



Remembering Our Heritage



28 January – 3 February

2 Feb 1923: Brig Gen Billy Mitchell, Assistant Chief, Army Air Service, arrived to inspect the 3rd Attack Group at Kelly Field, TX. He reported to Maj Gen Mason Patrick, Chief of the Army Air Service, that the attack group commander and most of the men were inexperienced and that operations, training, equipment and facilities were unsatisfactory. He recommended that Maj Lewis H. Brereton replace Lt Col Seth W. Cook as the commander. General Mitchell then spent several days assisting Major Brereton, who assumed command on 5 February, and a new staff in correcting problems. When Major Brereton assumed command of the 3rd Attack Group, the US Army Air Service, had only three major combat organizations, the 1st Pursuit Group at Selfridge Field, MI; the 2nd Bombardment Group at Langley Field, VA; and the 3rd Attack Group at Kelly Field, TX.



31 Jan 1942: The 3rd Bombardment Group boarded U.S. Army ship, *Ancon*, sharing the transport with the 2nd Platoon, 2nd Chemical Company attached. While on board over 60 percent of enlisted personnel, 463 men, were promoted on Special Orders No. 11. The 3rd Bombardment Group arrived at Brisbane, without any aircraft, as the first new Army Air Forces unit to arrive in Australia. The Group was temporarily housed at Ascot Park, a local racetrack.

31 Jan 1942: Major Benjamin Talley informed Brig Gen Simon Buckner that three million square feet of Martston Matting and 136,000 squad feet of Irvin Grill (a rod and bar type matting) had become available for use in Alaska. The Marston Matting had been under development for five years. Originally, plans called for the paving of both Cold Bay and Otter Point on Umnak Island. The Alaska Defense Command abandoned the paving idea because of shortage of time and decided to use the Marston Matting instead.



3 Feb 1942: The Alaskan Air Force initiated a policy to transfer pilots between the 11th Fighter Squadron and the 18th Fighter Squadron and between the 73rd Bombardment Squadron and the 77th Bombardment Squadron. Each flight of the newly arrived squadrons gained at least one experienced pilot from the original squadrons assigned to Alaska. Some of the newly arrived pilots were sent to Kodiak to train on the B-18 and P-36 aircraft. The air units in Alaska remained thinly spread due to a lack of experienced personnel to go around.

27 Jan 1943: The 89th Squadron, assigned to the 3rd Bombardment Group, strafed the Japanese supplies area at Lae and attacked Mubo, Garrison Hill and Komiatum. During the mission eight P-38s mistakenly attacked an A-20 to within 1,000 feet but inflicted no damage. One A-20 and its pilot were lost after the plane blew a tire on take-off and crashed on the runway.





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29 Jan 1943: Lt Billy Wheeler wrote in his diary, "Sub reported. B-17 dispatched to scene, after two hours searching, sights what he thinks is a sub, actually a whale. Drops bombs on it."

3-5 Feb 1944: The 3rd Bombardment Group, per Movement Order No. 26, completed the move from Dobodura, New Guinea to Nadzab, New Guinea. The group had transferred to Dobodura in May 1943. At this time, the 3rd Bombardment Group was flying the Consolidated B-24 Liberator and North American B-25 Mitchell aircraft.



28 Jan 1950: Lt Col Lester F. Mathison, Commander, 625th Air Control and Warning Squadron, Elmendorf AFB, reported seeing an Unidentified Flying Object (UFO) while walking from the operations building to the squadron orderly room. He described it as three reddish-orange objects about the size and shape of a pencil eraser above a small cirrus clouds approximately 25,000 to 35,000 feet above the ground. They appeared to be moving in trail, in a slightly curved line, heading north before they disappeared. Colonel Mathison called a nearby sergeant to witness the sighting. The objectives disappeared before he arrived. The Alaskan Air Command Intelligence staff ruled out the possibility that the objectives sighted were jet aircraft. Colonel Mathison's sighting was a series of UFOs observed during the January-June 1950 period.

Sergeant William Y. Harrell, a control tower operator on Elmendorf AFB, spotted two green lights at 0122 hours, 19 April, at an altitude of 200-300 feet over one of the hangars. He and an assistant observed them move in a trail formation to a position within 1,000 feet and about 25 feet above the tower. For a brief moment, one of the lights emitted a very greenish trail. Both lights increased in brightness as they came closer to the tower and appeared to be 24-36 inches in diameter, compact and circular in shape. They appeared to glow, with deep green centers fading to yellowish green on the outer edges. The lights veered away from the control tower and passed on the opposite side of the base water tower, heading southwest towards Merrill Field. They disappeared from view one mile south of Elmendorf AFB. Other personnel on the ground also observed the lights. They appeared to be traveling at 300 miles and hour as they traversed Merrill Field. Intelligence personnel ruled out other aircraft or weather phenomena.

Feb 1951: The 3rd Bombardment Wing increased its operational tempo during the month of February in the Korean War. In the past, B-26 crews would fly to the target from Iwakuni, then land Taegu, spend the day resting there before returning to Iwakuni. The new plan required them to turn around at Taegu after the night mission and fly a daylight mission before returning to Iwakuni. The new operational commitments required the 3rd Bombardment Wing to fly



approximately 38 sorties per day, while experiencing a high loss of aircraft and an insufficient number of replacements. Weather and icing continued to plague operations for the wing. The wing was heavily committed during the month and flew missions as far north as the Yalu River.



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2 Feb 1957: The *Anchorage Daily News* reported that the Alaska District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers had invited interested contractors to bid of four Nike-Hercules surface-to-air missile sites in the Fairbanks-Eielson AFB area with an estimated \$10,000,000 cost and completion date by 1 October 1958. The paper reported that the Anchorage area would be next to be submitted for bids. Each site included a battery control building of 26,000 square feet, a launcher control building of 7,000 square feet, two launcher section structures of 15,900 square feet, a fuel storage building, access roads and outside utilities.



1 Feb 1960: With the decline in the numbers of F-89Js, the Alaskan NORAD Region ended the alert commitment on Elmendorf AFB and reduced the alert at Ladd AFB to two fighter interceptor on five minute alert and one on one hour alert. The 317th Fighter Interceptor Squadron had already assumed all the alert commitments at King Salmon and

Galena with its F-102As during November-December 1959.

2 Feb 1960: General Thomas D. White, Chief of Staff, USAF, wrote to Gen Lyman L. Lemnitzer, Chief of Staff, US Army describing the situation in Alaska and that the Air Force had completed a study which required a major reorganization of Alaskan Air Command. He stated that the Air Force wanted to transfer all its flying activities from Ladd AFB to Eielson AFB. Other activities being duplicated on the two bases would be inactivated. The Air Force would continue to operate the Air Force hospital and the Arctic Aeromedical Laboratory on Ladd AFB. General White recommended in view of the Army's activities on Ladd AFB that it assume responsibility for the base and transfer its Eielson AFB activities there. He recommended a September 1961 transfer date.



2 Feb 1961: The *Fairbanks News-Miner*'s editorial page stressed the strategic importance of Alaska and the need for basing intercontinental ballistic missiles in the state as a deterrent to Soviet aggression. Ballistic mission emplaced near Fairbanks could reach targets in western Russia and China. The editorial emphasized the need to base Polaris submarines in Arctic waters and train US ground forces to fight an offensive war in the Arctic. It referred to Alaska as the "Gibraltar of the North" and noted that construction of the Clear Ballistic Missile Early Warning System station recognized that fact. The editorial stated it made political and military sense to base forces in Alaska rather than overseas because of the better control and the fact money would be spent on the local economy.



1 Feb 1962: The Commander-in-Chief, Alaskan Command (CINCAL), established a regional staff for the Alaskan NORAD Region. The Alaskan NORAD Region/Continental Air Command Region had been established in 1958 and CINCAL designated its commander. He had used his ALCOM staff to handle ANR matters. A NORAD evaluation in October 1961 pointed out that a dedicated ANR staff was needed in order to be in compliance with other NORAD regions. The ANR staff that was established consisted of 18 Air Force and 14 Army personnel serving in dual capacities.



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3-6 Feb 1965: A series of earthquakes, the largest measuring 6.5 on the Richter scale struck the Aleutian Islands. Shemya Air Force Station reported glass breakage, cracks in the taxiways, the sinking to the depth of two and one-half feet of the taxiway leading to Hangar Five, temporary loss of approach lights to Runway 28 and minor damage to POL valves. There were no injuries.



29 Jan 1968: Responding to a public law removing restrictions on promoting female officers, the Air Force promoted Col Jeanne M. Holm, Director of Women in the Air Force, and Col Helen O'Day, assigned to the Office of the Air Force Chief of Staff, to the permanent rank of colonel.

31 Jan 1968: Bien Hoa AB came under an intense ground assault during the Tet Offensive. The brunt of the attack centered on the east end of the installation near a single bunker called Bunker Hill 10. The intense battle lasted from 0330-1200 hours; when it was over, the 3rd Tactical Fighter Wing lost two men and 14 wounded. As for the enemy, over 60 dead bodies were counted. The wing flew 52 combat sorties in defense of the base and supported four ground operations. The Air Force awarded one Air Force Cross and three Silver Stars to the following men who fought that day: Capt Reginald V. Maisey, Jr., Air Force Cross (Posthumous); Capt Martin E. Strones, Silver Star; Staff Sergeant Larry H. Sawyer, Silver Star; and Staff Sergeant William Piazza, Silver Star.



1 Feb 1968: Two F-100s, 510th Tactical Fighter Squadron, pounded three Viet Cong strongholds. The first was two enemy battalions that were mortaring a friendly outpost 132 miles southwest of Bien Hoa. The fighters bombed and strafed the area, removing the enemy threat. The 2nd target was a three-canal intersection with a strong enemy presence. The fighter's experienced heavy ground fire, each receiving 3-4 hits. After changing aircraft, the pilots proceeded to the 3rd stronghold, Phu Loi village. An estimated 1,000 enemy troops had infiltrated the village. Following the bombing and strafing of the area, all ground fire ceased.

1 Feb 1975: Shemya AFB experienced a 7.5 earthquake on the Richter scale at approximately 0945 hours. The epicenter was 75 miles northwest of the island. A shock registering 5.5 on the scale hit the base about an hour before the larger shock. There were no fatalities and no serious injuries, although there were 15 minor injuries. The earthquake severely damaged the runway, reducing the usable length from 10,000 feet to 5,800 feet. It also damaged three of the four WWII hangars and a number of fuel storage tanks. Most of the buildings sustained slight damages and there were some damages to the roads and water distribution center. Disrupted communications were quickly restored. General Gamble requested and General Hill concurred that C-130Es deployed from Jack Frost 75 be because of their increased range and load capacity be used to provide recovery airlift support and the 317th Tactical Airlift Wing (MAC), Pope AFB, NC, was selected. Two C-130Es and three crews were retained at Elmendorf AFB until 23 February. The C-130Es airlifted 300 barrels of cold patch material were airlifted in so that temporary repairs to the runway could be made that permitted the landing of C-141s. The Air Force awarded a \$600,000 contract to make permanent repairs on the runway. The project was completed on 20 May 1975. Another contract for \$733,000 was awarded to repair the wooden trusses in the hangars and tighten bolts in the wooden hangars.

Source: Office of History, Elmendorf AFB



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28 Jan 1979: Chinese Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping and his party of 70 stopped at Elmendorf AFB at 0235 hours while en-route to meet with President Carter in Washington DC. The Premier's stopover for his Boeing 707 to be refueled was preceded by the arrival of Ambassador Leonard Woodcock, head of the US Liaison Office in Peking, the Chinese envoy to the US, Chai Tse-min, and Ambassador Edith Dobelle, White House Chief of Protocol. Lt Gen Winfield Scott greeted the Premier and escorted him to the Passenger Terminal Distinguished Visitors Lounge for a meeting with Ambassador Woodcock. Premier Xiaoping and his party stopped again at Elmendorf AFB on 5 February, where they were greeted by General Scott and taken to the Susitna Club for lunch.



1-5 Feb 1982: An E-3 from the 966th Airborne Warning and Control System Squadron, Tinker AFB, OK, conducted the first of a series of deployments to Elmendorf AFB. Unlike previous deployments, airborne control and warning aircraft was specifically deployed to Alaska to participate in training with Alaskan Air Command air defense forces. Other deployments were made 27 February-6 March and 27 November-2 December. The E-3s had been originally programmed to begin permanent rotational deployments in 1992, but President Reagan decided to commit them in support of Saudi Arabia, which delayed the deployments to 1988.

28 Jan 1986: The seven crew members of the space shuttle *Challenger* died in an explosion shortly after liftoff from the Kennedy Space Center, FL. The disaster delayed the U.S. manned space program more than two years.

2-4 Feb 1993: An F-22 design team from the F-22 System Program Office, Wright-Patterson AFB, OH, toured 3rd Wing maintenance facilities and gathered information on cold weather operations. The team focused their attention on the F-15E since it had arrived at Elmendorf AFB from the factory. The wing maintenance personnel impressed on the team the need to keep flight line maintenance to the minimum and make maximum use of indoor facilities.



2 Feb 2005: The 19th Fighter Squadron redeployed 225 personnel and 12 F-15C aircraft from Kadena AB, Japan, they had left Elmendorf AFB in November 2004. The squadron flew 524 sorties with a deployed 94.4 percent mission capable rate. The 19th Aircraft Maintenance Unit oversaw the repair of sister AMU aircraft after a mid-air collision, as well as arranging for a Depot Field Team for an aircraft, which was repaired several weeks ahead of schedule.



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30 Jan 2006: General Paul Hester, COMPACAF, issued a policy prohibiting cell phone use while operating a motor vehicle on PACAF installations. The policy applied to all uniformed military personnel, DoD civilians, contractors, family members, and any other non-DoD drivers operating a motor vehicle on all PACAF installations. This policy went into effect immediately and violators of this policy received a written warning until 28 February 2006. Beginning 1 March 2006, a violation of this policy resulted in the loss of on-base driving privileges for 30 days. Initially the policy did not apply to bargaining-unit civilians because the union took the Air Force to court over this policy. However, the policy was extended to apply to bargaining-unit members on 13 July 2006.



30 Jan 2007: The USAF announced the Alaska Air National Guard's (ANG) 176th Wing at Kulis Air National Guard Base (ANGB) would relocate to Elmendorf AFB. This consolidation was one of the recommendations from the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission. The 176th brought eight C-130Hs, three HC-130Ns, five HH-60 helicopters and all the Airmen assigned to Kulis ANGB. Once at Elmendorf AFB, the 176th expected to gain four additional C-130H aircraft. They also formed an active duty and ANG associate unit with the C-17 aircraft that was expected in June 2007.