

# Cold Weather Test Detachment



The original purpose of the testing facility was to ensure that all Army planes would function at -60 degrees F and below. With war raging in Europe and the Pacific, there was a growing fear that the United States would be drawn into the conflict. Aircraft that could function at extreme cold temperatures were vital.

Only five aircraft were available at Ladd Field for testing due to its remote location during the first winter. A B-17 was lost in February in a crash taking the lives of eight men on board. The loss of friends weighed heavily on the small contingent at Ladd.

Later to honor the men who had passed away, roads on Ladd Field were named in honor of them: Freeman, Ketcham, Whidden, Trainor, Gilreath, Davies, and Applegate.



The men of the Cold Weather Test were deployed in the early weeks of the Aleutian campaign and faced harsh combat conditions. They sustained casualties and did their duty as part of the first group of responding forces.

In the Aleutians, Cold Weather Test fliers flew patrol missions and bombing runs over Kiska Island. Three men were lost to enemy fire and combat related crashes.

Eventually, Gen. Arnold reactivated the Cold Weather Test Detachment at Ladd and the men returned to continue the critical mission of testing the winterization procedures and Arctic operations for all military aircraft and associated equipment.