

●PSF

Safe: Alaska

Alaska

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

January 20, 1942.

MEMORANDUM FOR CAPT. McCRAE:

I am not satisfied with the partial report from CNO in regard to Alaskan defense preparations. This applies not only to the main Alaskan coast but to the Aleutian Islands all the way out. The weather temperature in these Islands is not low. It is not lower than that of Hyde Park, New York.

I think that this should be taken up by Admiral King, Admiral Stark and the Joint Board.

Your enclosure giving status of naval shore facilities in Alaskan area is particularly disappointing in the percentage of its readiness.

F.D.R.

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

file

January 16, 1942.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

There is attached a partial report from the Chief of Naval Operations (Naval Districts Division) in response to the President's recent inquiry about the war readiness in the Alaskan Area.

Respectfully,

J. R. Beardall
J. R. BEARDALL

In reply refer to Initials
and No.

Op-30-HF
(SC)EG-3

NAVY DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
WASHINGTON

January 14, 1942

MEMORANDUM

From: The Director, Naval Districts Division
To: The Naval Aide to the President
Subject: Material and Operational Readiness, Alaskan Area.
Reference: (a) Your Memo to CNO (Naval Districts Division)
of January 12, 1942.
Enclosure: (A) Material Readiness.

1. In reply to reference (a), the following information is furnished:

2. As to naval operational readiness, this, of course, is a matter of Operating Forces available for service in the area, under the following headings:

- (a) The Pacific Fleet must necessarily deal with major overseas threats in this direction. It is assumed that information as to readiness here is available to you from the Commander-in-Chief.
- (b) (1) The Pacific Northern Naval Coastal Frontier Forces charged with local naval operating tasks in the area, are considered seriously inadequate to deal with even minor threats by our clever and determined enemy. The outstanding deficiency here is in aircraft and patrol classes such as gunboats and subchasers. These cannot be supplied at

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E.O. 11652, Sec. 3(E) and 5(D) or (E)

OSD letter, May 3, 1972

RHP, NARS Date MAR 28 1973

SECRET

the expense of other Naval Coastal Frontiers who, themselves, are in similar or worse states.

- (2) On October 15, 1941, this Division estimated that, allowing for deliveries of new construction to January 1, 1942, and all privately owned craft that could possibly be converted to these uses, we would have for all Naval Coastal Frontier Forces only the following portions of their estimated needs:

Subchasers - large	13%
Subchasers - small	31%
Gunboats	13%
Motor Torpedo Boats	0%

- (3) Present strength of Pacific Northern Naval Coastal Frontier is as follows:

Gunboats	2
Old Destroyers	5
Yacht	1
Subchasers, large	3
Eagle Boat	1
Coastal Yachts	3
Minesweepers	9
Net Tenders	4
Harbor Patrol Boats	23 (plus 13 just acquired)
Aircraft	12 VPB (6 in Alaska)

These must serve not only for Alaska, but also for the Washington-Oregon coast. Considering this, and his relative proximity to the enemy, the Commander, Pacific Northern Naval Coastal Frontier (Commandant, Thirteenth Naval District) has very meager forces, but has been here allotted somewhat more than his share of availables.

- (4) Nothing has been done as to net defenses in Alaska, due to more urgent demands for available material.

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By RHP, NARS Date MAR 28 1973

- OF [REDACTED]
- (5) The Commandant, Thirteenth Naval District, has repeatedly pointed out his lack of forces for meeting his tasks, but the Department has been unable to supply more than above listed without denuding other Naval Coastal Frontiers.

3. By material readiness, it is assumed that status of naval shore facilities is meant. This is indicated in enclosure (A). As to adequacy of material stocks, etc., it is suggested that since this would involve the material bureaus, the Fleet Maintenance Division would properly supply the information.

E. J. Gillam
E. J. GILLAM
Acting

Copy to: CNO (with copy of reference (a))
Cominch (with copy of reference (a))

[REDACTED]

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OSD letter, May 8, 1972

By RHP, NARS Date MAR 28 1973

NAVAL SHORE FACILITIES IN THE ALASKAN AREA

1. Naval Air Station, Sitka. Seaplane facilities for 24 VPB or VSO, usable, 73% complete on December 31, 1941.
2. Naval Air Station, Kodiak. Land and seaplane facilities for 48 VPB and for emergency use of four Marine Squadrons, usable, 53% complete on December 31, 1941.
3. Submarine Base, Kodiak. Facilities for six submarines, not usable, 5% complete on December 31, 1941.
4. Naval Air Station, Unalaska. Facilities for 24 VPB only usable for tender based aircraft, 25% complete on December 31, 1941, gun emplacement 0% complete.
5. Submarine Base, Unalaska. Facilities for six submarines, not usable, 0% complete.
6. Naval Section Bases at Ketchikan, Port Armstrong, Sitka, Juneau, Port Althorp, Cordova, Seward, Kodiak, Sand Point and False Pass. Facilities for support of local defense forces; all usable and scheduled for completion in January, 1942.
7. Naval Aerological Stations at Attu, Amchitka, Atka, Kanaga, Kiska and Umnak. Temporary facilities under construction at Kiska and Kanaga -- Kanaga facilities to be removed in the Spring of 1942 to Adak.
8. Naval Radio Stations at Sitka, Kodiak and Dutch Harbor in use.

ENCLOSURE (A)

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OSD letter, May 8, 1972

By RHP, NARS Date MAR 28 1973

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DOD DIR. 5200.9 (9/27/58)

Date- 10-19-66

Signature- *Carl L. Spicer*

~~SECRET~~

WAR DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF STAFF
WASHINGTON

Safe: Alaska

PSF

June 11, 1942

file Box -

Contact report, later amplified, by a patrol plane which searched the harbor of Kiska:

June 11 0320 (Z)

In Kiska there are four Japanese ships. Two of them are at the entrance and are tentatively identified as torpedo boats, 500 tonners, of the Tomozuru class. Inside is one ship believed to be a heavy cruiser and one believed to be a destroyer. Commander Alaska Sector estimates that this heavy cruiser may be the one which was torpedoed on 4 June. Complete reconnaissance not possible because of fog. Cincpac has directed the maximum use of submarines, and has ordered Com Alaska Sector to "Exert maximum effort to bomb Japs out of Kiska".

Pacific Fleet units are investigating floating wreckage in the vicinity of the Midway Battle. They have found a lot of it, which indicates fire. They have also recovered 2 Jap prisoners in a rubber boat.

Safe : Alaska
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DDO DIR. 6200.9 (9/27/88)

Date: 10-21-66

Signature

Carl F. Spicer

PROPOSED TRIP
TO
ALASKA
OR
ICELAND

AIRPLANE

A C-54, four-motored transport plane, similar to the one used for the return trip from Casablanca, can be provided.

I C E L A N D

THE TRIP.

Rail trip to Presque Isle from Washington is recommended in order to reduce insofar as is possible the time which must be spent flying. The weather during the months of July and August is the best available throughout the year with the exception of June. The trip can be made in one hop from Presque Isle to Reykjavik.

An alternate flight is by way of Goose Bay, Labrador, spending the night there and then flying on to Reykjavik the next day. Another alternative is to fly from Presque Isle to Goose Bay, spend the night, fly the next day to Narsarssuak, Greenland, spend the night there, then on the third day, fly to Reykjavik. However, this route is not recommended due to the uncertainty of Greenland weather.

The return trip can be made by way of Newfoundland, landing at the Gander Lake (Newfoundland) Airport.

ITINERARY.

Rail.

Depart: Washington Evening of D day.

Arrive: Presque Isle, Maine Evening of D + 1 day.

Spend night on train.

Air.

Depart: Presque Isle Early morning of D + 2 day.

Arrive: Reykjavik Late afternoon of D + 2 day.

Distance: 2150 miles. Flying time: 12 hrs. 45 min.

(Alternate):

Depart: Presque Isle Morning of D + 2 day.

Arrive: Goose Bay, Labrador Afternoon of D + 2 day.

Distance: 685 miles. Flying time: 5 hrs.

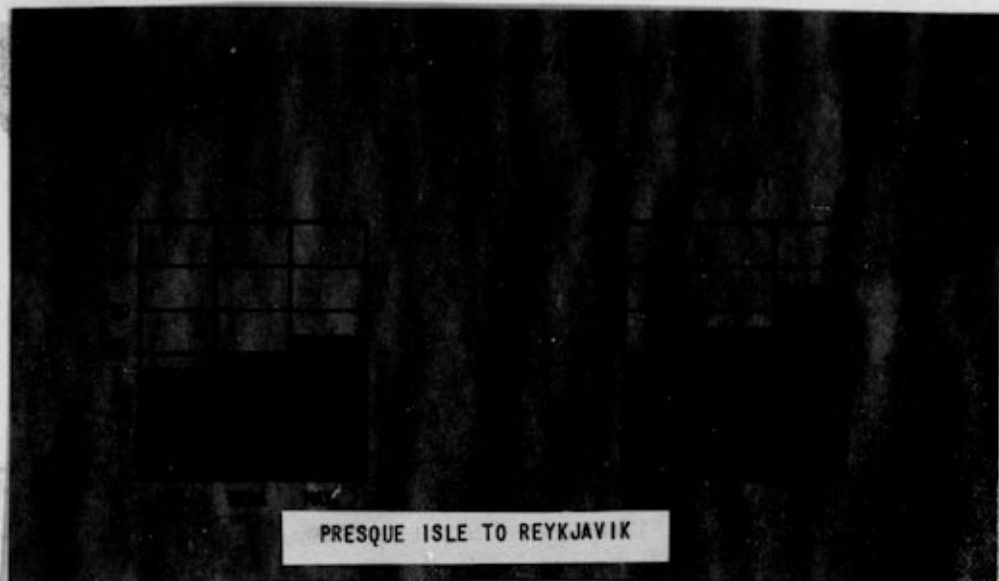
Stay overnight at Goose Bay.

Depart: Goose Bay Morning of D + 3 day.

Arrive: Reykjavik Afternoon of D + 3 day.

Distance: 1470 miles. Flying time: 8 hrs. 15 min.

WEATHER.



Graphs indicate the number of days per month that an airplane flight would normally be expected possible between the terminals indicated. All factors - fog, rain, icing - have been considered.

The graphs are broken down into the mean number of days per month, the minimum number of days per month, and the maximum number of days per month that this trip could have been made during the past several years.

DISCUSSION.

I. Facilities.

Facilities in Iceland for the proposed visit are extremely limited. There are only two possibilities worthy of consideration; (1) the University of Iceland at Reykjavik, (2) the "Hotel DeGink" at Keflavik Airport about 40 miles from Reykjavik. It is assumed

that the University of Iceland would be unoccupied due to the summer vacation. No detailed information is available as to the type of facilities it would provide but most of the University is housed in one large building. Our agreement with the Icelandic Government does not provide for requisitioning and billeting, so that negotiations would be necessary to secure the use of the University. In addition, any modifications which would be required would be subject to the approval of the Icelandic authorities.

The Hotel DeGink, near the Keflavik Airport, is a newly constructed frame building. It was built by the Air Transport Command to accommodate overnight guests passing through Iceland. The building is of cantonment type construction and consequently a constant fire hazard exists. The high winds which prevail increase the hazard.

The road between Reykjavik and Keflavik, approximately 40 miles, is narrow, rough and winding and for the most part unpaved.

II. Security.

From a security angle, Iceland would be most undesirable. It lies within 1,000 miles of German air bases in Norway. German planes are over the Islands frequently, and within the past week, one plane has strafed some of our troops.

The large German-speaking population of Iceland no doubt supports considerable Axis sentiment and information may be transmitted from the Island either by fishing boat or clandestine radio. In spite of the proposed reduction of the Iceland garrison, sufficient troops, antiaircraft and ground, will remain to furnish protection against sporadic raids or air attacks. It can be expected that the Icelandic Government will cooperate in security measures provided such measures do not require abrogation of the agreement under which we occupy Iceland.

During the latter part of July and the entire month of August, the movement of troops into Iceland and the movement of the Fifth Division out of Iceland to the United Kingdom will be in progress. It is open to conjecture how much, if any, attention this activity will receive from enemy air forces.

A cruiser anchored in the harbor could be used to provide limited accommodations, but in this case the danger from air attack is greater than when on land where bomb shelters are available.

III. Summary.

It is not believed that accommodations of a suitable nature are, or can be made available in Iceland for the purpose under consideration.

Political implications may make extremely difficult our tenancy of Iceland and prohibit the reduction in garrison now contemplated. Harbor and anchorage facilities at Reykjavik will be taxed to the utmost during the movement of troops into and out of Iceland. These activities may possibly draw the attention of enemy air or sea forces.



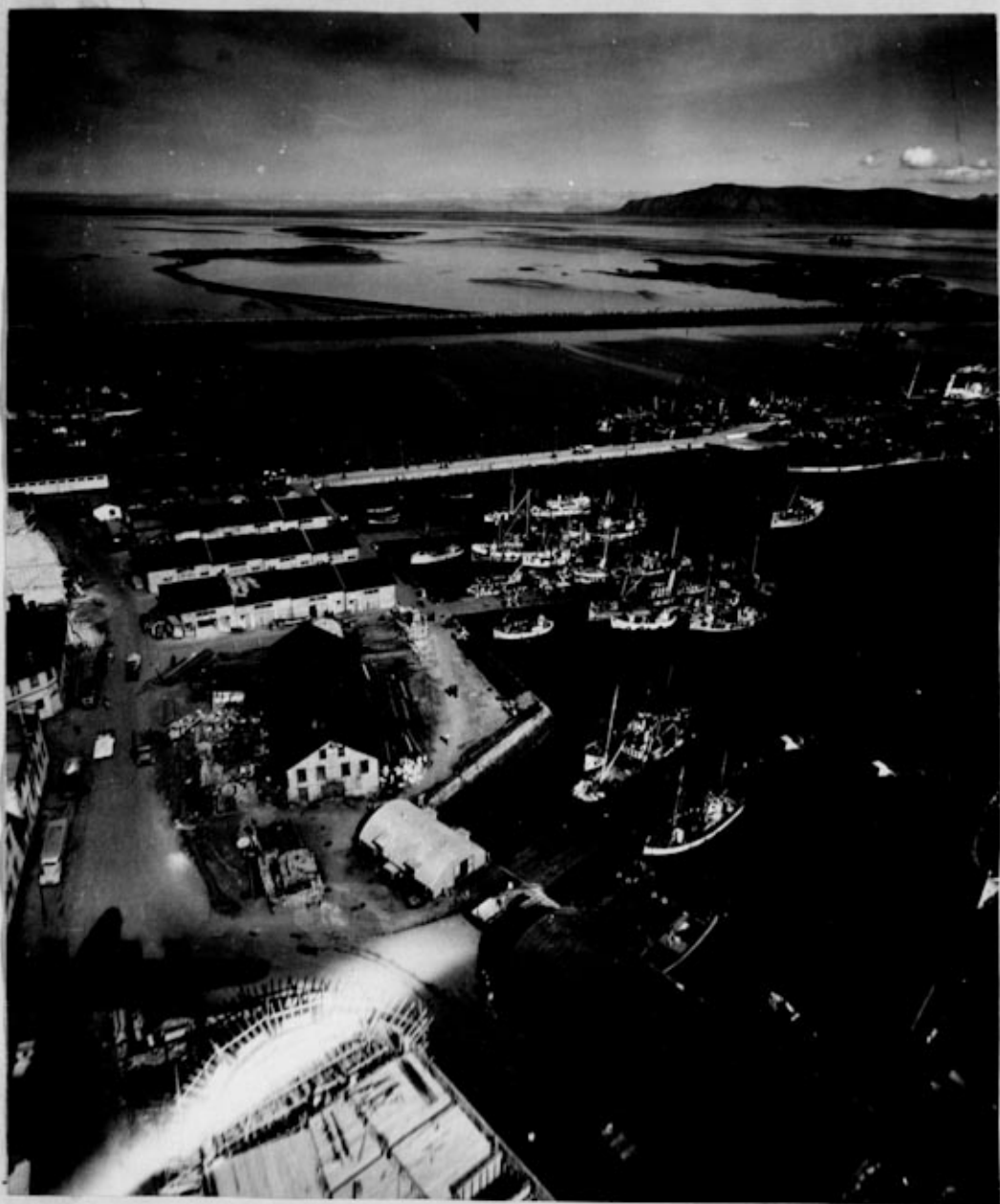
REYKJAVIK, ICELAND.
Hafnarstraeti (Main Street) on a Sunday Morning.



REYKJAVIK, ICELAND.
Looking northeast over Leingoto Street in Reykjavik. Taken
from top of Catholic Cathedral, northeastern part of Reykjavik
can be seen in background. 3/21/43.



Reykjavik Airdrome, Iceland.



Docks, Reykjavik, Iceland.

ALASKA

THE TRIP.

By rail to Ottawa, arriving there the following day and spending the afternoon of that day and second night in Ottawa, departing from Ottawa early the next morning. The trip to Edmonton can be made in one day with good weather and an early start. It is assumed that adequate facilities for an overnight stop in Edmonton are available. Departing the following day, it is an easy journey to Fort Nelson with the Alcan Highway in sight practically the entire distance from Dawson Creek to Fort Nelson. Army facilities at Fort Nelson can be made available for an overnight's stop at that place. Departing for Fairbanks the following day, there is again ample opportunity to view the northern end of the Alcan Highway.

If it is decided to go by rail to Great Falls, Montana, the flight from Great Falls to Fort St. John can be made in about four hours and from there on to Fairbanks, the trip can be varied so as to permit an inspection of the Alcan Highway.

ITINERARY.

Rail.

Depart: Washington evening of D day.

Arrive: Ottawa noon of D+1 day.
Spend night in Ottawa.

Air.

Depart: Ottawa morning of D+2 day.

Arrive: Edmonton evening of D+2 day.

Distance: 1775 miles. Flying time: 12 to 14 hours.
Spend night in Edmonton.

Depart: Edmonton morning of D+3 day.

Arrive: Fort Nelson noon of D+3 day.

Distance: 535 miles. Flying time: 4 hours 15 minutes.
Spend night in Fort Nelson.

Depart: Fort Nelson morning of D-4 day.

Arrive: Fairbanks afternoon of D-4 day.

Distance: 939 miles. Flying time: 8 hours 50 minutes.

(Alternate)

Rail.

Depart: Washington evening of D day.

Arrive: Great Falls, Montana, morning of D-3 day.

Air.

Depart: Great Falls, Montana, morning of D-3 day.

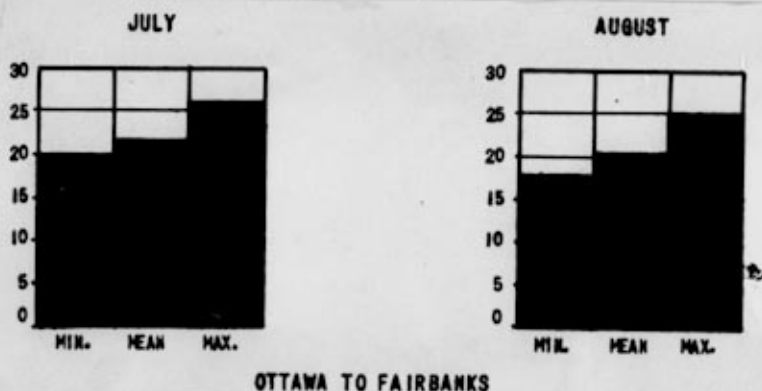
Arrive: Fort St. John afternoon of D-3 day.

Distance: 774 miles. Flying time: 4 hours 20 minutes.

From Fort St. John to Fairbanks the trip may be varied as desired.

WEATHER.

TOTAL NUMBER OF FLYABLE DAYS



Graphs indicate the number of days per month that an airplane flight would normally be expected possible between the terminals indicated. All factors - fog, rain, icing - have been considered.

The graphs are broken down into the mean number of days per month, the minimum number of days per month and the maximum number of days per month that this trip could have been made during the past several years.

DISCUSSION.

I. Facilities.

Accommodations exist in the permanent construction at Ladd Field, situated 4 miles east of Fairbanks. The only single unit is the Commanding Officer's house. This is a modern building with bedroom and bath accommodations on the first floor and several bedrooms and baths on the second floor. Nearby are officers' and non-commissioned officers' apartments and a barracks building, all with a combined capacity of over 300 without crowding. The personnel now occupying these buildings could be moved under canvas for the period of the visit. Officers' and non-commissioned officers' families have been removed from Alaska. Hospital facilities adjoin and the airfield is only 1500 yards from the proposed area.

II. Security.

Security in this case offers no problem. The installation is on United States Territory included within an Army Post. Obstacles can be erected to separate the area from other Post activities. Troops for guard purposes are available at the Post or can be moved in from other Alaskan Posts. (Present strength - 2,000). The distance from the nearest enemy air base (2,000 miles) practically eliminates the possibility of air attack. If deemed advisable, anti-aircraft can be moved in from Anchorage.

(Alternate)

If the accommodations at Ladd Field are not considered adequate, Fort Richardson, 2 miles east of Anchorage, is suggested as an alternate location. Here, 12 sets of permanent officers' quarters can be used to provide accommodations for any distinguished guests without intrusion of privacy. Sufficient additional housing is available for administrative and clerical personnel. As in the case of Ladd Field, the Post is built adjoining the airfield. Troops are available for all security purposes.

(Present strength - 12,000). An antiaircraft unit is available.

The use of Fort Richardson would eliminate the rail trip from Fairbanks to Anchorage, however a recent survey of the railroad indicates that it is in such poor condition that the trip might be considered a hazardous one. Furthermore, lack of signal equipment prohibits night travel which will necessitate two days with an overnight stop for the trip.

III. Summary.

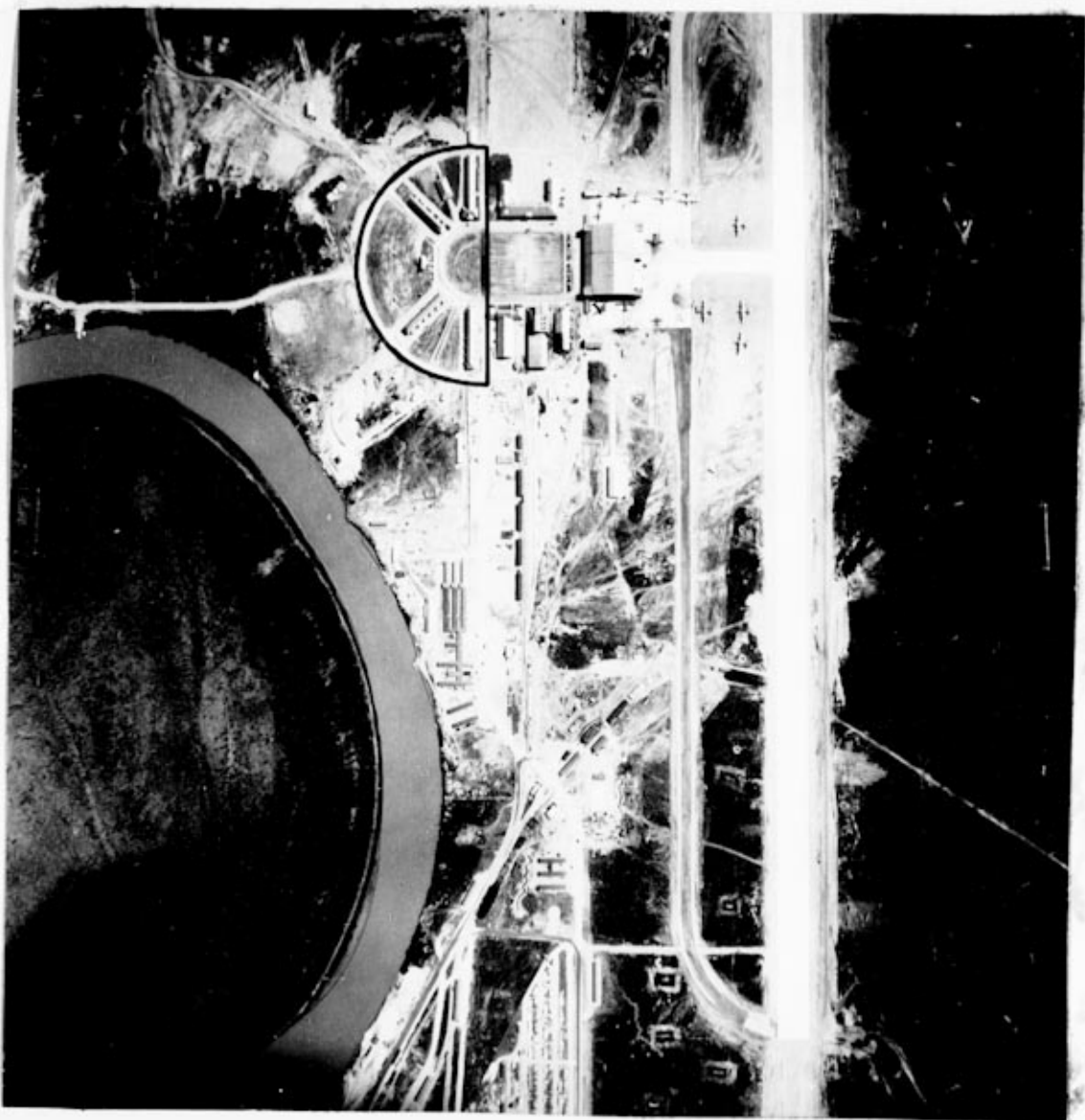
Adequate accommodations are available at two Army Posts.

No political problem is presented in a trip to Alaska, except the visit to Ottawa. Remoteness from possible enemy attack and the presence of American troops assures adequate security. The weather during the time of year selected for the trip permits practically daily flights.



LADD FIELD, ALASKA, Fairbanks in the distance.

Area proposed is shown encircled in red.



LADD FIELD, ALASKA.

Area proposed is shown encircled in red.



LADD FIELD, ALASKA.

- (1) Commanding Officer's quarters.
- (2) Bachelor Officers' quarters.
- (3) Officers' quarters.
- (4) Non-commissioned officers' quarters.
- (5) Barracks.
- (6) Hospital.

Construction has been completed since picture was taken.

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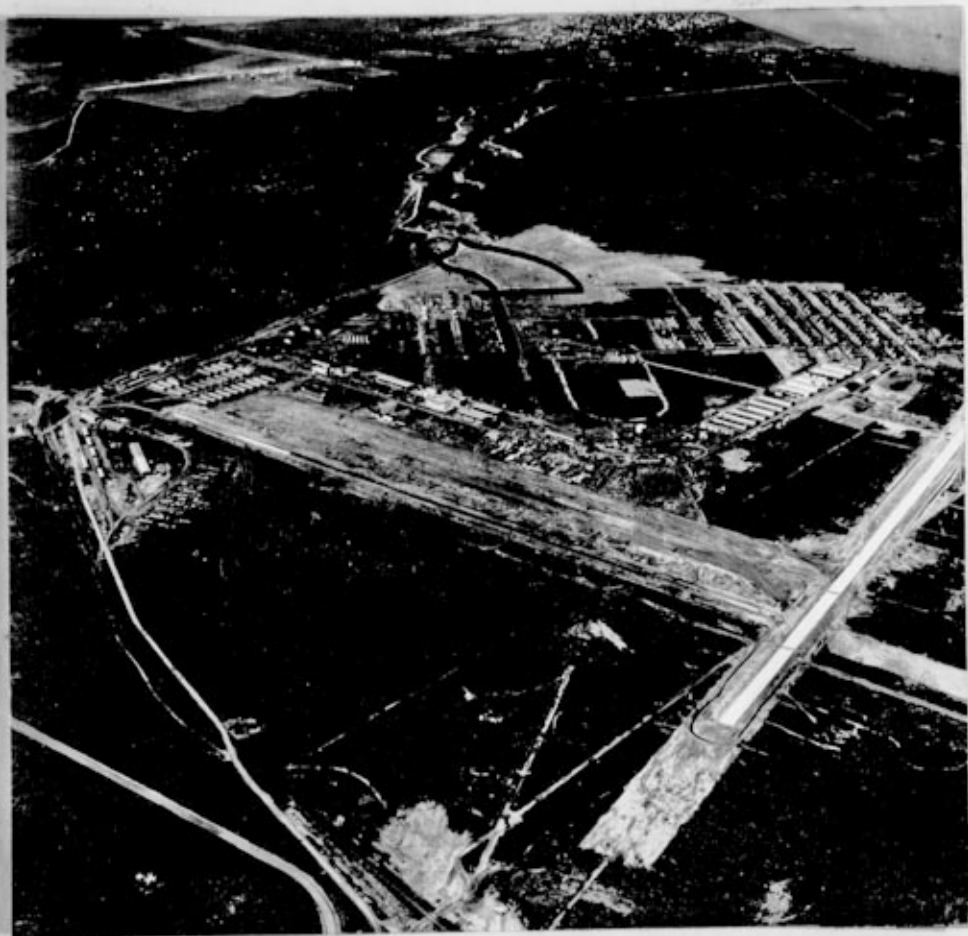


FORT RICHARDSON (Elmendorf Field), ALASKA. Anchorage in the distance.
12 sets of officers' quarters have been constructed in the area shown
encircled in red.

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Date- 10-21-66

Signature- Carl J. Spicer



Another view of FORT RICHARDSON (Elmendorf Field), ALASKA.

