

ALASKANIZED

THE STORY OF KULIS AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE
AND ITS HISTORIC HANGAR



Iceland

Norway

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Whitehorse

Alaska

Anchorage





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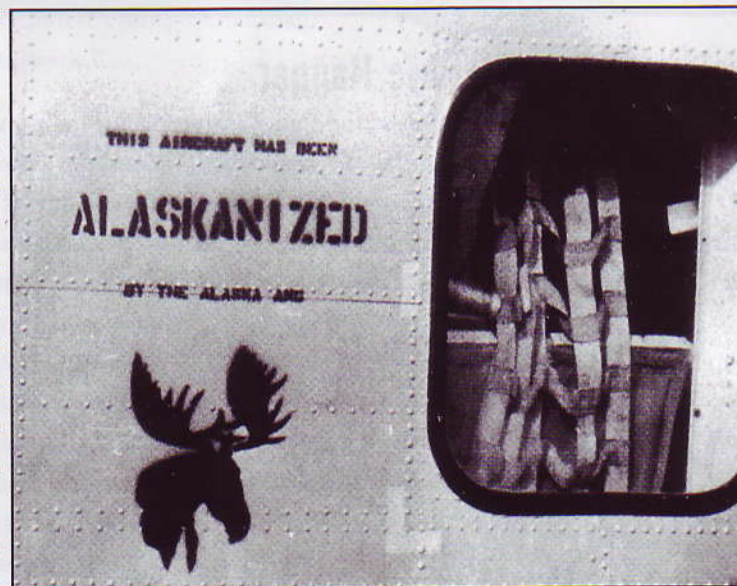
For more than 50 years, the Kulis Air National Guard Base at the Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport played a critical role in the defense of Alaska and the United States during the Cold War. Additionally, the base provided needed response and relief during state emergencies. The base was the first permanent home of the Alaska Air National Guard (ANG) 144th Fighter Squadron, which originated in 1952 as the 8144th Air Base Squadron. Since 1969 the parent unit has been designated as the 176th. The base's centerpiece was the aircraft hangar (Building 3) that was erected in 1955 and enlarged in 1959. Since 1955 base personnel have used the hangar to conduct necessary military functions, to serve as a center for emergency response and relief, and to host meetings for ANG personnel, dignitaries, and other visitors. The historic hangar has stood prominently at the Anchorage International Airport and announced the presence of the ANG to the military, Alaskans, and the visiting public.

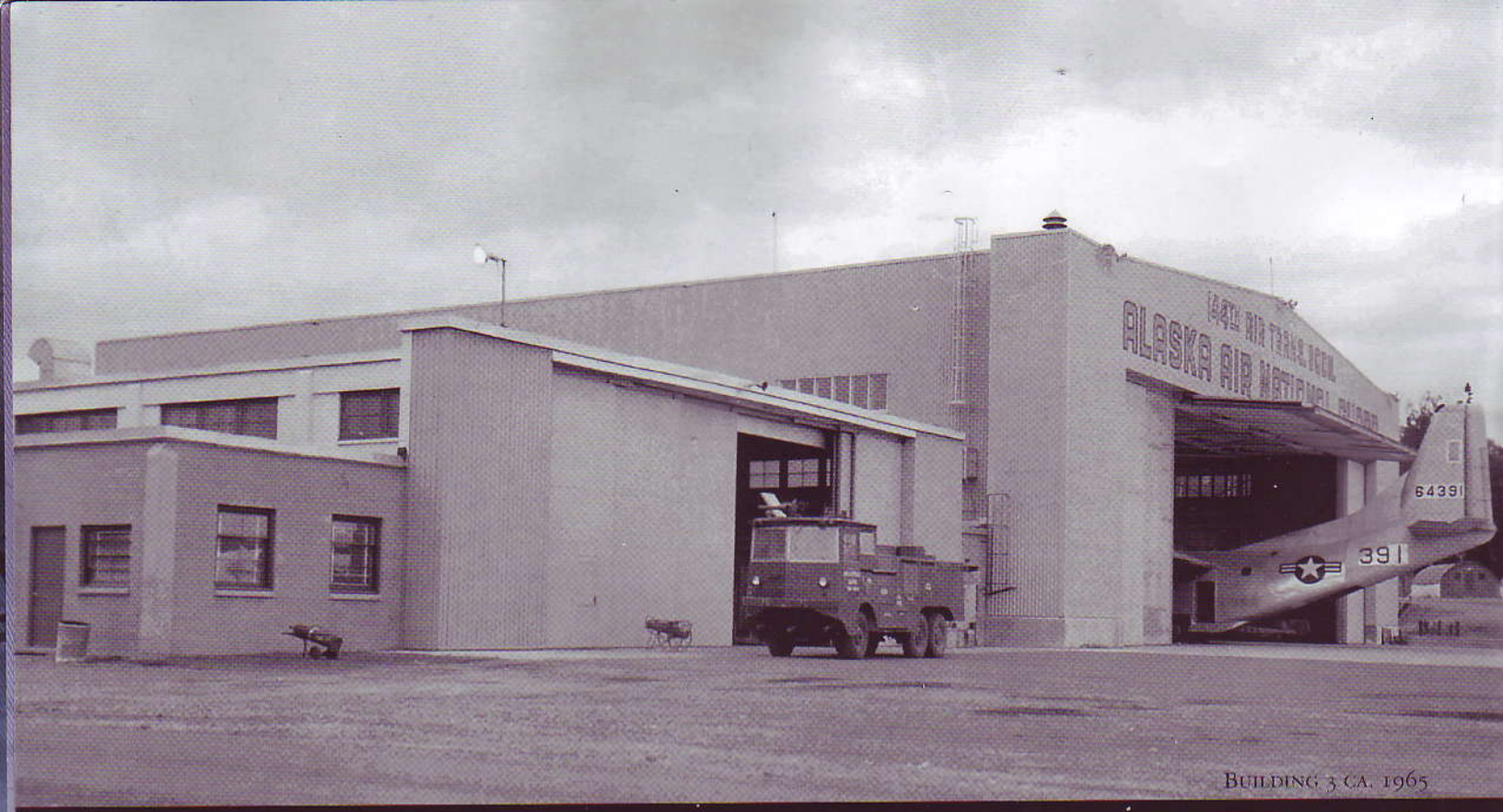
This booklet is intended to convey the historical contributions of the Alaska ANG at its first permanent home. The title, "Alaskanized," is coined from one of Alaska ANG's own missions and is emblematic of their pride and their unique Alaskan identity. In 1967 the 144th picked-up the first modified C-123 aircraft, the C-123K, in Hagerstown, Maryland, flew it to Anchorage for refueling and a demonstration of the modifications for its Vietnam service. They autographed, or "Alaskanized," the plane by painting a logo—a moosehead—on the door. From Anchorage, the pilots of the 144th flew the distinctively marked plane to Clark Field in the Philippines and on to the combat zone for use in Vietnam. Pilots of the 144th continued to ferry C-123Ks, about 100 in all, for use in Vietnam, usually through California and the Pacific, then returning to the United States to repeat the entire process.

In 2005 the Department of Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC) recommended the closure of Kulis ANG Base.

Two years later, the National Guard Bureau (NGB), in consultation with the Alaska State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), determined the base's Cold War-era hangar (Building 3) eligible for the National Register of Historic Places for its historical contributions and architectural significance. Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) requires federal agencies, such as the NGB, to take into account the effects of their actions on historic properties. In compliance with the NHPA, in 2009 the NGB, Kulis ANG Base, and the Alaska SHPO entered into an agreement to develop this booklet and undertake certain other measures as mitigation for the adverse effect of Building 3's transfer to the State of Alaska. After the base's closing, the 176th Wing of the Alaska ANG will return to a former home, Elmendorf Air Force Base (AFB) in Anchorage. Indeed, in 1953—two years before Kulis's founding—the 144th (the unit that would grow into the 176th) was stationed at Elmendorf AFB.

This publication was developed by the NGB, Kulis ANG Base, and the Alaska SHPO. The Alaska State Archives holds a collection of relevant architectural records, including photographs and drawings of Building 3. Master Sergeant Michael Phillips and others of Kulis ANG Base, the National Archives in Anchorage, the Public Affairs office of the Alaska Department of Veterans and Military Affairs at Fort Richardson, and other repositories generously provided other historical materials used in this publication.





BUILDING 3, CA. 1965

Kulis's Historic Hangar

Kulis ANG Base's Building 3 is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places for its contribution to history, specifically for the role the building played during response and relief efforts for the 1964 Good Friday earthquake and 1967 Fairbanks flood response, and during the provisioning of the remote Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line radar stations, a critical component of U.S. military defenses during the Cold War. The ANG also determined Building 3 to be architecturally significant because it features an unusual configuration that combines a small hangar for fighter aircraft (constructed in 1955) with a large hangar for cargo transport aircraft (constructed in 1959).

ALASKA



The original 1955 hangar didn't just house fighter aircraft. Mechanics and maintenance personnel of the 144th Fighter-Bomber Squadron, and later the 144th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron, also called it home. Its dimensions and architectural details made it a simple but roomy shelter. The single-story, flat-roofed building of reinforced concrete measured 140-by-120 feet and 18 feet high, with two bays for fighter-bomber aircraft maintenance. Clerestory windows, paired with additional windows on the east and west elevations, allowed for natural lighting. Its original lateral-sliding aircraft doors were later converted to an overhead type subsumed within the original rectangular door opening.

A mission change from air defense (fighters) to transport in 1957 meant much change for Building 3. A new "Million Dollar" hangar, erected in 1959 and connected to the original fighter hangar, dwarfed the original structure. The new three-and-a-half story, 48-foot-tall addition measured 176-by-157 feet, and was clad in galvanized metal/asbestos (galbestos) sheathing. The new hangar had a steel truss structural system to support the central high bay and hoist systems and its slightly gabled membrane roof. The new hangar's truss structural system contrasted with the beam system of the 1955 hangar. The door's height had to be changed to accommodate the tail of the C-123J model aircraft, and a drop-down vertical support was added. For five years prior to this modification, Kulis ANG Base used a "nose jack" designed by the maintenance personnel and constructed at the base machine shop. This jack raised the nose of the C-123Js, thus lowering the tail. The plane could then be pulled into the hangar and the tail slowly raised until it sat between the truss supports. They also replaced the original wooden overhead aircraft doors with horizontally folding canvas doors. The mission change required alterations to the 1955 hangar as well, including the extension of its aircraft apron west to the larger hangar. In the mid-1970s the roof support of the 1959 hangar was modified again to accommodate the larger tail of the C-130 Hercules and again in the 1990s to allow a C-130 to be backed into the hangar, leaving room for a 24-hour rescue alert HH-60 helicopter.

THE COLDEST FRONT

Alaska's Strategic Significance

Kulis ANG Base, the first permanent home of the 8144th Air Base Squadron, the Alaska ANG's first unit, was established to defend Alaska and the United States against the Soviets during the early Cold War years. Soviet-U.S. relations became increasingly tense in the years following World War II. Russians, less than 50 miles from U.S. soil and capable of delivering nuclear munitions, exposed the military vulnerability of Alaska and the entire circumpolar region, inspiring the Cold War "Polar Concept." The Polar Concept acknowledged the troubling fact that the shortest distance between the Soviet Union and the lower forty-eight states was a straight line through the polar region and Alaska. The Soviet Union's proximity to the United States thus ensured that Kulis would play a Cold War strategic role in allaying U.S. security concerns in this region.

The threat of a transpolar attack spurred immediate military development throughout Alaska, including state-of-the-art advanced warning systems and interception strategies. Alaska became a beehive of military planning and staging, especially for the Air Force (officially established in 1947). Virtually overnight, Alaska became a central theatre in the Cold War, providing essential frontline detection, interception, and retaliation capabilities. The Air Force and its components, including the ANG, shouldered most of the responsibility. As a result, Alaska became known as "The Coldest Front," "Guardian of the North," "Gibraltar of the North," and the "Northern Bulwark."



RARE PHOTO OF LARS JOHNSON (RIGHT)- KNOWN AS "KING OF THE TUNDRA" IN THE PHILIPPINES DURING WWII

Birth of the Alaska Air National Guard

Despite the threat of Soviet attack via the polar region, it was not until 1952 that the Alaska National Guard established an ANG unit. The Alaska National Guard had been established in 1939, eventually combining the Army National Guard with its component Alaskan Territorial Guard (formed in 1942). In 1950, Alaska was the only state or territory without its own ANG component, despite discussions since 1947 about the obvious need for one. General Lars Johnson, a decorated World War II pilot and the Alaska National Guard's youngest adjutant general, and Alaska Governor Ernest Gruening recognized the need for an actual unit. Alaska's nearness to the Soviet Union and the expansive distances requiring air transportation

within the state were compelling reasons for an ANG unit. Although they met with some resistance, General Johnson and Governor Gruening worked relentlessly and convinced the territorial legislature and Alaska's congressional delegate of the wisdom of establishing an ANG unit in the state.

In July 1952, Congress appropriated \$1.5 million to create the Alaska ANG. The 8144th Air Base Squadron was established on September 19, 1952, as the first and only Alaska ANG unit. The eleven enlisted men and five officers met in a small office above the bus depot on Fourth Avenue in downtown Anchorage; they had no aircraft. In Feb-



144TH FIGHTER BOMBER SQUADRON PERSONNEL

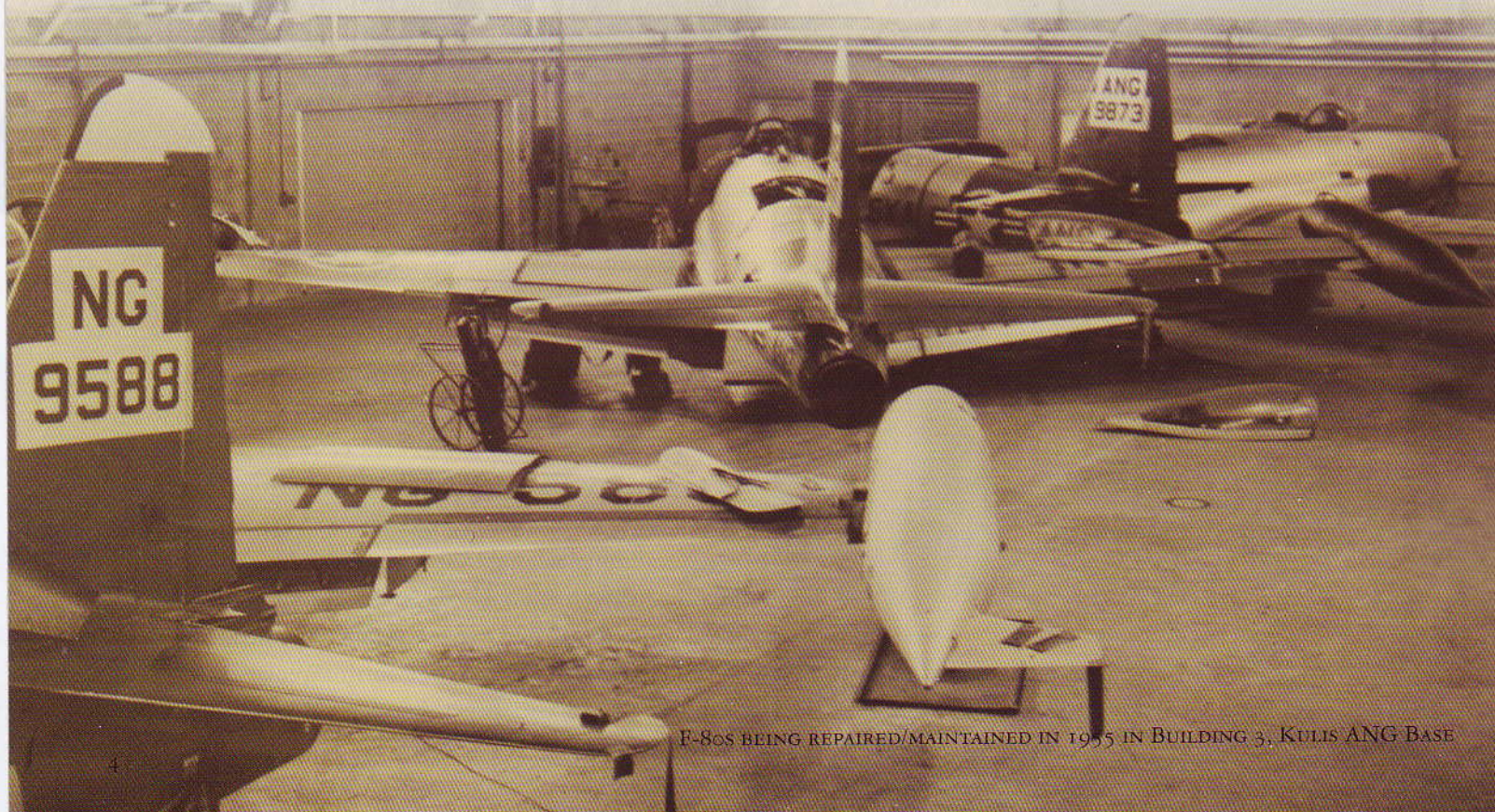
February 1953, the first of six propeller-driven T-6 Texan trainer aircraft arrived at Elmendorf AFB, the first home of the Alaska ANG. That July the unit was designated the 144th Fighter-Bomber Squadron; their mission was to provide air defense for the United States' northern perimeter. Technology was developing quickly during the Cold War and the Alaska ANG's time flying the Texan was short. They quickly transitioned to the T-33A jet-powered trainer in October 1953. Soon after, the first F-80C Shooting Star jet fighters arrived. By 1954 the ANG's inventory included T-33s, F-80s, T-6 observation planes, and a C-47A Gooney Bird cargo plane.

Kulis Crash

Lieutenant Albert Kulis was a civilian pilot with Cordova Airlines and a fighter pilot assigned to the 144th Fighter-Bomber Squadron. On November 16, 1954, he led a flight of three F-80C Shooting Stars on a training mission near Goose Bay through driving sleet and snow. His wingmen, Capt. Blinn Webster and Lt. Frank Novosel, witnessed his plane take a steep diving turn towards the ground and observed an explosion on impact. They radioed Elmendorf AFB about the accident and turned for home. Two weeks later, parts of Lt. Kulis's plane were spotted in the Goose Bay mud. Joe Redington, who is known as the "Father of the Iditarod," and a civilian pilot located small parts of Lt. Kulis's jet, including the canopy. These items were recovered by the ANG. When the 144th arrived at its new base near Anchorage International Airport in April 1955, a recommendation was made to name the base after Lt. Kulis. In May 1955 Kulis ANG Base was dedicated in his honor. His widow, Ruth Kulis, attended the dedication ceremony and accepted the honor.



PORTRAIT OF LT. ALBERT KULIS



F-80S BEING REPAIRED/MAINTAINED IN 1955 IN BUILDING 3, KULIS ANG BASE

THE EARLY YEARS

Base Construction

The Territory of Alaska set aside acreage adjacent to the Anchorage International Airport for the new ANG base and leased the land to the federal government. Following groundbreaking, various buildings were erected, the most substantial being a modest concrete fighter hangar and a maintenance shop building to the east. A large asphalt apron for parking the fighter planes was constructed in front of the hangar. A taxiway led to the shared airport runway. A few small temporary support buildings and Quonset huts were built as well. Following the completion of these buildings, the base was dedicated on Memorial Day, May 27, 1955.

At this time, the heart and soul of the ANG installation was its small fighter hangar (Building 3). It provided needed space for the maintenance of fighter aircraft assigned to the 144th and a myriad of other purposes. Weather conditions forced much of the aircraft maintenance work to be done indoors, even during the summer months. In contrast, installations in more temperate climates could store and maintain their aircraft outdoors for much of the year.

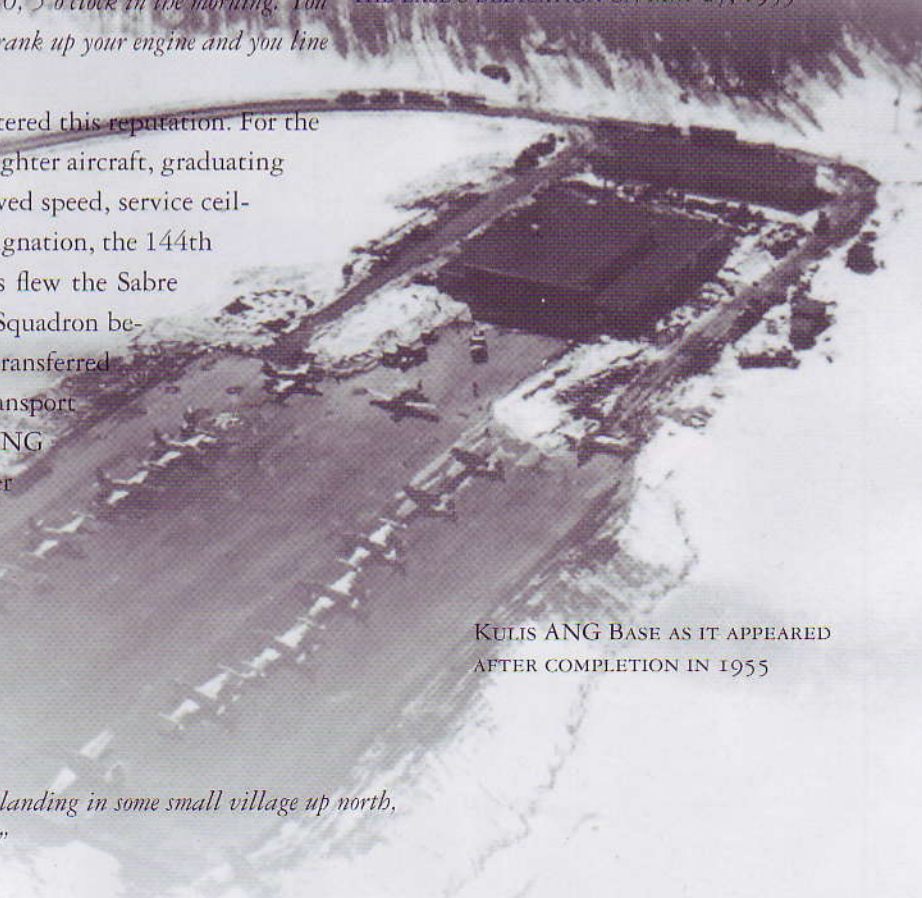
Transition from Fighter/Bombers to Air Transport

Despite the official status of the organization and its establishment of a permanent home, the Alaska ANG was sometimes thought of as "a flying club." This possibly was because of Alaska ANG's combination of sophisticated jets, young and enthusiastic pilots, and the relatively lax structure compared with the rigorous standards of the United States Air Force (USAF) and the ANG today. Retired General Edward Belyea recalled the sentiment: *"You get up, 4:30, 5 o'clock in the morning. You get your flight plan, it is just starting to get daylight. You crank up your engine and you line up on the runway . . . Freedom!"*

The passage of time and mission reassignments altered this reputation. For the next few years, the Alaska ANG continued flying jet fighter aircraft, graduating from the F-80 to the F-86 Sabre jet which had improved speed, service ceiling, range, and firepower. The unit received a new designation, the 144th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron, and Kulis ANG pilots flew the Sabre until 1957. That year the 144th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron became the 144th Transport Squadron (Light) and was transferred from Air Defense Command to the Military Air Transport Service. This change meant that pilots of the Alaska ANG gave up their sleek F-86s for the slower and bulkier C-47A Gooney Birds and became transport pilots, the fighter mission being assumed by regular Air Force pilots at nearby bases like Elmendorf AFB. General Belyea summarized the change by commenting that *"An airplane is an airplane, but the mission was different. Fighters take off, you go do your mission and return to the same place. Cargo, you take off and next thing you know you are landing in some small village up north, landing on rivers and lakes. The mission is very interesting."*



MAY 30, 1955—BASE FLAG DEDICATION DAY AT KULIS ANG BASE, THREE DAYS AFTER THE BASE'S DEDICATION ON MAY 27, 1955



KULIS ANG BASE AS IT APPEARED AFTER COMPLETION IN 1955

The Million Dollar Hangar

With the new transport mission came the need for new infrastructure at Kulis ANG Base. The hangar was far too small for the new large air transport aircraft. Like the smaller jet fighters, the new cargo aircraft needed protected indoor space for maintenance, repair, additional shops, and work areas. The new "Million Dollar Hangar" was the answer. It was large enough to accommodate most cargo aircraft of the time. It was constructed adjacent to the original hangar, making a large, unique twin-like hangar structure. The Alaska ANG celebrated the new hangar's completion with an open house on May 30, 1959, nearly four years to the day after Kulis ANG Base's dedication. Like the original fighter hangar, this new combined hangar building continued as the base's core, and served as Kulis's public face for decades to come. Building 3 serviced and housed the Alaska ANG aircraft inventory, was a center for refuge and relief during disasters, and served as a public meeting place for ANG events and visiting dignitaries.



F-86 ON THE FLIGHT LINE IN FRONT OF THE ORIGINAL FIGHTER HANGAR



BUILDING 3 "THE MILLION DOLLAR HANGAR" CA. 1959

COLD WAR MISSIONS, ACCOMPLISHMENTS, AND BASE EXPANSION

Standing Missions

After the transition to a transport mission, pilots at Kulis ANG Base helped keep the growing tapestry of radar stations and other Arctic outposts supplied and connected to the rest of the world. In September 1957, the ANG at Kulis embarked on supplying the Aircraft Control & Warning and the DEW Line radar stations, and later the White Alice communication sites (as well as other remote defensive outposts). Many stations were still under construction, and new sites were continually being planned. This kept the Kulis pilots in nearly daily contact with the Cold War front line.

The ANG's C-47As were ideal for this supply mission. These aircraft were slightly smaller than most other transport aircraft and were able to perform in situations where larger aircraft were incapable. They could land and take off from small landing strips, which were often covered in snow and ice. Their other advantage was durability. They were able to withstand the rigors of the Arctic and subarctic environment.

In 1960 the C-47A was replaced with the C-123J Provider and the 144th was converted to a medium transport squadron. The C-123J had increased power and range and, like the C-47A, it possessed the flexibility to operate in rugged conditions, including taking off and landing on short runways. Ten of the C-123Js came equipped with ski-wheel landing gear and wingtip-mounted J-44 jets used to supplement the Pratt and Whitney R-2800-99-W engines to counter the weight and drag of the ski-wheel landing gear. These modifications were particularly useful in the Alaskan environment. The 144th became the only unit in the ANG to fly C-123Js. These workhorse transport planes served Kulis ANG Base and the 144th for the next sixteen years through events like the 1964 Good Friday earthquake and 1967 Fairbanks flood relief efforts.

In 1969 the 144th was placed under the Alaska Air Command (AAC) and elevated to group status. Originally, the Air Force did not believe that the Alaskan ANG would ever grow bigger than a squadron so they gave the 144th Group and Wing to the Fresno ANG Base. Since the 144th Group designation was not available, the Alaska ANG 144th became the 176th Tactical Airlift Group (TAG). The 144th was retained as the flying unit within the group and was redesignated the 144th Tactical Airlift Squadron. The 176th Tactical Dispensary, the 176th Communications Flight, and the 176th Civil Engineer Flight completed the 176th TAG.

In 1970 Elmendorf AFB eliminated C-123s from its aircraft inventory, and Kulis ANG Base took over flying their missions under AAC direction according to Kulis ANG Base's Master Sergeant Russell Kendall. Pilots and loadmasters from Kulis flew to Elmendorf in their C-123Js, picked-up loads, and flew to Sparrevohn,

Tatalina, and other remote Alaskan sites. Four days a week, the Kulis ANG Base had an AAC mission. Crews had to be at Elmendorf at 5:00 a.m. to pick up cargo and fly it to one of the radar sites. One particularly memorable site had a 4,000-foot runway with one end 800 feet higher than the other, so pilots would land going uphill and take off going downhill. Former base commander General Edward Belyea remembered, "... and when you take off, you really take off."



BARTER ISLAND DEW LINE STATION

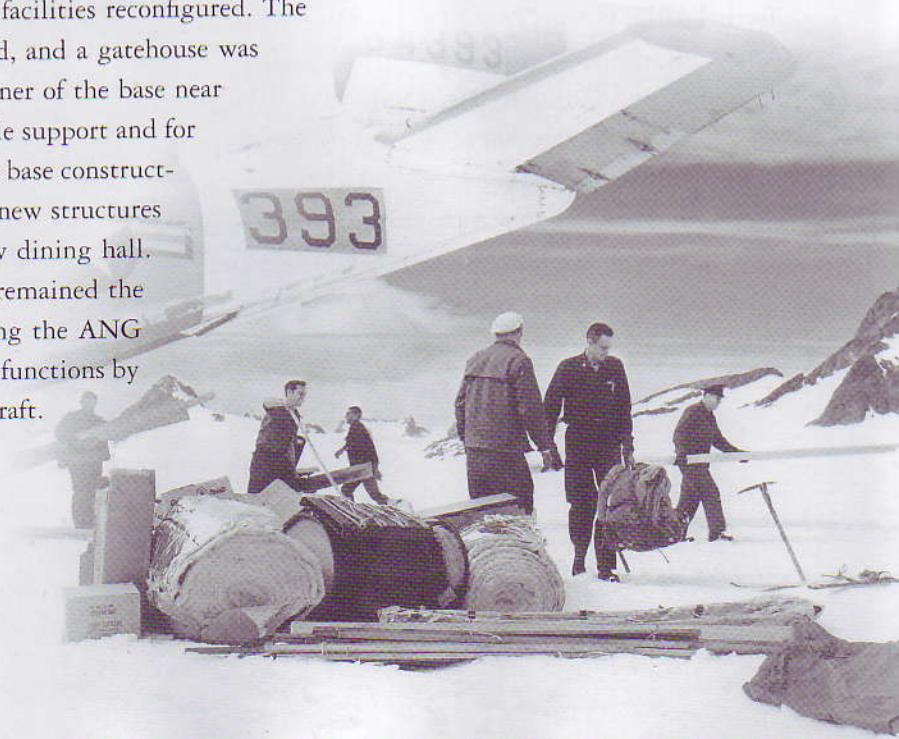


“...and when you take off, you really take off.”

In 1974 the 176th TAG was assigned to Military Airlift Command and its mission changed to worldwide airlift, a mission it continues to fly today. In 1976 Kulis ANG converted to the larger C-130E Hercules aircraft and then was upgraded to the new C-130H model in 1983. Having earned the respect of the NGB, the Alaska ANG was now assigned brand new aircraft.

In 1986 the 168th Aerial Refueling Squadron was activated as Eielson AFB-based Detachment 1 of the 176th, which was redesignated the 176th Composite Group (COMPG). The 168th continued to grow and by the end of the decade became the 168th Aerial Refueling Group, a unit independent of the 176th. The 176th COMPG retained its “composite” status through the Cold War’s end with the addition of the 210th Air Rescue Squadron (ARS) in 1990.

With the 1969 redesignation as the 176th TAG, the number of personnel at Kulis ANG Base increased. New facilities were needed and existing facilities reconfigured. The base’s main entrance was moved to Raspberry Road, and a gatehouse was constructed at the new entrance. The northeast corner of the base near the original entrance was converted for use as vehicle support and for petroleum, oil, and lubricant functions. In 1971 the base constructed a new aerospace ground equipment facility and new structures for squadron operations, and in 1975, added a new dining hall. Through this first round of expansion, the hangar remained the primary focal point of Kulis ANG Base, embodying the ANG focus: active duty support of the Air Force and state functions by hosting air transport missions and maintaining aircraft.



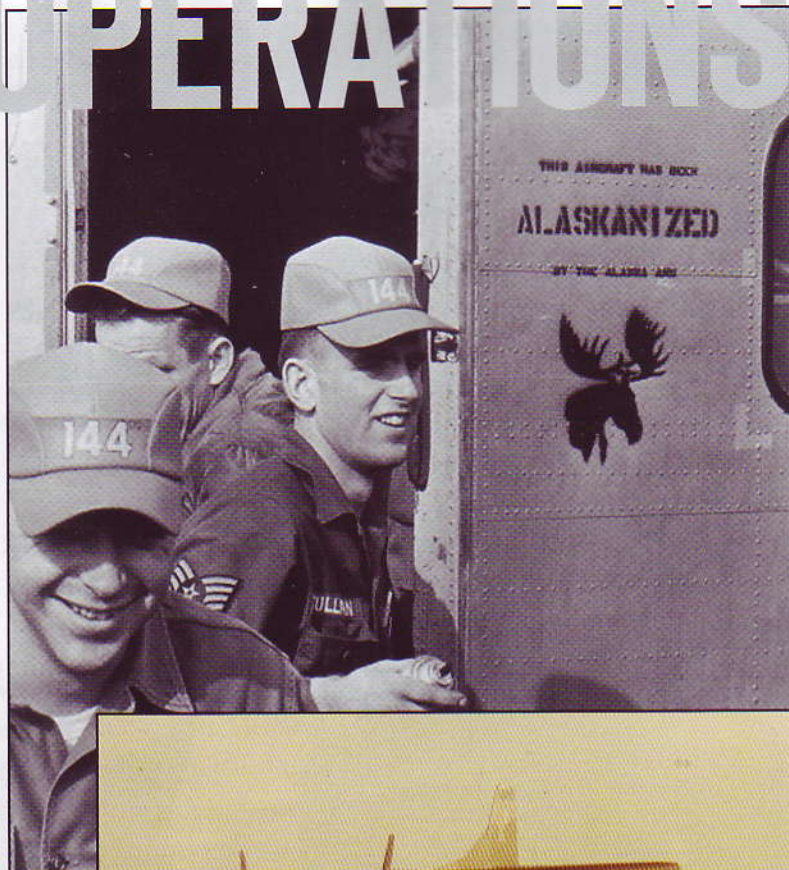
Ferrying C-123s to Vietnam

The Alaska ANG also conducted various operations in support of larger Cold War initiatives. It ferried 100 Vietnam-bound, specially modified C-123K aircraft from Hagerstown, Maryland, to Clark Field in Manila, the Philippines. The 144th pilots began on April 1, 1967, by picking up the first C-123K aircraft in Hagerstown, flying it to Anchorage for refueling, and "Alaskanizing" it by painting a moosehead on the plane's fuselage, then transporting it to Clark Field. From there, 144th pilots returned home for repeat performances, this time flying more directly through California, while combat pilots flew the delivered aircraft into combat zones in Vietnam. "Alaskanizing" the first C-123K with the moosehead emblem was akin to autographing the plane—a way for the Alaska ANG to mark their participation in the mission and boost morale. The program lasted about a year and was an impressive achievement.

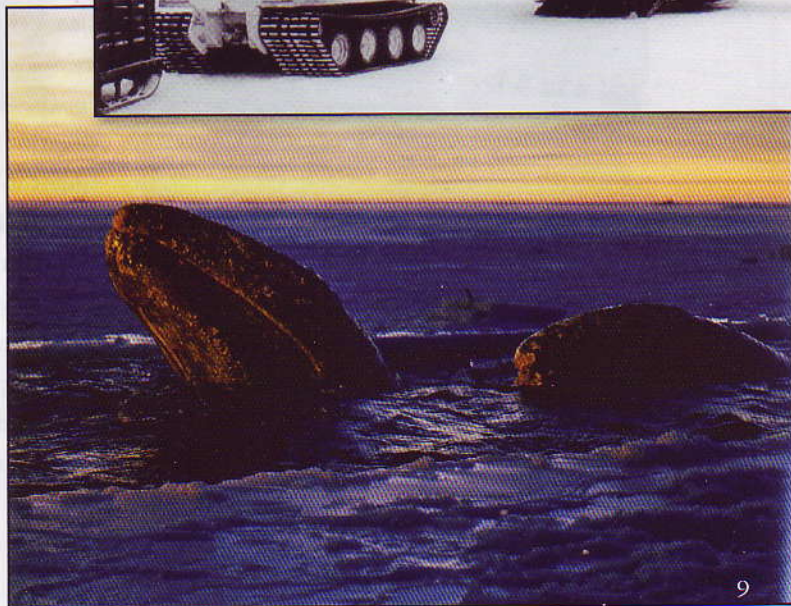
An Occasional Thaw in the Cold War

With the Soviet Union only a stone's throw away from Alaska, contact between the United States and the Soviet Union occasionally occurred in the region. One such instance happened on February 27, 1974, when the Alaska ANG assisted a stranded Soviet Arctic research aircraft. It had encountered a significant headwind and lacked the fuel to return to the Soviet Union. One of its engines stalled from lack of fuel on the final emergency approach to Gambell, an Alaskan village airstrip, forcing a difficult landing. While villagers provided food and heaters for the crew, diplomatic overtures at higher levels ensued, resulting in the transfer of 900 gallons of JP-4 aircraft fuel to the stranded plane and enabling its return to Siberia. On October 7, 1988, Cold War tensions again temporarily thawed when three California gray whales became trapped in the ice at Barrow, Alaska. ANG and Army National Guard aircraft and a Russian icebreaker vessel helped free the whales to return to their southern migration route.

However, not all exchanges went as planned. In April 1989 a joint Soviet-U.S. expedition team on dogsleds crossed from Siberia to the United States over the frozen Bering Sea in a gesture of goodwill. Surprise arose when two Soviet reporters, who had come from Moscow to record the event, approached an Alaska Army National Guard officer and declared their desire to defect. The ANG transported them to Little Diomedé, a U.S. island just over two miles east of Russian territory, where the United States granted them asylum. The ANG then airlifted them to safety further within the Alaskan border.



VIETNAM C-123K AT KULIS ANG BASE



LENDING A HAND: EMERGENCY, SCIENTIFIC, AND HUMANITARIAN MISSIONS

Kulis ANG Base units were involved in a number of state, civic, scientific, and humanitarian missions from inception to the present. The ANG's dual state-federal mission contributed to the community and the region in important ways. Because of the state's vastness and remoteness, many places could only be reached by boat or aircraft, and the types of supplies that were needed could often only be carried by large cargo planes like those in the ANG's fleet. In emergency situations, it was often only the military, especially units like the Alaska ANG with flight capability, that had the ability to provide the first line of response and relief.

Operation SANTA CLAUS

One of the most enduring operations of the Kulis ANG Base has been Operation SANTA CLAUS. In 1956, floods and drought devastated the isolated community of St. Mary's on the Yukon River. Because all of the community's resources were dedicated to feeding its residents, it appeared that there would be no funds left over to stage a Christmas celebration. Noting the situation, the mother superior of the local Catholic mission wrote a letter to the Alaska National Guard headquarters asking for help. As word spread, the ANG began receiving a large number of donations, mostly new and used toys. In December, the 144th loaded all the gifts, plus a guardsman playing Santa Claus, on a C-47A and delivered the gifts and other supplies to the village. The operation served double-duty, for not only did it create a humanitarian link between the villagers and the squadron (the squadron adopted the village), the flights there and back also functioned as de facto training missions.

Operation SANTA CLAUS has grown into a partnership between the Alaska National Guard, Salvation Army, other military branches, and numerous villages and families. Hundreds of volunteers, including both the military and the broader Anchorage community, continue to devote time and resources to the project. Today, 30 to 40 people from the National Guard, local and national media, politicians, local businesses, and active duty military accompany Santa to the villages. The Salvation Army Brass Quartet or the U.S. Air Force Band of the Pacific join in too, all catching a ride with the 144th. In 2009 those in the operation celebrated the project's 53rd anniversary.





Good Friday Earthquake

One of the most dramatic chapters in Alaska's history unfolded on Good Friday, March 27, 1964. As many were making preparations for Easter, the strongest recorded earthquake in the Western Hemisphere tore through Alaska. The earthquake measured between 8.4 and 8.6 on the Richter scale and later was upgraded to a magnitude of 9.2. The initial quake and resulting tsunamis devastated much of the state, including most of the infrastructure of Alaska's major population centers. Anchorage's thoroughfares were impassable, and Seward's oil tanks ruptured, setting the town ablaze. The tsunami that followed tossed a 100-ton locomotive more than 60 feet and scattered many boxcars, while heaving eight of Seward's ten sets of railroad tracks in the rail yard. Two of the town's three 45-ton gantry cranes at the shipyard were washed away completely.



In Anchorage, air guardsmen also found devastation. Pilots from Kulis ANG Base rushed across the airport runway and discovered that the airport's control tower had collapsed. Using the radios of their C-123J Providers (aptly named for their ability in this situation to provide air traffic control and communication to the outside world), Kulis' pilots acted as a temporary radio tower guiding incoming aircraft. Other airmen rushed to extricate victims from the control tower's rubble, rescuing three people. Elsewhere in Anchorage, other air guardsmen formed patrols to locate and remove victims from collapsed buildings and to prevent looting and other criminal activity.

In the earthquake's aftermath, Kulis ANG Base became the public face of the herculean effort to aid survivors; the Alaska National Guard command post provided equipment for rescue operations and helped stave off chaos. The Base Supply and Equipment (BSE) Building was converted into a dispensary for earthquake victims. The few functioning radio stations served as information centers, announcing that the base had heaters, electrical power, sleeping cots, and a mess hall to aid survivors. By midnight on Good Friday, 97 people had found their way to the base for refuge. For the 35 children in the group, local merchants donated boxes of candy for Easter baskets. Some children and parents even colored Easter eggs and hid them within the BSE, making the best of a terrible situation.

From Kulis ANG Base, the ANG airlifted 131,000 pounds of cargo and evacuated 201 people over the course of 25 missions and 77 sorties. The base supported Kodiak, Seward, and Valdez for approximately two weeks as roads, rails, and harbors to these towns had been destroyed. For this effort the unit won an Air Force Outstanding Unit award.

Fairbanks Flood

After a few years of relative quiet, Kulis ANG Base again became a staging area for natural disaster response and relief. In August 1967, the Chena River crested its banks, ravaging Fairbanks with a steady torrent of water. Again Alaskans sprang into action, including the air guardsmen at Kulis ANG Base. Within five hours of calls for help, Kulis's Providers were underway on the first of dozens of missions to the stricken city. The ANG embarked on precision missions flying virtually nonstop for days, providing emergency supplies to Fairbanks and evacuating flood victims.

Guardsmen from Kulis occupied the Fairbanks Airport with the Federal Aviation Administration. Lt. Col. Harold Wolverton was the on-scene commander; he coordinated evacuation of Fairbanks citizens and the drop off of supplies and equipment, and kept track of the location and number of Air and Army National Guardsmen helping the rescue in Fairbanks. The Fairbanks Airport was completely surrounded by water but the runways were dry. During a nine-day period, General Belyea, then a captain, and pilot Ed Granger made nineteen flights into Fairbanks. All eight of Kulis's C-123Js flew sorties 24 hours a day. Kulis was the staging point for Fairbanks flood relief, so Belyea and the other national guardsmen left with supplies for the devastated city and returned home with a cargo hold of flood evacuees. Alaska Airlines helped by placing the evacuees on a manifest so that the ANG could record names, addresses, and any contacts in Anchorage. General Belyea recalled that each flight was met at the hangar, sometime at 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning, by a group of high school students called the "Yellow Jackets" because they wore yellow club jackets. This group would greet evacuees and take them to the Kulis Mess Hall where Anchorage families would be waiting to give them a place to stay.

The ANG flew 138 sorties and spent 223 flying hours traveling more than 25,000 miles to carry 300,000 pounds of supplies and to ferry 2,371 people to safety. For the second time in three years, Kulis ANG Base and Building 3 became the center of a major humanitarian enterprise.

Anchorage Daily News

Anchorage Daily Times-Flood Edition-September 1967

Air Guard

"Clutching their hands to their stomachs, the two small boys bent over the pavement in front of Fairbanks International Airport, ill and crying until their weary legs wouldn't hold them any longer. With tears of sympathy running down her cheeks, the boys' mother tried her best to comfort them. A nurse ran to her aid.

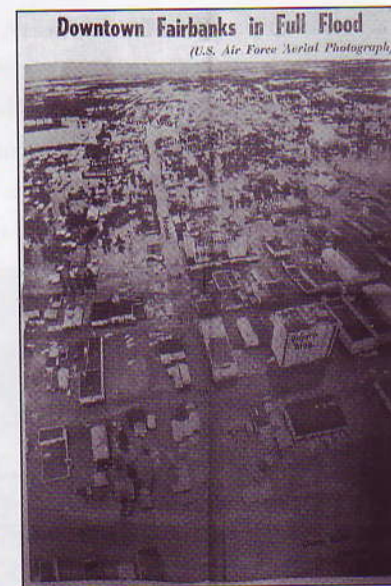
Sick from fear and wading through high water to leave their flooded home, the boys and their mother had gotten out of a riverboat not far from the airport. The distraught mother brought them to the terminal. As their vomiting stopped, the whimpering boys curled up on the pavement as close to their mother as they could get. She patted them on the back and occasionally dabbed at her red eyes with a crumpled hankie.

And then it came.

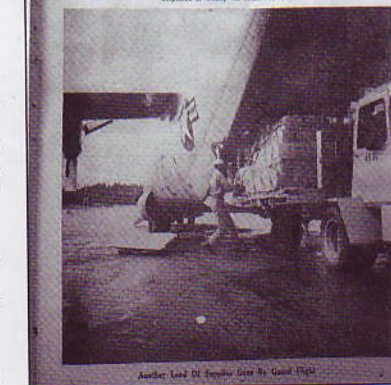
Descending from the overcast sky was a familiar C-123J, an Alaska ANG plane that was going to fly the boys and their mother along with scores of other refugees to safety in Anchorage. The mother got to her feet and urged the boys to come along. Holding their hands, she took her place near the gate so she could board the plane as soon as possible.

The planes' arrival stirred the airport to life. People rose from their places on the floor and lobby chairs to head outside so they could board the plane. They carried only what they had been able to save. Many carried nothing.

For the Guardsmen aboard the plane it was just another routine mission, like seven others that already had been flown that day. Almost constantly in the air between Anchorage and Fairbanks, Air National



Shipments Ready At Kulis Air Base



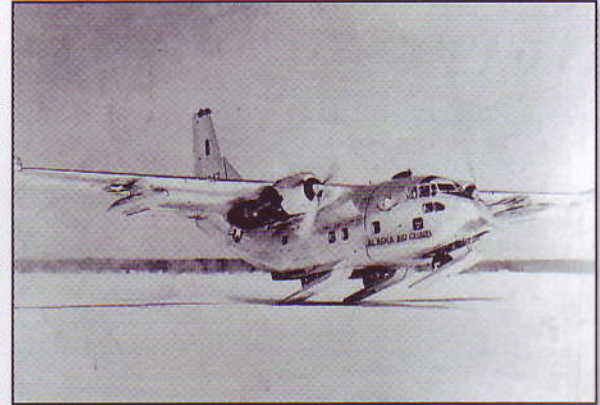
Another Load Of Supplies Gets Its Ground Flight

Guard planes carried literally tons of food and clothing into the stricken city, always returning with a load of homeless refugees.

The unit's flights continued for several days at the height of the flooding and evacuation. On one of those days there were 15 separate missions to the Interior City. On many of the flights, for the first time in the history of the Alaska Air National Guard, there was a stewardess to greet, comfort and reassure the evacuees. Terri Washburn, attractive mother of two who operated a modeling agency in Fairbanks prior to the flood, had volunteered to help with the refugee flights. Her offer was gratefully accepted."

Scientific Assistance

From its earliest years, when it wasn't occupied with disaster relief or Cold War missions, the ANG took on missions that supported scientific research, utilizing the unit's C-47s and later, its C-123Js. In particular the Alaska ANG provided operational support to scientists conducting research in remote locations of the state. For example, from 1957-58, aircraft from the 144th hauled personnel and equipment for American scientists conducting International Geophysical Year research in Alaska and the Yukon Territories. In August 1960, the 144th provided equipment and supplies to researchers on T-3, the floating ice island some 600 miles from the North Pole. In 1963, Kulis ANG rescued 11 T-3 researchers after their own plane's engines overheated. In the 1960s, ANG pilots assisted scientists working on a multi-year glaciology research program conducted on the Taku Glacier by Harvard University professor Maynard Miller. Lt. Col. Wolverton flew several missions to support Professor Miller's work and remembers how appreciative he was of the assistance provided by the Alaska ANG, *"In his early days he (Professor Miller) walked up, from Juneau...up onto the field, which was a day and a half trip. He was very, very excited to have our support."*



State and Federal Assistance

The ANG flew many sorties with state and federal fish and game personnel, equipment, and animals all over the state. This was most often done as part of scheduled management programs, but occasionally for emergency and rescue reasons as well. Among the game transported were bison, musk oxen, caribou, sea lions, and moose.

Musk Oxen Wake Up

One memorable experience occurred while the ANG transported musk oxen in the late 1960s for the Alaska Fish and Game Department to reestablish diminished musk ox herds on Alaska's North Slope. General Belyea was flying a C-123J with a cargo of tranquilized musk oxen to their new home. A few hours into the seven-to-eight-hour flight, the tranquilizer wore off. Angry, confused, and frightened, the musk oxen scattered



the crew in the cargo hold, forcing them to flee to the flight deck where six people spent the rest of the flight sharing three seats. Throughout the flight, disgruntled oxen continually rammed the side of the plane. Luckily there was no lasting damage to animal, human, or plane, and the flight landed safely at its destination.



Taking Care of their Own

In February 1967 an ANG C-123J, *The City of Nome*, was delivering supplies for a fishery on Nuyakuk Lake at the request of the Air Force. A fixed based operator was hired to check the thickness of the ice on the lake and to lay out a 4,000-foot-long spruce bough runway. The ice was drilled near the shore and was determined safe for landing; however, the runway was laid out in the middle of the lake where the ice had not been drilled. Kulis' Lt. Col.



TAKU GLACIER SUPPORT FLIGHT

Wolverton was piloting and while completing the landing, *The City of Nome* broke through the ice of Nuyakuk Lake. Because it was an Air Force mission, the Air Force attempted to recover the aircraft by cutting out the ice around the plane. The plan was to haul the plane near shore through a channel blasted through the ice. This attempt failed and, after the ANG was called in to remove the propellers and control surfaces, the Air Force placed bridge pontoons under the plane's wings and tail section, surrounded the plane with logs to protect it from shifting ice, and left it until the spring thaw. A recovery camp was set up in the spring and maintained over the summer months. Air Force mechanics, rescue teams, and others worked tirelessly to raise the aircraft, tow it to shore, repair damage done by the rain of ice chunks that struck the plane when the ice channel was blasted, and to get all the flight systems and mechanical systems functioning. Like a giant jigsaw puzzle, the aircraft was eventually put back together under primitive conditions. The plane was preflighted and considered ready for a return flight home; however, this had to wait until the lake had frozen again in the winter. Exactly a year to the day after *The City of Nome's* break through the ice, Lt. Col. Wolverton flew the aircraft home. It was further repaired at Kulis and spent another ten years in service with the ANG.

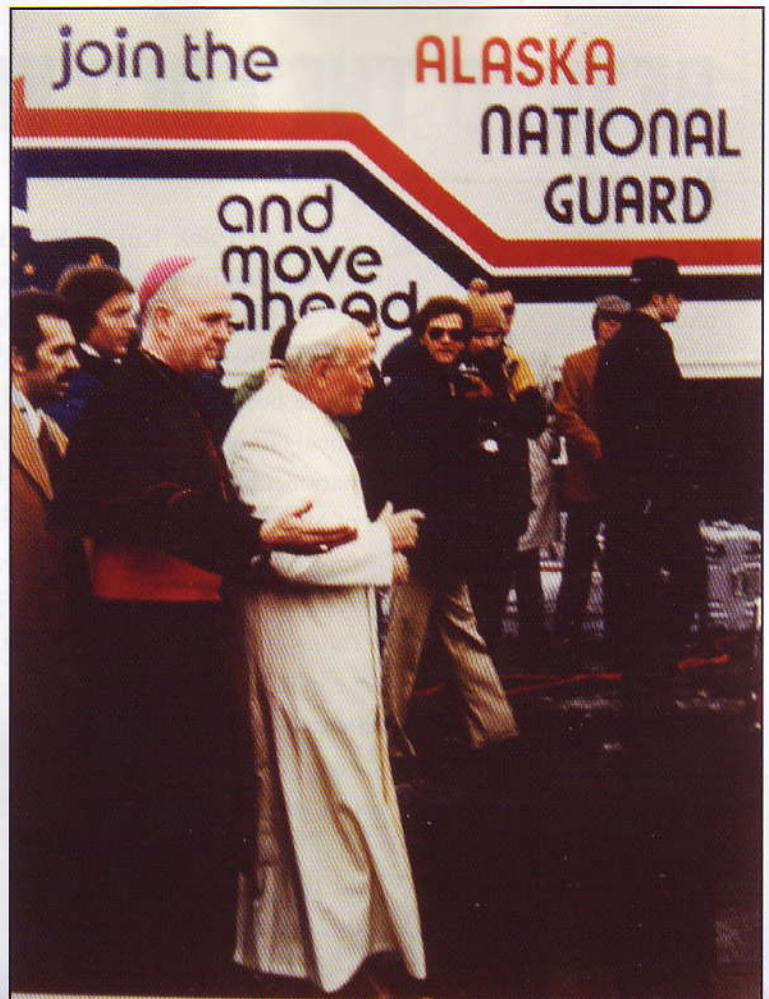
Other Support Operations

Not all support operations involved flying. On February 27, 1981, Pope John Paul II stopped in Anchorage following his Asian tour during one of his seven visits to the United States. He was received on the Kulis ANG Base flight line and ANG personnel helped with security. The backdrop to the flight-line reception was Building 3, the one constant in the base's decades of operation and to visitors arriving at Anchorage's airport.

Even with its worldwide missions and international personalities visiting, the Alaska ANG continued local emergency response missions. Because of Kulis' proximity to the Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport, the ANG had an agreement with airport personnel to lend crash/fire/recovery (CFR) units and equipment in the event of an accident. On November 27, 1970, a military charter carrying 229 passengers and crew crashed on takeoff from the Anchorage airport. A wing was torn from the fuselage; jet fuel spilled and quickly ignited. CFR personnel from Kulis were some of the first responders. As fire crews from the base, airport, and city of Anchorage fought the fire, others worked to evacuate survivors. Forty-six passengers and one crewmember were killed and a temporary morgue was set up in the Motor Pool Building at Kulis. ANG personnel were called again on December 4, 1978, when the late Senator Ted Stevens' jet crashed on landing, seriously injuring him and killing his wife, the pilot, the co-pilot, and two Alaskan businessmen. The Kulis CFR crew pulled victims from the wreckage. In 1983 two plane incidents at the Anchorage airport within days of each other prompted the National Transportation Safety Board to recommend the installation of ground radar at the airport. On December 19, a Japan Air Lines Boeing 747 cargo jet struck a maintenance truck just after touchdown. Only four days later a Korean Air Lines DC-10 cargo plane cut through a twin engine Navajo commuter plane while taxiing for take off. Both planes were engulfed in flames but fortunately no one was killed. Kulis CFR crews battled the fires for more than 24 hours. General Belyea remembered the dedication of the crews fighting the fires as well as medical personnel treating injured passengers and crew. He reminisced that Kulis ANG Base *"was absolutely packed with good people. I couldn't have done anything without them."*

On March 24, 1989, in the calm waters of Prince William Sound, the oil tanker *Exxon Valdez* ran aground, spilling 10.8 million gallons of oil into Alaskan waters. Prince William Sound's remote location, accessible only by boat and aircraft, made government and industry response challenging. Despite the difficulty in delivering supplies, the 144th again heeded the call for help and arrived almost immediately. Pilots flew numerous sorties, delivering containment booms, supplies, and emergency personnel to the city of Valdez. After air support roles were handed over to civilian contractors, ANG members stayed in Valdez, filling a variety of roles, including crash response and fire protection at the Valdez airport.

On July 23, 2006, the *Congar Ace*, a large Japanese cargo ship, rolled on its side while carrying 23 crew and 4,812 automobiles from Japan to Oregon. ANG units from Kulis ANG Base immediately responded to the scene and saved the crew in a dramatic rescue. On July 24, two HH-60 Pave Hawks from the 210th Rescue Squadron, two HC-130N from the 211th Rescue Squadron, one C-130H from the 144th, and about 12 pararescue men from the 212th Rescue Squadron assisted with the rescue, recovering all crew members. As a result of this selfless act, members of the 176th Wing at Kulis ANG Base were honored by the Jolly Green Association with the Rescue Mission of the Year Award.

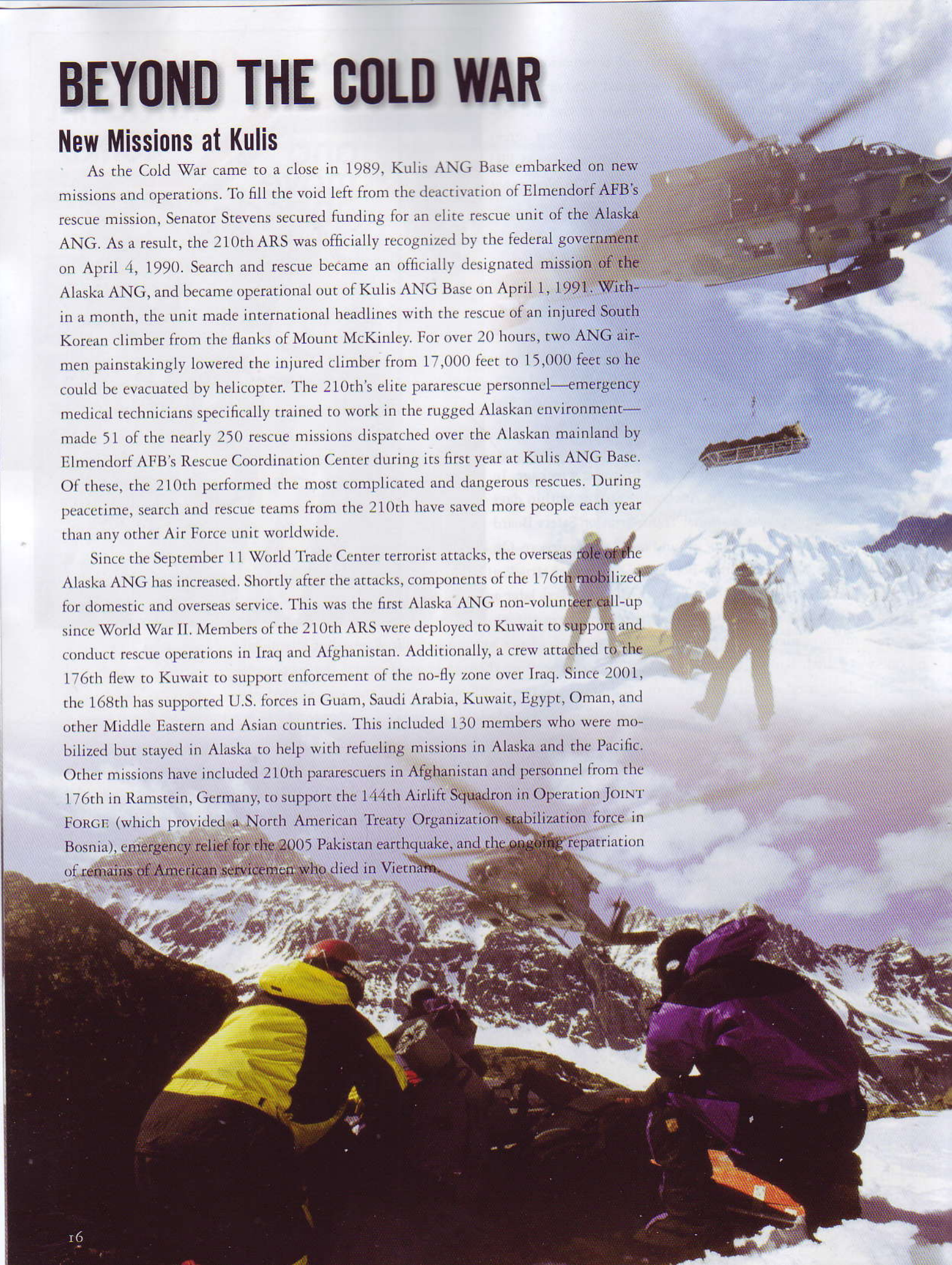


BEYOND THE COLD WAR

New Missions at Kulis

As the Cold War came to a close in 1989, Kulis ANG Base embarked on new missions and operations. To fill the void left from the deactivation of Elmendorf AFB's rescue mission, Senator Stevens secured funding for an elite rescue unit of the Alaska ANG. As a result, the 210th ARS was officially recognized by the federal government on April 4, 1990. Search and rescue became an officially designated mission of the Alaska ANG, and became operational out of Kulis ANG Base on April 1, 1991. Within a month, the unit made international headlines with the rescue of an injured South Korean climber from the flanks of Mount McKinley. For over 20 hours, two ANG airmen painstakingly lowered the injured climber from 17,000 feet to 15,000 feet so he could be evacuated by helicopter. The 210th's elite pararescue personnel—emergency medical technicians specifically trained to work in the rugged Alaskan environment—made 51 of the nearly 250 rescue missions dispatched over the Alaskan mainland by Elmendorf AFB's Rescue Coordination Center during its first year at Kulis ANG Base. Of these, the 210th performed the most complicated and dangerous rescues. During peacetime, search and rescue teams from the 210th have saved more people each year than any other Air Force unit worldwide.

Since the September 11 World Trade Center terrorist attacks, the overseas role of the Alaska ANG has increased. Shortly after the attacks, components of the 176th mobilized for domestic and overseas service. This was the first Alaska ANG non-volunteer call-up since World War II. Members of the 210th ARS were deployed to Kuwait to support and conduct rescue operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Additionally, a crew attached to the 176th flew to Kuwait to support enforcement of the no-fly zone over Iraq. Since 2001, the 168th has supported U.S. forces in Guam, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Egypt, Oman, and other Middle Eastern and Asian countries. This included 130 members who were mobilized but stayed in Alaska to help with refueling missions in Alaska and the Pacific. Other missions have included 210th pararescuers in Afghanistan and personnel from the 176th in Ramstein, Germany, to support the 144th Airlift Squadron in Operation JOINT FORGE (which provided a North American Treaty Organization stabilization force in Bosnia), emergency relief for the 2005 Pakistan earthquake, and the ongoing repatriation of remains of American servicemen who died in Vietnam.



210,000+ Accident Free Flying Hours

As of July 31, 2010, the 176th had achieved a milestone: 215,868 accident-free flying hours, an unprecedented record. Prior to this date, the last accident occurred 45 years earlier on December 15, 1965, when a C-123J crashed on approach to the Cape Romanzof DEW Line radar site.





ALASKA AIR GUARD

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A LOOK BACK: THE LEGACY OF KULIS ANGB & BUILDING 3

The Legacy of Kulis ANG Base

With its closure and the relocation of the 176th Wing to Elmendorf AFB, Kulis ANG Base leaves behind an impressive legacy. Throughout the Cold War, the base hosted units that served missions integral to national defense and critical to Soviet deterrence. Kulis ANG Base also supported the health, welfare, and safety of Alaska, Alaskans, and the Alaskan natural environment.

For those who served at Kulis, the Anchorage base was home. For flood, earthquake, and crash victims, it was a welcome refuge. For the throngs who attended open houses, dedications, and air shows over the years, or even arrived at the Anchorage airport, it provided a sense of security—the knowledge that base personnel stood ready to defend, aid, and comfort them should the need arise. The historic hangar endured at Kulis ANG Base for half a century, a venerable landmark projecting the Alaska ANG's proud legacy to Alaskan and international visitors alike.



PHOTO CREDITS

- Cover:** Aerial photograph of Kulis ANG Base (National Guard Bureau, Public Affairs Office, Fort Richardson, AK)
Alaska ANG plane and Building 3 (National Guard Bureau, Public Affairs Office, Fort Richardson, AK)
Alaska ANG plane and crew (National Guard Bureau, Public Affairs Office, Fort Richardson, AK)
- Inside Cover:** Polar map (HDR|e²M)
- Alaskanized:** Alaska ANG planes flying over Kulis ANG Base (National Guard Bureau, Public Affairs Office, Fort Richardson, AK)
Alaska ANG “Alaskanized” C-123K (National Guard Bureau, Public Affairs Office, Fort Richardson, AK)
Kulis ANG Base hangar (National Guard Bureau, Public Affairs Office, Fort Richardson, AK)
- The Coldest Front:** 144th Fighter-Bomber Squadron and planes at Elmendorf AFB (National Guard Bureau, Public Affairs Office, Fort Richardson, AK)
Gen. Lars Johnson, “King of the Tundra” (National Guard Bureau, Public Affairs Office, Fort Richardson, AK)
144th Fighter-Bomber Squadron (National Guard Bureau, Public Affairs Office, Fort Richardson, AK)
Portrait of Lt. Albert Kulis (Kulis Air National Guard Base)
F-80s in Building 3 (Kulis Air National Guard Base)
- The Early Years:** Flag dedication at Kulis ANG Base (National Guard Bureau, Public Affairs Office, Fort Richardson, AK)
Aerial photograph of Kulis ANG Base (Kulis Air National Guard Base)
F-80s on flight line (Kulis Air National Guard Base)
Construction of 1955 hangar (National Guard Bureau, Public Affairs Office, Fort Richardson, AK)
- The Cold War:** Barter Island DEW Station (www.defenseimagery.mil, photo taken by Tech. Sgt. Donald L. Wetterman, 1987, accessed 2010)
C-123J with skis (two photos, both Kulis Air National Guard Base)
Unloading gear on Taku Glacier (National Guard Bureau, Public Affairs Office, Fort Richardson, AK)
C-123K at Kulis ANG Base (Kulis Air National Guard Base)
Men with Alaskanized C-123K (Kulis Air National Guard Base)
Snow machines unloading (National Guard Bureau, Public Affairs Office, Fort Richardson, AK)
Grey whales trapped in ice (National Guard Bureau, Public Affairs Office, Fort Richardson, AK)
- Lending a Hand:** Alaska ANG Santa (Kulis Air National Guard Base)
Operation SANTA CLAUS (Kulis Air National Guard Base)
Fourth Avenue, Anchorage, after Good Friday earthquake (Operation HELPING HAND, p. 52, National Archives, Anchorage, AK)
Anchorage earthquake damage [inset] (Kulis Air National Guard Base)
Beds set up for victims of Anchorage earthquake (Kulis Air National Guard Base)
Fairbanks flood images and article (*Anchorage Daily News*, Flood Edition September 1967, p1 and p9, National Archives, Anchorage, AK)
The City of Nome trapped in ice (two photos, both Kulis Air National Guard Base)
Bison leaving C-123J (Kulis Air National Guard Base)
Taku Glacier scientific studies support flight (Kulis Air National Guard Base)
Pope John Paul II arrives in Alaska (Kulis Air National Guard Base)
Rescue of *Cougar Ace* crew (Kulis Air National Guard Base)
Supplies in front of hangar (Kulis Air National Guard Base)
- Beyond the Cold War:** 210th search and rescue drill (two photos, both Kulis Air National Guard Base)
Two hundred thousand-plus accident-free flying hours (Kulis Air National Guard Base, photo taken by MSgt. Michael Phillips)
Search and rescue helicopters on flight line (HDR|e²M)

A Look Back:	Kulis ANG Base hangar (National Guard Bureau, Public Affairs Office, Fort Richardson, AK) Kulis ANG Base hangar (HDR e ² M) Kulis ANG patches (Kulis Air National Guard Base, photo taken by MSgt. Michael Phillips) C-123J, Guardsman and sled (Kulis Air National Guard Base)
Photo Credits:	C-47 static display at Kulis ANG Base (HDR e ² M)
Back Cover:	Aerial photograph of Kulis ANG Base (National Guard Bureau, Public Affairs Office, Fort Richardson, AK) F-86 Sabre (Kulis Air National Guard Base) Operation SANTA CLAUS (Kulis Air National Guard Base)

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