

# Aviation History of Ladd, Fort Wainwright



**During World War II, the Cold Weather Test Detachment tested all aircraft in the American arsenal. It's mission was to make every plane operable at temperatures of 65 degrees below zero. The aircraft manufacturers and support companies that made everything from tires to engines sent representatives to Alaska to work with the detachment.**

The aeronautical research effort grew into a sophisticated enterprise through which more than 700 military personnel tested 22 types of aircraft and related equipment. Knowledge gained on the ground and in the air helped the U.S. military and the aviation industry conquer engineering challenges of extreme conditions.

In 1947, the Air Force opened a cold weather test hangar at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida.

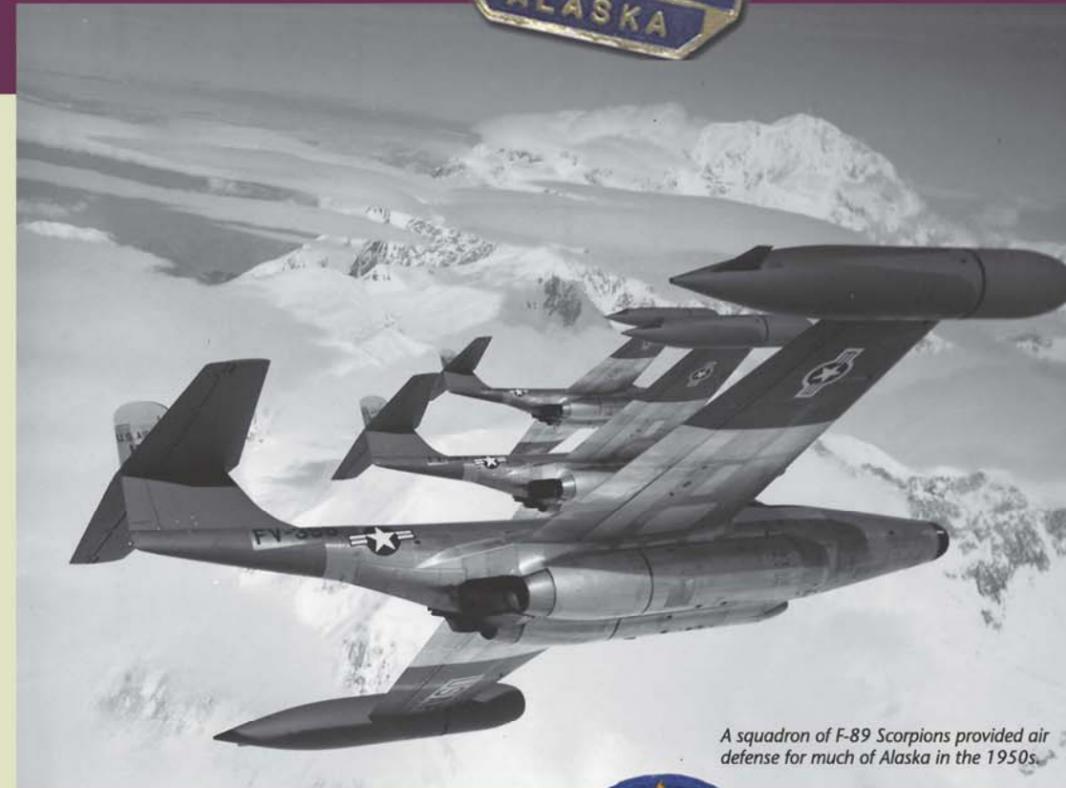


A P-38 crew warms up the aircraft for a winter flight from Ladd Field.

Cold weather test operations continued in Alaska on a reduced basis, while strategic reconnaissance, air defense, research, and search and rescue missions became the main mission of Ladd Air Force Base.



The F-13s of the 46/72nd Reconnaissance Squadron fly in formation through the Alaska Range. The F-13 was the reconnaissance version of the B-29.



A squadron of F-89 Scorpions provided air defense for much of Alaska in the 1950s.

Long-range reconnaissance flights from Ladd assessed Soviet activities and weather conditions before the era of satellites and the U-2 spy plane. While details about reconnaissance flights remained secret, the public closely followed news accounts of the 10th Air Rescue Squadron, which performed numerous military and civilian mercy flights.



Pilots of the Alaskan Air Command put the F-82 Twin Mustang through its paces on reconnaissance and surveillance missions in the early 1950s.



Fighter-interceptor squadrons provided air defense for central and northern Alaska, first with the F-82 H and later with the F-89 Scorpion.

After the Army took control of the installation in 1961, a variety of fixed-wing and helicopter aviation units operated from the airfield, with a primary mission of supporting ground defense and providing air mobility for the infantry.

When the Army assumed control of Ladd Field and renamed it Fort Wainwright in 1961, the aviation mission shifted to one of providing support and mobility for ground troops, a task that continues to this day.

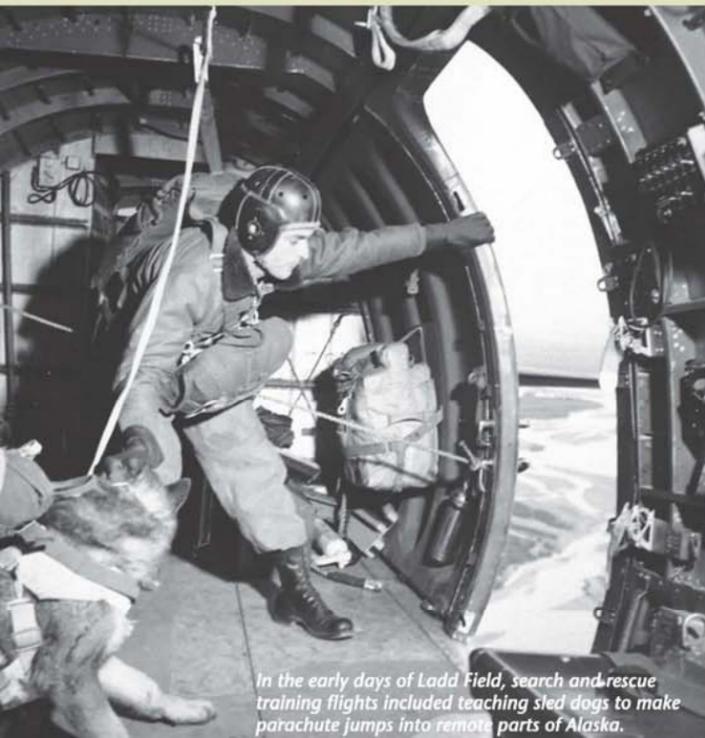


Successive generations of Army helicopters such as the HU-1 Huey, the UH-21 Shawnee, the CH-47 Chinook, the OH-58 Kiowa and the UH-60 Blackhawk have been based at Fort Wainwright, along with a variety of observation aircraft, supporting operations in Alaska and around the world.



The UH-60 Blackhawk is a mainstay of the United States Army Alaska at Fort Wainwright.

In 2006, the airfield was renamed Ladd Army Airfield, recognizing its place in the military and aviation history of Alaska and the nation.



In the early days of Ladd Field, search and rescue training flights included teaching sled dogs to make parachute jumps into remote parts of Alaska.