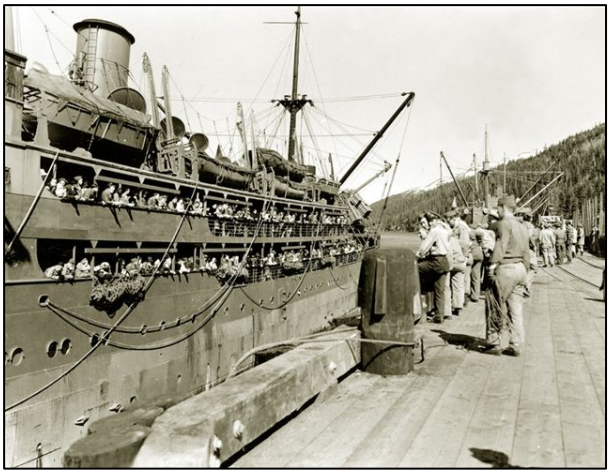
9-15 July

15 Jul 1920: Capt St. Clair Streett and his flight of four Army Air Service DeHavilland DH-4Bs equipped with 400 horsepower Liberty engines, nicknamed the Black Wolf Squadron, departed Michel Field, NY, for Nome, AK, 4,500 miles away, by way of stops at Erie PA; Grand Rapids, MI; Winona and Minneapolis, MN; Fargo, ND; Portal ND; Saskatoon, Saskatchewan; Edmonton and Japer, Alberta; Prince George and Hazelton, British Columbia; Wrangell, AK; Whitehorse and Dawson, Yukon Territory; and Fairbanks and Ruby, AK. Others making the flight were: Sgt. Edmund Henriques, Captain Streett's mechanic; Lt. Clifford C. Nutt, pilot, and Lt. Erik H. Nelson, navigating and engineering officer in aircraft number two; Lt C.E. Crumrine, pilot, and Sgt. James D. Long, mechanic, in aircraft number three and Lt. Ross C. Kirkpatrick, pilot, and MSgt. Joseph E. English, mechanic, in aircraft number four. (Capt St. Clair Streett, "The First Alaska Air Expedition," *National Geographic*, May 1922; Flight Log, Black Wolf Squadron, undated, copy in Eleventh Air Force History Office.)



13 Jul 1940: The War Department authorized a survey of what would later become known as the Port of Whittier. General John DeWitt, Commander, Fourth Army, had expressed concerns about the vulnerability of the segment of the Alaska Railroad between the Port of Seward and Portage (a railroad flag stop at the head of Turnagain Arm, 60 miles north of Seward) with its deep gorges and high trestles to sabotage and air attacks. He knew that the Alaska Railroad did not have the funding to extend a 14-mile rail line from Portage to the Passage Canal on the opposite side of the Chugach Mountains. The two engineers, Lt. Alvin Welling and Mr. James G. Truitt, from the Seattle District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, conducted a survey shortly afterwards. The two recommended the construction of a three and a half mile tunnel through the Chugach Mountains. General DeWitt recommended the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers be given the job. (Woodman, *Duty Station Northwest*, Vol. II, pp. 83-84.)

10 Jul 1942: Lieutenant William Theis and his PBY crew from VP-41 spotted a downed Zero flown by Petty Officer Tadayoshi Koga on Akutan Island. The PBY crew was returning from a routine patrol when a crew member sighted the downed Zero on the southwest side of the island. Lieutenant Thies reported the discovery and was immediately placed in charge of leading a ground investigation of the site. A converted fishing boat, YP-151, transported the 15-man party to beach near the crash site on 11 July. The party then hiked to the site about a mile and a half inland in a high valley.

Source: Office of History, Elmendorf AFB

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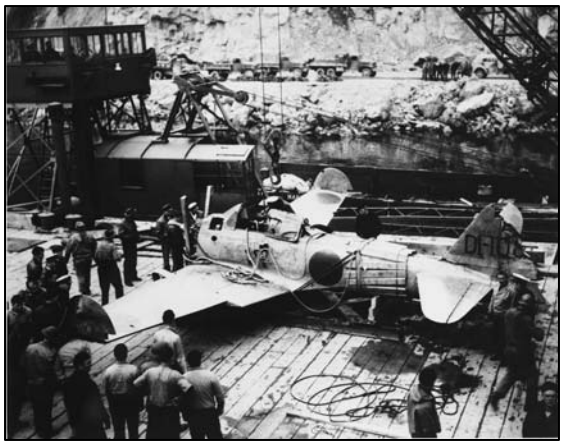

Petty Officer Koga apparently attempted to make a wheels and flap down stall landing on the muskeg. His aircraft had skidded along a short distance, breaking off the landing struts and damaging the landing flaps and belly tank before flipping over on its back and skidding farther, damaging the wing tips, vertical stabilizer and trailing edge of the rudder. Lieutenant Thies and his party found the Zero resting with the fuselage and engine half-buried in the knee-deep water and mud. The decomposing body of Petty Officer was still strapped in with the head and shoulders and head submerged in the water. The party spent a considerable amount of effort removing the body, which involved cutting a hole in the side of cockpit so that the shoulder and seat straps and rudder straps could be loosen. The party, after taking photographs, buried Koga's body nearby in a simple Christian ceremony. Before burial, the party examined and removed from the clothing the insignia, clothing labels and various clothing articles. The pockets were empty. They also removed a transparent folder from Koga's neck which contained pictures of the latest American Army and Navy aircraft, a simple Japanese voice code, a panel code, engine power curb and graph for determining drift. The information was partially obliterated due to being submerged in the water. The party also removed the 20-millimeter cannons, optical reflector site and other smaller items of equipment. The party observed that the Zero was in excellent condition and the data plates noted that it had entered service on 19 February 1942 as a model type A6M2 after being manufactured by the Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Company at the Nagoya Airplane Manufacturing Plant. (After Action Report, VP-41, "Salvage of Japanese Nagoya Type Zero Discovered on Akutan Island 10 July 1942," 22 Jun 1942; "Defiance Rewarded," oral history interview by Joseph S. Rychetnik with William Thies, *Military History*, Jun 1989.)

10 Jul 1943: The Eleventh Air Force launched the first land base bomber attack against the Japanese homeland. Eight B-25s raided military installations in the northern Kuriles dropping bombs on the southern part of Shimushu Island and the northern part of Paramushiru Island in a dead reckoning bomb run when clouds obscured the target and prevented a low-level altitude attack. No anti-aircraft fire or fighters were encountered. The B-25 crews staged from the Alexia airfield on Attu Island. Six B-24Ds originally scheduled to participate in the attack were diverted when word was received that Japanese ships were nearby. Five other B-25 crews on shipping alert were also dispatched. (Carter and Mueller, *Combat Chronology*, p. 156.)

14 Jul 1943: 2 A-20s from the 89th dropped life rafts to a downed pilot off of Lasauga Island. This was the first recorded active participation of an A-20 in an air-sea rescue. (Hist, Third Bombardment Group (Light), 1 January 1942 to 31 March 1944, p. 60)

14 Jul 1944: The 3rd Bombardment Group struck the Boela oil fields at Ceram off the West tip of Dutch New Guinea. The mission, the first low-level attack against an oil field, was very successful. (Hist, Third Bombardment Group (Light), 1 April 1944 to 31 December 1944, Unit History for July, pp. 2-3)

Source: Office of History, Elmendorf AFB

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10 Jul 1950: The 3rd Bombardment Group B-26s along with F-80s and F-82s struck a North Korean column trapped at a bombed-out bridge near Pyongtaek. In one of the decisive engagements of the war, the Fifth Air Force aircraft destroyed 117 trucks, 38 tanks and 7 haft-tracks. This attack along with others helped devastate the North Korea's armored capability, greatly weakening its ability to later break through the Pusan Perimeter of defense established by the American and South Korean armies. (Warnock, *The USAF in Korea, A Chronology*, pp. 6-7; Walter J. Boyne, "The Forgotten War," *Air Force Magazine*, Jun 2000)

9 Jul 1953: Mount Spurr, east of Elmendorf AFB, erupted sending volcanic ash and smoke to a height of 60,000 feet. Lieutenant Mark J. Metzner, a jet pilot, observed the eruption at 0505 and reported it shortly afterwards. His report was followed by another one from Capt William A. Temple from the 5039th Air Transport Squadron at 0600. Volcanic activity was also noted at nearby Mt. Gerdine and Mt. Torbert. All jet aircraft were ordered to fly to Ladd AFB and other aircraft to fly either to Eielson AFB or Ladd AFB. The other aircraft were flown to Eielson AFB and Ladd AFB. Those which could not be flown off the base were placed in hangar. The C-124s were covered. By 1500, the worst of the ash fall was over. Tactical jet aircraft were unable to operate from Elmendorf AFB from Elmendorf AFB 9-13 July due to low visibility and the presence of ash. Operations returned to normal on 17 July. The blanket of ash over the base and surrounding area measured one quarter to one half-inch. It caused considerable engineering problems. Various means including brooms and fire hoses were used to remove it from hard surfaces. The most successful proved to be a jet engine mounted on a truck bed. (Ravenstein, Hist., AAC, Jul-Dec 1953, pp. 73-80.)

13 Jul 1955: Following June negotiations, the Air Force awarded a contract to the Western Electric Company to build a distant early warning (DEW) line from Cape Lisburne (F-7), Alaska, across the Canadian Arctic to Cape Dyer on Baffin Island, Canada. It required Western Electric to have the system operational by July 1957 and committed it to providing overall development, design, engineering, construction, procurement, logistics, training and administrative services. A 20 July change order authorized the company to proceed with plans for a rearward communications system. The DEW Line at the time of contract award consisted of six main stations, twenty-three auxiliary stations and twenty-eight intermediate stations. (Chart, Hist, AAC, Jul-Dec 1955, pp. 173-174.)

Source: Office of History, Elmendorf AFB

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13 Jul 1957: The DEW Line was declared technically completed. It was built to provide Canada and the United States advance warning of a Soviet bomber attack. The line, stretching 3000 miles between Cape Lisburne (F-7) on Alaska's northwest coast to Cape Dyer on the east coast of Baffin Island, provided outer the outer perimeter of a three tiered radar defense system that included Pine Tree and Mid-Canadian radar lines. It was integrated into Alaska's aircraft control and warning system. (Leona B. Miller, Hist, AAC, 1 Jul 1958-30 Jun 1959, p. 176.)

11 Jul 1966: The Air Force assigned the 144th Air Transport Squadron, Alaska Air National Guard, to the Alaskan Air Command as the gaining command up mobilization. The squadron was the only flying unit assigned to the Alaska Air National Guard and was equipped with C-123s. It supported the Alaskan Air Command and other military activities in Alaska, assisted in search and rescue missions and supported Navy research projects with its ski-wheel equipped C-123Js. (HQ AAC SO G-100, 11 Jun 1966; Weidman, Hist, AAC, Jul-Dec 1966, p. 7.)

14 Jul 1971: The Engineering Division, HQ USAF, assigned the responsibility for constructing the Blair Lakes Bombing and Gunnery Range to the 819th Civil Engineering Squadron Heavy Repair, a rapid engineer deployable, heavy operations squadron, engineer (RED Horse), then based at Westover AFB, MA. The Alaskan Air Command had selected the Blair Lakes area for its new range following a 1967-1968 study to determine what areas could best support F-4E training requirements. The Blair Lakes area had originally been withdrawn on 8 August 1941 for use as a bombing and gunnery range. It had been variously known as Ladd Field Bombing and Gunnery Range, Blair Lakes Bombing and Gunnery Range (1947), Blair Lakes Army Range, Blair Lakes Air Force Range (1957) and the Fort Wainwright Maneuver Area. Congress authorized the construction project on 21 July 1969 and appropriated $578,000 to pay for it. (Hales, Hist, AAC, Jul 1972-Jun 1974, pp. 162-164.)

15 Jul 1973: The 354th Tactical Fighter Wing, based in Thailand, flew the last combat mission of the Southeast Asia Conflict. The USAF, since 2 February 1962, had flown 5.25 million sorties over South and North Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. It lost 2,251 aircraft, 1,737 to hostile fire and 514 to operational causes. (Haulman, *One Hundred Years of Flight*, p. 112.)

9 Jul 1974: The National Park Service requested assistance from the Rescue Coordination Center (RCC) when a passenger bus of tourist went off the road 60 miles from the McKinley Park Headquarters, killing one and injuring 26 of the 28 aboard. The RCC dispatched an HH-3E from Eielson AFB with a flight surgeon and paramedic aboard when it was believed only 15 people had been injured. Later, two more helicopters were sent. The injured, which included nine critical cases, were flown to the Fairbanks Memorial Hospital. Nine lives were credited with being saved. (Cloe, Hist, AAC, Jul 1974-Jun 1975, p. 178.)

13 Jul 1977: The Cobra Dane AN/FPS-108 Phased Array Radar on Shemya AFB achieved operational capability. Raytheon Company and its subcontractors built the intelligence-gathering radar to replace the AN/FPS-17 Detection Radar and the AN/FPS-80 Tracking Radar in operation since the early 1960s. In addition to collecting intelligence, Cobra Dane also provided early warning of a missile attack. During normal surveillance mode, the PPS-117 boasted a 99 percent probability rate of detecting an object the size of a baseball at 2,000 nautical miles. The Aerospace Defense Command operated and maintained the radar at the time. (Email, Dr. Sturdevant, USAF Space Command History Office to John H. Cloe, 3rd Wing History Office, 29 Feb 1996)

Source: Office of History, Elmendorf AFB

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13 Jul 2001: The American flag at Fort Greely was lowered for the last time, exactly 54 years to the date that is was first raised. The post was identified in the 1995 Base Realignment and Closure Commission for closure. The post became operation again in September 2003, as part of the missile defense program. ("Fort Greely's BRAC Process Concludes," *Alaska Post*, 19 Jul 01.)

13 Jul 2001: General William J. Begert, Commander, Pacific Air Forces, presented the Raytheon Hughes Achievement Award to the 19th Fighter Squadron during ceremonies held on Elmendorf AFB. The annual award is presented to the best air superiority squadron in the Air Force. This was the first time the 19 FS won the prestigious award. It was the sixth time the award had been presented to an Elmendorf unit. (Hist, 3 WG, 2001, p. 122)

Source: Office of History, Elmendorf AFB