



## Remembering Our Heritage



### 3-9 December

**6 Dec 1941:** Col Everett Davis, on the eve of Pearl Harbor, noted: "The Air Force present is so small, consist of such old equipment and is in such poor condition as to constitute a cadre sent to the territory in advance of the main body for the purpose of gaining information on the geography, developing a technique of cold weather operation and principally to develop a plan and facilities for the operation of the main force on its arrival. By no stretch of the imagination can it be accepted as a force able to defend the territory against any attack in force." Colonel Davis considered the plans to send forces to Alaska in the event of an emergency unrealistic because of the lengthy time it would take to organize and train the once they arrived. While the cadre already in Alaska could provide training, the newly arrived forces would suffer losses from enemy action and the weather. General Buckner and Colonel Davis pointed this fact out on numerous occasions. Colonel Davis in a typed draft of a plan titled "Status of Air Defense in Alaska," listed three possible enemy attack scenarios: by air from the northeast part of Siberia, by surface forces supported by ship based aircraft from the Bering Sea and by surface forces supported by ship based aircraft from the Pacific. He reasoned that the latter would be most likely, and reiterated the need to destroy the force at sea. The possible collapse of Russia might give the Japanese bases near Alaska. Attacks from the sea might give the enemy greater returns. The plan conceded that the attack on Alaska would be a diversion with the idea of damaging national prestige and diverted forces elsewhere. The principle objective would be Hawaii and the Philippines and even the continental United States. Another possibility was the capture of all of Alaska for use as a forward base against the rest of the United States. To counter these scenarios, Colonel Davis recommended stationing three groups, each with two bombardment squadrons and one pursuit squadron, with a group stationed at each field being constructed. (Ransohoff,, Hist, Eleventh Air Force, pp. 83-84.)



**7 Dec 1941:** The Japanese attacked the Navy base at Peal Harbor in two waves with 362 aircraft beginning at 0755. Seven U.S. battle ships, *Arizona* (BB-39), *California* (BB-44), *Maryland* (BB-46), *Nevada* (BB-36) *Oklahoma* (BB-37), *Tennessee* (BB-43), *West Virginia* BB-48) were moored in neat lines along the south east side of Ford Island and *Pennsylvania* (BB-38) was in dry dock. All were hit, four sunk with the *Arizona* and *Oklahoma* lost. Only the *Pennsylvania* escaped serious damage. With the exception of the *Arizona* and *Oklahoma*, all the battle ships were repaired and later saw service in the war. The minelayer *Oglala* (CM-4) was

badly damaged and the target ship, the former battle ship *Utah* (BB-31), destroyed. Three light cruisers *Helena* (CL-50), *Honolulu* (CL-48) and *Raleigh* (CL-7) and three destroyers *Cassin* (DD-372), *Downes* (DD-375) and *Shaw* (DD-373) were damaged. Oahu's air strength was almost wiped out with 164 planes destroyed. The planes had been lined up wingtip to wingtip to guard against sabotage. The death toll included 2,008 Navy, 109 Marine Corps, 218 Army and 68 civilians for a total of 2,403. The Navy lost three times as many men as it had lost in the Spanish-American War and World War I combined. The Japanese lost 29 aircraft, five midget submarines and approximately 100 lives. While devastating the Pacific Fleet,



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the Japanese failed to destroy the support base of overhaul shops, dry docks, fuel storage tanks and warehouses. They also did not sink the three Pacific Fleet aircraft carriers, *Enterprise* (CV-6), *Lexington* (CV-2), and *Saratoga* (CV-3), which were elsewhere at the time. (Samuel Eliot Morison, *History of the United States Naval Operations in World War II*, Vol. III, *The Rising Sun in the Pacific, 1931-1942*, Little, Brown and Company, Boston, Mass, 1948, pp. 80-146.)

The air attacks killed 193 Army Air Forces personnel on Hickam, Wheeler and Bellows Fields and destroyed 64 Hawaiian Air Force's airplanes. Six Army Air Forces pilots shot down ten Japanese planes with 2/Lt. George S. Welch downing four, 2/Lt. Kenneth M. Taylor, two, and four other pilots shooting down one each. (Haulman, *One Hundred Years of Flight*, p. 39.)

Japanese propagandist taunted the Americans with cries of "Where is your Navy now?" (Driscoll, *War Discovers Alaska*, 1943)



Alaska first learn of the attack from 24-year old August (Augie) Hiebert, a radio engineer at the KFAR transmitter site near Fairbanks. "Cap" Austin E. Lathrop, Alaska's first millionaire, had opened the station in 1939, referring to it as "Key for Alaska's Riches." He hired two engineers to operate the site, Stanton Bennett and his assistant Augie Hiebert who lived at the station. Hiebert got up at around 0830 (Hawaii time was 0730). It was a clear bright day with minus 35-degree temperatures outside. The station was not scheduled to go on the air until 1400 and

Hiebert began turning the dials of the short wave receiver to see what the international stations were broadcasting. He stopped at a station that was broadcasting a drama at around 0910. At about 0927, the program was interrupted and the announcer came on to say that the Japanese were bombing Pearl Harbor and Hickam Field. Hiebert woke up Bennett and the two confirmed the attacks and notified the local Army officials at Ladd Field. Both were kept busy for the rest of the day making announcements for the Army. (Potter, *Alaska Under Arms*, pp. 112-113.)

Pearl Harbor caught the Alaska Defense Command by surprise. General Buckner ordered a full alert and troops were recalled to their duty stations. Jean Potter described the scenes. "Guns fired at Fort Rich calling men to arms. Soldiers rushed to fighting positions with ammunition. Plans took off. Army trucks went into Anchorage to pickup soldiers. Wide streets cleared of cars. Storekeepers began taping windows. Army trucks roared through streets. That night there was total blackout. Following morning sirens went off and aircraft roared into sky. Citizens



looked up through falling snow. Rumors persisted in the following months that Japanese bombers and fighters had tried to fly in from the sea that night from a Japanese carrier off Alaska Peninsula. Wives and children were evacuated, and civilians advised to dig slit trenches. Dimond told Congress "My people feel they occupy a battlefield.'" (Jean Potter, *Alaska Under Arms*, New York, 1942, pp. 9-11.)



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The Elmendorf Field historian recorded that guns were fired on post calling men to arms. Men rushed to fighting positions. Planes took off on patrol. Army trucks were sent into Anchorage to pickup military personnel. Anchorage bordered up windows. Trucks moved back and forth all day carrying war supplies. A total black out was ordered that night. In the next few weeks, rumors persisted that enemy fighters and bombers had tried to fly in from the sea and that a Japanese carrier was lurking off the Alaska Peninsula, planning to strike Alaska, but the heavy sleet and fog prevented the mission from being conducted. (Freischer, Hist, Elmendorf Field, p. 29.)



Fort Richardson and Elmendorf Field were built to peacetime standards with streets and buildings laid out in neat grids. Although many buildings were temporary, others were built as permanent structures along the east-west runway in a 500 by 1000-foot area that presented a good bombing target. The headquarters and main hangars were located here. General Buckner, following Pearl Harbor, asked that the facilities be dispersed. This was done to a degree with the construction of a nearby warehouse loop area with railroad tracks in a circle around the loop. (Ransohoff, Hist, 11AF, pp. 94-95.)

General Buckner ordered the serviceable B-18s to conduct daylight patrols over the Gulf of Alaska in the vicinity of Kodiak Island with the instructions "to prevent attack and destroy hostile air forces." The bombers were loaded with 300-pound bombs. The P-36s were placed on 24-hour ground alert. After things settled down and it became evident that Japan was not planning an immediate attack against Alaska, routine patrols were conducted over the Gulf of Alaska and later extended out from Yakutat Island, Annette Island and Nome as more units arrived to defend Alaska. (Ransohoff, Hist, 11AF, pp. 87-88.)



General Buckner, venting his frustrations, wrote General Arnold, stating: "At dawn this morning I watched our entire Alaskan Air Force take to the air so as not to be caught on the field...consisted of six obsolescent medium bombers and twelve obsolete pursuit planes. Obviously they would be of little value in protecting Alaska from destructive air raids." He also reported that there was a shortage of ammunition, limited number of bombs and that a request of aviation gasoline had accumulated 20 endorsements, but no gas. General Buckner ended his letter, stating: "Some months ago I wrote a letter stating that I would rather be reinforced by one heavy bombardment squadron than a division of ground troops since the only striking force that we can use is bombardment aviation and the enemy is always at a disadvantage when he is on the water and we are on the land." (Ransohoff, Hist, 11AF, p. 86.)



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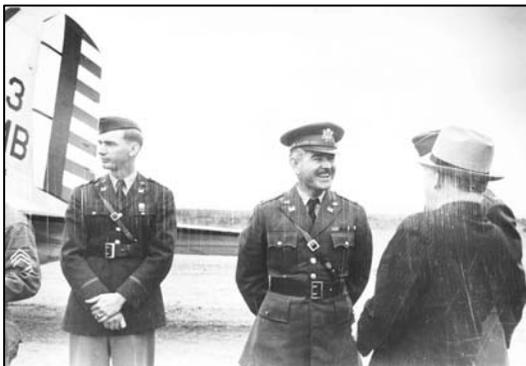


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At the time of Pearl Harbor, the Army garrison in Alaska numbered 21,500 officers and enlisted men. It doubled to 40,424 during the next five months. The increased represented a considerable more than what was originally planned for. The numbers included a large number of engineer troops needed to rush construction to completion. (Conn, Fairchild and Engelman, *The Western Hemisphere, Guarding the United States and Its Outpost*, p. 255.)



The Air Force, Alaska Defense Command, the youngest and smallest overseas air force at the time, consisted of 2,200 officers and men. At the time of Pear Harbor it had six operational B-18As and 12 P-36Cs on Elmendorf Field. (Craven and Cate, *The Army Air Forces in World War II, Vol. I, Plans and Early Operations*, pp. 166, 276.)



No additional air units had been sent to Alaska prior to Pearl Harbor. The three squadrons in Alaska were under strength and under equipped with obsolete aircraft. The Army Air Forces' policy at the time was that the bulk of the air forces should be concentrated in the United States and deployed in emergencies to locations requiring reinforcements. Commanders in Alaska claimed that there was not enough time to deploy forces. They could not be trained in time to operate in Alaskan conditions. The enemy could occupy the bases before reinforcements arrived. The air units on hand were not equipped to defend Alaska. While the Headquarters, Army Air Forces, appreciated the concerns and General Arnold agreed to sending a bombardment and a fighter group to Alaska there was not enough time. At the time of Pearl Harbor, the agreement had not advanced beyond the planning stage. On 7 December 1941, Alaska was the only oversees location without modern aircraft. Colonel Davis characterized his command as "a cadre sent to the territory in advance of the main body." (Craven and Cate, *The Army Air Forces in World War II, Vol. 1, Plans and Early Operations*, pp. 169-170, 275-277.)

**7 Dec 1941:** Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the Army Air Forces reassigned the senior leadership form the 3rd Bombardment Group to training duties throughout the Army Air Forces and by mid-January 1942, Lt Robert Strickland found himself the senior officer. The 3rd Bombardment Group flew anti-submarine patrols off the eastern seaboard before departing the United States for Australia. (*The Grim Reapers*, p. 7)



**9 Dec 1942:** In another attempt to bomb Kiska, the Eleventh Air Force launched a B-24D, 41-2367, from the 404th Bombardment Squadron flown by Capts John Andrews and Louis Blau on a preliminary weather reconnaissance mission. Brig Gen William Lynch, the Army Air Forces Inspector General, and Col John V. Hart, Chief of Staff, Eleventh Air Force, were aboard as mission observers. General Arnold had sent General Lynch to the Aleutians after hearing reports about the weather and its impact on missions. Captains Andrew and Blau flew their bomber to Attu, circled over Hotz Bay and then headed back to Adak, arriving there at 1600. They found the field obscured by clouds, which also hid the alternate fields as far away as Cold Bay. After three attempts to land at Adak, they flew to nearby



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Atka Islands where the weather station there had reported clear conditions. Since the field there was not ready, they flew around the island looking for a flat place to land. Spotting a flat area at the head of Bechevin Bay, they made a wheels up landing after a low-level approach across the bay. Other than General Lynch, who had a cracked collar, no one was injured. The B-24 broke in two just behind the wing trailing edge. Everyone had moved forward prior to landing, which prevented their possible injury. The crew spent the night at the crash landing site. A B-24 from the 21st Bombardment Squadron arrived over the site the next day followed by another from the 404th Bombardment Squadron. Supplies including sleeping bags were dropped. A PBY crew from Fleet Air Wing Four arrived shortly afterwards. It could not take off with the crew because of the weight. The seaplane tender *Gillis* (AVD-12) arrived later that evening and evacuated the crew, who were given Christmas leave. The B-24 was abandoned where it remains today. (Ransohoff, Hist, 11AF, p. 241; Transcribed Oral Hist Interview, John H. Cloe, Historian, Alaskan Air Command, with John Andrews, 13 Oct 1982.)

**7 Dec 1948:** General Twining wrote the Alaska Housing Authority to express his concerns about the critical shortage of family housing available for military members in Alaska and the impact it was having on increasing the force structure in the territory. He sought to increase the number of housing and put an end to the exorbitant rents being charged military families. General Twining stated..."in war the American citizen will serve his country wherever his services are needed, but in peace time he expects and is entitled to a home for his family. Capable, trained and desperately needed men will not continue to serve in the Armed Forces unless they have some hope of a normal American family life." (Hist. ALCOM, Jan 1947-Dec 1951, p. 151.)



**4 Dec 1951:** Headquarters Alaskan Air Command issued a training directive dividing Alaska into coastal and domestic air defense zones (ADIZ). The instructions required the interception and identification of any unknown aircraft entering the ADIZ. The rules of engagement required the fighter pilots to take action when: the aircraft opened its bomb bay doors, dropped objects, open fire with missile or guns, carried the markings of a known enemy or when directed ground control intercept controller. (Chart. Hist, AAC, Jul-Dec 1951, pp. 98-99.)



**4-5 Dec 1952:** An 8th Bombardment Squadron B-26B, assigned to the 3rd Bomb Wing, flown by Maj Theodore H. Kuch, Jr., the squadron operations officer, was hit by ground fire during a night mission against a supply depot near Kangdong, North Korea. Major Kuch managed to fly his B-26 to near the front lines before the crew had to bail out. Major Kuch was killed during the bail out. His observer, Airman Second Class Alexander M. Brown, broke his right leg when he hit the horizontal stabilizer and his nose and jaw on landing.

He was rescued two days later and spent 27 months in the hospital before being medically discharged. The gunner Airman Second Class Clarence Mosely was rescued five days later and became the Air Force's first quadruple amputee. (Alexander M. Brown, "Bailout From The B-28," *Invader*, Vol 8, No. 1, Mar 1991)

**5 Dec 1952:** Headquarters Alaskan Air Command activated the following nine aircraft control and warning squadrons (AC&WS): 705th at Naknek (F-3, later renamed King Salmon), 708th at Indian Mountain (F-16), 717th at Takotna (F-10, later renamed Tatalina), 719th at Sparrevohn (F-15), 710th at Cape Prince of Wales (F-4, later renamed Tin City), 711th at Cape Lisburne (F-7), 712th at Northeast Cape (F-9), 794th at Cape Newenham (F-5) and 795th at Cape Romanzof (F-6). The following stations were designated ground control intercept with a squadron authorization of 14 officers and 160 airmen: Naknek (F-3, later renamed King Salmon), Indian Mountain (F-16); Takotna (F-10, later renamed Tatalina) and Sparrevohn (F-15). The

Source: Office of History, Elmendorf AFB



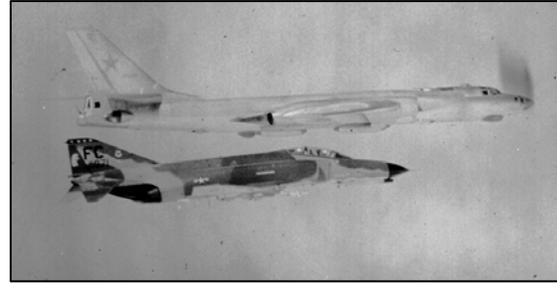
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following were designated early warning with a squadron authorization of 4 officers and 160 airmen: Cape Prince of Wales (F-4, later renamed Tin City), Cape Lisburne (F-7), Northeast Cape (F-9), Cape Newenham (F-5) and Cape Romanzof (F-6). (HQ AAC GO 70, 5 Dec 1952; Chart, Hist, AAC, Jul-Dec 1952, pp. 20-21.)

**5 Dec 1961:** Two F-102s, assigned to the 317th Fighter Interceptor Squadron, intercepted two TU-16 Badgers off the northwest coast of Alaska over the Bering Sea.



**Dec 1967:** Department of Defense military and civilian employees and their dependents accounted for 40 percent of the Alaska population. Military pay contributed \$82,325,511 to the Alaska economy and civilian pay, \$21,791,331. (Weidman, Hist, AAC, Jul-Dec 1967, pp. 11-12.)

**7 Dec 1967:** Two F-102s from the 317th Fighter Interceptor Squadron were scrambled from Galena to intercept an IL-14 Crate off the west coast of Alaska. No photographs were taken because of darkness. (Hist, 317FIS, 1 Jul-31 Dec 1967, p. 4.)



**7 Dec 1968:** Two F-100s from the 90th Tactical Fighter Squadron were diverted from their original target to strike enemy sampans along a canal bank 25 miles northwest of Can Tho. The pilots arrived on target; the soldiers breached the sampans and made a run for the tree line. The pilots dropped their bombs at intervals along the bank and then saturated the entire tree line with canon fire. Pilots were credited with 12 confirmed kills along the bank and destroying six sampans. (3 TFW History, Sep-Dec 68, p. 29)

Two F-100s, 531st Tactical Fighter Squadron, bombed and strafed a huge enemy structure complex 55 miles southwest of Can Tho. Pilots were credited with destroying 14 structures and 2 supply train cars, while damaging 25 structures and igniting 6 fires. (3 TFW History, Sep-Dec 68, p. 38)

**4 Dec 1970:** SSgt Carolyn F. Blansett and Sgt Cheryl E. McGhee, 1931st Communications Group, and SSgt Barbara Johnson, 5008th Support Squadron, were to first women to enter the Alaskan Air Command NCO Leadership School as full-fledged students. Women participated in portions of the course before but never for the full four week course. The three women were assigned dormitory rooms on the first floor and were involved in all aspects of the course. (MSgt Charles E. Lockhart, "WAF Find School..A Challenge, *Sourdough Sentinel*, pp. 8-9.)

**9 Dec 1969:** The 90th Attack Squadron flew its first A-37 mission of the Vietnam War. (3 TFW History, Oct-Dec 69, p. 33)

**5-6 Dec 1972:** The Alaskan Air Command conducted public hearing in Fairbanks on the construction of the Blair Lakes Bombing and Gunnery Range. The Command received the draft environmental statement for the range from HQ USAF in September 1972. The statement received criticism from Federal and State agencies with the consensus that it was incomplete and lacked scientific documentation. Local groups such as the Tanana Valley Sportsmen's Association, the Friends of the Earth, the Fairbanks Environmental Center and the Alaska Alpine Club voiced their opposition and asked for a public hearing. Col Arnold D. Castle, AAC Staff Judge Advocate, characterized the attitude of those attending as being antagonistic towards the military. Few seemed concerned about the environmental process and were more focused on the economic impact and loss of recreational opportunities. (Hales, Hist, AAC, Jul 1972-Jun 1974, pp. 175-176.)

Source: Office of History, Elmendorf AFB



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**9 Dec 1981:** Lt Gen Lynwood Clark, Alaskan Air Command Commander, telephoned Senator Ted Stevens (R-AK) to seek his support for providing a Cost Of Living Allowance (COLA) for single airmen residing in dormitories. His predecessors had tried unsuccessfully for years to get the allowance. General Clark's efforts succeeded and the airmen were scheduled to begin receiving the COLA in effective 12 January 1982. (Cloe, Hist. AAC, 1981, p. 122.)



**9 Dec 1983:** The entire Regional Operations Control Center (ROCC) system achieved fully operational capability when the Southwest ROCC at March AFB, CA, achieved initial operational capability (IOC). The Elmendorf AFB ROCC had been the fourth to achieve IOC. The first had been the Southeast ROCC at Tyndall AFB, FL; followed by the two Canadian ROCCs at North Bay, Ontario; The Northeast ROCC at Griffis AFB, NY; and the Northwest ROCC at McChord AFB, WA. (Cloe, Hist, AAC, 1983, p. 277.)