



Remembering Our Heritage



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6 Oct 1904: The Army completed work on WAMCATS with laying a telegraph cable between Valdez and Sitka. The system consisted of 2,128 miles of submarine cable, 1,497 miles of land lines and 107 miles of radio communications. The estimated cost per mile for landline communications came to \$617.00 and for cable, \$431.00 for a total cost of \$1,144,907.00. The system served both military and civilian needs, and revenues to the government averaged between \$170,000.00 and \$190,000.00 per year. (Meehan, "Alaska Communications System History," p. 67; Nielson, *Armed Forces on a Northern Frontier*, p.79.)

5 Oct 1917: The 90th Aero Squadron arrived at Garden City, NY via train. Squadron members hiked out to Field Number 2 of the Aviation Mobilization Camp where they were quartered with the Headquarters First Provisional Wing in Barracks Number 5. The 90th Aero Squadron stayed for three weeks performing guard duty and fatigue work, equipment and preparation for overseas duty. Recreation was provided in the form of frequent 24-hour passes to New York City and other towns in the neighborhood. ("The 90th Aero Squadron, American Expeditionary Forces, the Pair Of Dice Observation Squadron in World War I," Battery Press, 1990)

5 Oct 1921: Brigadier General Billy Mitchell, angry that he had been passed over for the job by another ground officer, offered to resign. When he went to the office of Maj. Gen. James Harbord, the Army's second in command, accepted his offer. General Mitchell decided to stay on active duty. Where General Menoher had allowed General Mitchell considerable leeway, General Mason kept tight control. General John J. Pershing, Army Chief of Staff, had appointed Mason as a means of controlling the outspoken Mitchell. President Coolidge did not reappoint him as the assistant chief of the Army Air Service after his term was up. Both the Army and Navy secretaries had threatened to resign. General Mitchell reverted to his permanent grade of colonel and was assigned as the air officer to Fort Sam Houston, TX. He also received a written warning to desist in his public statements. (Thomas D. Boetcher, *First Call: The Making of the Modern U.S. Military 1945-1953*, Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 1992, pp. 71-72.)



1 Oct 1940: One thousand, six hundred men worked three shifts, seven days a week with a schedule that called for laying 20 foot sections of concrete runway and working to complete 90 barracks needed to house units arriving at Elmendorf AFB. *The Anchorage Daily Times*, announced that one of the units scheduled to deploy to Alaska was the 11th Pursuit Squadron. (*The Anchorage Daily Times*, 1 Oct 1940 and 3 Oct 1940.)

1 Oct 1942: The 3rd Bombardment Group (Light) was redesignated 3rd Bombardment Group (Dive) per General Order No. 12, Fifth Air Force. Per Allied Air Forces General Order No. 54, Advanced Headquarters, the 3rd Bomb Group and the 89th Squadron were under the operational control of the Advanced Echelon of Fifth Air Force. Group Headquarters and the 8th, 13th, and 90th Squadrons were under the operational control of Fifth Bomber Command. (Hist, Third Bombardment Group (Light), 1 January 1942 to 31 March 1944, p. 113; Hist, Third Bombardment Group (Light), 1 January 1942 to 31 March 1944, pp. 110-11)

Oct 1943: Edward "Eddy" V. Rickenbacker, escorted by Maj. Gen. Davenport Johnson, Commander, Eleventh Air Force, visited the Aleutian Island bases as far as Attu. He referred to the Aleutians as our coldest front and emphasized their importance in protecting them against a possible invasion. He later reported his findings to the Secretary of War to include the fact that Russia was secretly shipping uranium from the U.S. in Lead Lease aircraft. Eddy Rickenbacker, a World War I ace who later received the Congressional Medal of Honor and founded Eastern Airlines, spent the war years as an emissary of the Secretary of War visiting war fronts reporting on conditions and helping boost morale. (Alfred Mongin, AAC Historian, "AAC





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Begins Feature Article Series, " *Sourdough Sentinel*, 4 Jan 1974.)

5 Oct 1943: The Eleventh Air Force established the Eleventh Air Force Instrument Training School (Provisional) on Elmendorf Field under the command of Capt. John G. Coulter, a former airline pilot and flight instructor who had called to active duty following Pearl Harbor as a Air Transport Command pilot. Major General William O. Butler, Commander, Eleventh Air Force had seen the need for an instrument school based on the lessons learned during the Aleutian Campaign. Major General Davenport Johnson, General Butler's successor, made it a priority. The school began with six officers and seventeen enlisted men drawn from the operational flying units. It later grew to 24 officers and 86 enlisted men. The training aircraft consisted of a B-24, two B-25s and an AT-7. By the end of July 1945, the number had increased to two B-24s, eight B-25s, two C-47s, two P-38s, two P-40s and two AT-6s. The three bombers were veterans of the Aleutian campaign. By the end of the year, Captain Coulter, later promoted to lieutenant colonel, had acquired 14 Link trainers and operators. They were placed in operation in the Aleutians. Colonel Coulter also developed let down procedures. All pilots assigned to the Eleventh Air Force were required to complete the three-week instrument school and acquire a minimum of fifty hours instrument time. As a result, weather related accidents were reduced and the time to reach destinations in the Aleutians shortens. (HQ 11 AF Training Directive 5, 5 Oct 1943; 1/Lt Daniel R. Rectanus, Hist., Eleventh Air Force Instrument School (Provisional), Jul 1943-Jul 1945, pp.9-20.)



Oct 1945: Because of a shortage of aircrews, the 404th Bombardment Squadron transferred its last B-24Ds, 41-23886 "Little Girl," 42-40090, "Mush," 42-40965 "Lil' Deicer" and 42-41157 "Flash," to the Alaska Depot at Elmendorf AAFB for storage and ultimately salvage. Lieutenants Karl K. Kova, Richard J. Korpany, Price and Gerald W. Speicher, veterans of the Kurile operations, flew the battle weary bombers to their final destination. They are also carried men who had acquired enough points to separate from the service. (Capt

Rhodes F. Arnold Jr., Hist, 404th Bombardment Squadron, Oct 1945, pp. 13 and 23.)

3 Oct 1950: B-26C crews from the 8th Bombardment Squadron flew armed reconnaissance missions against trains, rail yards and factories in the vicinity of Sohung, North Korea. They destroyed numerous boxcars, train tracks, and scored six direct hits on a factory. The 13th Bombardment Squadron dropped flares to light up their targets on the road to Pyongyang, and then strafed, dropped bombs and fired rockets at the vehicles below. (3 BW newspaper, *The Invader*, 14 Oct 50)

1 Oct 1955: The 3rd Bombardment Group, Light was redesignated the 3rd Bombardment Group, Tactical at Johnson AB, Japan. (Lineage and Honors History, 3rd Operations Group)

1 Oct 1955: The 3rd Bombardment Wing, Light was redesignated the 3rd Bombardment Wing Tactical. (Lineage and Honors Statement)

4 Oct 1957: The Soviet Union launched *Sputnik I*, the first artificial satellite, a metallic sphere measuring two feet across and weighing 184 pounds. The Soviets used an R-7 (SS-6) intercontinental ballistic missile booster as the launch vehicle from the Baikonour launch facilities in Kazakhstan. The launch caught the Americans by surprised and led to the creation of NASA and increased concerns that the Soviet had developed a missile capable of delivering a nuclear warhead to North American targets. (Haulman, *One Hundred Years of Flight*, p. 81; histinfo@hq.nasa.gov.)





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Oct 1961: Elmendorf AFB formed a committee to study the allocation of on-base housing. At the time, 3,901 military families were eligible for 1,826 available housing units. The greater Anchorage area had 6,246 rental units available. (Miller, Hist, AAC, 1961, pp. 176-177.)



1 Oct 1961: Headquarters, AAC, inactivated the 5070th Air Defense Wing at Elmendorf AFB. It eliminated a layer of command with the following units reporting directly to Headquarters, AAC: 5040th Air Base Wing; USAF Hospital, Elmendorf AFB; 317th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron; 5070th Defense Systems Evaluation Squadron; 5071st Air Base Squadron at King Salmon; 5072nd Air Base Squadron at Galena; 5073rd Air Base Squadron at Shemya; 5010th Air Base Wing at Eielson AFB and the 19 aircraft control and warning squadrons. The organization change, changed the role of the AAC staff officers from purely staff matters to also of that as functional management of the subordinate units. The units remained attached to the 5040th Air Base Wing for administrative and logistical support. The Commander, AAC exercised courts martial jurisdiction. (HQ AAC SO G-57, 8 Sep 1961; Miller, Hist, AAC, 1961, pp. 92, 99 and 105.)



7 Oct 1966: Civilian pay on Elmendorf AFB was converted to computer operations. (Weidman, Hist, AAC, Jul-Dec 1966, p. 178.)

1 Oct 1970: The 90th Attack Squadron, in preparation for the 3rd TFW stand-down, ceased combat operations. (3 TFW history, 1 Jul-31 Oct 1970, p. 1, 5)

5-8 Oct 1971: The Alaskan Air Command hosted a combat turnaround to demonstrate the procedures its personnel developed for preparing an F-4E for another mission once it landed. Combat turnarounds involved three operations that had to be completed before a fighter could be launched on another mission. The inertial navigation system had to be realigned, the fighter reloaded with munitions and refueled. The munitions included 20 millimeter cannon ammunition for the M-61A1 internal nose gun, four AIM-4 Falcon and four AIM-7 Sparrow radar guided missiles. The standard NORAD load and launch time was 45 minutes by an eight man load team. The Alaskan Air Command sought to reduce the time by half and used a four man team and a team chief. Each man received training in a specific function. The load team demonstrated to representatives from the Tactical Air Command, Pacific Air Forces, Air Defense Command, and U.S. Air Forces in Europe that it could load combat turn an F-4E in half the standard time. The Air Force subsequently adopted AAC's approach for the standard for the F-4E. (Mongin and Mesloh, Hist, AAC, Jul 1970-Jun 1972, p. 94; Homsher, Hist, ALCOM, 1971, p. 72-75.)



1 Oct 1977: The 18th Tactical Fighter Squadron was activated and assigned to the 21st Composite Wing. It gave AAC, for the first time since 1960, a two-fighter squadron capability. The Command gained 12 additional F-4Es, bringing each squadron up to 24 primarily assigned and two maintenance backup fighters each. General Boswell had requested the additional fighters and the Air Staff approved in the request in May 1977. The first of the additional F-4Es began arriving in October with the final arrival scheduled in March 1978. (HQ AAC SO G-058, 22 Sep 1977; Hales, Hist, AAC, 1977, p. 13.)



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1 Oct 1980: The USAF began Operation Elf, the deployment of four E-3A airborne warning and control system aircraft to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, to protect Saudi airspace during the Iran-Iraq War. The Air Force also deployed three KC-135s in support of the operation. (Haulman, *One Hundred Years of Flight*, p. 123.)



4-5 Oct 1980:The Alaskan Air Command participated in the rescue of passengers from the burning Holland-American cruise ship, *Prinsendam*, in the Gulf of Alaska. The cruise ship with 519 aboard was bound from Vancouver, British Columbia to the Orient when it caught fire during the early morning hours of 4 October in the Gulf of Alaska, 370 miles southwest of Anchorage.

The 17th Coast Guard District's Juneau Rescue Coordination Center (RCC) coordinated the rescue efforts, which involved three Coast Guard cutters and the oil tankers *Williamsburg* and *Sohio Intrepid*, as well as helicopters and fixed wing aircraft from AAC, Coast Guard and Canadian Forces.



The Elmendorf AFB RCC dispatched the alert HH-3E with two pararescuemen (PJ) at 0435 and launched an HC-130, with three PJs, a flight surgeon and photographer aboard at 0610. The HH-3E arrived at Yakutat at 0745, off-loaded 169 blankets and then proceeded to the area of the *Prinsendam*, where the crew joined two Coast Guard HH-3Es in recovering by hoist the passengers who were scattered in six

lifeboats, one motorized launch and four life rafts.

Captain Walters and his crew began recovery operations at 0920 by lowering Sergeants Cassidy and Rios into the lifeboat to assist in lifting 11 passengers aboard and flying them to the *Williamsburg*. He and his crew recovered six more, he then stopped to refuel, before picking up 35 more passengers. They had to stop when the hoist cable became tangled in the lifeboat rudder and broke. The HC-130, which had been providing overhead support, diverted to Yakutat where the flight surgeon and the three PJs transferred to a Coast Guard HH-3E then flown to the *Williamsburg*, where their services were needed. Captain Walters and his crew landed on the *Sohio Intrepid*, where they remained until the tanker reached port at Valdez.

By 1830, the Coast Guard reported that all the passengers had been flown or made their way to the *Williamsburg* in life boats including the *Prinsendam* captain and his crew members who had given up trying to contain the fire. However, when the Commander, 71st Rescue and Recovery Squadron asked for a confirmation on the location off all his personnel, it was discovered that Sergeants Cassidy and Rios and 18 passengers were missing. The search was resumed and the Coast Guard cutter *Boutwell* located the lifeboat after midnight 5 October. The 71st Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron received credit for saving the lives of 74 people including 13 from the Canadian CH-46. (Cloe, Hist, AAC, 1980, pp. 332-339-149.)





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The rescue operation received considerable media attention. It was the largest of its kind in Alaskan waters, and no lives were lost despite the advanced age of the passengers. Captain (Dr.) Donald Hudson, the flight surgeon from the Elmendorf AFB hospital who treated the passengers aboard the *Williamsburg*, attributed to their survival to the philosophy of old age. Many had resigned themselves to death and did not panic, but calmly accepted it and made the best of their situation. Air Force Chief of Staff Lew Allen later presented Captain Walters and his crew, including the flight engineer, SSgt. Michael J. Engles, and Sergeants Cassidy and Rios, with the Distinguished Flying Cross. The crew members and others aboard the HC-130 received the Air Medal and the others involved in the rescue, the Air Force Commendation Medal. Captain John J. Walters and his HH-3E crew from the 71st Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron also received the Mackay Trophy. (Cloe, Hist, AAC, 1980, p. 337; and Haulman, *One Hundred Years of Flight*, p. 123.)

Oct 1982: General Clark, in addition to concept of establishing temporary operating locations for the A-10A, also explored the possibility of operating the off frozen lakes. The concept was not new; ski-wheel equipped C-123Js and C-130Ds had operated off frozen lakes during the 1960s. The practice, however, was discontinued after an Alaskan Air National Guard C-123J broke through the ice on Lake Nuyakuk in 1967. The 343rd Composite Wing conducted surveys in 1982 to locate lakes for use during Brim Frost 83. The established criteria included being within 15-20 minutes of the exercise area and having a runway length of 10,000 to 12,000 feet. The following lakes were selected: Summit, Paxson, Harding and Quartz. Later the choice was narrowed to Paxson Lake south of Fort Greely and General Clark and Col. James Grassman, Deputy Chief of Staff, Operations over flew the lake in October. Plans were made to lay out a runway with landing lights and navigation aids. The concept, however, was not tested due to the inadequate ice thickness. General Clark also proposed operating the A-10As off gravel strips. Both ideas died shortly after General Brown assumed command. (Cloe, Hist, AAC, 1982, pp. 314-215; Cloe, Hist, AAC, 1983, p. 329.)



1 Oct 1982: The 18th Tactical Fighter Squadron, newly equipped with the A-10A, achieved operational capability. The squadron was authorized 32 pilots and 20 A-10A including two maintenance backup aircraft. There were also seven A-10 pilots authorized in the headquarters of the 343rd Composite Wing and two in Headquarters, AAC. The A-10 pilots were drawn from other A-10 units, former AAC F-4E pilots, O-2a and T-33 conversions and recent graduates of undergraduate pilot training who underwent conversion training at Davis-Monthan AFB, AZ. (Cloe, Hist, AAC, 1982, p. 272.)

3 Oct 1982: The 43rd Tactical Fighter Squadron received its last F-15A, 74-0095, from the 405th Tactical Training Wing, Luke AFB, AZ, and achieved operational capability shortly afterwards. The delivery of the 27 F-15As and the dual seat F-15Bs had been delayed by the need to undergo a maintenance program Warner-Robbins Air Logistics Center, GA, called Speedline. It involved modifications to the aircraft fuel, egress, avionics and structural system and replacement of the foam lining to the fuel tanks. During the process, the technicians found cracks in the wing spars, which had to be corrected. It delayed the delivery dates from 1980 to 1982 as shown in the table below. The Tactical Air Command loaned AAC nine F-15s so that training could be conducted. (Cloe, Hist, AAC, 1982, pp. 266-267.)



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The Alaskan Air Command received the F-15A/Bs in poor maintenance condition, only one arrived with fully capable weapons system. Other than the delays in delivery, and slow arrival of F-15 support equipment, the beddown went smoothly. (Cloe, Hist, AAC, 1982, p. 443.)

5 Oct 1982: The F-15A replaced the F-4E on alert duty at the forward operating bases, ending an era that began 1 August 1970 when the F-4E began performing alert duty at the forward operating bases.. (Cloe, Hist, AAC, 1982, pp. 235, 270-403.)



6 Oct 1983: General Brown testified before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, chaired by Senator Murkowski on the shoot down of Korean Airlines Flight 007. Senator Murkowski had convened the hearing to determine how procedures could be implemented to prevent another occurrence. General Brown briefed the air defense posture at the time, noting that the air defense system undergoing modernization both in fighters and radars. He described the organization of NORAD, and stated that the NORAD forces would not shoot down a Soviet aircraft, even if it penetrated North American airspace. The media quoted General Brown the next day as stating: "We would attempt to divert it or would attempt to get it to land. And if all of that failed, we would stay with it until after it left our sovereign airspace. But we would not shoot it down. (Cloe, Hist, AAC, 1983, pp. 242-247.)



1 Oct 1984: Headquarters, AAC, redesignated the USAF Hospital, Elmendorf AFB as the USAF Regional Hospital, Elmendorf. The change resulted from the fact that the hospital was providing services to other military activities including the Veterans Administration throughout Alaska. (HQ AAC SO G-58, 24 Sep 1984; Cloe, Hist, AAC, 1984, p.19.)

2 Oct 1989: Captains Lee G. Haefner and Gilbert Davis, 54th Fighter Squadron, and two pilots from the 51st Tactical Fighter Wing, Kadena AB, conducted the last Shemya based intercept of a Soviet aircraft flight, an IL-20.

3 Oct 2001: The 3rd Air Expeditionary Group began deploying to Kwang Ju, Korea, in support of Operation Enduring Freedom with more than 500 personnel including civil engineers who refurbished the base, which had been dormant for two years, and communications personnel who established and provided communications. Ten F-15Es from the 90th Fighter Squadron departed on 8 October. While deployed, the squadron flew practice strike missions and provided the long-range interdiction strike capability in the region during the absence of the USS *Kitty Hawk* (CV-63) from Japan. The group had deployed to the Indian Ocean in support of operations in Afghanistan. Half the personnel and four F-15Es returned to Elmendorf AFB on 20 December and the remainder arrived back at the base 23 December. (Hist, 3 WG, 2002, pp. 63, 123, 138-139).