



# Remembering Our Heritage



## 22-28 October

**27 Oct 1917:** The 90th Aero Squadron, two officers and 157 men, arrived at Pier 54, North River and boarded the H.M.S. *Orduna*. The crossing of the Atlantic was uneventful. The *Orduna* proceeded alone to Halifax, where it picked up seven other vessels and the convoy sailed together for Liverpool, arrived 10 November 1917. ("The 90th Aero Squadron, American Expeditionary Forces, the Pair Of Dice Observation Squadron in World War I," Battery Press, 1990)



**24 Oct 1929:** Carl Ben Eielson announced in Fairbanks that Alaskan Airways, Inc. had signed a \$50,000 contract with the Swenson Fur Trading Company to rescue 15 stranded passengers and recover a \$1 million dollar cargo of Arctic furs from the fur trading schooner *Nanuk*, frozen in the ice at North Cape (later renamed Mys Schmita), Siberia. It required flying a 2,250-mile round trip between Teller, Alaska, and North Cape in difficult weather conditions with no forecast other than that provided by the *Nanuk*. The schooner had been stranded since 4 October with the need to get the valuable furs to the market and remove the passengers. Eielson made arrangements to fly a large Hamilton Metalplane with mechanic Earl Borland to Teller where he would join Frank Dorbandt and his mechanic, Clark Bassett, who were flying a smaller Stinson Standard. Frank Dorbandt departed Teller and arrived at the *Nanuk* with a load of mail, cigarettes, a case of coffee and enough case gas for the return trip on 29 October. Eielson and Borland arrived the next day from Nome. The two departed the next day with eight passengers and a load of furs. After being forced down near an Eskimo settlement 90 miles west of East Cape by weather, they dropped the passengers and furs off at Nome in time to catch an outbound steamer and landed at Teller on 4 November. (Stevens, *Alaskan Aviation History*, pp. 719-720; Page, *Polar Pilot*, pp. 336-338.)

**24 Oct 1940:** General Simon Buckner in a letter to General DeWitt outlined his airfield requirements for defending Alaska. He proposed a series of air bases from which offensive and defensive operations could be conducted. After consulting with Marshall Hoppin, General Buckner subsequently developed a list of priorities. The first called for airfield at Nome, Bethel, Kodiak and on Unalaska Island. The second called for intermediate fields connected to Elmendorf and Ladd Field that provided refueling and armament support. The locations included Ruby and McGrath in interior Alaska and Northway and Big Delta to support aircraft transiting the interior route through Canada and Cordova for the coastal route. (Ferguson, AAF Study No. 4. pp.11-12.)



**26 Oct 1940:** The Alaska Defense Force (later re-designated Alaska Defense Command) retroactively activated Yakutat Landing Field, which marked the arrival of the first military personnel. The field was garrisoned by the 1st Battalion, 153rd Infantry Regiment, Headquarters and B Batteries, 244th Coast Artillery Regiment, a Post Headquarters Company, and weather, communications and engineers detachments. It never became a major military installation and served as an auxiliary field for transit aircraft and as a base for patrol aircraft during the early part of World War II. It was placed in a caretaker status in late 1943 and closed after the war. (HQ ADC GO 85, 23 May 1043; Fries, Hist, Yakutat Field, 26 Oct 1940-31 May 1944, p. 5.)



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**23 Oct 1942:** The Eleventh Air Force launched seven B-24s with an escort of six P-38s against the main camp and submarine base on Kiska under unusually clear ski conditions. (Carter and Mueller, *Combat Chronology*, pp. 49-54.)

**27 Oct 1951:** The 8th Bombardment Squadron, assigned to the 3rd Bomb Group, flew a three-ship formation consisting of two B-26Bs and one B-26C. The mission was flown a mere 40 miles east of the base (Kunsan) in conjunction with the Korean National Police. The objective of the mission was the suppression of local guerilla activity. The mission lasted two hours and forty-five minutes and consisted of bombing, strafing, and rocket attacks on designated ridges and valleys. A ground controller on a nearby ridge directed the strikes. Several days later the squadron received a report that sixty-nine guerillas were killed during the mission. The mission gained valuable experience in close ground support for the crews involved. (Hist, 8BS, Oct 1951, p. 3)



**22 Oct 1943:** Admiral Nimitz recommended to Admiral King that Alaska including the Aleutians be placed in a non-invasion status. He went on to say that the Army should have responsibility for the defense of Alaska including the Aleutians and develop them as a base for launching an offensive against the Kuriles. The Commander, North Pacific Force, under his control would have the responsibility developing naval facilities in Alaska and the Aleutians with the goal of offensive operations against the Kuriles to include training for amphibious operations directed against Japan along the Aleutians-Kuriles route. Admiral Nimitz instructed Admiral Fletcher to plan for an invasion of the Kuriles in 1944 and protect the sea lines of communications in your area. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, however, had already decided to reduce the garrison and delay the invasion of the Kuriles until 1945, with Paramushiru Island being the target. (Hist, North Pacific Force, 14 Aug 1945, pp. 79-80.)

**23-24 Oct 1944:** The 404th Bombardment Squadron conducted a formation bomber attack on the Kashiwabara Army Staging Area on Paramushiru. The en-route weather consisted of an under-cast with tops at 3,000 to 5,000 feet. The target area was covered with eight tenths clouds with occasional breaks and alto-stratus at 17,000 feet. Lt Gerald P. Weisman took off at 1154 in 42-40976 "Sally M" followed by Lt. Robert A. Weiss in 42-40988 and Lt. Kenneth E. Elliott in 42-41157 "Flash." Lieutenant Weisman's bomber carried 20 100-pound general purpose bombs and the other two carried 30 100-pound bombs. The formation crossed over the north central part of the island and then reversed course off the east coast of Araidō Island for the bomb run over Kashiwabara. Lieutenant Weisman, the flight leader, dropped his bombs at 2102 with the others in close formation dropping on his signal. All bombs were dropped at 150 foot intervals with radar returns being excellent. The bomb flashes were observed through the clouds. The formation turned for base, landing between 0122 and 0126. (Memo, Comdr, 28<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group to Comdr, 11AF, subj: Operational Summary for 23 October 1944, 24 Oct 1944.)



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**24 Oct 1946:** An RB-29 crew from the 46th Reconnaissance Squadron (Very Long Range-Photography) at Ladd Field spotted a large ice island floating in the Arctic Ocean on the radar scope. It was referred to Target 1 or T-1. Other than report it, nothing was done at the time. Interest was revived in 1948 when Lt. Col. Arnold E. McKenzie at the Air University, Maxwell AFB, AL, suggested that an airbase could



be built on a floating ice island. Further discussions resulted in the belief that the idea would be impractical, but that a floating ice island could be used as a weather and scientific research station. In the interim, subsequent reconnaissance flights continued to report and track T-1. Between its discovery and September 1949, T-1 had drifted 1,500 miles in a clockwise position from a position 300 miles north of Barter Island to within 200 miles north of Ellesmere Island, where contact with it was lost until its rediscovery in late 1951 aground near Cape Columbia, Ellesmere Island. Two other ice islands, T-2 and T-3, were subsequently found by air reconnaissance. Their evident strength and resistance to fragmentation indicated composition of fresh water. They had apparently originated on the north coast of Ellsmere Island. A 1875 expedition led by Sir George Nares had observed large sheets of fresh water ice, which were later recorded by Robert E. Peary in 1905. The three ice islands resembled ice covered land from the air. The Air Force initiated the highly secret Operation Ptarmigan flights in 1946 employing RB-29s on photoreconnaissance flights over the Polar Region to gain knowledge of the Arctic Region north of Alaska and Canada to the North Pole and beyond. (Dr. Ira Chart, Hist, AAC, Jan-Jun 1952, p. 222-223.)

**27 Oct 1950:** HQ, Alaskan Air Command, published General Order 48 activating 10th Air Division (Defense) at Elmendorf AFB and the 11th Air Division (Defense) at Ladd AFB. Headquarters strength authorization for each was set at 10 officers and 20 airmen. The manpower positions were drawn for existing AAC resources. The two divisions reported directly to Headquarters, AAC for operational control with the 57th Fighter Interceptor Wing and 5001st Composite Wing providing administrative support to the respective divisions. While the 10th Air Division (Defense) was fully manned with personnel drawn from the 57th Fighter Interceptor Wing, the 11th Air Division (Defense) at Ladd had a token manning of one officer and one airman at the end of 1950. (Parsons, Hist, AAC, Jul-Dec 1950, pp. 45-46.)



**25 Oct 1957:** The 3rd Bombardment Group, Tactical, was inactivated at Johnson AB, Japan. In order to preserve its history, the 3rd Group's lineage and honors were bestowed on the 3rd Wing. (Lineage and Honors History, 3<sup>rd</sup> Operations Group)

**25 Oct 1961:** The evacuation of Drift Station Brava (Ice Island T-3) begun on 21 September 1961 was completed. The Alaskan Air Command placed it on a standby status. Headquarters, AAC Special Order G-61, Sep 1961, inactivated Detachment 2, Drift Station Charlie, and Detachment 3, Drift Station Bravo. (HQ AAC SO G-61, Sep 1961.)



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**22 Oct 1962:** President John F. Kennedy addressed the nation that the Soviet Union was positioning nuclear missiles in Cuba, stating U.S. would “regard any nuclear missile launched from Cuba against any nation in the Western Hemisphere as an attack by the Soviet Union on the United States, requiring a full retaliatory response against the Soviet Union.” The Strategic Air Command went to Defense Readiness Condition (DEFCON) 2, one step away from general war. In response to the Cuban Missile Crisis, AAC increased its readiness posture to DEFCON 3, activated its command post, manned its alternate command post at Wildwood AFS and went to 24-hour operations. All the radar stations went to a two 12 hour shifts. The 317th Fighter Squadron deployed additional aircraft to the forward operating bases and Eielson AFB bringing the total at each to eight. The remaining F-102As were placed on alert. The numbers were reduced to three at each base on 3 November. Military planners met with their civilian counterparts to discuss the evacuation of non-combatants to Safe Haven. The Air Force used Seward and the Army, Whittier, south of the Alaskan Range. Both used Fort Greely north of the range. The discussions revealed difficulties implementing the Safe Haven plans due to lack of adequate transportation. The Alaskan Railroad, which provided the only viable alternative to moving large numbers of personnel, did not have the capability. The plans were not implemented due to inadequate plans and limited urgency. The Command returned to normal operations on 27 November with the declaration of DEFCON 5. (Corell, “Airpower and the Cuban Missile Crisis;” Miller, Hist, AAC, Jul-Dec 1962, pp. 377-409.)



**25-30 Oct 1964:** Governor Bill A. Eagen proclaimed the first Arctic Airlift Week to extend public understanding of the Air Force’s peacetime rescue, humanitarian and relief operations in Alaska. The objectives of Arctic Airlift Week including providing information to the public on AAC’s airlift operations and combat support, increasing a public knowledge of complex and hazardous airlift operations in Alaska, extending a knowledge of search and rescue and humanitarian relief operations and to strengthen the morale of AAC by providing a better understating

mission accomplishments. The AAC hosted fifteen news media representatives from the Lower 48 and 10 from Alaska. Seven accompanied the 17th Troop Carrier Squadron on a C-130D deployment to Greenland in support of DEW Line sites DYE II and DYE III. While in Greenland, the C-130D crew circled the site of a World War II B-17 (*My Gal Sa*). Six other media representatives flew on a routine re-supply mission, which ended up as a humanitarian mission when the aircraft crew picked up a seriously ill soldier at Wildwood and took him to a hospital. At least 32 stories featuring 62 photographs were published. Maj Gen James C. Jensen, Commander, AAC, hosted the media and invited dignitaries to briefings, demonstrations and displays including a mass airborne drop of USARAL troops from five C-130s over the Claxton Drop Zone. The week ended with an Arctic Aviation Pioneer banquet honoring Arctic flying pioneers. Among those attending were Alaskan aviation pioneers John Cross, Jim Dodson, Jack Jefford, Ray Peterson, Bob Reeves and Noel Wien. Col Bernt Balchen, USAF Ret, was also present as was Lt Gen Ramond J. Reeves, Commander-in-Chief, Alaskan Command. (AAC Information Office, Case History of Arctic Airlift Week, 25-30 Oct 1964; Weidman and Ravenstein, Hist, AAC, 1964, pp. 260-263.)



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**25 Oct 1967:** Two F-100s from the 510th Tactical Fighter Squadron, assigned to the 3rd Tactical Fighter Wing, were diverted from their original target, to stop a mortar attack on the small Army airfield of Ben Tre, 50 miles southwest of Saigon. Seven bomb passes were made before pilots began a strafing run. In addition to thwarting the mortar attack, the pilots were credited with destroying four military structures, damaging one, igniting two secondary explosions and silencing the small arms fire in the area. (Hist, 3 TFW, Oct-Dec 1967, p. 28)



**24 Oct 1973:** President Nixon placed U.S. military forces of Defense Readiness Condition 3 as a result to the Middle East crisis brought on by the Egyptian and Syrian invasion of Israel. The Alaskan Air Command received the notification at 1848 hours local and within five hours had armed 12 additional F-4Es and dispatched four aircraft to Galena and King Salmon. The number of alert aircraft at Eielson AFB increased from two to four aircraft. Five HH-3Es were also deployed, with two each on alert at Eielson AFB and Galena and one at King Salmon. The C-130s were also deployed to the forward bases to provide support. All non ANR forces were directed to return to DEFCON 5 (normal readiness) at 1625 on 25 October. Alaskan NORAD Region returned to DEFCON 5 at 0930 on 26 October. (Hales, Hist, AAC, Jul 1972-Jun 1974, pp. 262-263.)

**25 Oct 1973:** The *Anchorage Times* reported that military forces in Alaska had been directed to go on alert and there was no comment from the military. Gerry McFarland with the Alaskan Command public affairs office stated he expected further guidance later in the day. Major General Bruce Stasser, State Adjutant General, stated the Alaska National Guard had not been alerted, but the Guard was "taking precautionary measures to get geared up in case something does happen." Representative Don Young (R-AK) stated that the U.S. is in a critical situation, facing one of those periods in its history "closely related to the Missile Crisis in Cuba." ("Alert Includes Alaska Bases, *Anchorage Times*, 25 Oct 1973.)

**26-29 Oct 1974:** Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger visited Alaska to discuss the planned disestablishment of ALCOM with the military leadership. Full consideration was given to the sensitivity of Alaska's civilian leadership for the military posture. As the result of this visit and prior discussions, the planners agreed to upgrade the position of Commander, Alaskan Air Command, from a major general to a lieutenant general with the following responsibilities: senior military officer in Alaska, senior DoD representative in Alaska, DoD coordinating authority, and Commander of ANR. He was also, based of JCS recommendation, designated Commander, Joint Task Force (Alaska), which could be activated in the event of hostilities and natural or manmade disasters to provide unity of command. He would then report directly to JCS. The agreement reached, while implying Commander, Joint Task Force (Alaska) might be the designated commander in the event of hostilities, JCS had the authority to designate someone else. (Cloe, Hist, AAC, Jul 1974-Jun 1975, pp. 30-33.)



**22 Oct 1992:** Lt Col Timothy H. Kline and Lt Samuel S. Fedak, 54th Fighter Squadron, launched from King Salmon and intercepted a flight of two TU-95 Bear Gs over the North Pacific. (Hist, 3<sup>rd</sup> Wing, 1991-1992, p. 90.)



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**23 Oct 2002:** The 3rd Wing deployed approximately 100 personnel, most of which came from the 12th Fighter Squadron, and six of the squadron's F-15Cs to participate in Commando Sling 2003. The Republic of Singapore sponsored annual air-to-air combat exercise. The exercise began in 1990 to provide combined air combat training for USAF, Republic of Singapore Air Force units and other nation's air forces. The 12th Fighter Squadron was the only USAF participant in this year's exercise, which involved flying against Republic of Singapore Air Force Northrop F-5 Tigers. Douglas A-4 Skyhawks and Lockheed-Martin F-16 Falcons. (1/Lt Johnny Rea, "Wing Deploys to Singapore for Commando Sling," *Sourdough Sentinel*, 25 Oct 2002)



**24 Oct 2003:** The Joint Mobility Complex at Eielson AFB opened. By the end of the month, more than 1,100 personnel had processed through it. Prior to its opening, Eielson AFB and Fort Wainwright did not have a facility similar to the one on Elmendorf AFB for processing rapid deployment of personnel and equipment. ("JMC Officially Open," *Arctic Sentry*, 31 Oct 2003.)

**26 Oct 2004:** The Boniface Gate reopened after being closed for nearly four months because of the \$4.6 million construction at Elmendorf AFB's main gate. Anchorage Mayor Mark Begich joined Col Michael Snodgrass, 3 WG Commander, to cut the ribbon to the new state-of-the-art facility. (Frank, Hist, 11AF, 2004, p. 33.)



**27 Oct 2005:** The *Anchorage Daily News* reported that the Air Force had reversed its decision and decided to keep access to Elmendorf AFB from Government Gate via another temporary gate. The 3rd Wing Public Affairs Office had issued a release the week before that the gate would close the gate providing access from the Government Hill area for nine months due to shortage of Security Forces personnel and new housing construction near the gate. It had alarmed

businesses outside the gate. Fort Richardson agreed to help provide gate manning at the Muldoon Gate, which helped relieve the 3rd Security Force Squadron shortage. Many Army personnel use the Muldoon Gate because of its closeness to the hospital and shopping mall. The 3rd Security Forces Squadron agreed to provide training to around 10 Army military policemen. The Air Force still planned to close the Government Hill Gate to the public so that construction vehicles could use it, but decided to open the rarely used nearby Bluff Road Gate. (Tataboline Brant, "Air Force Will Keep Gate Open," *Anchorage Daily News*, 27 Oct 2005.)