63.)



16 Aug 1967: The Military became involved in providing support to the civilian community in the Fairbanks area when the Chena and Tanana Rivers overflowed their banks and flooded the lower portions of Fairbanks as well as nearby Fort Wainwright. The rising waters disrupted communications and stranded personnel. The President declared Fairbanks a disaster area on 17 August and on 19 August the Federal Office of Emergency Planning began coordination disaster relief. The Air Force committed 500 of its personnel augmented with 200 Civil Air Patrol cadets to providing relief support. The water began receding on 22 August. The damage assessed at Fort Wainwright came to \$9,500,000 and that to Eielson AFB, \$225,000. Both Eielson AFB and Murphy Dome (F-2) AFS received Outstanding Unit Awards for their response and support of the recovery work. (Weidman, Hist, AAC, Jul-Dec 1967, pp. 110-112.)



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15 Aug 1968: The 604th SOS completes 15,000th combat sortie in one year of combat operations in Vietnam. (3 TFW History Jul-Sep 68, chronology, p. xii)



19 Aug 1968: Two F-100s, 90th Tactical Fighter Squadron, scrambled from the alert pad to wipe out a concentration of sampans 54 miles southwest of Can Tho. Some of the sampans were beached and several were in the water when the pilots arrived at the target. The pilots used napalm and 500-pound bombs. The FAC reported 10 sampans destroyed, six damaged, 6 bunkers destroyed, and two secondary ammunition explosions. (3 TFW history, Jul-Sep 1968)

17 Aug 1969: 4 F-100s from the 531st and 510th TFS, struck an enemy base camp deep in the Mekong Delta near the Gulf of Siam. The pilots were credited destroying numerous fortifications, sampans, and bunkers. (3 TFW History, Jul-Sep 69)

20 Aug 1978: The last F-4E, 66-0333, needed to equip AAC's two tactical fighter squadrons arrived from the 31st Tactical Fighter Wing, Homestead AFB, FL. It gave AAC 36 operational authorized F-4E and four not operational authorized F-4Es as maintenance spares. Each squadron received 20 Phantoms, with the older 1966 models going to the 18th Tactical Fighter Squadron and the 1967 models assigned to the 43rd Tactical Fighter Squadron. (Cloe, Hist, AAC, 1978, pp. 161-162.)



16 Nov 1998: The 3 WG held an Open Skies Treaty exercise from 16-20 November 1998, in preparation for an actual mission scheduled from 8-12 February 1999. This exercise validated Elmendorf's and the 3 WG's capability and preparedness to support the Open Skies Treaty mission. (Hist, 3 WG, 1998, p. 50)