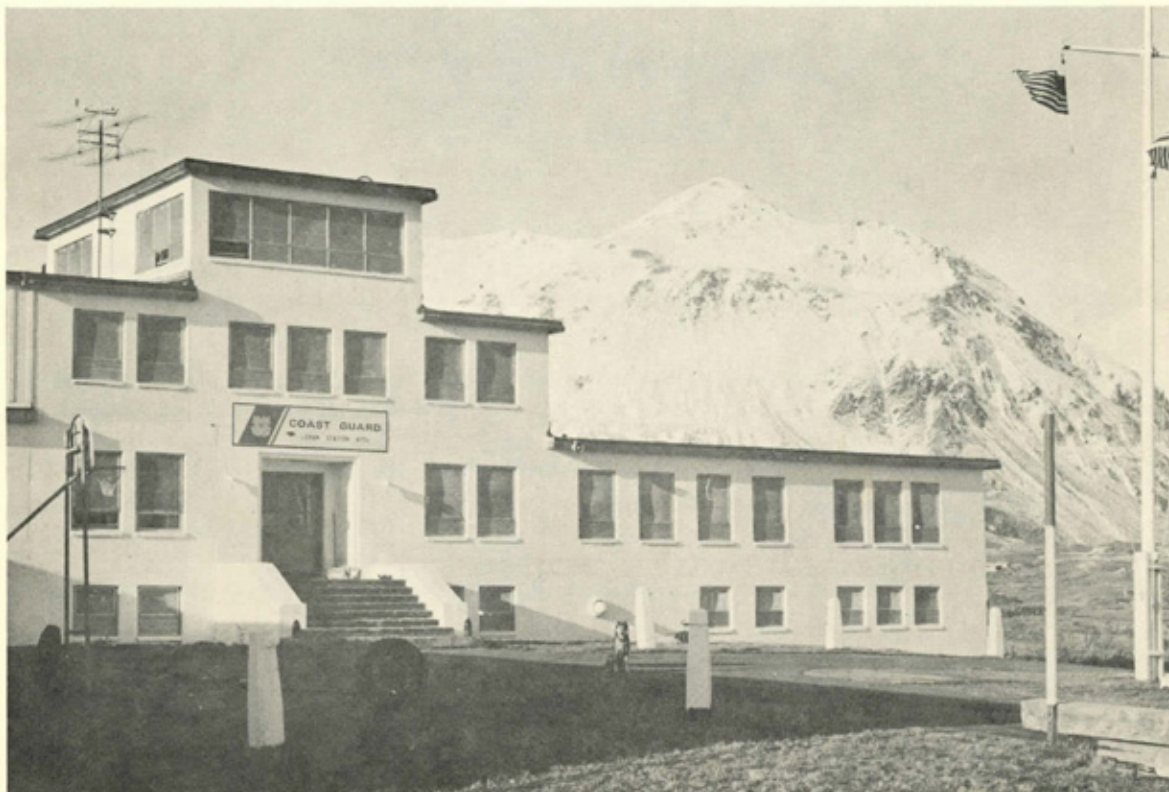


U.S. Department
of Transportation

**United States
Coast Guard**



Welcome Aboard Loran Station Attu



**Seventeenth
District**

Attu, Alaska



U.S.C.G. Loran Station Attu

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Attu's guard dogs on watch

Photos by CWO2 Randy Blunck

CHAPTER I

GENERAL INFORMATION

Geography and Topography

Attu is the last island in the Aleutian chain and the largest of the Near Island group. It is comprised of rugged mountains and hills, narrow valleys, and a rocky coastline. The island is tundra-covered and naturally treeless. During the summer months, Attu displays a beautiful variety of wildflowers.

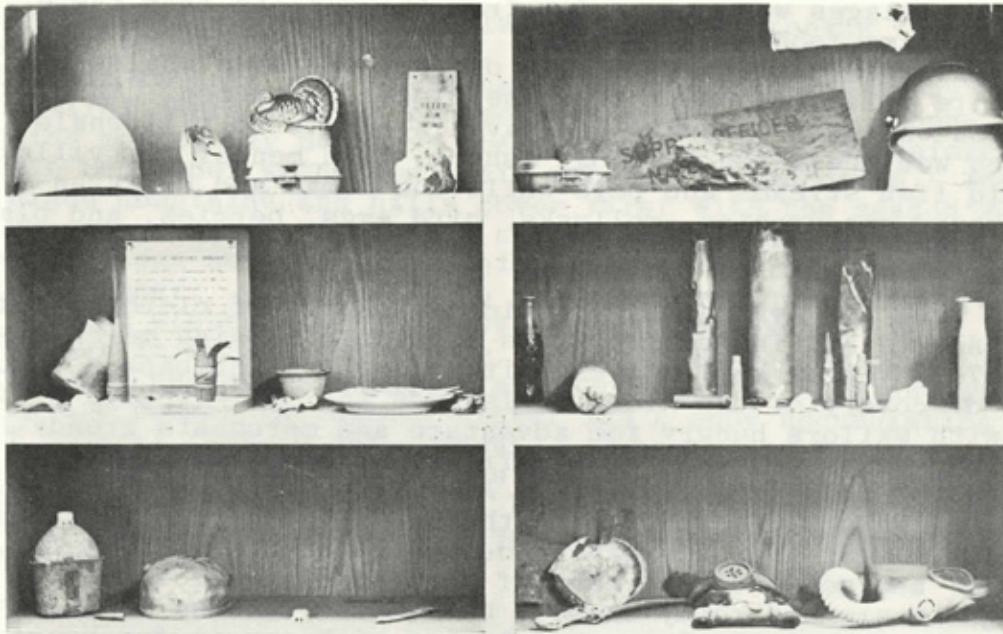
On the southeast side of the island, overlooking Massacre Bay, is the USCG Loran Station Attu. The station is situated between two mountain ranges and has Mt. Terrible as a backdrop.



Weather

It would be difficult to describe Attu's weather in terms of "typical days" or "average temperatures" as the weather is not only unpredictable but often quite localized. While one valley may be enjoying a warming sun, an adjacent valley may be shrouded in fog.

In recent years, spring has brought clear, sunny weather with occasional snow flurries occurring until late May. Snow disappears rapidly from the lowlands in May and June until by July only scattered remnants of winter past are visible. Temperatures are mild with outside activity requiring a light jacket. Melting snow from the hills, midsummer rain and fog provide ample moisture to transform the tundra into a rich green carpet.



Artifacts from the second world war

D-Day had to be postponed four days because of thick fog. At 0300 on 11 May 1943, 100 scouts were landed at beach Scarlet and were later reinforced by an additional 300 men. By mid evening, 2,000 troops had landed in the Massacre Bay area and 1,100 at Red Beach in the Holtz Bay area. It was fortunate that these American landings encountered no opposition as poor beach discipline and much confusion existed upon reaching shore. Howitzers towed by tracked vehicles soon bogged down in the trundra, becoming useless. Brute strength and incredible human effort was necessary to point these guns toward enemy positions but their effectiveness was severely limited by their location and lack of mobility.

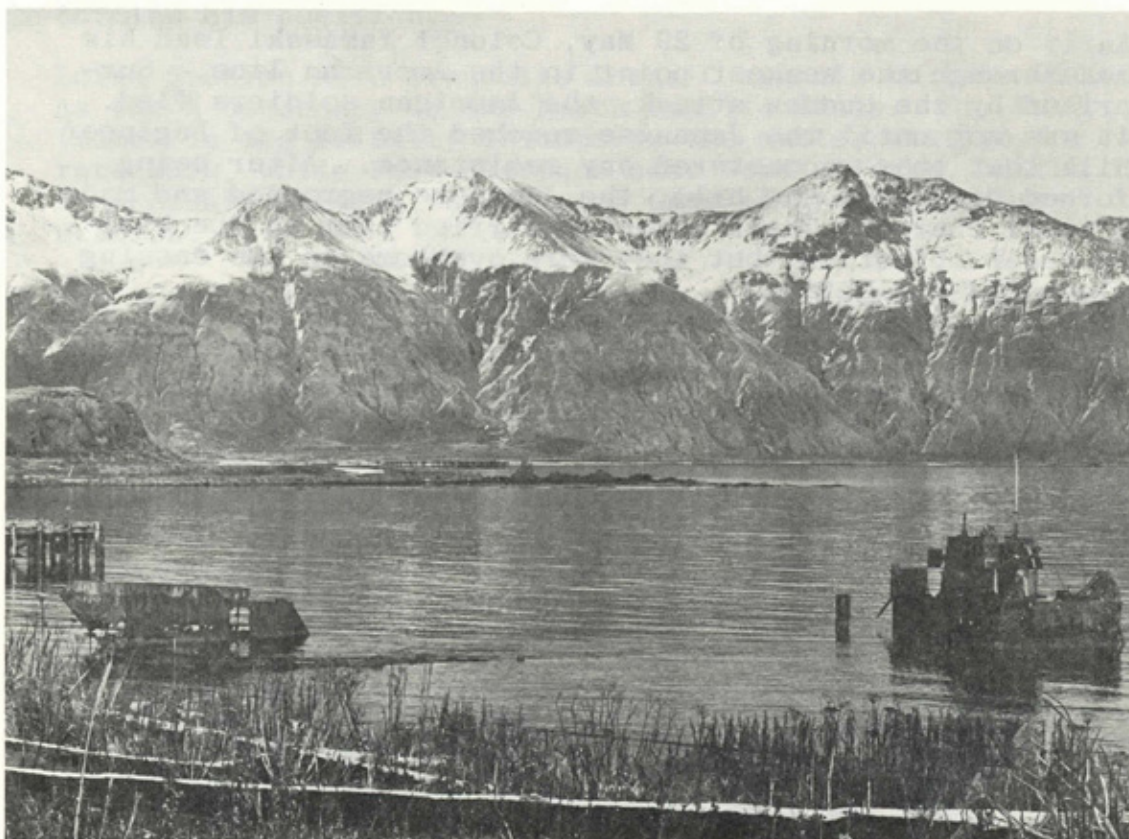
The main force of American troops moved up the first several hundred yards of Massacre Valley unopposed. But soon accurate Japanese machine gun and mortar fire rained down from the hills halting the advance. Enemy snipers, hidden in the ridges by fog, inflicted casualties and pinned down the troops in the valley.

The troops in the Holtz Bay and Scarlet Beach areas also landed without resistance, but soon they too were under fire from enemy in hilltop positions.

The Japanese had well estimated the American attack and had planned their strategy accordingly. From the ridges their 2,600 men were prepared to defend against almost any assault. Their positions were often hidden by fog, and while they could see down to fire at the American soldiers below, the Americans could not see to locate the enemy positions above.

Days of bitter hard fighting raged between the forces. American advances in the Massacre Bay area could be marked in yards and feet. The U.S. troops in the Holtz Bay area were making little better progress. Rifle and machine gun fire was continuously exchanged inflicting casualties on both sides. Machine gun and mortar nests were charged by the U.S. troops, bringing death and despair to Americans and Japanese alike.

As the battle continued, a common enemy emerged -- Attu's unrelenting weather. Inadequate clothing made the subfreezing temperatures and high winds unbearable. When pinned down in fox holes, unable to advance, men spent hours and even days knee deep in stinging cold water. Men became unable to walk, and knees became raw and bleeding from crawling across ice and crusted snow.



Sunk landing craft in Massacre Bay

Air support heavily favored the American forces but was limited much of the time due to the ever-present fog. Planes strafed enemy positions and knocked out some hill-top positions. Naval gunfire support further reduced the number of enemy.

With dogged determination, U.S. troops pressed up slopes facing the machine gun and mortar fire. Close range fighting and hand-to-hand combat were necessary to remove the Japanese from the ridge positions. On 26 May the weather cleared allowing U.S. planes to inflict heavy damage on the enemy. Badly needed supplies and reinforcements never reached the Japanese. Finally, they were removed from their advantageous positions and were forced into the Chichagof Valley area while the Americans now occupied the ridges.

On 28 May, the Japanese Colonel, Yamasaki, faced almost certain defeat. He had only 800 able-bodied men and 600 wounded remaining. With his remaining men, Yamasaki planned a daring attack hoping to capture Engineer Hill where he could turn the American guns back onto his enemies. From here it would be relatively easy to reach the poorly guarded and much needed supplies in Massacre Valley.

Early on the morning of 29 May, Colonel Yamasaki lead his men through the weakest point in the American line. Surprised by the sudden attack, the American soldiers fled. It was not until the Japanese reached the foot of Engineer Hill that they encountered any resistance. After being forced back from the hill, the Japanese regrouped and made a final charge. Their momentum carried them up the hill to their objective, but they were overcome in the ensuing close-order fighting.

At the end of the battle, there were about 16,000 American fighting men on Attu. Most of these left Attu at the end of the war, leaving only a small number of U.S. Navy personnel to maintain a communication station until the late 1950s.

Upon the departure of the Navy, the U.S. Coast Guard renovated the present station building to house the Loran A and Loran C stations. This building was commissioned at 1150 on 15 November 1960. By December 1980, Loran A was discontinued.



CHAPTER II

OPERATIONS

Loran A and Loran C

The word LORAN is an acronym for "LONG RANGE Navigation".

The basic Loran C element is a pair of transmitting stations synchronized to develop useful hyperbolic information. The difference in time of receipt of pulses from these stations can be measured by the user on a special receiver designed for this purpose. From the time difference, the user can plot a line of position, and by repeating the procedure the user can plot a line of position, and by repeating the procedure with other station pairs the user can accurately determine his position.

Loran Station Attu transmits Loran C signals on rate 9990 as the X secondary in the North Pacific Chain. St. Paul Island in the Pribilof Islands is the master station for rate 9990, while Port Clarence near Nome, Alaska, is the Y secondary station, and Narrow Cape is the Z secondary station.

The Loran C system offers a larger coverage area, greater accuracy, and lower power than the old Loran A system.

Attu is equipped with the AN/FPN-54, AN/FPN-60, associated recording and auxiliary equipment, AN/FPN-42 transmitters and a 625-foot guyed tower.

Communications

The teletype communications net includes the Seventeenth District Communications Center and the north Pacific Loran Chain.

SSB (Single Side Band) communications are also used between the Loran C stations in the North Pacific Chain.

A continuous guard is maintained on 2182 KHZ, the International Distress Frequency.

In addition to the teletype and SSB, Attu has a VHF telephone link with Shemya Air Force Base providing access to the Auto-von system, through which morale calls are made.

CHAPTER III

STATION ORGANIZATION

Personnel

The following is the Authorized Personnel Allowance for Attu:

Commanding Officer: LTJG		EMO: ELC4			
DECK:	ENGINEERING:	ELECTRONICS:			
BM2	1	MKC	1	ETC	1
HM1	1	EM1	1	ET1	1
SS1	1	MK2	1	ET2	2
SS3	1	DC1	1	ET3	2
SK3	1	MK3	2		
SN/SA	4	FN/FA	1		

Departmental Organization

Deck/Admin Department:

A BM2 is assigned as the head of the deck department and serves as the Administrative Assistant to the Commanding Officer, performing that work concerning administration normally delegated to an Executive Officer.

The Corpsman performs yeoman duties in addition to his medical responsibilities for the health, sanitation, and hygiene of station personnel.

The Seamen and Seaman Apprentices assigned serve as Loran Watchstanders, Radio Watchstanders, Mess Cooks, and as part of the Deck Department responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the station.

Engineering Department:

The Engineering Department's most important duty is the operation and maintenance of the station's power plant. The primary station electrical power is supplied by Caterpillar D-397 Series B Electric Sets. Three of these sets are installed in the generator room with a rated output of 300 KW each. Since the normal station load ranges between 140 KW and 190 KW, any one set is capable of carrying the station's load. With three generators one is on-line, one is stand-by, and the other is free for preventive maintenance, corrective maintenance or overhaul.

Additional responsibilities of the Engineering Department include maintenance of the station's heating and fresh water system, care and maintenance of the fire fighting equipment, operation of the sewage plant, and vehicle maintenance for the station's pickup trucks, tracked vehicles, snow plow, and snow blowers.

Electronics Department:

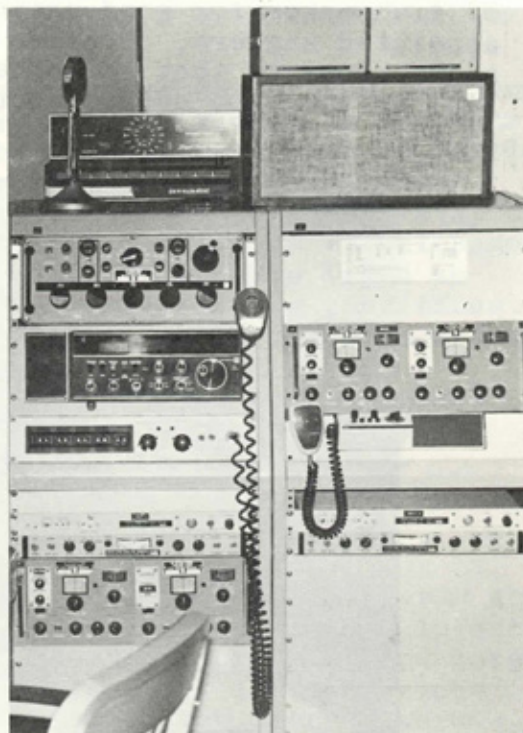
The Electronics Department, under the direct supervision of the EMO (Electronics Material Officer), is responsible for the operation and maintenance of the Loran and communications equipment.

The Electronics Plant consists of an AN/FPN-54, AN/FPN-60, associated recording and auxillary equipment, two AN/FPN-42 transmitters, and a 625-foot tower for Loran C.

The communications equipment consists of two AN/VRT-23 HF transmitters, one Collins 651A HF receiver, one R1051 HF receiver and two R-1735/VRR receivers. A VHF FM communications system provides a four-channel link with Shemya Air Force Base for reception and transmission of teletype, AFRN news and music programs, and access to the Autovon telephone system.



Transmitter building and
625-foot antenna



Timer room communications
equipment

CHAPTER IV

RECREATION AND MORALE

Hiking

Several gravel roads lead from the station area to Holtz Bay, Chichagof Harbor, Alexai Point, Murder Point, and part way up the Peaceful River Valley, making nearly one-fourth of the eastern end of the island readily accessible.

For those seeking a more challenging trek, Attu's hills and mountains offer such an opportunity. Mt. Terrible rises 2,200 feet and is less than a mile from the station.

With the exception that parts of the island are off limits due to unexploded ordinance, the extent of one's journey is limited only by time and ambition of the hiker. The station has backpacks for overnight hikes, which require at least one companion for safety.

Fishing

Dolly Varden and salmon return to Attu's streams about mid-July. Their delicate light meat is enough to bring even the most frustrated fisherman out of retirement. The abundance of fish makes for good eating and only a small number of disappointed anglers. Station personnel usually construct a smoke house so that smoked salmon may be enjoyed after the last of the fish depart about mid-September.



Attu's 'Peaceful River'

Photography

The island's snow-capped peaks and summer array of wildflowers are enough to satisfy the most ardent shutterbug. But Attu has much more to offer the photographer, be he amateur or professional. North American and Asiatic birds, a landing craft and Quonset hut rusting into oblivion, rolling and breaking seas, and assorted remnants of the second world war may all be captured with the camera lens.

The station has a modest darkroom for developing and printing black and white pictures.

Beachcombing and Souvenir Hunting

Beachcombing sometimes turns up glass float balls used by Japanese fishermen for their nets. These may range in size from four to 16 inches in diameter with the smaller ones more commonly found on Attu. Storms may uncover "treasures" and WWII articles previously hidden in the sand.



Quonset huts

Souvenirs may also be found in Quonset huts and fallen hangar buildings. The most popularly collected items include old coffee mugs, brass fire nozzles, and telephone pole insulators.

Sports

Sports with equipment available at the stations include basketball, volleyball, trap shooting, snowshoeing, and skiing. The station has 12-gauge shotguns which may be checked out for shooting. Personnel reporting to Attu may also bring their privately owned firearms but must check them in with the BM2 immediately upon arrival.

Indoor Recreation

For indoor recreation there are several options. Movies are shown nightly on the recreation deck. The "Rec Deck" also has a pool and ping-pong tables, a foosball game, a stereo system, and a bar that is open evenings serving beer and soft drinks. A sauna and weight room are also available.

For those who enjoy reading, Attu has a library containing several hundred paperback books and novels. The Alaska State Library in Juneau sends books and records monthly on a loan basis to provide a wide variety of reading and listening material.

There is one radio and television station which is received through Shemya Air Force Base.

The quiet hours offer an ideal opportunity to complete service courses, school correspondence courses, write letters, or just relax.

The station also operates an amateur ham radio station so that phone patches can be made to those back home. The radio station's call letters are KL7CGB. Morale calls are made twice a week through Autovon connections at the nearest military base to where you are calling.



Recreation deck area

CHAPTER V

MISCELLANEOUS

Personal Needs and Miscellaneous

Exchange: Attu's exchange is a satellite exchange of Kodiak. The store stocks about \$5,000 to \$7,000 worth of merchandise including toilet articles, tobacco products, records and tapes, candy, Alaskan souvenirs, and other sundries. Items not contained in the exchange, such as stereo equipment, may be special ordered through the parent exchange in Kodiak.

Mail: Reeves Aleutian Airways flies to Attu from Anchorage on Thursdays, stopping at Adak and Shemya along the way. Reeves brings the mail and other supplies. Because airline operations are so dependent upon weather, mail service is very irregular. Letters may take up to two weeks to reach their destination while packages may take two to eight weeks. Coast Guard C-130 logistic flights from Kodiak service Attu once every two or three weeks.

Laundry: The Station has three washing machines and four dryers to meet the needs of station personnel. Soap and bleach can be purchased from the station exchange.

Shemya Island: Thirty-nine miles from Attu is Shemya Island, home of about 1,400 Air Force personnel and civilian workers. During the summer months personnel from Shemya often venture to Attu to partake in its fishing and to do some hiking. Likewise, it is sometimes possible to allow Attu personnel to visit Shemya for a weekend. The Catholic and Protestant Chaplains at Shemya try to make regular visits to Attu.

Mid-Term Leave: For those who so desire, it is usually possible to take 21 days of mid-term leave between the fifth and eighth months of the tour of duty on Attu. Often a military flight to or from Elmendorf Air Force Base in Anchorage can be utilized to defray travel expenses.

Weekend Meals: Brunch and evening meals on the weekend are on a "fix your own" type basis. This provides the cooks with time off and allows the crew members to practice their culinary skills.

Visitors: Attu is often visited during the summer months by authors, members of the Fish and Wildlife Service, and Coast Guard vessels on patrol. This provides a pleasant diversion from the normal routine as well as offering an educational opportunity.

Attu Bound Helpful Hints

Before coming to Attu you should check to be sure that you have a complete seabag. Working uniforms should be in good condition and you will probably find it advantageous to bring along one or two extra sets of work uniforms. Only one dress uniform (new Coast Guard blue) is required.

Personal effects can be mailed ahead of time to your new address:

(Name)
USCG Loran C Station
Attu Island
Anchorage, AK. 99502

It is most important that your mail contain the correct zip code if it is to reach the correct destination.

Attu's telephone number is (907) 392-3333.

Civilian clothes may be worn after working hours and on weekends when not on duty. You will probably wish to bring a good pair of hiking boots, a parka, and good outdoor-type clothing. The station provides foul weather clothing for the winter months, but thermal underwear and waterproof hiking boots are a good idea to include in your seabag.

Although there is a stereo system for music on the recreation deck, most personnel also wish to have their own record player or tape deck in their rooms. Tapes, cassettes, and records may be purchased from the station exchange.

As previously mentioned, firearms may be brought to Attu although there are no animals to hunt. The station has shotguns which may be checked out by station personnel.

If you have any inclination toward fishing, you will wish to bring your own fishing gear. A light rod and reel with ten or fifteen pound test line will be sufficient for your needs. Fishing tackle can be purchased from the exchange, and the morale locker does have a few fishing rods.

Cameras are a must.

Plenty of hobby material should be brought along to see you through the foggy or snowy days.

Business is most efficiently conducted by checking account in Alaska. You may wish to open an account prior to arriving on Attu or you can obtain a checking account with the First National Bank of Anchorage after arriving at the station.

Before departing your old unit, you should insure that your overseas physical and all dental work is taken care of.

Necessary allotments should be made out prior to leaving your old unit.

