



Remembering Our Heritage



4 Jan 1902 (Sat): Lieutenant William Mitchell arrived at Fort Egbert to supervise the construction of the telegraph line between Eagle and Valdez. He and his crew began work on the northern section of the line in early February. (Woodman, *Duty Station Northwest*, Vol. I, p. 221.)

7 Jan 1941 (Tue): Captain Benjamin B. Talley, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, arrived at Fort Richardson to assume responsibility for overseeing construction of the post and its air facilities, Elmendorf Field, as part of the transfer of base construction responsibility from the U.S. Army Quartermaster Corps to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Prior to his arrival, a considerable amount of progress had been made. Most of the temporary structures had been erected and foundations for the permanent hangars poured. The runways and aprons had been cleared, the east-west runway graded to 200-foot wide by 7,500 feet long and paved 60-feet and 4,980 feet long. The materials had been shipped from Seattle and San Francisco aboard U.S. Army transports, unloaded at Seward and brought the rest of the way by the Alaska Railroad. The unskilled came from local sources, but skill labor had to be brought in. (Fagen, Hist, Fort Richardson, p. 29; Fleischer, Hist, Elmendorf Field, p. 24 .).



1 Jan 1942 (Thu): The air echelon of the 11th Fighter Squadron, led by 1/Lt John S. Chennault, began departing the Sacramento Air Depot, CA, for Alaska. The squadron was organized into three flights, each accompanied by a C-53, which provided navigation support and carried the mechanics and baggage. The squadron encountered considerable difficulties during the flight, which took them by way of Medford and Spokane, OR; then to Edmonton, Alberta, Fort St. John, Fort Nelson, Whitehorse, and Yukon Territory; and on to Northway, Ladd Field and Elmendorf Field in Alaska. The flight was made during one of the coldest months on record. By 4 February, only 13 of the

original 25 P-40Es had reached Alaska. Seven had crashed en route, three of which were a total loss. The remainder were somewhere in Canada. (Ltr, Gen Buckner to Gen DeWitt, 4 Feb 1942; Johnson, Hist, 11th Fighter Squadron, p. 20; Oral Hist Interview, John H. Cloe w/Lt Col Albert Aiken, USAF Ret, 20 Oct 1986.)

■ **1 Jan 1942:** The air echelon of the 77th Bombardment Squadron began departing the Sacramento Air Depot, CA, on the 2,300-mile trip to Elmendorf Field by way of Spokane, WA, Edmonton, Alberta, and Whitehorse, Northwest Territory. Due to engine problems, only ten bombers reached Spokane. Major Cork decided to continue on to Edmonton and wait for the other four to join the rest of the squadron there. Finally, on 12 January, all 14 B-26s took off on the 1,000-mile leg for Whitehorse. The crews of three B-26s became lost and made an emergency wheels-up landing in a shallow valley southeast of Watson Lake, British Columbia, which became known as "Million Dollar Valley." Two landed safely and the third nosed over, injuring the pilot and copilot. The stranded pilots were later rescued and the bombers stripped and abandoned. A fourth bomber was damaged beyond repair in a landing at Watson Lake and a fifth suffered



Remembering Our Heritage



the same fate at Whitehorse. The remaining nine finally reached Ladd Field, Alaska on 29 January, with five making it to Elmendorf Field on 4 February. All nine were grounded for faulty gas line installations and could not be flown until parts arrived from the states. (Howard, Hist, 77th Bombardment Squadron, 15 Jan 1941-31 Dec 1943, p. 5; Chronology, 77th Bombardment Squadron; Hist, Fourth Air Force, pp. 1-2.)

4 Jan 1943 (Mon): Rear Admiral Thomas Kinkaid arrived at Kodiak to assume command of the North Pacific Force. Generals Buckner and Butler responded, who had been unable to get along with Admiral Theobald, expressed their pleasure with the new commander. Command relations improved and the three got along well. (U.S. Naval Administration in World War II, Director of Naval History, p. 29; Ltr, General Buckner to General DeWitt, 5 Jan 1943.)

6 Jan 1943 (Wed): The Eleventh Air Force launched a mission of six B-24s and six B-25s accompanied by twelve P-38s from the 54th Fighter Squadron against Kiska. The mission ran into bad weather and the P-38 pilots and one bomber crew turned back. The rest continued on, encountering five "Rufe" fighters and marginal weather over the target. All but one bomber crew aborted the mission. The lone B-24 crew bombed the submarine base through a hole in the clouds. (Ransohoff, Hist, 11AF, p. 245; Carter and Mueller, *Combat Chronology*, 324.)



7 Jan 1944 (Fri): Admiral Chester Nimitz, Commander-in-Chief, Pacific, directed Vice Admiral Frank Jack Fletcher, Commander, North Pacific Force, in his plan *Specific Operations for the Defeat of Japan 1944*, to:

- Plans for the North Pacific involve the augmentation of base facilities and defensive installations in the Aleutians in preparation for entry into the Kuriles and Soviet territory in the event of Russian collaboration.
- Naval surface and submarine action, including raids on Japanese fishing fleet will be carried out.
- Preparations will be made for executing very long range strategic bombing against the Kuriles and Northern Japan. (Hist, North Pacific Force, 14 Aug 1945, pp. 88-90.)

1 Jan 1947 (Wed): The Alaskan Command was established 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 other than that allowed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The three components that reported to ALCOM were: the Alaskan Air Command (AAC), United States Army, Alaska (USARAL), and Alaskan Sea Frontier (ALSEAFRON). The establishment of ALCOM came six



months prior to the President signed 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



Remembering Our Heritage



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 USAF as a separate service in September 1947, the CINCALS came from the general officer ranks of the USAF. (HQ ALCOM GO 1, 1 Jan 1947; Hist, ALCOM, Jan 1947-Dec 1951, pp. iv-v.)

3 Jan 1952 (Thu): Brigadier General D.N. Yates, Director for Research and Development, USAF hosted a meeting at Headquarters, USAF with Lt. Col. Joseph Fletcher representing AAC to discuss the policy of using ice islands for scientific research. Those at the meeting reached a decision that AAC would establish a camp on one three ice islands (T-1, T-2 and T-3.). Upon his return, Colonel Fletcher briefed General Old who decided that T-3 would be occupied. An experimental camp was established on the Tanana River in February to test equipment and personnel. Arrangements were made to use Thule AB in Greenland as the staging base and Alert, a Canadian base at the top of Ellesmere Island for refueling support. Supplies and equipment were flown to Thule AB from Ladd AFB during March. A C-124 undergoing operational cold weather testing at Ladd AFB provided the bulk of the airlift. (Chart, Hist, AAC, Jan-Jun 1952, pp. 228-229.)

5 Jan 1956 (Wed): The Air Force agreed to AAC's request for two additional SH-19s to the four assigned to the 10th Air Rescue Group for use at Galena and King Salmon for search and rescue support of rotational F-89 crews. The Air Force proposed replacing the SH-19s with SH-21Bs. (Chart, Hist, AAC, Jan-Jun 1956, pp. 106-107.)

2 Jan 1958 (Fri): General Armstrong recommended that an AN/FPS-8 Search radar be located at Gulkana to cover a gap in radar coverage that would permit Soviet bombers from entering from the east and reaching Anchorage undetected until the 65 miles away. The Alaskan Air Command maintained that complete defense of major targets were unsupportable, and that a gap in coverage from the east was worth the risk. Headquarters, NORAD, however, disagreed and General Armstrong directed AAC to have a radar at Gulkana operational by 1 August 1959. While Headquarters, USAF, approved the project, it gave it such a low priority, that the earliest Gulkana could be operational was during the October-December 1960 period. General Armstrong objected, but by the end of 1959, he concurred with the elimination of the Gulkana site from the Aircraft Control and Warning program. (Hist, ALCOM, 1959, pp. 94-98.)

3 Jan 1959 (Sat): President Dwight Eisenhower signed the Alaska Statehood Bill, making Alaska the 49th State. A lobbying campaign had paid off in 1958, when the U.S. 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.)



Remembering Our Heritage



6 Jan 1960 (Wed): The 11th Air Division (Defense) notified Headquarters, AAC, that Ice Station Charlie was breaking up. A fissure had separated 2300 feet of the 5100-foot runway leaving only 3800 usable feet near the camp area. The Division declared Emergency Condition II, which required the movement of personnel to a safer area. While there was no immediate danger, the experiences of Ice Station Alpha influenced the decision. The 62nd Troop Carrier Wing at Seward AFB, GA, deployed two C-130D ski-wheel aircraft to augment AAC's C-123Js assigned to Ladd AFB. The evacuation went smoothly with the last C-130 mission completed on 15 January. (Miller, Hist, AAC, Jul-Dec 1959, pp. 247-248.)

1 Jan 1961 (Sun): 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. (Miller, Hist, AAC, 1961, p. 4.)

3 Jan 1964 (Fri): The *Sourdough Sentinel* featured an article on the assignment of the 17th Troop Carrier Squadron from Dyess AFB, TX, to Elmendorf AFB with an effective date of 1 July 1964. The article noted that twelve C-130D and D-6s were being assigned to support the Greenland Ice Cap re-supply of DEW Line sites DYE II and DYE III and for the intra-Alaska being performed by 5017th Operations Squadron C-123Bs and deployed C-124s. (Weidman and Ravenstein, Hist, AAC, 1964, p. 554.)

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

1 Jan 1974 (Tue): The Alaskan Air Command transferred responsibility for operations of the recreation camps at King Salmon and Seward from its direct control to the Elmendorf AFB Base Central Services. (Hailes, Hist, AAC, Jul 1972-Jun 1974, p. xxxii.)

5-13 Jan 1978: Representatives from Hughes Aircraft Company of Culver City, CA, who had been awarded the Regional Operations Control Center (ROCC) design contract by the Electronic System Division in late 1977, visited Elmendorf AFB to discuss the design and location of the Alaska ROCC. The Alaskan Air Command had planned to build as an addition to its headquarters building as a cost saving initiative. The visit resulted in the design of a 23,614 square foot addition at an estimated cost of \$8,994,400. The plan called for a contract award on March 1980 and beneficial occupancy of September 1981 with equipment delivery and installation to be done between September 1981 and September 1982. (Cloe, Hist, AAC, 1978, p. 277.)



3 Jan 1983 (Mon): The first meteor burst communications tests were conducted between Elmendorf AFB Regional Operations Control Center and the long-range radar stations. (Cloe, Hist, AAC, 1983, p. 300.)

3 Jan-17 Feb 1987: Brim Frost 97, a Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) sponsored, U.S. Readiness Command (USREDCOM) coordinated joint training exercise was conducted with over 24,000 participating. It involved the employment of 143 Air Force and 130 Army aircraft and five U.S. Coast Guard cutters. General James Lindsay, USA, Commander-in-Chief, USREDCOM served as exercise director. General Nichols served as Commander, Joint Task Force-Alaska (JTF-AK) with headquarters on Elmendorf AFB. Major General



Remembering Our Heritage



Johnnie Corns, Commander, 6th Infantry Division (Light) was the Commander, Army Forces; and Col. William Povilus, Vice Commander, AAC, the Commander, Air Force Forces. Rear Admiral Edward Nelson, Jr., Commander, 17th Coast Guard District, commanded the Alaska Maritime Defense Zone. Unlike previous Brim Frost exercises, there was no large commitment of Lower 48 forces due to funding limitations. Alaskan based forces defended key facilities against a Spetsnaz threat. The 12th Special Forces Group, U.S. Army Reserves, Fort Shridan, IL, and SEAL teams from the Naval Special Warfare Group, provided the opposition force. The 21st Tactical Fighter Wing T-33As provided the air opposition force. The exercise was conducted over a wide area and different locations. Airlift was used extensively during the exercises to move forces. (Cloe, Hist, AAC, 1987, pp. 143-147.)

1 Jan 1992: Headquarters PACAF redesignated the 5000th Contracting Squadron as the 3rd Contracting Squadron. (PACAF SO GA-27, 2 Jan 1992; Hist, 3WG, 1992, p.10)

5 Jan 1993 (Tue): Secretary of the Air Force, Dr. Donald Rice, approved Eleventh Air Force's request to rename Shemya AFB after Col William O. Eareckson.

1 Jan 1994 (Sat): Headquarters, PACAF, inactivated the 43rd Fighter Squadron and activated the 19th Fighter Squadron and assigned it to the 3rd Wing as part of the USAF plan to retain its most illustrious squadrons.. (PACAF SO GA-02, 28 Dec 1994.)



3 Jan 1998: The 19th Fighter Squadron (19 FS) deployed to Prince Sultan AB (PSAB), Saudi Arabia for a 45-day deployment in support of Operation Southern Watch with 18 aircraft, 17 F-15Cs and one F-15D. The 18 aircraft were a mixture from the 19 FS and 54th Fighter Squadron (54 FS), and all 18 aircraft remained at PSAB for both the 19 FS and 54 FS rotations. The 200 plus maintenance and support personnel departed on 5 January 1998. (Hist, 3 WG, 1998, Chron)



5 Jan 2005 – Operation Unified Assistance (OUA): Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) activated the 517th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron (517 EAS), a provisional unit, at Jakarta, Indonesia, tasked with supporting the tsunami relief effort. The 517 EAS was assigned to the 374th Air Expeditionary Group (374 AEG), located at Utaphao, Thailand. The 517th Airlift Squadron (517 AS) deployed four C-130H aircraft with six crews from Elmendorf on 31 December 2004. Additional support and maintenance personnel brought the total of deployed personnel to approximately 90. The squadron ran 24 hour operations. The 517 EAS delivered 280 tons of humanitarian supplies and provided transport for 822 indigenous displaced personnel and 154 aid/relief workers. The 517th returned to Elmendorf on 29 January 2005. (Miller, 3 WG Hist 2005, 2006.)

4 Jan 2006 – Air Force Outstanding Unit Award: (U) General Paul Hester, COMPACAF, announced the 3 WG earned an Air Force Outstanding Unit Award (AFOUA) for the period covering 1 October 2003 through 30 September 2005. (E-Mail (U), PACAF/CC, "2005 Air Force Outstanding Unit Award," 4 Jan 2006.)