



Remembering Our Heritage



31 December – 6 January

31 Dec 1940: Brig Gen Simon Buckner hosted a New Year's Eve party for his officers and invited guests from Anchorage. (*The Anchorage Daily Times*, 31 Dec 1940, p. 1.)

1 Jan 1941: There were only two reliable radio ranges in Alaska, one at Nome and the other at Fairbanks. The nearby mountains interfered with the one at Anchorage. There was no complete weather forecasting system in Alaska. (Ransohoff, Hist, 11AF, p. 27.)



31 Dec 1942: The 3rd Bomb Group strafed and bombed the Lae airdrome, possibly destroying 6 parked bombers. P-38s intercepted attacking Zeros and scored 8 kills during the attack. During the month, the 3rd Bombardment Group flew 189 combat sorties during the month, dropping 86 tons of bombs and expending 83,290 rounds of ammunition. Totals for 1942 were 2,029 sorties flown, 324 tons of bombs dropped and 398,180

rounds of ammunition expended. (Hist, Third Bombardment Group (Light), 1 January 1942 to 31 March 1944, p. 34)

Jan 1942: General Marshall informed President Roosevelt that the War Department feared Japan might attempt a raid on Alaska "at any moment." The War Department intelligence staff prophesied that as soon as the Japanese could gather forces, they would launch an offensive towards Alaska with the occupation of bases in mind. This led to the decision to send more reinforcements to Alaska. The new flying units that arrived were not experienced in Arctic flying conditions and the pilots were for the most part recent graduates of flight schools and inexperienced. Most military observers during the formative period of the WWII military in Alaska considered Alaska to be air rather than a ground theater of operations because of its large area and widely scattered population centers. General Buckner on hearing that Alaska was to be reinforced with additional ground forces remarked: "I would rather have an additional heavy bombardment squadron than a division of troops. The time to strike hostile expeditions is



when their troops are crowded in transports and their planes on the decks of carriers." However, the availability of air units was limited due to priorities elsewhere. Ground troops continued arrive to defend the bases that were being established. Although Pearl Harbor resulted in the sending of the 11th Fighter Squadron and 77th Bombardment Squadron to Alaska, the Army Air Forces remained reluctant to commit more units to Alaska's defense. Alaska did not enjoy a high priority. The War Department placed Alaska in a Category Defense C (minor attack probably) except for Dutch Harbor, which was placed in Category D (subject to major attack). While Dutch Harbor received ground forces for its defenses, no air units were provided. Construction of an airfield on Otter Point, Umnak Island, however, was started. General Buckner pressed the point following Pearl Harbor that Alaska could be used launch an attack against Japan. He suggested to the Commander, Alaskan Sector, 13th Naval District that joint plans be formulated for such an eventuality. The plan, however, depended on Russia granting basing rights. Admiral King was not receptive to the idea, the senior Navy leadership felt that Alaska already had sufficient forces. They believed that although Alaska was vulnerable to attack it would be unlikely that the Japanese would attempt it due to the operational and logistical difficulties. Admiral King believed instead that the Japanese might attempt submarine and air raids against Alaska. He believed it unwise to use Alaska for offensive operations against Japan unless the Russians agreed to provide Far East basing rights. (Ferguson, AAF Study No. 4, pp. 22-28.)



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1946-1959: The upward trend in Alaska's population began in 1940 and continued with the military buildup during the Cold War years. The World War II buildup of military forces had been tailored to conventional war with relatively short range aircraft. The Cold War buildup was in response to long range strategic bombers carrying nuclear weapons. While the military tried to defend all of Alaska during the war with far flung garrisons, the emphasis during the Cold War was on the major population centers of Anchorage, Fairbanks and Kodiak with their surrounding military bases. The military embarked on a major base construction program during the late 1940s and early 1950s. It included the construction of an elaborate air defense system. The system reached its height in strength in the late 1950s when the threat of intercontinental ballistic missiles emerged. Other than the Clear Ballistic Missile Early Warning System (BMEWS) station, no major construction projects were undertaken during the late 1950s and 1960s. Alaska did not figure in the basing of offensive missiles. It brought protest from the local military and political leaders. Senator Gruening, alarmed at the downward trend, noted in a 1960 newsletter to his constituents: "Whereas there had been 48,563 military personnel in 1952, there were only 33,645 in 1958, 33,029 in 1959 and 32,606 on June 30, 1960." The downward trend threatened Alaska's economic well being that it had become accustomed to with the growth of the military sector. (George W. Rogers, *The Future of Alaska: Economic Consequences of Statehood*, John Hopkins Press, Baltimore, MD, 1962, pp. 97-102.)



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Alaska Population, 1945-1960

Interlude-Post World War II to Korea			
	Civilian	Military	Total
1945	79,000	60,000	139,000
1946	80,000	19,000	99,000
1947	83,000	25,000	108,000
1948	93,000	27,000	120,000
1949	100,000	30,000	130,000
1950	112,000	26,000	138,000
Post-Korean War			
1951	126,000	38,000	164,000
1952	146,000	50,000	196,000
1953	162,000	50,000	212,000
1954	169,000	49,000	218,000
1955	171,000	50,000	221,000
Interlude-Jets to Missiles			
1956	175,000	45,000	220,000
1957	180,000	48,000	228,000
1958	178,000	35,000	213,000
1959	186,000	34,000	220,000
1960	194,000	34,000	228,000

Rogers, *The Future of Alaska*, Table 8, p. 95.



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1 Jan 1947: The Alaskan Command (ALCOM) was established along with the Far East Command and Pacific Command as one of first unified commands based on lessons learned from World War II. Alaska's strategic location for defensive and offensive operations and its widespread population centers and inadequate communications dictated the establishment of an organization for centralized planning and coordination of joint training and operations. It exercised no operational controls over its components at the time other than that allowed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). The three components that reported to ALCOM were: the Alaskan Air Command (AAC); Alaskan Department, later replaced by United States Army, Alaska (USARAL); and Alaskan Sea Frontier (ALSEAFRON).



The establishment of ALCOM came six months prior to the President signing of the Armed Forces Unification Act into law which called for "the effective strategic direction of the armed forces and for their operation under unified control and for their integration into an efficient team of land, naval and air forces." In recognition of the importance of airpower to the defense of Alaska, Maj. Gen. Howard A. Craig, Army Air Forces, Commanding General, Alaskan Department, also served as the first Commander-in-Chief, Alaskan Command (CINCAL). With the creating of the United States Air Force (USAF) as a separate service in September 1947, the CINCALs came from the general officer ranks of the USAF. The Alaskan Command reported initially to Headquarters, Army Air Forces. With the implementation of the Armed Forces Unification Act in 1947 and creation of the USAF in September 1947, it reported the Department of the Air Force, which served as the Executive Agent for the Joint Chiefs of Staff for the defense of Alaska. With the 1 December 1958 implementation of the Defense Department Reorganization Act, ALCOM reported directly to JCS. The act removed USAF as the higher headquarters and gave CINCAL operational control over the three component commands in Alaska. The mission of ALCOM included providing for the defense of the Alaskan mainland and Aleutian Islands, exercising unified command over the component forces and supporting neighboring commands. Other responsibilities included coordinating civil defense, maintaining a capability to support deployed forces, reviewing and commenting on major construction projects, overseeing cold weather training and assisting in the development of the territory and its resources. (HQ ALCOM GO 1, 1 Jan 1947; Hist, ALCOM, Jan 1947-Dec 1951, pp. iv-v.)

January 1948: There was an acute shortage of on base family housing and off base housing was expensive. Families living on Aleutian Islands bases were housed in surplus World War II. Those on the mainland lived in family quarters, most of which were built during the war. The tables below show the break down of housing on Elmendorf AFB and the costs of constructing new housing. The high cost of construction resulted from the need to transport materials to Alaska and high labor costs. Rentals in the local communities were high, usually \$100.00 a month plus utilities for a very small place. Three 500-man barracks were under construction at Elmendorf



AFB and one at Ladd AFB for single enlisted personnel by the end of 1948. Work, however, had been halted due to lack of funding. The Air Force was faced with the need to build family housing to accommodate the Cold War expansion. It planned to construction 26,595 units at 49 bases, but by mid-June 1950 had begun construction on only 4,292. Alaska, where 3,000 to 4,000 units had been planned, proved difficult due to high construction and utility costs and the lack of interest by construction firms and the need for housing to meet cold weather standards. (Maxwell, Hist, AAC, 1948, pp.21-23.)



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Status of Family Quarters, Elmendorf AFB, 1948

Status of Personnel Requesting Quarters	No. of Quarters Allotted	No. of Quarter Applications	No. of Personnel Over Quarters Allocation
Field Grade	99	102	3
Company Grade	204	323	119
Senior NCOs	373	410	37
Civilians	162	240	78
Totals	838	1075	237

Maxwell, Hist, AAC, 1948, p. 21.

Family Housing Construction Costs

Quarters Designed for	Cost Per Family Unit	Total Cost
Field Grade Officers	\$61,600	\$223,200
Company Grade Officers	\$52,700	\$421,600
Senior NCOs	\$47,000	\$376,000
Civilians	\$59,000	\$118,000

Maxwell, Hist, AAC, 1948, p. 22.

31 Dec 1950: During December 1950, the 3rd Bombardment Wing flew 856 sorties and reported six crewmembers missing in action. The wing lost a B-26 when it ran out of fuel over the sea. The crew reported they were bailing out and were never heard from again. Two other B-26s received heavy damages during the month. (Hist, 3BG, Dec 50, Ch 4, p. 8; Summary of Events, 3BG, Jun 50-Mar 51)

31 Dec 1950: The construction effort at Fire Island (F-1) had been hindered somewhat by labor problems and the estimated beneficial occupancy date was advanced from 1 September 1951 to January 1952. The Air Force allocated an additional \$800,000 to the project. The workers had completed work on 90 percent of the main buildings and the antenna tower had been completed and the antenna installed. The installation of the radar set had been delayed due to shipping problems. Similar labor problems had delayed construction at Murphy



Dome (F-2) and Naknek (F-3, later renamed King Salmon). The buildings at Murphy Dome were 65 percent complete and those at Naknek 83 percent complete. Work at the other sites had consisted chiefly of off-loading materials and equipment and preparing for the 1951 construction season. The table below shows the work status of aircraft control and warning station construction as the end of 1950.

Status of Construction, Aircraft Control and Warning System, 30 December 1950

Station	Date Work Started	Scheduled	Actual
F-1, Fire Island	17 Apr 1950	87%	79%
F-2, Murphy	17 Jun 1950	55%	63%
F-3 Naknek (King Salmon)	6 May 1950	60%	83%
F-4, Cape Prince of Wales (Tin City)	9 Sep 1950	8%	15%
F-5, Cape Newenham	12 Sep 1950	38%	1.2%
F-6, Cape Romanzof	12 Sep 1950	7%	3%
F-7, Cape Lisburne	6 Sep 1950	4%	27%
F-8, Galena	25 Jun 1950	11%	14%
F-10, Takona (Tatalina)	17 Jul 1950	21%	5%

Parsons, Hist, AAC, Jul-Dec 1950, p. 69.



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2-3 Jan 1951: Crews of the 3rd Bombardment Wing used C-47 "Lightning Bug" transports to drop flares over targets north of Seoul in a test. Prior to this test the B-26 crews used M-26 parachute flares, which proved unreliable. Col Reginal J. Clizbe, the wing's executive officer, suggested using US Navy Mark VIII flares that could be dropped from C-47s. The lanyard activated flare detonated about 5,500 feet from the ground and floated down under a parachute. During the test the C-47 crew dropped 129 flares during a five-hour period, and the B-26 crews claimed the destruction of 30 vehicles. Based on the result of several nights of operation, the 3rd Bombardment Wing had six C-47 aircraft modified for flare operations and assigned to the Tactical Flight Section, 3rd Air Base Group. One C-47 was generally employed with two B-26s and acted as the control plane. This allowed the crews to concentrate on their low level bombing of an illuminated target. It also assisted artillery units in identifying targets at night and kept enemy movements at night to a minimum. At one point during the month, the group was using six C-47 flare ships. Initially, when the 3rd Bombardment Wing began flying night missions as far north as Sinanju on the Yalu River, the enemy vehicle drivers had kept their headlights on. With experience, they learned to shut them off, making locating and attacking targets difficult. (Hist, 3BG, Jan 51, Ch 4, p. 6; *United States Air Force Operations in the Korean Conflict, 1 November 1950-30 June 1952*, p. 47; Furtrell, *The United States Air Force in Korea*, p. 326; Warnock, *The USAF in Korea, A Chronology*, p. 29; Frederick A. Johnson, *Douglas A-26 Invader*, Specialty Press, North Branch MN, 1999, p. 40)

31 Dec 1951: The table below shows scheduled and actual completion dates and the operational dates of the original ten radar stations.

Scheduled and Actual Completion Dates, AAC Aircraft Control and Warning System

Station	Contract Award	Amount	Start of Const	Planned Completion	Actual	Ops
Fire Island, F-1	28 Mar 1950, Pomeroy & Co	\$2,685,795	17 Apr 50	1 Sep 51	Sep 51	Sep 51
Murphy Dome, F-2	28 Mar 1950 Morrison-Knudsen & Peter Kiewit & Sons	\$3,113,113	17 Jun 50	1 Sep 51	Jul 51	Sep 51
Naknek (King Salmon), F-3	12 Apr 1950, Gaasland & Co	\$1,766,667	6 May 50	1 Sep 51	Nov 51	Nov 52
Cape Prince of Wales (F-4, later renamed Tin City), F-4	20 Jun 1950, Gaasland & Co	See Note	9 Sep 50	1 Sep 51	Dec 52	Apr 53
Cape Newenham, F-5	1 Jun 1950 Haddock Engineering, Ltd	\$2,450,000	12 Sep 50	1 Dec 51	Dec 52	Feb 54
Cape Romanzof, F-6	20 Jun 1950, Gaasland & Co	See Note	12 Sep 50	1 Sep 51	Dec 52	Mar 53
Cape Lisburne, F-7	20 Jun 1950, Gaasland & Co	See Note	6 Sep 50	1 Sep 51	Aug 52	Feb 53
Galena II (Campion) F-8	9 Mar 1950, Morrison-Knudson	\$2,238,000	25 Jun 50	1 Oct 51	Sep 51	Apr 52
Northeast Cape, F-9	31 Jan 1951 Morrison-Knudson	\$1,500,000	5 Jul 51	?	?	Dec 52
Takotna (Tatalina), F-10	1 Jun 1950, Haddock Engineering, Ltd	\$2,636,000	17 Jul 50	1 Sep 51	Nov 52	Apr 53

Sources: Thomblison, Hist, AAC, Jan-Jun 1950, pp. 41-43; Chart, *Development of ACW in Alaska*, p. 56; Sturm, *Air Defense of Alaska*, pp. 17-20; Chart and Staff, Hist, AAC, Jan-Jun 1951, pp. 160-161.

Source: Office of History, Elmendorf AFB



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Jan 1952: The wing completed the internal transfer of aircraft among the three squadrons. The transfers resulted in the 8th and 90th Bombardment Squadrons receiving the SHORAN equipped B-26Cs and the 13th Bombardment Squadron the B-26B aircraft. Lieutenant Colonel Robert Fortney, Commander, 13th Bombardment Squadron, had persuaded the group and wing commanders to assign all the B-26Bs to the squadron. The squadron was assigned responsibility for armed reconnaissance in the northwest region of North Korea; also know as "Mig Alley."



Although heavily defended, the relatively flat area was better suited for low-level night operations against road and rail traffic. (Hist, 3BG, Jan 52, p. 16)

4 Jan 1952: Colonel Chester H. Morgan assumed command of the 3rd Bombardment Group (L), replacing Colonel Henry C. Brady. (Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of WWII*, p. 32)

3 Jan 1959: President Dwight Eisenhower signed the Alaska Statehood Bill, making Alaska the 49th State. A lobbying campaign had paid off in 1958, when the US House of Representatives approved statehood by a vote of 208 to 166. The Senate then voted 64 to 14 in favor. President Eisenhower signed the Alaska Statehood Bill into law on 7 July 1958. Alaskans accepted statehood in August. The law gave Alaska the right to send two elected senators and one representative to Congress. Former territorial governor Earnest Gruening and E.L. "Bob" Bartlett were elected on the Democratic ticket. Democrat Ralph Rivers was elected to the House of Representatives. Democrat William A. Eagan became the first governor. While Alaskans pushed to obtain an equal footing with the others states, the Federal government, principally the Department of Defense and Department of Interior, continued to play a dominate role in Alaskan affairs. (Antonson and Hanable, *Alaska's Heritage*, pp. 287-288.)



31 Dec 1959: The Military Air Transport Service inactivated the 71st Air Rescue Squadron on Elmendorf AFB. It left the Alaskan Air Command without a dedicated search and rescue service. It assumed direct responsibility for search and rescue in Alaska with its own resources and formed a rescue coordination center. The Command also arranged for ten DeHavilland L-20 (designation changed to U-6 in 1962) Beavers to be transferred to the Civil Air Patrol. (Miller, Hist, AAC, Jan-Jun 1960, pp. 11-12.)



1 Jan 1961: The Department of Air Force transferred Ladd AFB to the Department of Army who renamed it Fort Wainwright in honor of Lt Gen Jonathon M. Wainwright. Secretary of the Army Wilbur M. Brucker, officiated at the transfer ceremonies. The Army named its new fort after Lt Gen Jonathon M. Wainwright, USA Ret, who had surrendered American forces on Japan and endured captivity for the remainder of the war. General Wainwright died in 1953 after 41 years of service to his nation. More than 20 veterans of Bataan and Corregidor serving in or living in Alaska attended the ceremony. (Miller,

Hist, AAC, 1961, p. 4.)

Source: Office of History, Elmendorf AFB



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2 Jan 1968: The 90th Tactical Fighter Squadron aided the US Army 25th Division fire support base, located 49 miles northwest of Bien Hoa, in Operation Yellowstone. During a four-hour battle, the 90th flew through .50 caliber fire, delivering their ordinance to the attackers. 73 tactical air sorties blunted the attack, leaving 355 enemy soldiers dead. (Hist, 3 TFW, Jan-Mar, 1968, p. 40)



31 Dec 1970: The Alaskan Air Command Rescue Coordination Center reported 305 missions requiring 5,358 flying hours and 2,515 sorties, resulting in 59 saved lives. Highlights of the year included the activation of the 71st Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron on 8 March and 5040th Helicopter Squadron achieving fully operational capability with its HH-3Es following conversion from the HH-21B. The 5040th Helicopter Squadron flew the first mission of the year on New Year's

Day when it evacuated an injured pilot from the Nulato village airstrip to Bassett Army Hospital on Fort Wainwright. On 13 November, a HH-3E crew landed on the top of the Site Summit Nike site and searched for a hunter who had been injured. One of the crew members slipped and fell 1,000 feet down the mountain, sustaining severe bruises and lacerations. The helicopter crew lowered a doctor and pararescueman who treated the two men and assisted in their recovery. ("In 305 Mission, Rescue Center Aids Fifty-Nine Victims," *Sourdough Sentinel*, pp. 1-2.)

4 Jan 1971: The Alaskan Air Command Band played the National Anthem and Lt Gen Robert G. Ruegg, Alaskan Command Commander, led the Pledge of Allegiance at the inauguration ceremonies for Governor William Egan and Lieutenant Governor Henry "Red" Boucher. ("Band Plays," *Sourdough Sentinel*, 15 Jan 1971.)

1 Jan 1975: The Army disestablished USARAL and activated the 172nd Infantry Brigade (Alaska) in its place with the mission of providing the ground defense of Alaska. Its subordinates included the 172nd Infantry Brigade (Alaska) at Fort Richardson, the 222nd Aviation Battalion on Fort Wainwright and the 4th Missile Battalion, 43rd Artillery Regiment on Fort Richardson. It was also responsible for the Northern Warfare Training Center at Fort Greely. The 172nd Infantry Brigade (Alaska) was responsible for the ground defense of Alaska and consisted of a Deputy Commander, Maneuvers, responsible for the combat ground operations made up three infantry battalions with one airborne company in each, an artillery battalion, a support battalion, an air cavalry troop and an engineer company configured for air mobile and airlift operations; a Deputy Commander for Support, responsible for support and garrison activities; and a Deputy Commander for Reserve responsible for Army National Guard and Reserve advisory affairs in Alaska. (Homsher, Hist, ALCOM, Jan-Jun 1975, p. 5.)

1987: The number of intercepts in 1987 represented the highest number recorded in Alaska. Col William Povilus, Commander, 21st Tactical Fighter Wing attributed them to the better performing F-15 with its longer range and improved command and control provide by the Regional Operations Control Center and E-3. Additionally, the Soviets had increased the number of TU-95 Bear flights near Alaska. The table on the following page shows Soviet/Russian aircraft intercepts from 1961 through 1998.





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INTERCEPTS BY YEAR

YEAR	INTERCEPTS	YEAR	INTERCEPTS
1961	1	1980	8
1962	0	1981	12
1963	3	1982	8
1964	0	1983	8
1965	1	1984	9
1966	9	1985	18
1967	6	1986	18
1968	11	1987	33
1969	1	1988	29
1970	0	1989	25
1971	0	1990	29
1972	1	1991	15
1973	2	1992	5
1974	8	1993	3
1975	5	1994	2
1976	12	1995	0
1977	8	1996	0
1978	8	1997	0
1979	18	1998	0

NOTE: A total of 316 intercepts were made on 308 Soviet/Russian flights conducted from 1961 to 1998.