

Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson

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Shemya Island at a glance

EARECKSON AIR STATION, Alaska – Shemya Island is a small island in the Semichi Islands southwest of Alaska. It is about 1,500 miles southwest of Anchorage, Alaska.

Shemya Island was first developed in May 1943 by the U.S. Army. During the World War II campaign against Japanese occupation forces on Attu and Kiska Islands, the Army constructed a 10,000-foot runway and several aircraft hangars.

Shemya Island became the home of the 28th Bomber Group, and later the 343rd Fighter Group. The latter group was deactivated on August 15, 1946.

The Shemya Air Force Base (now Eareckson Air Station) mission was reduced following World War II.

The station served as a stopover refueling and staging point on the Great Circle Route for support and supplies during the Korean conflict. Following the Korean conflict, the station mission was again reduced, and on July 1, 1954, the station was declared surplus and deactivated.

Shemya was designated Eareckson Air Force Station in May 1993 after Col. William Eareckson, a squadron commander in the Aleutians during World War II. In March 1994, Eareckson Air Force Station was redesignated Eareckson Air Station.

The station downsized once again and reverted to caretaker status in April 1995. At present, Eareckson is operated and maintained by an onsite contractor.

Eareckson currently serves as an early-warning radar installation with facilities to house support and contractor personnel. The support and contractor personnel maintain the radar installations, equipment operation and maintenance, civil engineering work, vehicle maintenance, and communications.

Though no aircraft squadrons are currently assigned to Eareckson, it serves as Pacific Air Forces' only barrier equipped emergency divert field within a 1,000 mile radius, thus keeping the North Pacific route open for air travel.

Eareckson currently supports approximately 160 contractor personnel, but its population may increase to 220 personnel in the summer months due to an increase in construction and the number of related support services personnel.

(Courtesy of 611th Air Support Group)