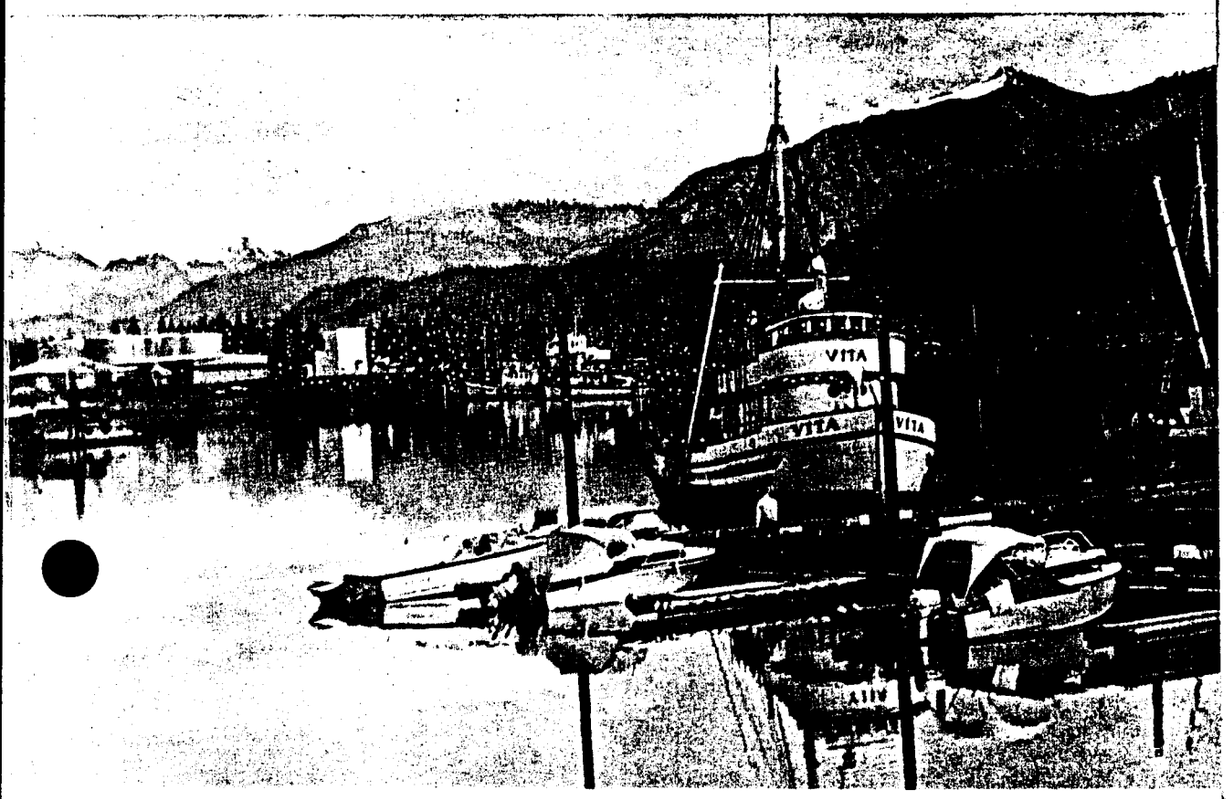

HISTORY OF

THE ALASKA DISTRICT

UNITED STATES ARMY

CORPS OF ENGINEERS

1946 — 1974

If White Alice provided the essential intrastate communications system without which the warning systems could not adequately function, a further problem remained--the relaying of messages from the DEW Line and the BMEWS system south to the headquarters of NORAD (North American Air Defense Command) and the Pentagon. The message-relaying system adopted by the Defense Department and constructed by the Alaska District became known as "Rearward Communications."

The Alaska District first examined sites for this project in 1959 and advertised for the initial contracts in December of that year. The program called for microwave stations running along an inland route roughly paralleling the Alaska Highway. There was also to be an alternate route running by microwave and White Alice facilities south to Annette Island and from there by submarine cable to Seattle. Between 1959 and 1961, the project involved the construction of 32 stations for which the Alaska District awarded some 28 contracts totalling just over $18 million.

The most costly of these sites was that located on Duncan Canal near Petersburg. There the site was placed on the shoulder of a mountain inaccessible to everything except helicopters. Supplies had to be barged to a beachhead and a road carved up to the site. To illustrate the difficulties involved, the access road alone cost $1.3 million.[30]

In addition to its work on the communications supporting the early warning systems, the Corps planned and directed construction for two other separate communications organizations--AACS (Airways and Air Communication Service) and ACS (Alaska Communications System.) The Alaska District planned and supervised the construction of the basic AACS facilities at Elmendorf, Eielson, and Ladd from 1950 to 1955. The primary function of these facilities was to support military air navigation in the region. ACS was a much older organization, the descendant of WAMCATS. In the 1950's the Alaska District monitored contracts for such ACS and telephone repeater buildings. By far the largest operation undertaken for ACS was the construction of its Fairbanks facility for a total cost of $1,113,500.[31]

PIPELINE CONSTRUCTION

At the conclusion of the second World War, the CANOL System (see Chapter I) lines were shut down. In July 1946, the Corps of Engineers took over control of the system and assigned immediate custody to the Great Lakes Engineer District. In November of that year, the newly formed Alaska District assumed responsibility for what remained of the inactive project.[32]

If CANOL remained inactive, discussion of its wartime function--the cheap transport of high volumes of petroleum--did not. By 1952, the decision had been made to construct a

new pipeline system with much larger capacity capable of transporting a variety of petroleum products. As it ultimately emerged in 1953, the project called for the construction of just over 600 miles of 8 inch pipeline from Haines in the Alaskan Panhandle to the interior. It was to be known as ALCANGO--the Alaska-Canada Gas Oil Pipeline.

From sea level at Haines, the line rose to cross the 3,700 foot high Chilkoot Pass and from there descended to the 450 foot level at Fairbanks in the Alaskan interior.

In addition to the line, terminal docks for tankers, pumping stations, and a huge tank farm were built at Haines. Along the line, storage facilities and other stations were constructed, all linked together by the telephone and teletype networks constructed by the Alaska Communications System. When finished in 1955, ALCANGO was the northernmost ma-

Construction of the Haines-Fairbanks military pipeline, 1954.

The route for the line was chosen by USARAL and the Alaska District with the approval of the Canadian government. Under contracts let by the District, construction began at Fairbanks and Haines late in 1953.

jor pipeline in the world and one of the first truly multi-purpose military lines ever built. As originally designed, it could deliver about 10,000 barrels of product per day.

In 1962, the District undertook a crash project to expand the capacity of ALCANGO by adding six more pumping stations. The project, completed in the very short period from April to November 1962, involved not only the installation of the pumping station equipment but also the virtual construction of several small towns as well. Every station had to have family housing and support facilities, as well as storage buildings. The new pumping stations, established over about 500 miles of the line, roughly doubled the system's capacity.

At the pipeline's original dedication in October 1955, Lt. Gen. J.H. Atkinson, the Alaska Commander in Chief, remarked that while the line had cost the American people about $40 million, it was expected to save $3.5 million annually in transportation costs and hence would amortize itself in slightly more than ten years.[33]

THE CONSTRUCTION OF AERIAL DEFENSE FACILITIES

If emphasis was placed on the development of Alaska as an advanced early warning post in the 1950's, considerable effort was also expended to create local defenses for the most important military facilities. These defenses included not only ground troops and tactical aircraft but sophisticated anti-aircraft weapons as well. The establishment of all the facilities necessary to the operation of these forces required a very large effort from the Alaska District. We have already seen how the District contributed to the building of operation bases for aircraft and troops. From the middle of 1955 the District became involved in another area--the development of defensive ground-to-air missile sites. In August 1955, USARAL revealed that installations for Nike Hercules missiles would be built to protect the key military installations at Fairbanks and Anchorage. These were to replace the anti-aircraft gun batteries emplaced around these facilities in the early post-war period. The District surveyed the potential sites, acquired the necessary land, and in March 1957, announced the invitations to bid.

The most spectacular aspect of this project was the construction of a mis-

Radar at Site Summit, 1973.