



Remembering Our Heritage



10-16 December

13 Dec 1922: War Department General Orders 54 changed the name of Fort Seward to Chilkoot Barracks in honor of the route that had been established over the past between Alaska and Canada during the Gold Rush. The Fort was located on a 4,400-acre parcel near Haines, AK. It was part of the XI Corps area, whose headquarters was located at The Presidio in San Francisco, CA.



Companies E and F, 7th Infantry Regiment provided the garrison. The two companies each provided 40 officers and men to serve as escorts to President Warren Harding during his visit the Juneau 10 July 1923. Chilkoot Barracks remained the only Army post in Alaska until 1940 when Fort Richardson was established. A former Navy mine layer, renamed the *Captain James Fornance*, provided a link to the rest of southeast Alaska. (Woodman, *Duty Station Northwest*, Vol. II, pp. 21-25.)



11 Dec 1940: The 17th Transport Squadron (later 517th Airlift Squadron) was activated at McClellan Field, CA and assigned to the 64th Transport Group. They flew the Douglas C-47 Skytrain when they were activated. (Maurer *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, p.97)

12 Dec 1940: War Department General Order 9 designated military reservation near Anchorage, Fort Richardson, and flying field, Elmendorf Field. The Army named the post in honor of Brig Gen Wilds P. Richardson, former head of the Alaska Road Commission, and the field after Capt Hugh M. Elmendorf, killed in a flying accident near Wright Filed, OH, on 13 January 1933. With the establishment of the Western Defense Command, Alaska became a theater of operations. General DeWitt, however, did not have the authority to move major forces to Alaska without War Department approval. The Western Defense Command issued a directive that ground forces would be used to defend airfields so that air forces personnel could be freed to concentrate on training. Prior to that time, the air forces ground personnel had been employed in providing airfield security in addition to their regular duties. Colonel Davis inked a note at the bottom of the directive to his adjutant, Lt Jack C. Vincent, "Jack, this is a sort of Bible, file careful." (War Department General Order 9, Dec 12, 1940; Fleischer, *Hist, Elmendorf Field*, p. 15.)



14 Dec 1942: The 3rd Bomb Group scrambled eight bombers in response to B-17s reporting five Japanese destroyers off the coast of Buna. Another plane responded to an updated sighting reporting the fleet off Cape Ward Hunt. The plane made three unsuccessful strafing runs and was heavily damaged by anti-aircraft fire. Intelligence reports indicated that the Japanese were unloading and barging troops and large amounts of fuel, oil, and food along the Kumusi and Mambare rivers. In response, the 89th and 90th Bomb Squadrons bombed the landing

barges on the Kumusi River killing hundreds of Japanese soldiers. (Hist, Third Bombardment Group (Light), 1 January 1942 to 31 March 1944, pp. 32-33)



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16 Dec 1942: Captain Edward Lerner, 90th Bombardment Squadron Commander, led six B-25s modified for low-level attack on a mission against the Japanese airfield at Salamaua where they strafed and dropped parafrag bombs on Japanese aircraft. (*Grim Reapers*, p. 38)

Dec 1944: The 3rd Bomb Group was unable to maintain the airstrips at Leyte Island as it was the start of the rainy season. Almost 30 inches of rain fell on the island and combat missions were not flown during December 1944. All planes remained in Hollandia, unable to land at the Leyte airfield. (Hist, Third Bombardment Group (Light), 1 April 1944 to 31 December 1944, Unit History for December, p. 1)



14 Dec 1946: President Truman approved the Outline Plan establishing seven regional commands, one of which was the Alaskan Command (ALCOM). The others were the Far East Command, Pacific Command, Northeast Command, Atlantic Fleet, Caribbean Command and European Command. The establishment of the regional commands grew out of US Navy concerns stemming from dissatisfaction over the command relations in the Pacific during World War II. Instead of the one unified command, (Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Forces, Europe under Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower) two existed in

the Pacific. Admiral Chester Nimitz served as Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Fleet (CINCPAC) and Gen Douglas MacArthur as Commander-in-Chief, US Army Forces, Pacific (CINCAFPAC). The war time Joint Chiefs of Staff envisioned the arrangement would exist into the peace time military establishment. The Navy objected to the command arrangement in the Pacific and the Chief of Naval Operations on 1 February 1946 characterized the existing arrangement as "ambiguous" and "unsatisfactory." The Navy preferred a unified command for the entire Pacific. The other services opposed the Navy on the basis that commands should be established on the basis of mission rather than geographical area. They also feared that the Navy's plan would deprive General MacArthur of the forces he needed to carry out his mission in the Far East. A compromise was reached, resulting in the Outline Plan approved by President Truman. (Joint Chiefs of Staff Special Historical Study, *History of the Unified Command Plan, 1946-1977*, 20 Dec 1977, pp. 1-2.)

16 Dec 1946: The Joint Chiefs of Staff issued a directive establishing Alaskan Command, Far East Command and Pacific Command effective 1 January 1947. The executive agents for these commands respectively were Commanding General, Army Air Forces (later Chief of Staff, Air Force), the Chief of Naval Operations and the Chief of Staff, Army. The other commands were subsequently established at later dates during the year. Preparations were made to establish the Alaskan Command and Maj Gen Howard A. Craig, US Army Air Forces, was designated its first commander in addition to serving as the Commander, Alaskan Department. (*History of the Unified Command Plan*, p. 4; Hist, ALCOM, 1 Jan 1947-31 Dec 1951, p. 5.)



15 Dec 1949: The temporary radar site, which Alaskan Air Command had established on St. Lawrence Island to monitor Soviet shipping in the North Sea Route, was shut down. The radar had proven unreliable because of communication difficulties and the radar was difficult to support. (Thomblison, Hist, AAC, 1949, pp. 51-52.)



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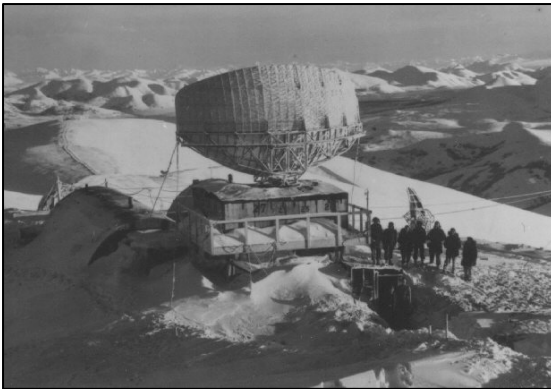


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11 Dec 1950: Col Virgil L. Zoller, 3rd Bombardment Wing Commander, successfully bombed a factory near Sinuiju, while encountering heavy anti-aircraft fire. In route back to base, he spotted a heavy concentration of enemy troops and vehicles near Chargongwan. He proceeded to attack the target until his ammunition was depleted. When he departed, numerous vehicles were destroyed and he inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy troops. Maj Gen Frank F. Everest, Commander Fifth Air Force, awarded Colonel Zoller the Silver Star on 3 August 1951. (*The Invader* 10 Aug 51)



13 Dec 1950: The Air Force issued a directive for the construction of a Global Communications (GLOBECOM) station of Elmendorf AFB, which would be one of six world-wide major radio stations (referred to as beltline stations) supporting a world-wide, long range, point-to-point and air-ground-air communications system. The GLOBECOM system was intended to permit the Air Force to communicate on world-wide bases. Alaska was selected because of its strategic location and its importance in the air defense of North America. The Alaskan Air Command planned to site the beltline station on Fort Richardson just off the Davis Highway near the boundary between the two installations. A tributary station was planned for Eielson AFB. A target date of 1 February 1952 was set for the Elmendorf AFB station with \$1,766,206 budgeted for the building and equipment. (Chart, Hist, AAC, Jul-Dec 1951, pp. 164-186.)



Development in Alaska, p.82; Hist, AAC, Jul-Dec 1951, pp. 193-194.)

13 Dec 1951: The AN/CPS-5 at Sparrevohn became operational. Five days later, winds estimated at 100 miles per hour blew the antenna down and damaged the set. The incident pointed to the need for radomes to protect the antennas against the elements. General Old considered the need for radomes to protect the antennas from the harsh Alaska environment to be a major priority. He recommended several commercial firms from which the radomes could be purchased. His engineers had the capability to construct the towers to mount them. (Chart, *ACW*

13 Dec 1952: The 3rd Bombardment Wing flew its 25,000 sortie of the Korean War. (Hist, 3BW, Jul-Dec 52, p. 3)

14 Dec 1956: The Air Force asked the Western Electric Company, the contractor for the Arctic DEW Line (Project 572), to build an Aleutian DEW Line Segment (Project Stretch Out). The Alaskan Air Command had already conducted a survey 17 April-25 May 1956 and sites had been selected. At the time, as construction of the Arctic DEW Line neared completion, the Air Force realized the need for a system to guard the western flank of North America. Initially, a system known as the West Wall was envisioned for the west coast of Alaska. The existing aircraft control and warning radar stations, however, fulfilled that requirement to a point north of the Alaska Peninsula. The Air Force decided a system of DEW Line radar stations was needed to provide surveillance further south. It resulted in the decision to build the Aleutian DEW Line Segment (Project Stretch Out) that would tie into a system of picket ship airborne based surveillance radars operated by the U.S. Navy. It called for one main and five auxiliary stations spaced about 106 miles apart. (Miller, Hist, AAC, Jan-Jun 1957, p. 178.)



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10 Dec 1959: Headquarters, USAF, informed Maj Gen Conrad F. Necrason, Alaskan Air Command Commander, that the 71st Air Rescue Squadron had been programmed to be inactivated in March 1960. Its duties would be absorbed by Alaskan Air Command units. The Rescue Control Center would continue to function in coordinating the search and rescue and emergency evacuation support provided by various, federal, state and local agencies. Senator E.L. "Bob" Bartlett vigorously protested the decision. There was also strong reaction against the decision from civilian pilots. The squadron provided search and rescue support to the civil sector as well as the military and Alaskans had come to depend on the squadron. They directed their ire the high level planning behind the inactivation. The anger dampened over time as a result of an education plan and promises that search and rescue would not be neglected in Alaska. (Miller, Hist, AAC, Jul-Dec 1959, p. 64.)



12 Dec 1959: The *Anchorage Daily Times* reported the unveiling of the new FAA Air Route Traffic Control Center outside of the Boniface Gate to Elmendorf AFB. The center regulated traffic Northway through Summit to the Yukon River. The center had been actually used since 8 August 1959. Approximately 100 employees worked in the center, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The original traffic control center was established on Elmendorf Army Air Base in 1943 and moved to Merrill Field in 1944. (The *Anchorage Daily Times*, 12 Dec 1959.)



13 Dec 1967: The aircraft alert configuration was changed. The College Shoes rotational F-106s stopped performing alert at Galena AS because they were equipped with larger external fuel tanks which made operations hazardous for winter operations. Instead, two F-106s pulled alert at Eielson AFB and two at King Salmon. The 317th Fighter Interceptor Squadron maintained four F-102s on alert at Galena AS and two at King Salmon AS. (Hist, 317FIS, 1 Jul-31 Dec 1967, p. 3.)

14 Dec 1968: The 17th Tactical Airlift Squadron flew their first air land mission to the T-3 ice island that involved delivering 450 drums of diesel fuel and 50,000 pounds of general cargo to the Navy research station there. The Navy had been unable to deliver the fuel with its own aircraft and commercial airlift was not available at the time. The 17th Tactical Airlift Squadron continued to provide airlift support during 1969. (Weidman, Hist, AAC, Jul 1968-Jun 1969, p. 62.)

12 Dec 1970: The Tactical Air Command transferred six F-4Es (68-0453, 68-0468, 68-0477, 68-0483 and 68-0493) to the Alaskan Air Command for assignment to the 43rd Tactical Fighter Squadron. It increased the squadron to 24 authorized F-4Es. Headquarters, USAF subsequently authorized the squadron at 26 F-4Es. The additional two aircraft were needed to provide maintenance spares. The Tactical Air Command transferred three F-4Es (68-0430, 68-0458 and 68-0474) to Alaskan Air Command on 10 May 1971. One of the F-4E was a replacement for F-4E, 68-0419, which had crashed into Cook Inlet 18 February 1971 and was not recovered. (Mongin and Mesloh, Hist, AAC, Jul 1970-Jun 1972, p. 59.)





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15 Dec 1972: Bob Hope and his tour group put on a one hour performance for around 800 personnel during a refueling stop at Shemya AFB (now known as Eareckson Air Station) while en route to the Far East for shows in Vietnam, Japan and Thailand. ("Shemya Sees Hope and Show Beauties," *Sourdough Sentinel*, 5 Jan 1973.)

10 Dec 1974: Lt Gen James E. Hill held a press conference for the media in Headquarters, ALCOM to explain the rationale for the use of the Blair Lakes Bombing and Gunnery Range. The presentation included a short chronology of Blair Lakes, its importance and why the Oklahoma Range had not been acceptable. General Hill then briefed newly elected Governor Jay Hammond and key members of his staff on 16 December. Following further discussions with the governor, General Hill agreed in February 1975 to reduce the range area from 33,000 to 13,000 acres and establish an elaborate warning system for sportsmen, pilots and hunters who might want to use the range area. They included high power strobe lights, colored pylons and a microwave link between the range safety officer and the Fairbanks radar approach control. Range operating hours were established at 0900-1100 and 1400-1700 daily Monday through Friday. Hunters and sportsmen who wanted access during non-operational hours had to obtain permits from the Fort Wainwright military police. (Cloe, Hist, AAC, Jul 1974-Jun 1975, pp. 190-191.)



15 Dec 1981: The Elmendorf Rescue Coordination Center launched a search and rescue missions when it received word that a Cessna 185 with four people aboard had crashed at the 10,300-foot level of Mount McKinley during a flight seeing trip in which their aircraft encountered a downdraft. An Army CH-47 attempted to land near the crash site, but had to abort the mission because of high winds and adverse weather. A CH-47 then landed six-

member mountain rescue team at the 6,700 foot level on 16 December. Because of the weather, the team was unable to reach the crash site until five days later, where it found two of the four individuals alive. It took the two survivors and one of the deceased to a 9,500-foot where they were evacuated by a CH-47. The remaining rescue team and the other deceased were taken off the next day by a CH-47. One of the survivors, from Indiana, filed a law suit in 1984 for \$1.5 million, claiming that the government had been negligent in its rescue attempt. He claimed that the CH-47 could have landed and as a result, he had suffered frostbite, which required the amputation of fingers and parts of fingers. Although the plane was equipped with sleeping bags and packs, there were no tents, ground pads or stoves. The suit prompted a flurry of letters to the editor, most condemning the suit and supporting the rescuers. One referred to the situation as ironic and indicative of the unwillingness of an individual not to account for his actions but blame others. Several others pointed out that the military SAR efforts for aimed primarily at war time conditions, but were conducted as humanitarian reasons. (Cloe, Hist. AAC, 1981, p. 352.)

16 Dec 1988: Lt Gen Thomas McInerney approved the initial manning proposal for the Alaskan sub-unified command known as Alaskan Command (ALCOM). It called for 117 manpower positions of which 154 were new and 23 "dual hat." (Cloe, Hist, AAC, 1988, p. 35.)



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12-13 Dec 1994: Lt Gen Lawrence Boese, 11 AF Commander, visited Eareckson AS and became aware of the enormity of the work required to implement the station's drawdown. Because of departures of personnel with no replacements, there was not enough manpower there to handle all the requirements and meet the 1 April 1995 deadline for turning



Eareckson AS over to a contractor. At the time, less than 78 of the approximately 575 personnel once assigned to the island remained. As a result, a drawdown team of volunteers, Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard personnel was formed. They were organized into five composite teams, which worked 12-hour days, six days a week for 90 days to meet the deadline. The effort involved closing buildings and inventorying and shipping unneeded equipment and supplies. The teams emptied the contents of 76 buildings scheduled for closure and 42 scheduled to remain open. The effort involved processing 6.3 million pounds of high priority equipment and supplies for shipment by air and another 3.9 million pounds for shipment by sealift. It included 1,300 refrigerators and office furniture dating back to 1957. (Cloe, Hist, AAC, 1994, p. 13-14.)



13 Dec 2001: President George Bush provided a formal six-month notice to Russia that the United States would withdraw from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, stating: "I have concluded the ABM treaty hinders our government's ability to develop ways to protect our people from future terrorist or rogue state missile attacks." It cleared the way for the construction of a missile defense system to begin in Alaska during the spring of 2002. The plans called for basing a command center and five silo-based missiles at Fort Greely and an advanced radar installation at Eareckson AS on Shemya Island. (U. S. Gives Russia Formal Notice of withdrawal from ABM Treaty," a *Washington Post* article by Steven Mufson and Dana Milbank, reprinted in the *Anchorage Daily News*, 14 Dec 2001; Tom Kizzia, "Missile Defense System in Alaska Can Go Forward," *Anchorage Daily News*, 14 Dec 2001.)