

UNITED STATES ARMY, ALASKA

YUKON ARCHIVES

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BUILDING ALASKA WITH THE US ARMY



1867 - 1962

Headquarters, United States Army, Alaska

10 August 1962

OP AL 211

In 1956 the 2d Infantry Division, minus one regiment and some support troops, moved to Alaska from Fort Lewis, Washington. This was part of Operation Gyroscope and the 2d Infantry Division replaced the 71st Infantry Division which rotated to Fort Lewis and was then deactivated.

The 9th Infantry Regiment, with supporting troops, was stationed at Eielson and Ladd Air Force Bases, both in the Fairbanks area, and was assigned the mission of protecting the two bases and the Fairbanks area. The 23d Infantry Regiment, with the 2d Infantry Division Headquarters, was stationed at Fort Richardson, with the mission of protecting the Elmendorf-Anchorage-Richardson complex.

In December 1957 the 2d Infantry Division was deactivated, with the divisional units remaining in Alaska. Earlier in the year the regiments of the division had been reorganized under pentomic lines and the 9th Infantry Regiment became the 1st Battle Group, 9th Infantry and the 23d Infantry Regiment became the 1st Battle Group, 23d Infantry.

With the activation of the Yukon Command, USARAL at Ladd Air Force Base in 1955, all USARAL Army units north of the Alaska Range, except Fort Greely, were placed under the control of the Commanding General, Yukon Command, USARAL, who also serves as the Deputy Commanding General, USARAL.

During 1958 many changes occurred in the operations of the Army in Alaska. In January of that year, basic training at Fort Richardson for personnel inducted in Alaska was phased out. Basic training, conducted at that post since 1950, was discontinued and the basic training mission for Alaska draftees and enlistees was transferred to Fort Ord, California. During the same month, the 4th Antiaircraft Artillery Group, stationed north of the Alaska Range, was deactivated.

Construction continued at Fort Richardson and in April 1958, the new commissary was opened in the new community shopping center. Construction contracts for 155 housing units on Fort Richardson were let in July.

Secretary of the Army, Wilber M Brucker, announced in April 1958 that the first nuclear power plant in Alaska would be built by the Army to provide heat and power for Fort Greely. The Secretary stated that Fort Greely had been selected because of its location and that it would provide an operating test of the plant under extreme cold weather conditions.

Future air defense capability of the Army units in Alaska was greatly enhanced with the announcement of the Department of the Army in November 1958 that NIKE-HERCULES missile sites in Alaska were scheduled to become operational in 1959. Construction of sites in Alaska were scheduled to be completed by December 1958, according to the announcement. Units to man the sites were designated as the 4th Missile Battalion, 43d Artillery, in the Anchorage area, and the 2d Missile Battalion, 562d Artillery, in the Fairbanks area.

Other changes in 1958 included the arrival of the first helicopter company to be assigned to USARAL when the 80th Transportation Company (Light Helicopter) arrived in August from Fort Riley, Kansas with their H-21 aircraft. An organizational change in December placed the Alaskan Command directly under the Joint Chiefs of Staff and eliminated the Department of the Air Force as an executive agent.

NIKE-HERCULES units became operational in the Anchorage area in March 1959 and in the Fairbanks area in May of the same year.

The importance of Alaska as a training ground in winter operations grew during the post World War II period. In April 1947 the War Department designed Big Delta as the site for the first postwar cold weather maneuver, Exercise YUKON, which was held during the 1947-48 winter season. The post at Big Delta was returned to active status and four companies of the 2d Infantry Division participated in the maneuver which was completed in March 1948. On 1 May 1948, the post at Big Delta was officially transferred to the Department of the Army and redesignated an Army post.

In November 1948, Big Delta was named as the site of an arctic training center. The area, renamed Fort Greely, was chosen because it combines the extreme weather conditions of the Alaska interior with the greatest variety of terrain to be found in any similar location in Alaska: mountains, plains, forests, muskeg, tundra, glaciers, rivers, lakes and swamps.

When activated, the center consisted of three subdivisions in addition to the post complement personnel:

1. The Army Arctic Indoctrination School.

The 1961 annual winter maneuver, Exercise WILLOW FREEZE, pitted the 1st Airborne Battle Group, 187th Infantry, 82d Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, against the 1st Battle Group, 23d Infantry, Fort Richardson.

As an indication of the importance of aviation in military operations in Alaska, the USARAL Aviation Battalion was activated on 3 April 1961, and in August 1961 the 65th Transportation Company (Light Helicopter) arrived aboard the MSTC Core for assignment to USARAL with station at Fort Wainwright. This gave USARAL two helicopter companies in addition to fixed wing capability. The Core had arrived at the new \$8 million facility at Anchorage. Earlier, on 11 July 1961, the USS Mann, carrying 600 passengers, in addition to military cargo, had been the first military ship to use the new facility.

In November 1961 the Department of the Army announced that a Canadian unit would participate in the 1962 Alaskan Maneuver, Exercise GREAT BEAR. This marked the first time Canadians had maneuvered in Alaska since 1948. The unit selected was Airborne Company A, 2d Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, normally stationed at Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. The US Forces were to be portrayed by the 1st Battle Group, 22d Infantry, 4th Infantry Division, Fort Lewis. They were withdrawn from the troop list due to other military commitments and the 2d Battle Group, 60th Infantry, 2d Brigade, Fort Devens, Massachusetts, substituted for them. The 1st Battle Group, 9th Infantry, Fort Wainwright, was the USARAL battle group designated for the maneuver.

Also in November 1961, two WAC officers were assigned to USARAL, the first WAC's on duty in Alaska since World War II.

USARAL at the beginning of 1962 was described by the USARAL Progress Review as follows:

"USARAL COMMANDS AND INSTALLATIONS"

"The Commanding Officer, USARAL Support Command, commands all installations and units assigned to the USARAL Support Command. The Annual Funding Program for Fiscal Year 1962, as of 31 December 1961, was \$25,772,100. The USARAL Support Command includes:

"Fort Richardson:

"Fort Richardson is located eight miles northeast of Anchorage, Alaska, and adjoins Elmendorf Air Force Base. The post proper consists of 66,602 acres with 1,103 buildings, 115 miles of surfaced roads, and 25 miles of Government-owned trackage valued in excess of \$154,000,000. Off-post holdings consist of 27,128 acres and facilities valued in excess of \$9,000,000. Housing exists for 1,709 families and 7,292 enlisted men. Coal consumption averages 104,000 tons yearly. An average of 3,700,000 kilowatt-hours of electricity is used per month. Water process for Fort Richardson and Elmendorf Air Force Base averages 4,000,000 gallons per day. Post population and those supported off-post total approximately 16,600.

"The USARAL Support Command includes a sizeable supply activity located on Fort Richardson which utilizes 650 acres of land and facilities which include: 14 permanent shops and miscellaneous structures comprising 908,000 square feet of covered warehousing space; 358,000 square feet of improved open storage space; 2,158,000 square feet of unimproved storage space; and 84,000 square feet of covered space, two above ground magazines with 12,000 square feet of covered space, and 11,000 square feet of improved open storage space.

"The climate at Fort Richardson is not severe. Although at times the temperature drops to 30 degrees below zero, in general the climate can be compared to that of the New England states. Annual rainfall averages 15.7 inches; annual snowfall averages 61 inches.

"Petroleum Distribution Division:

"The Petroleum Distribution Division of the Director of Supply and Procurement, USARAL Support Command, is charged with scheduling, receiving, storing and distributing petroleum products to Army and Air Force installations on the Alaska mainland. The facilities of the system are valued at approximately \$44,500,000 and consist primarily of the Haines-Fairbanks eight-inch pipeline facilities and the Anchorage and Port of Whittier terminals. The system utilizes 3,209 acres of land. Population is included in the Fort Richardson total.

"The Haines-Fairbanks pipeline is composed of 626 miles of eight-inch pipeline, from the deep water port of Haines, in southeastern Alaska, to the military installations north of the Range in the interior of Alaska. Passing over 25 major river crossings, 82 minor stream crossings, 49 major

ALCANGO

Haines, Alaska to Fairbanks, Alaska POL Pipeline

The Haines to Fairbanks Products Pipeline which extends a distance in excess of 622 miles from Haines, Alaska through British Columbia and Yukon Territory, Canada to Fairbanks, Alaska (of which distance approximately 290 miles are located in Canada) has sections of restrained (buried) and unrestrained (surface laid) construction. In "Underconstruction" and in "proposed" petroleum piping installations located at pipeline terminals, on air bases, on army posts and in inhabited area, (much of the northland is uninhabited), pipeline designs are tending toward burial to protect the pipe from mechanical damages and to comply with the recommendations of the National Board of Fire Underwriters and to follow the practices of the commercial pipelines. Other considerations of substantial merit that are influencing pipeline designs toward burial, for certain locations where the sole consideration of economics would indicate surface pipe are objectionable appearances of surface laid pipe caused by changes in temperature conditions, government regulations and laws, public safety, military security and the need to reduce operating and maintenance costs.

In 1953, when the Korean trouble was causing everyone some concern, an earlier pipeline, the Canol No. 4 pipeline's 3 inch section extending from Whitehorse, Y.T. to Fairbanks, Alaska was proving to be too small to do the job of carrying fuels to Alaskan bases. Even the Canol No. 2 which was a 4 inch pipeline extending from Skagway, Alaska to Whitehorse, Y.T. was proving too small to adequately perform the task. It had become increasingly apparent that in order to supply the big bases in Alaska a larger pipeline was a necessity. This larger (8 inch) POL pipeline was to be named "ALCANGO". The line was to run from Haines, Alaska to Fairbanks, Alaska. Alaska District personnel were to select the route. They sought a route which would avoid as much as possible the

old "bugabocs" of all pipelines, the breakages due to land slides, snow slides and washouts due to flooded, swollen streams. The station sites which were finally selected were: Haines, Border, Haines Junction, Donjek, Tok (tank farms at Eielson). Then by 1962-five stations were added: Blanchard River, Destruction Bay, Beaver Creek, Lakeview, Sear Creek and Timber. In order to get going on the line itself a very large dock had to be built at Haines, to unload the ship loads of material for the construction. This alone was a five million dollar project.

Since portions of this pipeline were to pass through Canadian Territory, it was to have American materials in the American portion and Canadian materials in the Canadian portion. Labor was to be separated by country in the same manner. Since Canada at that time had no pipe fabrication factory to produce the pipe necessary for the line, Great Britain furnished the pipe for the Canadian sector. A curious note-the Canadians hired German ships to transport the pipe from England to Canada.

Surveyors found conditions that ranged from humid semitropical climate to thawed soils along the shoreline lands located along the coastline of Southeastern Alaska to the high, rocky and snow-covered St. Elias and Coastal mountains to flat expanses of tundra lands located east and north of the Alaska range. The latter tundra lands are situated in semi-arid valleys in Yukon territory and in Alaska where soils are varied and where the upper valleys are annually subjected to freezing and thawing. In these valleys and on slopes of the adjacent foothills there also exists much permanently frozen ground. This permafrost is found existing continuous in large areas and also exists in small scattered places in areas where the soils are for the most part not frozen. The deposits vary in thicknesses from thin layers to depths of hundreds of feet. Many of the areas in which permafrost exists are covered with moss. This moss is a highly efficient natural insulating material that, where the moss is thick effectively preserves in a frozen

condition even the surface of the permafrost that is in direct contact with the bottom of the moss. Moss coverings also vary from sparse growths to deep, continuous coverings which attain thicknesses of twelve or more inches.

The origin of the permanently frozen ground (permafrost), as well as frozen layers of ice in general presents many problems which have not yet been satisfactorily solved. For a long time it was generally assumed that they were relics of the ice age and that the masses were, in part at least, the buried remnants of the ice sheets at that time. This view, because it does not fit the demonstrated facts, has now been entirely abandoned as an explanation of the known deposits. There are ice masses and frozen ground that lie far outside of the limits reached by those old ice sheets and many of them cut across deposits formed subsequent to the time when the glaciers had their greatest extent.

As the Alaska District now understands the phenomenon, permafrost starts to grow whenever the temperature of the ground ceases for many consecutive years to reach a temperature above the freezing point during the summer months. At a short distance below the base of the active layer the ground temperature remains throughout the year equal to the mean annual air temperature at the surface. The southern boundary of the permafrost zone coincided with roughly the 0 degree Centigrade mean annual temperature isotherm. The local deviations between these two lines are due to secular (continuing or taking place progressively throughout an age without observed recurrence in a cycle) variations in the mean annual temperature combined with the lag between a change in the mean temperature and the corresponding change in the thickness of the permafrost layer. One must keep in mind also that temperature conditions in Alaska vary widely with one geographic location to another.

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