Most runway pavements constructed in Alaska have an approximate life span of 15-20 years. But Runway 10-28 at Eareckson Air Station (formerly Shemya Air Force Base) has performed exceptionally well under severe weather conditions and heavy aircraft loadings for more than 35 years with only minor repairs.

The 10,000-foot runway was constructed during World War II, and received a major rehabilitation in 1967. The Army Corps of Engineers re-established the surface grades of the pavement by removing high spots with a heater-planer and filling in low areas with one to four lifts of 2.5-inch HMA leveling courses. It then overlaid the entire runway with a 1.5-inch HMA surface course. This rehabilitation allowed the runway to support unlimited twin tandem aircraft operations (C-135 and C-141 aircraft up to 290,000 lbs.) for more than 10 years.

In 1976, the runway received a 2-inch HMA overlay after it was hot-planed and leveled. This was the first HMA overlay project that used the Corps of Engineers’ new Pay for Performance specifications, which stated that if the contractor did not meet certain requirements for mat density, joint density, and asphalt content, its pay would be reduced. The contractor, Dickerson Construction, met the specifications and produced a high-quality HMA overlay.

Evaluations of the runway in 1986 and 1990 showed that it was still in excellent shape overall. In 1990, it did receive one 5-foot by 10-foot patch at the centerline. The runway was evaluated again in 1993; there was almost a total absence of cracks or surface deterioration. A pavement condition survey conducted in June 2001 rated the runway as “good” to “very good.”