

Alaska-Siberia Route

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The Lend-Lease was originally established as a strategy to allow the United States to provide material assistance to Great Britain while preserving its neutrality. In 1941, the United States began providing war supplies under this program. Lend-Lease aid was loosely defined to encompass virtually any commodity useful to the defense of friendly nations. In June of 1941, Germany attacked the Soviet Union surprising the Soviet Air Force and destroying thousands of their warplanes throughout the first week of fighting. In October of 1941, the United States officially began extending aid to the Soviet Union under the Lend-Lease program in an agreement known as First Protocol. First Protocol provided the Soviet Union with heavy war materials via sea routes. It wasn't until the following year when the idea of flying aircraft via the northwest route through Alaska was raised and then implemented under the Second Protocol agreement.



Various routes were considered for the delivery of the aircraft. Several routes considered had their own disadvantages including threats of German U-boat attack and the limitations of short-range aircraft being able to make long over-water journeys. The Northwest route through Alaska and Siberia was determined to be the most direct and allowed for areas to refuel and repair along the way.

In the summer of 1942, the Soviet Union and United States had agreed to utilize the Alaska-Siberia (ALSIB) route. American pilots would ferry newly manufactured planes from Great Falls, Montana through western Canada and into interior Alaska at Ladd Field. While other airfields were along the staging route Ladd Field was designated as the official transfer point between American and Russian pilots.