Cold Missions

The U.S. Army Air Forces and Ladd Field in World War II

The first Buzby Ranch, ca 1916. The Buzby's claimed a homestead half a mile up the Chena River. Later Harry Buzby bought Lou Joys homestead. In 1939 the Buzby's as well as others sold in land for the original Ladd Field.Vide Bartlett Collection 1977-0089-00067 Archives and Manuscripts, Alaska And Polar Regions Dept., UAF.

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The installation known today as Fort Wainwright entered the world stage during the 1940s because of a unique episode in American military history, one brought about largely by weather, geography and international politics.

The post was Ladd Field, established in 1939 as a small cold weather test station. The airfield was named in recognition of Maj. Arthur K. Ladd, an Army Air Corps pilot who died in a crash in South Carolina in 1935. Cold weather testing remained an important element of Ladd Field operations throughout World War II, but another task conceived as an act of U.S. diplomacy soon emerged as the dominant mission.

The United States and the Soviet Union agreed that Ladd Field would be the transfer point for thousands of warplanes provided to the Russians to help win the fight against Hitler's Germany. The tale of how the airmen known later as the "Cold Nose Boys" developed the techniques needed for safe cold weather operations in the air and how an air bridge to Russia formed on the outskirts of Fairbanks is the story of Ladd Field during World War II.

The demands of wartime transformed Ladd Field into a major military installation that was home to thousands of troops, more than 700 buildings and connected in important ways to the war in the Pacific and in Europe.

Alaska's key position on the world map contributes to the importance today of Fort Wainwright. That was no less the case for Ladd Field, built not long after Brig. Gen. Billy Mitchell had warned Congress, "I believe, in the future, he who holds Alaska will hold the world and I think it is the most strategic place in the world." It was only as World War II was starting in Europe that a consensus developed that Mitchell was right about the strategic importance of Alaska.

Maj. Arthur K. Ladd. Courtesy Alaskan Air Command History Office, Elmendorf AFB.

Alaska's delegate to Congress, Anthony Dimond, 1932-1945. University of Alaska Fairbanks, Archives, UAF-1992-90-17.

Brig. Gen. Billy Mitchell. University of Alaska Fairbanks, Archives, 1987-0149-00074.

"An awful lot to learn"

Lt. Col. Henry H. "Hap" Arnold accepts the key to the city of Fairbanks, Alaska. University of Alaska Fairbanks, Archives, 1987-0149-00044

For most of the 1930s Alaska's nonvoting delegate to Congress, Anthony Dimond, had argued without success in Congress that spending money to fortify Pearl Harbor in Hawaii without taking any precautions to defend Alaska was like locking one door of a house and leaving another wide open. He said the territory could be taken "almost overnight by a hostile force" and any effort to recapture Alaska would come at a cost of millions of dollars and thousands of lives.

But isolationism remained a formidable political force in America and the nation was slow to recognize the threat from Germany and Japan or how aviation had redefined notions of national security. This was not for lack of trying by men like Dimond and Lt. Col. Henry H. "Hap" Arnold, the officer who led a groundbreaking flight of 10 Army bombers to Alaska in 1934 on which he mapped airways to Alaska and scouted locations for bases.

Constructing Quartermaster's party arriving in Fairbanks. Left to right: Cadet John Lee, Jr., Maj. Newton Longfellow, Maj. Dale Gaffney, Col. John Lee, Maj. E. M. George, Capt. C.W. Gibson. Kay Kennedy Aviation collection, 1991-0098-00837, Archives and Manuscripts, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

The future five-star general and commander of the Army Air Forces in World War II became one of the most outspoken proponents of the need to defend Alaska. After the 1934 flight, Arnold recommended that an air base be built at Fairbanks, as a supply point and for cold weather testing. Congress authorized a cold weather testing station, but provided no money to build it.

In the meantime, the Army sent an official site selection party north in 1936 to pick a spot just to the east of Fairbanks along the Chena River. "We have no knowledge, of course, as to when the funds will be voted," the head of the delegation told the Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed papers in March 1937 to withdraw nearly six square miles for the base, but Congress was still in no hurry to act.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed his approval for a military base based in Alaska in March 1937.

In testimony to Congress in 1939, Arnold was characteristically blunt about the danger of continued delay. By then he was chief of the Army Air Corps and worried about holes in U.S. defenses. "We do not know anything about Alaska," he said. "Our people must be trained how to fly up there, about the weather and the kind of clothing they must have. How to start an engine when it's 40 degrees below zero. How to keep oil from congealing before you get it into the engine. What happens to a metal airplane when you bring it from this 40 below temperature and suddenly put it in a warm hangar. We have indications and every reason to believe that the rivets will pop right out. All these things we must go through and there is going to be an awful lot to learn."

The news in early 1939 that Congress approved $4 million to start building a cold weather testing facility was hailed by the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner as the "first definite step by the United States for the establishment of an Army air unit and training of its personnel in the frigid zone. That it constitutes a departure and a very necessary one goes without saying."

That summer, a 17-man party arrived in Fairbanks in two military aircraft to start the survey work on the cold weather test station. At the Weeks Field airport, located near where Lathrop High School and the Noel Wien Library are found today, about 100 of the town's nearly 3,000 residents turned out to welcome the new arrivals. It was Aug. 21, 1939, eleven days before Adolph Hitler invaded Poland and began World War II.

The Building *of* Ladd Field

Hangar One under construction, ca winter 1940-41. AAF photo, courtesy Eielson AFB and Steve Dennis.

In the fall of 1939 the Army acquired the land needed to build a four-mile spur of the Alaska Railroad to get heavy equipment to the site of what was soon to be named Ladd Field. Before the cold weather arrived, a construction crew poured a six-inch thick test slab of concrete for the airfield runway, measuring 60 feet by 120 feet. Since the same company also had the contract to pave the first street in Fairbanks the next year, it also did a test section of pavement downtown at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Cushman Street.

The Ladd Field ground work continued through the winter, an unusual step in a region where it was traditional for most outdoor work to cease during the coldest months. In April, 1940 a shipload of construction materials made its way north, along with 15 enlisted men, an O-38 airplane and Maj. Dale Gaffney, the first commander of Ladd Field. By the summer, up to 1,200 men were employed on the runway and the associated buildings. Gold mining had been the biggest source of employment in Fairbanks, but many workers left the big gold dredges to try their hand at construction work on Ladd Field. By July foundations had been poured for 12 buildings and the 5,000-foot runway was more than half finished. The concrete slab for the runway was six inches thick, atop two feet of gravel. A lot of the work had to be done by hand in heavily loaded wheelbarrows called "cement buggies."

Ed Hinke was working in Juneau when the call went out across Alaska that Ladd Field needed workers in 1940. "I landed the hardest and the dirtiest job on the base," he said. "I was a cement dumper, one of a crew of two. We had to dump seven sacks of cement into the hopper every few minutes. Had to wear 'tin clothes,' goggles and respirator all the time in the hot Fairbanks summer."

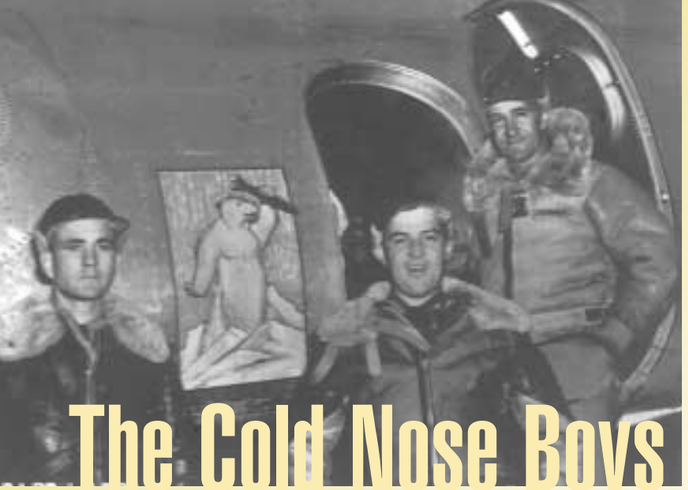
The construction on the air field created so many jobs that an observer wrote of Fairbanks that unemployed men gathered in herds on the street corners, but not for long: "Most of them will have jobs within a week or so and then another flock will flood into the city to be in their turn absorbed by the almost incredible activity of Fairbanks and the Fairbanks area."

With Hitler overrunning Europe, Arnold returned to Alaska in July 1940 to check on the status of the hurry-up military work in Anchorage and Fairbanks. In Anchorage, the major project was the construction of Elmendorf airfield within what became Fort Richardson, envisioned as the center of Alaska's defenses.

Speaking to the Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce just down the street from the new Lacey Street Theatre, which was showing "Gone With The Wind," Arnold shared his views on preparing the nation. "If we have an adequate defense in the air, there is less likelihood that we will be attacked. Air defense is national insurance. The recent wars have taught us one lesson which our people should never forget. That is, that the flying machine, one of the finest vessels of air commerce, can be turned into the deadliest weapon of war," Arnold said.

Arnold was impressed with the pace of work at Ladd and decided to move up the schedule by a year, figuring that the runway would be finished and the troops could be housed in temporary quarters that fall. The runway, dubbed the "largest slab in the Territory of Alaska" by a reporter, was completed in September about three months before the runway at Elmendorf Field in Anchorage was ready. Gaffney "christened" the Ladd runway on Sept. 5, when he landed the O-38, the first Army Air Corps plane assigned to Alaska, on the runway that would see thousands of aircraft within a few years.

An aerial view of the Headquarters area in 1940. Hangar No. One is under construction in the foreground, while the foundation was being laid for the Air Corps Barracks, and the BOQ was receiving finishing touches. AAF photo.



The Cold Nose Boys GET TO WORK

An early model Sikorsky helicopter was tested at Ladd Field in the winter of 1943-44, nicknamed "the Arctic Jitterbug," University of Alaska, Fairbanks Archives UAF-1999-204-82

Photo at left; Airmen of Ladd Field, 1940. Courtesy of Elmendorf AFB History Office.

A C-54 gets a hot-air treatment before flying into the cold blue yonder.

The main road leading into Fort Wainwright is named for Brig. Gen. Dale V. Gaffney, who became known in some quarters as the "Screaming Eagle of the Yukon."

Gaffney, who arrived at Ladd Field with the original survey crew and was closely connected to every stage of the field's development throughout the war, said the goal for the first winter of the detachment was to "Fly 'em and watch 'em." The pilots and other crew members would fly the planes and watch what happened, making adjustments and recommendations to deal with the cold.

In October, two B-17s arrived and the Cold Weather Test Detachment "grew into its name," the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner said. "The mammoth sky destroyers are but the leadoff guinea pigs of a composite squadron from Uncle Sam's military menagerie," the newspaper said. The planes had a logo showing a bear with its right paw

B-24 with engine heater (duct) at 35ºF below.

P-38 readied for flight. Courtesy Pioneer Air Museum.

Alaska Air Depot flight test on B-25 and Jeep at Ladd Field. The B-25 had a 75mm cannon on the left lower nose. University of Alaska Fairbanks Archives, 1987-0149-00039.

extended, preparing to hurl a bomb, which prompted newspapers to coin the term "Polar Bear Squadron" and later the "Cold Nose Boys."

The station had a roster of 14 officers and 200 enlisted men and a limited menagerie of two B-17s, two P-37s and one O-38. The B-17s undertook flights that ranged from photographic missions of central Alaska to a trip to Nome in November, returning with 2,000 pounds of fur mukluks and reindeer parkas to be tested by servicemen. The Daily News-Miner said that nearly everyone in Nome turned out to get a look at the plane, which returned to Fairbanks that night, landing by the light of flares.

But one of the P-37s and one of the B-17s did not even make it through the winter. A P-37 was damaged and out of commission soon after its arrival and one of the Flying Fortresses crashed while on a trip Outside, killing the crew of eight. The airmen were memorialized by the naming of roads on the new base after them, with most of the names still in use today—Freeman, Ketcham, Trainer, Whidden and Applegate.

The biggest challenges facing the Cold Weather Test Detachment appeared when the temperature dropped. Airplane heaters wouldn't work, wheels wouldn't turn, controls wouldn't budge, ice covered the insides of cockpit windshields and brakes froze. "Planes and men at Ladd Field will get a real taste of the rigors of an Arctic winter this year, for hangars have not been completed and will not be ready until the next year, so the planes will be out in the open in temperatures ranging down to 50 degrees below zero. It's just plain hard work to service and fly a plane in temperatures like that," Gaffney said.

Cold Weather Test Detachment ground equipment test area, east side of Hangar One. Note C-13 battery carts and Herman-Nelson heaters. B-26 in background. Temperature -35°F. AAF photo ca. 1944, courtesy Russ Sackett.

Chilly Billy, a B-17G, receives cold weather preparation for the arctic environment.

The wings are swept clear of snow on this C-46. Courtesy Pioneer Air Museum.

A B-24D with open bay doors awaits the loading of practice bombs that were delivered by sled. University of Alaska Fairbanks Archives, 1987-0149-00035.

Testing more than airplanes

UAF Lulu Fairbanks collection, 1968-0069-00604.

On his first visit to Ladd in July 1940, Col., later Gen., Simon Bolivar Buckner Jr., the commander of all Army tactical forces in Alaska, talked about the various types of cold weather testing he'd like to see at the new station. He said that 40 dogs would be moved from Chilkoot Barracks to Fairbanks, adding that dog teams were important to help aviators stranded in out of the way places.

10th Rescue Squadron, Dog Team Air Drop flying in a C-47. University of Alaska Fairbanks, Archives, 1987-0149-00023.

He had other exercises in mind as well, as 6,000 pairs of snowshoes had been requisitioned for the Alaska bases. "This seems to be a good snowshoe country and we will use them extensively. Skis are harder to learn and will probably only have limited use," said Buckner, who was once described in print as being "hard as a hunk of pig iron and built like stone lighthouse."

"Men will be sent out in the hills to camp in the snow," he said. "They will learn how to live in the cold and the snow. It is likely that they will bivouac in the mountains and perhaps it will be arranged for two battalions to meet in the wilderness for maneuvers on snowshoes," said Buckner.

Finding the right clothing was an early challenge. The coats the mechanics were first given to wear at 40 below were bulky and inadequate, leaving the men to alternately sweat and freeze. They needed mobility and they needed to keep warm while moving, a difficult combination that took time to achieve.

"Whenever we could, we went to the field and tested cold weather gear—from clothing to sleeping to cooking," said Ret. Col. Richard Dennison, a second lieutenant at the time. In the search for the right cold-weather clothes, one reporter wrote, the Army wanted garments that wouldn't stifle a pilot in the cockpit or give him instantaneous pneumonia if he found himself in nine inches of fresh snow with a northwest wind

One of the early coats worn by many of the early Ladd Field soldiers was known as the "DVG," which stood for Dale V. Gaffney. "Everybody was issued one of those

In 1942, Sir Hubert Wilkins, celebrated Arctic explorer (wearing the black tie), visited Ladd Field, Fairbanks, Alaska, to help solve some of the problems that arose in pushing Lend-Lease planes through to Russia during one of the bitterest winters ever recorded in the sub-arctic Alaska. To this left stands Gen. Dale V. Gaffney wearing the sheep-lined coat that was named after him – the "DVG." Kay Kennedy Aviation collection, 1991-0098-00854, Archives and Manuscripts, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Emergency rations. AAF photo, CWTD Report 1942-43. An important component to the emergency kit was the "can opener" (shown on the right) still in use today.

Lt. Marvin Walseth with C64 Norseman and wearing a fur parka and mukluks, 1941.

DVGs," said Bill Stroecker, a Fairbanksan who went into the Army in 1942. The sheepskin coats didn't work for air crews in cramped quarters, however, and Gaffney got involved in the development of down coats, which were more comfortable.

K-12 camera man testing his 75lb camera from an aircraft. University of Alaska Fairbanks, Archives, 1987-0149-00021.

Test pilot Randy Acord said that one innovation that helped mechanics and pilots was a thin rayon glove, the only item he knew of that served its purpose in cold or hot weather. In Arizona, soldiers wore the gloves to keep from burning their fingers on hot metal. At Ladd Field, the soldiers wore them inside of big mittens and could take their hands out of the mittens, tighten a nut and put them back in the mittens without having their fingers freeze to the metal.

None of the airplanes had good heaters for severe weather. One of the creative solutions devised to try to make flying a little more comfortable was a garment dubbed "electric underwear" by the newspapers that could be plugged in while in flight. There were small coils woven into garment, which was plugged in, as a reporter put it, like an "electric bottle warmer at home." Gaffney flew one of the B-17s for seven-and-a-half hours in the hot suit.

The transfer of the dogs that Buckner had talked about the previous summer took place, but with a strange twist. The 43 dogs and ten men left Haines on Jan. 24, 1941 for a 600-mile trip to Fairbanks. They carried radios and had food and other supplies dropped by air. The expedition got hung up in deep snow near Burwash Landing after a month on the trail and a B-17 from Ladd made an emergency flight to rescue the inexperienced dog drivers and their teams, many of which were reported to be sick. The plane landed on the ice of Kluane Lake on wheels and retrieved the dogs and military mushers, said to be a first in the history of aviation.

fairbanks and the military

1920 through 1945

1920

Gen. Billy Mitchell sends the "Black Wolf Squadron" from New York to Nome, a 9,000-mile roundtrip that establishes aviation in Alaska.

1922

Alaska Agricultural College & School of Mines opens in Fairbanks.

1923

Alaska Railroad completed.
President Harding visits Alaska to drive golden spike. Harding dies while on return to Washington.

1924

Carl "Ben" Eielson flies first air mail flights in Alaska.

Noel Wien makes the first flight from Anchorage to Fairbanks.

Douglas World Cruisers stop in Alaska on first flight around the world.

1925

Emergency dog team relay from Nenana to Nome carries diphtheria serum to Nome to combat health crisis.

Above and below ground at Ladd

By the start of 1941, the construction work was about 80 percent done, with the power plant already providing steam to heat several of the permanent buildings. The buildings were laid out in a horseshoe pattern on the north side of the runway, with the massive Hangar One dominating the scene next to the airfield. Along the horseshoe there were quarters for enlisted men and officers, a hospital, theater, power plant, and the commander's house.

The design and construction of this portion of the field occurred before the demands of war created an emergency situation in which appearances were expendable and utility and speed were all that mattered. Considerable planning is evident in the design of the original post, complying with an early pledge that the field would not be built in a haphazard manner.

North Post and runway, ca. 1942. Clockwise around parade ground from Hangar One on the left: Service club/bus station, power plant, quartermaster, 2 NCO quarters, commander's house, officers' quarters, garage, BOQ barracks/BX/hospital. Rail facilities, access road and warehousing are visible in upper right.

The field was laid out in a symmetrical pattern with Hangar One anchoring the design, just to the north of the airfield. The commander's house was at the apex of the horseshoe, which became a parade ground. Buildings along the sides of the horseshoe include a power plant, office/warehouse, quarters for married officers, NCOs and bachelor officers. A U-shaped building on the east side served as a barracks, hospital, PX and theater. This building became headquarters for Ladd Air Force Base in about 1954 and retained that function after the base became Fort Wainwright in 1961.

Hangar One at Ladd Field Cecil H. Kornegay Photograph Collection, 1946-1948. University of Alaska Fairbanks Archives, UAF-1999-0204-00045.

The buildings featured modern utilities, no easy task at a time when frozen water and sewer lines were a fact of life in the Fairbanks area. The solution the Army came up with at Ladd Field was to enclose the electric, water, steam, sewer and phone lines in underground tunnels about six feet wide and eight feet high. The tunnels had connecting branches to all of the buildings along the quadrangle.

One of the most talked about features of Ladd Field was that these utility tunnels did double duty as hallways, making it possible to travel among the major buildings of the original field without going outside. "In 40 below we walked in comfort," said enlisted man Bob Redding. The utilidor system still exists, providing a convenient way to maintain utility lines.

Interior of a barracks hut. Zenas Richards collection, University of Alaska Anchorage Archives.

The heat escaping from the utilidor had the added benefit of keeping the sidewalks above ground warm. That meant there was no snow to shevel and the sidewalks were clear for those who preferred walking outside.

During the war Ladd was regarded as the most comfortable and best-equipped base in Alaska, historian and retired military intelligence officer Otis Hays, Jr. has written, "with heated pedestrian tunnels linking the buildings and with Hangar One as its most visible landmark. The Soviets who later flew to and from the Fairbanks base called it a 'rest camp.'"

Hangar One was the most prominent architectural feature of the Ladd Field garrison. It dwarfed any other building ever attempted up to that time in Interior Alaska. The open floor of the hangar was 268 feet by 263 feet, nearly enough to hold a football field in either direction. The hangar had large two-story wings on the north and south sides. It had a concrete foundation with a wood truss roof topped by copper sheathing. The wings to the north and south side contained the headquarters staff, the post commander's staff and many other administrative and operational functions.

In addition to uniformed personnel, Ladd relied on a large civilian workforce. By mid-1944 there were at least 1,700 civilians on the base payroll and others working for contractors. Key civilians were recognized for their efforts in 1944 when more than 200 Ladd employees received the Asiatic-Pacific ribbon for civilian service.

Left to right; Commander's Quarters, WAC Barracks, Officers Family Quarters, BOQ (Bachelor Office Quarters.). University of Alaska, Fairbanks, Cecil H. Kornegay Photograph Collection, 1946-1948 UAF-1999-204-112

East elevation of combined Air Corps Barracks, Theater, PX, Hospital. ca. 1943. AAF photo.

Quartermaster building and the adjacent power plant. AAF photo.

Ladd Field Fire House (and Rescue Unit), north side of Quartermaster building. University of Alaska, Fairbanks, Cecil H. Kornegay Photograph Collection, 1946-1948 UAF-1999-204-112

1929-1939

1929
U.S. stock market crashes, starting the Great Depression.

Carl "Ben" Eielson crashes off the Siberian coast in November, prompting international search. Army Air Corps had neither planes nor pilots to participate.

1931
Alaska governor suggests federal government build more Alaska airfields.

1934
Territorial delegate Anthony Dimond introduces first bill to build an air base and defend Alaska.

Then Lt. Col. Henry "Hap" Arnold leads a flight of 10 B-10s from Washington, D.C. to Alaska and back. Arnold recommends building of Fairbanks air base.

1935
Congress approves idea of Alaska base, but provides no money.

First Juneau to Fairbanks flight.

Will Rogers and Wiley Post die in crash on Alaska's Arctic Slope.

1936
Army party selects site for Fairbanks base just east of town along Chena River.

1937
President Franklin D. Roosevelt withdraws six square miles for Fairbanks base.

1938
Civil Aviation Administration begins five-year campaign to build civilian airfields. At the time there were established airports at Fairbanks, Juneau, Anchorage and Nome.

1939
$4 million approved for cold weather test station.

August 1939
Surveyors and engineers start Ladd Field work.

September 1939
World War II begins when Germany invades Poland.

Fairbanks Welcomes the Military

From the start, the people of Fairbanks were enthusiastic about the building of Ladd Field, not only because of the economic boost it brought to the town, but also because the townsfolk were a friendly and welcoming sort. In the early months eight officers had their families with them in Fairbanks and found themselves invited to a variety of social activities.

Gaffney opened the gates to the townspeople on April 5,1941 in observance of Army Day. An hour-long air show featured four planes from Fairbanks and nine from Anchorage. Cameras were prohibited and members of the public were warned to stay in designated areas. About 2,500 of the town's 3,500 residents attended. Gaffney flew the B-17 as part of the exhibition.

"Visitors were amazed to see that the place that was a wood wilderness a year ago has been transformed into a magnificent establishment, not yet complete, but sufficiently along to convince the most skeptical that Uncle Sam's defensive forces are here in a mighty substantial way," the News-Miner editorialized.

Great Crowd Visits Ladd Field as Guests of Army And Workers at Dance

Until a larger affair comes along, Saturday night's hangar dance at Ladd Field will hold its place in history as the greatest crowd ever assembled under one roof in Interior Alaska and probably in the entire Territory.

According to figures compiled at the post, approximately 2,500 persons attended. Exact tabulations show that 1972 persons, 1622 from off the post, danced. The others came, looked, marveled and returned to their homes.

The dance was given by the U. S. Army Engineers, the Air Corps and the civilian employes working at

broadcast of music.

Promp Departure Appreciated

Last strains of the music were heard promptly at 1 a. m., and by 1:20 the post was cleared of civilians and civilian cars, of which there were 288 parked on and adjoining the hangar apron. In addition, many busloads of guests and dozens of taxi loads were taken away.

Officers of the post joined today in expressing their appreciation to the public for their careful following of regulations and for the quick departure after the dance.

To the post, Fairbanks says "Keep 'Em Flying."

In August 1941, a dance at Hangar One also drew about two out of three Fairbanks residents. The News-Miner said 1,972 people danced, making it the "greatest crowd ever assembled under one roof in Interior Alaska and probably in the entire territory." Within four months the world would change so much that there would be no more time for community dances in Hangar One.

AMERICA ENTERS THE WAR

For a time, a single B-17 was the only plane left at the field. With the expansion of what would be known after June 20, 1941 as the Army Air Forces, aircraft were hard to come by throughout the military. There was also a continuing power struggle within the Army about where Ladd Field would fit into the chain of command, stemming from conflicting opinions about the relative value of the Cold Weather Test Detachment. Gen. Arnold remained a big proponent of Ladd, however, and at various times the field commander reported directly to him in Washington, D.C. One reporter said of the underlying tension: "The CWTD became a dissident voice crying out in the wilderness which other army outfits would like to gag," William Gilman wrote.

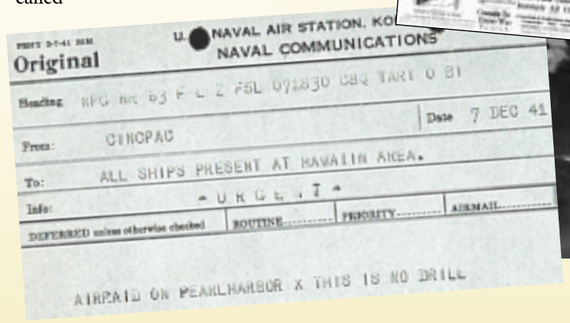
In the fall of 1941, the field had 520 men, but only 13 pilots, and Gaffney was concerned that it might not remain a cold weather testing station. The plan for the second year of cold weather testing was that two of every type of aircraft would be put to the test at Ladd Field, but growing world tensions, the shortage of aircraft and the events of Dec. 7, 1941 disrupted everything.

On that Sunday morning, Augie Hiebert was at the transmitter of Fairbanks radio station KFAR. He was checking short wave stations when he picked up word from San Francisco that Pearl Harbor had been attacked. "I knew that the military had a very uncertain short wave system if any at all," Hiebert said. "So I called

JAPAN ATTACKS U. S.

Fairbanks Daily News-Miner

NIPPON PLANES BOMB HUGE NAVY BASE AT PEARL HARBOR, HAWAII



Original

U. S. NAVAL AIR STATION, KO
NAVAL COMMUNICATIONS

Heading: RPG NR 83 F L Z 75L 071830 CBR TART 0 81

From: CINCPAC

Date: 7 DEC 41

To: ALL SHIPS PRESENT AT HAWAIIN AREA.

Info:

* U R G E N T *

DEFERRED unless otherwise checked | ROUTINE | PRIORITY | AIRMAIL

AIRRAID ON PEARLHARBOR X THIS IS NO DRILL

up Col. Gaffney, who was the military commander here. He was sort of a party guy; he had been up the night before. I got him out of bed and I asked him, 'Did you know there was a war on, Dale?"

Gaffney instantly put the base and community on alert. He advised residents of the community to stay off the phones, keep off the streets at night, obey military guards and prepare for a possible attack. He sent soldiers to temporarily guard the radio station, federal building, telegraph office and other key points before volunteers could be recruited.

Gaffney said he "had three jobs for every man" on Ladd Field and needed his men back. Later, Gaffney explained his belief that the Japanese would destroy Fairbanks if they thought it was necessary. "In such a case it is very logical that a squadron of Japanese bombing planes would be sent to destroy this area with little thought being given to the possibility of its returning," he said.

Outdoor lights were banned and plywood and drapes were placed over the windows of houses and offices. After Dec. 7 all work at Ladd Field was conducted in a blackout.

Augie Hiebert and his dog, Sparky at the transmitter of Fairbanks radio station, KFAR. University of Alaska Fairbanks, Archives, 1959-0845-01052.

1940

April 1940
Maj. Dale Gaffney and others arrive to begin major construction of Ladd Field. Work force grows to 1,000 by summer.

May 1940
Hitler invades Belgium and Holland. Congress approves $12.8 million for Anchorage air base construction.

June 1940
France surrenders to Germany.

June 1940
Construction begins on Elmendorf Field. First troops arrive in Anchorage.

July 1940
Then Col. Simon Bolivar Buckner Jr. arrives in Anchorage to command Alaska Defense Force.

August 1940
Buckner promoted to Brigadier General.

September 1940
Ladd Field runway completed. Cold Weather Experiment Station begins operation, ahead of schedule.

September 1940
Selective Service adopted in U.S.

October 1940
Churchill pledges that France will be liberated one day. U.S.-Canadian committee recommends series of military landing fields in Canada and Alaska.

November 1940
Anchorage Army installations named for Brig. Gen. Wilds Richardson and Capt. Hugh Elmendorf.

December 1940
New Fairbanks airfield named for Maj. Arthur Ladd, an Army pilot who died in South Carolina.

'A testing hiatus'

Cold weather testing was temporarily stopped after the attack on Pearl Harbor while Ladd Field troops concentrated on preparing against air raids and sabotage. "As with America as a whole, the illusion of remoteness and isolation vanished with that terrible expectation of momentary enemy bombs and bayonets," a 1945 history of Ladd operations said.

Fairbanks never became a target, but the Japanese bombed Dutch Harbor in June 1942 and occupied the islands of Attu and Kiska. Thousands died as U.S. forces battled to expel the Japanese in a campaign that lasted 15 months. The bombing of Dutch Harbor led to the disbanding of the testing detachment, as all available aircraft were pressed into service for defending Alaska.

That summer several officers and enlisted men from Ladd Field went on combat duty in the Aleutians. Maj. Jack Marks died when he was shot down, while Maj. Marvin Walseth died when the B-17 that had been at Ladd Field crashed because of bad weather during a reconnaissance mission over Kiska. Lt. Norman Nysteen also died in combat.

This "Grizzly Bear" patch was in use by the Alaska Defense Command beginning in 1943.

Cold Weather Test Detachment Fighter section crew poses with P-47D in front of "T" Hangars, Ladd Field, ca 1944. Courtesy Pioneer Air Museum/Randy Acord.

All outside information came through the Army's Alaska Communication System.

When it was disbanded, most of the detachment was sent to Nome because some military planners expected it to be the next place attacked after Dutch Harbor. Civilian and military planes made 218 flights to Nome, moving troops and supplies into place for an attack that never happened.

The dissolution of the testing detachment didn't last long. Arnold, who remained its most influential advocate, saw to that. It was reactivated in July 1942 when many of its men were at Nome, in the Aleutians and elsewhere. A unit history notes that opposition, which ranged from "passive resistance to marked antagonism," remained from those who just didn't see problems with flying in cold weather. To deal with these complaints, the Army brought dozens of laboratory scientists and factory representatives to Ladd to witness the tests and problems first-hand. It turned out to be a productive relationship. "We had the world of knowledge at our fingertips in the Cold Weather Test Detachment," test pilot Randy Acord said. "We had 45 of the top engineers from all the different major manufacturing companies in the United States. They were our advisers and watching everything we did. And we were running tests for them as well as the military and we ended up solving an awful lot of cold weather mysteries, which was always an interesting thing to Gen. H.H. Arnold. The more cold weather problems we could eliminate, the happier he was."

In the winter of 1942–43, the detachment progressed from the pioneer stage to one of "stability and intensive scientific accomplishment," a unit history records, and began to provide critical knowledge about how to keep planes flying in the cold. Recommendations from the detachment for modifications found their way quickly to the production lines and it wasn't long before all of the Army's planes could operate at 40 below zero.

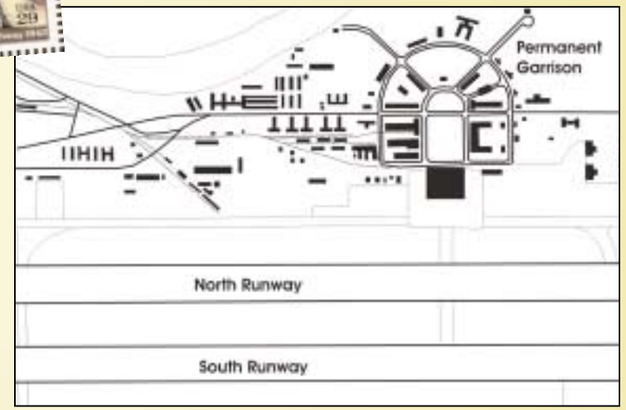
The extensive testing continued until the end of the war. The concentration of officers in the detachment was such that the unit reportedly had the biggest payroll of any comparably sized organization in the armed forces. The work had its dangers and during the course of the war, three dozen men from the detachment died, some in combat, others in accidents on the ground or in the air.

The program that had started with a small contingent in 1940 grew into a major testing program. By 1945, more than 700 military and civilian personnel tested 22 types of aircraft. In 1944, North Star Magazine wrote of the continuing struggle by the Cold Nose Boys to destroy cold weather Gremlins. "In that struggle, the Cold Weather Testing Detachment has played a leading and honorable role," it said.

A team of U.S. Army Engineers laying out the pioneer road in 1942. University of Alaska Fairbanks, Archives, 1992-0077-00203.

As Alaska became a war zone, Ladd Field became more important militarily, as a vital link on the supply route to Alaska, both on the ground and in the air. Less than a year after the attack on Pearl Harbor, there were trucks hauling supplies along a fifteen hundred mile primitive road to Fairbanks. The Alaska Highway also helped open a new highway in the skies, which became vital for the war in Alaska and in Europe. The Air Transport command ran the airfields along the route to Alaska and also was responsible for a major wartime cargo operation and contracts with private air carriers to supply air transport services for the military.

The demands of wartime forced rapid expansion to handle new missions. Ladd Field became an important transportation hub for cargo needed in the Alaska theater, as well as for passengers to and from Alaska and for the Lend-Lease aircraft. In what amounted to a continual construction spree, workers expanded the runway by 4,000 feet, built a second runway to handle more planes and added new warehouses, offices and other buildings. Hundreds of temporary buildings, four Birchwood hangars, two Kodiak "T" hangars, housing for more than 4,500 troops and other facilities also sprang into place during the war.



Ladd Field Partial Plot Plan; Based on 1946 Plot Plan prepared by Office of the Engineer, Ladd Field, Alaska.

1941

January 1941
Albert Farr, who hitchhiked to Fairbanks the previous summer from Durango, Colo., was the first Fairbanks enlistee at Ladd Field.

February 1941
First tactical air squadron arrives in Alaska, at Elmendorf. Alaska Defense Force redesignated Alaska Defense Command.

March 1941
FDR signs Lend-Lease Act.

April 1941
Germans capture Belgrade.

May 1941
Reconnaissance made of sites for Aleutian airfields.

June 1941
Hitler attacks Russia. Many aircraft destroyed.

August 1941
Dance at Ladd Field's Hangar One draws largest crowd under one roof in Alaska.

September, 1941
Alaska's National Guard placed on active duty.

Ladd Field has 520 men.

October, 1941
U.S. extends Lend-Lease provisions, shipped by sea, to Soviet Union.

December 1941
Japanese attack Pearl Harbor. Alaska towns blacked out in fear of attack. Fort Richardson key Alaska military installation.

Life at Ladd Field

The original quarters constructed at the field drew rave reviews. "Nothing I can say can possibly tell you how nice they are for Alaska," the wife of a lieutenant wrote home in early 1941. Later that year, an Army inspector said the barracks for the men "are the best I have ever seen. There is little doubt that morale of troops will be materially improved." After the United States entered the war, the demands on Ladd Field intensified and the base blossomed with Quonset huts, Pacific huts, prefabricated wood frame barracks and other rapidly built structures. "You started out with a new fine set of buildings and then they got in a rush, why they just threw up whatever they could," veteran Bill Stroecker said.

An unidentified soldier at the corner of Cushman Street and 2nd Avenue, a popular site for souvenir photos taken for friends and family "back home." Photo courtesy of June Edwards collection, TYHS.

WACS and their dates at NCO club, 1945. Courtesy Audrey Virden, fourth from left.

Photograph of a soldier sitting on the Six Mile firetruck Engine No. 9. Cecil H. Kornegay Photograph Collection. University of Alaska Fairbanks, Archives,1999-204-106

Baseball was a favorite pastime played under the Alaskan midnight sun. Photo courtesy of June Edwards collection, TYHS.

There were 184 Pacific huts that served as barracks, which contained bunks and were a place to pass the time, as Stroecker put it. Stan Jurek said the barracks he lived in provided him with a bunk, a place to store his rifle and a shelf for clothes. "Ours was named Pneumonia Gulch, next one as Snake Pit and they were all pretty cold living quarters in the wintertime." The men would chip in and pay someone to keep the fire in the coal stove going at night so they wouldn't freeze.

For entertainment, the men would go to the bars in Fairbanks or just outside the city, drop by the USO on the Chena River, play basketball, baseball and ski on Birch Hill. At times there were shows put on by the likes of Bob Hope and a boxing demonstration at which heavyweight champion Joe Louis acted as the referee.

WACs pose for a summer sleigh ride. 1945. Courtesy Betty Wiker.

1942

January 1942
Construction begins on Otter Point airfield 70 miles south of Dutch Harbor in the Aleutians.

February 1942
Cold Weather Experiment Station renamed Cold Weather Testing Detachment. Sixth Air Depot organized.

President Roosevelt authorizes construction of Alaska Highway.

March 1942
Construction begins on Alaska Highway. Gen. MacArthur leaves Philippines, says "I shall return."

April 1942
Col. James Doolittle, who grew up in Nome, leads raid on Tokyo and other Japanese cities.

People of Japanese ancestry ordered interned. Many from Alaska sent to Washington and then Idaho.

Memorial Day 1942
USO dedicated in downtown Fairbanks.

June 1942
Japanese land on Attu and Kiska islands, bomb Dutch Harbor. Hundreds of Aleuts evacuated from their homes to Southeast Alaska. Evacuations of nearly 900 Aleuts begin.

Cold Weather Test Detachment deactivated.

July 1942
Cold Weather Test Detachment reactivated.

August 1942
Ladd Field prepares to deliver airplanes to Russians. Advance crews arrive. At peak, up to 300 Russians would be stationed in Fairbanks.

September 1942
Lend-Lease deliveries of aircraft begin.

Ladd hospital opens.

November 1942
Alaska Highway opens, 1,000 trucks dispatched north.

The Women's Army Corps

WAC squadron passing in review in front of Hangar One, August 10, 1945. University of Alaska Fairbanks, Betty Wiker collection 2003-0175-00029.

During the last months of the war, Ladd Field was home to the first Women's Army Corps unit assigned to Alaska, the 1466th AAF Base Unit, Squadron W. The unit arrived in April 1945, occupying a brand new barracks that was destroyed by a fire that killed one of the soldiers that June.

The WACs arrived from Great Falls, Montana; 153 soldiers strong, in 13 ATC planes. They were wearing the five layers of clothes assigned to them for winter protection, which weren't needed in the spring. "When we got to Fairbanks the temperature was warmer than it had been in Great Falls," said Audrey Virden. They worked in office jobs, on kitchen duty, as warehouse clerks, dispatchers, medics, mechanics and in public relations during their stay at Ladd, which lasted until December, when they returned south to be discharged. Lt. Betty Etten, the commanding officer of the squadron, said the WACs handled many jobs at Ladd. The WACs also traveled to other installations in Alaska on morale-building missions. About 40 of them went with the 577th AAF dance band to attend a dance with the GIs at Galena along the Yukon River.

During their off-duty hours at Ladd some of the WACs played softball, grew flowers and vegetables, tried gold panning and stopped by the USO downtown.

WAC barracks interior; beauty parlor. UAF Betty Wiker collection 2003-0175-00035.

WAC barracks interior; mess hall. UAF Betty Wiker collection 2003-0175-00034.

WAC barracks interior; enlisted bay. UAF Betty Wiker collection 2003-0175-00031.

Bob Hope rides a dog sled during one of his many visits to Alaska as an USO entertainer. During WWII Alaska military bases were considered "overseas" and were included in the worldwide tours made by the big starts of the era. University of Alaska Fairbanks Archives, 1987-0149-00091.

Above; Commemorative souvenir pillow cases were popular gifts to family and friends back home.

Left; June Edwards and unidentified woman on the front steps of the USO Building of First Avenue. The USO building was torn down some years ago to make way for the Golden Heart Plaza.

Interior shot of the lounge in the Fairbanks USO (United Service Organizations) building. Zenas Richards. World War II Photographer Album, 1941-1945, UAA-HMC-0548

1943

January 1943
Aleutian campaign escalates.

February 1943
Naval facility opens on Amchitka.

Japanese abandon Guadalcanal after costly battle with Americans.

March 1943
Japanese supply line to Aleutians broken.

April, 1943
Attu invasion force moves into place. U.S. aircraft bomb Attu.

May 1943
U.S. forces land on Attu, meeting determined resistance. Battle of Attu ends with American victory. Americans lose 549 men, while 2,350 Japanese bodies found. Twenty-nine Japanese survive and are taken prisoner. U.S. also had 1,148 wounded and 2,100 troops lost to accidents, sickness or exhaustion.

May 31, 1943
Japanese end their occupation of the Aleutian Islands as the U.S. completes the capture of Attu.

June 8, 1943
Naval Air Facility, Attu, Aleutian Islands, is established.

June 29, 1943
Naval Auxiliary Air Facility, Shemya, Alaska, is established.

July 1943
U.S. bombards Kiska with air attack.

Drowning death of Pvt. John White strains relations with Soviets in Fairbanks.

July 14, 1943
Destroyers bombard Kiska, Aleutian Islands. Naval Operating Base, Adak, Aleutian Islands, is established.

July 22, 1943
Naval task force consisting of 2 battleships, 5 cruisers, and 9 destroyers bombard Kiska area, Aleutian Islands.

July 28, 1943
Japanese evacuate Kiska undetected by Allies.

August 1, 1943
Army aircraft initiate daily bombings of Kiska, Aleutian Islands.

August 2, 1943
Naval task groups consisting of 2 battleships, 5 cruisers, and 9 destroyers bombard Kiska, Aleutian Islands. Kiska is bombarded 10 times between this date and 15 August.

August 15, 1943
Naval task force under Commander North Pacific Force lands United States Army and Canadian troops at Kiska, Aleutian Islands.

One of the most important aspects of the history of Ladd Field is how this remote outpost played a pivotal role in a campaign by the United States to help the Soviet Union battle Hitler. Serving as a bridge to Russia became its most sensitive mission, although one that was officially cloaked in secrecy for the first two years.

The Alaska ★ Siberia Route

The 5,000th aircraft delivered at Ladd Field, Sept. 1944.

Early in the war, Germany collaborated with Russia, but that ended in 1941 when Hitler double-crossed Stalin and sent 250 divisions toward key Russian cities across a 2,000 mile front. Hitler believed that defeating Russia was the key to conquering England. "If Russia is beaten, England's last hope is gone. Germany is then master of Europe and the Balkans," Hitler had written a year earlier.

As the Germans battered the unprepared Red Army in 1941 and wiped out many of its aircraft, the Roosevelt administration declared that helping the Russians was essential to the defense of the United States. Recognizing that the Russians were taking some pressure off England, Roosevelt pledged to help.

Nearly $50 billion worth of war material flowed to a total of 32 U.S. allies under the Lend-Lease Act. About $11 billion of that went to the Russians, with most of the 15 million tons delivered by ship. The supplies included 427,000 trucks, 13,000 combat vehicles and everything else from shoes to diesel engines and nearly 15,000 combat planes.

In the fall of 1942, U.S. and Russian leaders had worked out a scheme under which airplanes would be delivered from the United States to Russia via Alaska. Other routes by sea and air were used to supply Lend-Lease equipment, but going through Alaska was a way to get planes to the front within days, instead of weeks or months.

The leaders of the two nations agreed, after months of haggling, that Ladd Field, hitherto a small testing station, would be the point where the planes would be handed over to the Russian pilots. The Soviets wanted no part of a plan to have Americans fly beyond Alaska.

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1943

August 22, 1943
Allied forces launch assault on Kiska. They discover the Japanese had abandoned the island the previous month. Mines, booby traps and friendly fire accidents create casualties. Total of about 1,000 U.S. forces die during Aleutian campaign from June 1942 to August 1943.

October 1943
Ladd Field transferred to Air Transport Command.

November 1943
150,000 military personnel in Alaska. War Department publicly confirms Lend-Lease program.

December 1943
Lt. Leon Crane survives crash of B-24. Spends 84 days in wilderness.

December 21, 1943
Naval aircraft from Attu, Aleutian Islands, bomb Paramushiro- Shimushu area, Kurile Islands.

1944

February 1944
Dog teams help rescue pilots who crashed east of Harding Lake.

May 1944
Vice President Henry Wallace stops at Ladd.

June 1944
D-Day invasion begins on the Normandy Coast.

July 1944
Commercial use allowed on the Army's Seattle-Ketchikan communications line.

August 1944
War Department cuts back Alaska forces. Ladd Field has 1,700 civilians on payroll.

October 1944
Japanese Navy suffers heavy losses in Battle of Leyte Gulf.

November 1944
FDR elected to fourth term.

December 1944
Air assaults increase on Japanese capital.

Russians at mess hall. AAF pilot, courtesy of the Pioneer Air Museum/Randy Acord.

Back and forth negotiations with Stalin took place while the Japanese were invading the Aleutians. For the meantime the Air Transport Command (ATC) delivered airplanes, cargo and people along the Northwest Route from Montana to Fairbanks via Edmonton and Whitehorse. There were landing fields at Northway, Tanacross and Big Delta in Alaska and nine others in Alberta, British Columbia and the Yukon.

The first Lend-Lease planes transported along the 2,000-mile route from Great Falls, Montana to Fairbanks arrived on Sept. 3, 1942. It was a two-day flight for the five A-20 bombers, which arrived with a white star on the fuselage that had to be replaced with a Russian red star, the insignia of the USSR.

There was a language barrier, a cultural barrier and a political barrier, but the operation was held together by the mutual understanding that the two sides were fighting a common enemy that threatened their survival. Ultimately the Americans transferred 7,926 planes at Ladd Field to Soviet crews, more than half of the nearly 15,000 built for the Russians.

Russian Pilots' Briefing Room, Hangar One. AAF photo, courtesy of the Pioneer Air Museum/Randy Acord.

Hangar One was divided into two halves, with the Cold Weather Test Detachment on the east side and the Soviets on the west. One of the two positions in the control tower was taken by a Russian-speaking American to communicate with the pilots, most of whom were combat veterans. "The Russians were well acquainted with the horrors of war," enlisted man Paul Solka once wrote. "Few had not had members of their family killed or mutilated in the struggle."

The Ladd Field newspaper included helpful Russian phrases and the base offered classes in Russian, but the language barrier was such that sign language often came into play when interpreters were not handy.

Russian and American non-commissioned officers at the party celebrating the Second Anniversary of the Soviet Military Mission in Alaska, Sept. 1944. University of Alaska Fairbanks Archives, 1987-0149-00034.

Frank Nigro, a private, worked a second job as a bartender at the Russian officers club. "A lot of them were young, like me, young pilots," he said. "They were good guys, you know."

The size of the Russian contingent sometimes took visitors by surprise. Writing about his stop in Fairbanks, Maj. Gen. Deane, the head of the U.S. military mission in Moscow, said it was a "memorable experience."

"In the first place, we found that our air base at Fairbanks was at least half under Soviet control. Officer's quarters, office space, hangars and shops had been turned over to the Red Air Force. Russian and American officers ate at a central mess. There were no restrictions whatsoever on Soviet personnel. They were free to use all the facilities of the station and to travel at will," Deane wrote.

About 300 Russians served at Ladd during the peak of operations, with many more transient flight crews arriving on a regular basis from the west to pick up airplanes. The Red star became a familiar sight in the skies over Fairbanks as the Russians would leave in groups. "There was feverish activity on the field, a tremendous roaring of motors as a large convoy was getting ready to take off," wrote Henry Varnum Poor, a soldier and artist. The bombers and pursuit planes would take off one after another, circling the field until all were ready to go. "And all together they moved into a tight formation and disappeared over the western hills," Poor wrote.

Cold Weather Test Detachment pilot Randy Acord said the normal procedure was for a flight of three airplanes to leave as a group of one B-25, three A-20s, and nine P-39s or

Inside Russian NCO quarters Sr. Sgt. Karnaoukh takes time out to show M/Sgt. Kostin his collection of "pin-ups." Kay Kennedy Aviation Collection, 1991-0098-00868, Archives and Manuscripts, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Early in the program, the Soviet Red Star was painted on the aircraft at Ladd Field. September 1942. University of Alaska Fairbanks Archives, 1987-0149-00033.

1945

January 1945
Germans lose Battle of the Bulge.

March 1945
Military personnel in Alaska reduced to 50,000.

April 1945
Roosevelt dies. Truman sworn in as president. Women's Army Corps unit arrives at Ladd Field.

May 1945
Victory in Europe Day celebrated May 8 in U.S. Heavyweight boxing champion Joe Louis visits Ladd Field.

June 1945
Gen. Simon Bolivar Buckner, who commanded all troops in Alaska early in the war, was killed by artillery fire on Okinawa. He was one of two three-star generals killed during the war.

August 1945
Japan surrenders after atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

September 1945
Lend-Lease ends.

November 1945
Ladd Field transferred to 11th Air Force.

P-63s later on. The Russians always had priority on the airfield, but not in the mess. "We took the first time that was convenient to us, and then the Russians would have to fit into that," Acord said.

The relationship with the Russians was strained at times, with the Americans complaining that the Russians were too picky about accepting planes with minor mechanical problems. David Chavchavadze, an American translator, said there was a good reason for this attitude. The North American part of the Lend-Lease route was difficult, but the Russian segments were worse because landing fields were farther apart and more primitive. "The Americans were irritated because the Soviets were so sticky in signing for and taking over this largess. Chavchavadzew wrote, "They did not realize that if a plane developed mechanical trouble on its way to the front, the Soviet mechanic who had signed for it was held responsible, and if it crashed, the consequence for him could be very serious." He said many American pilots regarded the Russians "as being somewhat arrogant and cavalier about their flying ability, even to the point of being reckless."

With wartime censorship, the presence of Russians in Fairbanks and the existence of the Alaska Siberia (ALSIB) route was not talked about much until the summer of 1944, although in towns along the way the operation had been common knowledge.

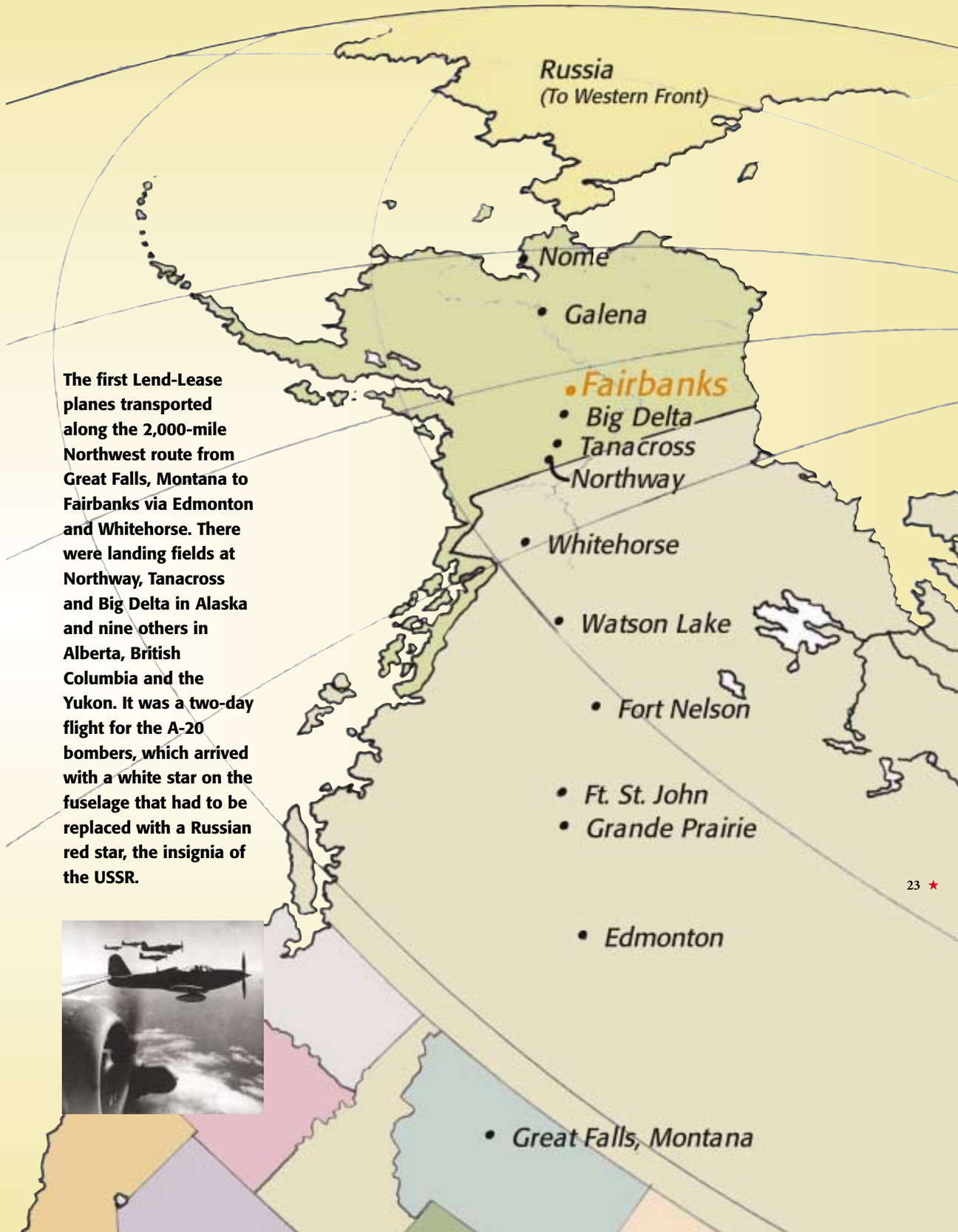
The Russians became famous in Fairbanks for buying large quantities of consumer goods that were hard to come by in their homeland. One American officer told of the time he was in a Fairbanks store and a Russian asked to buy shoes. "What kind?" the clerk asked. "All kinds," the Russian said. "What size?" the clerk asked. "All sizes," the Russian said. The clerk sold him the old lines of shoes the store held in stock. Fairbanks, where there was no rationing, was in the words of one historian, a "buyer's paradise" for the Russians.

The Russian presence at Ladd continued until the end of the war. In a span of about three years, the U.S. delivered 7,926 planes at the Fairbanks post. Historian Otis Hays, Jr. summed up this unique episode of the war by writing that the Soviet and American pilots shared the hazards of flying in the far north, conquered most of the language and cultural barriers and refused to allow mutual mistrust to overwhelm them.

Russian soldiers out and about in front of Lavery's Grocery on 2nd Avenue and Cushman Street. Rex and Lillian Wood collection, 2002-0164-00046, Archives and Manuscripts, Alaska and Polar Regions department, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Visiting Russians shopping in Fairbanks, 1944. The photographer reported that "these women spoke English and appeared to function as interpreters." Rex and Lillian Wood collection, 2002-0164-00048, Archives and Manuscripts, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Two Russian officers return a salute from American GI's on 2nd Avenue, Fairbanks,1944. Rex and Lillian Wood collection, 2002-0164-00049, Archives and Manuscripts, Alaska and Polar Regions department, University of Alaska Fairbanks.



The first Lend-Lease planes transported along the 2,000-mile Northwest route from Great Falls, Montana to Fairbanks via Edmonton and Whitehorse. There were landing fields at Northway, Tanacross and Big Delta in Alaska and nine others in Alberta, British Columbia and the Yukon. It was a two-day flight for the A-20 bombers, which arrived with a white star on the fuselage that had to be replaced with a Russian red star, the insignia of the USSR.

CONCLUSION

The World War II heritage of Ladd Field is visible today on Fort Wainwright through the buildings and facilities that survive from that tumultuous era in American history.

Recognizing the contributions made at Ladd Field in cold weather testing, its role as an air depot and its position as the transfer point for Lend-Lease aircraft, the U.S. Secretary of the Interior approved creation of the Ladd Field National Historic Landmark in 1985. This designation reflects its national importance as a historic site.

The original runway and North Post buildings, as well as the Birchwood hangars, Butler warehouses and other buildings are part of the landmark. What happened here during World War II was important in improving the operation of aircraft and bolstering the Russian fight against Hitler's Germany. Ladd Field also served as an important transportation hub, both for cargo and passengers in the Alaska theater of operations.

The mission of Fort Wainwright differs from that of Ladd Field, but it still is a place where the Army tests its ability to operate in the cold and retains the advantages of mobility, able to deploy around the world quickly, because of its strategic position on the world aviation map, confirming the predictions of Gen. Bill Mitchell of Alaska's importance to the United States.