

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

ADDRESS REPLY TO

Commanding Officer  
U.S. Coast Guard Loran Station  
A.P.O. 23  
New York, New York



RECEIVED  
SONNET DIVISION

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6 June 1956  
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CGCGD  
BOSTON 9, MASS.

From: Commanding Officer USCG Loran Station, Cape Atholl, Greenland  
To: Commandant (PO-2)  
Via: Commander, First Coast Guard District (p)

Subj: General station information; forwarding of

Ref: (a) Commandant (PO-2) letter dated 22 May 1956, file A-7

1. The information contained in the following paragraphs is furnished in compliance with the instructions contained in reference (a).
2. The Cape Atholl Loran Station is located on a small bay known as Quaratit, about 4 miles south of Cape Atholl. The station lies between two hills, 600 feet in elevation to the northwest, and 800 feet in elevation to the southeast. During the summer season a stream runs down the valley between the hills and discharges into the sea near the station. The stream is utilized for a fresh water source on a very limited basis. The entire country side is rocky and barren.
3. The nearest semblance of civilization is the Thule Air Force Base which is located approximately 18 miles north of the station. The road to Thule is passable only for a short time during the summer months and takes advantage of such level areas as are available between here and Thule. The road is not particularly dangerous but passage over it is very slow. The road connects with a main road which links Thule with one of the Air Force outlying sites. Distance from this station to Thule via road is approximately 30 miles and average transit time is two and one half hours.
4. Unfortunately the road winds inland most of the way and any winds off the ice cap immediately make visibility very poor and cover the road with snow. This is especially true in September when "Thule phase" conditions set in. The present commanding officer, shortly after taking command of the station, attempted twice to call on various departments at the Thule Air Base, but was turned back both times by heavy driving snow being blown off the ice cap. It is expected that the road can be held open from 15 June to 31 August, and any travel outside of these dates is subject to the "whims of the weather".

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5. The climate of the area is best described by one word - arctic. However, this is not as extremely cold as the word may at first indicate. All operations of the station have been carried out on a regular schedule with very little interference from the weather. Fortunately the station is sheltered by the hills and the high winds for which Thule is famous rarely exist at this station. Several gusty days have been experienced during the past season, one of which resulted in the amateur radio antenna being carried away. No other damage was experienced.
6. Temperatures at the station vary from the 50's (and sometimes higher) in the summer to well below zero in the winter. The coldest day experienced during the past winter was 38 degrees below zero on 19 March 1956. However, only mercurial thermometers have been supplied to the station, and Thule reported temperatures in the forties below on the same date. Readings from 30 below zero down must be regarded with caution as mercury thermometers are not accurate at these temperatures. This is not entirely disadvantageous as any arctic stories that crew members may desire to relate at their next duty stations can always be qualified by a statement that the mercurial thermometers were inadequate to measure the cold temperatures that did exist.
7. Snow fall is medium and constant shifting of the drifts makes it impossible to give an accurate estimate. Within the station vicinity bare spots have existed throughout the winter and at other places the snow has accumulated to a depth of eight to ten feet. Based on having been raised in snow country (Lake Superior area) the present commanding officer estimates the winter's snow fall at about 60 inches. There is much less snow fall at this location than on such Coast Guard units as the Portage Lake Lifeboat Station in the Ninth Coast Guard District.
8. No dependents, private automobiles, and related appendages are authorized at this unit. The only cost of living item which is of interest to commissioned officers is the cost of the mess bill. In accordance with current instructions, the commanding officer's mess bill is equal to the cost of the general mess ration for the unit. With the additional 50% allowance, the mess bill runs between 50 and 55 dollars per month. The food is excellent.
9. The other cost of living item (for both commissioned officers and enlisted men) is the exchange bill for necessary toilet articles, cigarettes, and similar items. Depending upon the crew member being a smoker or non-smoker the bill varies from one dollar to seven dollars per month. The cost is entirely dependent upon the individual. All purchases at the exchange are made on a credit basis with settlement of all accounts made upon return to Boston. The exchange does not stock any luxury items except beer which is rationed to one can per man per day. This ration is more than adequate and none of the crew members take full advantage of his beer allowance.



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10. Medical facilities are available at Thule Air Base Hospital. The station's sick bay is well stocked and capable of handling routine medical problems. If a situation develops requiring medical officer assistance, a message is sent to Thule, and the 55th Air Rescue Squadron sends a helicopter to pick up the patient. During the past year one crew member suffered sun burn of the face (caused by excessive use of a sun lamp) and it was decided that a medical officer should see the patient. Aid was requested and the helicopter arrived, thus demonstrating that medical aid is available when required.

11. In regard to other logistic support from Thule, the best description probably is as follows - "depends upon the policies of the present commands of the various units within the air base wing". Support has been erratic during the past year, and it is discussed in the following paragraphs.

12. In the fall of 1955 helicopter service was frequent and supplied by the 55th Air Rescue Squadron. However, on 7 November 1955, the helicopter enroute to Thule crashed killing one Air Force crew member. The aircraft burned and was destroyed. Helicopter support was eliminated (except for emergent cases) and the Thule Motor Vehicle Squadron was ordered to provide one logistic trip per month by weasel.

13. During November of 1955 two air drops of mail and fresh vegetables were made by the 55th Air Rescue Squadron using an SA-16 aircraft. No problems in retrieving parachutes were encountered and no discomfort from the weather - temperature about 7 below zero - was noticed. However, at the end of November the 55th Air Rescue Squadron received instructions not to furnish any support to this unit except actual rescue operations.

14. On Thanksgiving Day, two Air Force weasels arrived delivering U.S. mail and evacuating five Air Force people who had installed a radio beacon tower at this unit. On 10 December 1955, two officers and one enlisted man arrived by weasel delivering U.S. mail and fresh vegetables. On 24 December 1955, the same two officers and one enlisted man arrived bringing U.S. mail and fresh vegetables. The crews reported no difficulty in their trips from Thule, but the senior officer stated that henceforth only one weasel trip per month was authorized. This trip was scheduled between the 10th and 15th day of each month. Since that time no weasels have arrived at this unit. When no trips materialized for January, several messages requesting mail were sent. However the Thule Motor Vehicle Squadron had considerable difficulty in vehicle maintenance and other units in the general Thule area also required support. As a result the workload assumed proportions which were beyond the capabilities of the squadron.

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15. On 2 February 1956, a 40 day mail famine was ended by the arrival of a U.S. Army helicopter. The station received approximately one hour's advance notice of the proposed trips. This notice was adequate and all preparations to receive the helicopter were completed. Lights to outline the landing area were rigged. The temperature was 24 degrees below zero. The helicopter carried mail and vegetables on its first trip. A second trip was made carrying personnel including two Massachusetts Institute of Technology engineers who conducted tests at this unit. On 13 February 1956 the U.S. Army (Arctic Transport Group) again provided support and hauled out the engineers.
16. Another mail famine was well underway when the Danish Northern Greenland inspector (traveling by dog sled) visited the station on 11 March 1956. In the course of conversation, he learned that this unit was approaching its 30th day without mail. When he returned to Thule, he designated an Eskimo (named MASANGUAPALUK) to load mail and proceed to this unit. On 13 March 1956, at 1700 the Eskimo arrived with 210 pounds of mail aboard his dog sled. Failure of the Eskimo to be conversant in English did not hamper his enjoyment of a full meal and a movie. The Eskimo returned to Thule on 14 March carrying this unit's outgoing mail.
17. Since 1 January 1956 all support has been furnished by the U.S. Army Arctic Transport Group and support trips have averaged approximately twice per month since April 1. It was not the intention at first to write such details concerning winter logistics, however it is felt that the details are necessary to support the contention that logistic operations have been erratic. It will be suggested to the new commanding officer that he visit all support units in the Thule command area prior to his relieving the station. Such a procedure should improve the logistic situation for next winter.
18. It is planned (and correspondence has already been initiated) that during the summer months Thule Air Force Base provide vehicular support with this unit's personnel sharing the driving duties. Considerable support is required during the summer (including turnover of the entire crew), and although the Army handles all bulk annual resupply operations, numerous minor errands can be quickly completed by the constant availability of a vehicle.
19. No morale problems were encountered during the mail famines, and the crew came through the winter excellently.



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20. The main station building consists of six wings with functions as follows: one loran wing, one galley and mess deck wing, two engineering wings, one barracks wing, and a wing which houses the commanding officer, the chief petty officers, the crew's head, the sewage disposal compartment, and a large storeroom. Two other buildings are located on the station - a storeroom and a disaster hut. The disaster hut has emergency rations, bedding, and equipment for survival in the event that the station is lost or otherwise becomes uninhabitable.

21. The main problem of the station is the fresh water supply. A dam to hold the water of the stream is located about a third of a mile up the valley from the station. However, the dam leaks badly, and the water was below usable level in early September. The station at that time went to evaporator source and hauled sea water for evaporator feed water. At the present time, the snow has not melted sufficiently and no water is in the dam. However, it is expected to fill rapidly within the next ten days at which time the station will shift to dam supply and overhaul all evaporating and water hauling equipment. The problem is under discussion between Commandant (ECV) and CCGD1(e). By separate correspondence the present commanding officer has suggested that evaporators comprise the primary source of water and dam supply be the secondary supply. The ice melting equipment which also is available would then be relegated to emergency supply. The water hauling operations were carried out weekly with no major difficulties. Water has been hauled at 20 degrees below zero and at the end of the cold season the water crews were very adept in their duties. Complete "technical manuals" of the operations have been written up and are available for the relief commanding officer and crew.

22. Recreational facilities consist of a pool table, table tennis, shuffle board, movies, and an excellent darkroom. In addition a three speed record player and a good library (mainly fiction) are available. The commanding officer and the chief petty officers each have a record player in their respective quarters. Model kits, do-it-yourself kits, and various games supplement the major recreational items. The project which aroused the most interest in the present crew was the Heathkit program - a combination training and recreation project in which all hands participated.

23. The station has excellent amateur radio equipment. Two transmitters are available - a B&W 5100 capable of delivering 120 watts and a BC610 capable of delivering 400 watts. The operations have been limited to the 20 meter band as indications are that this band is most reliable for stateside communications. Radio amateurs in the United States have been most cooperative handling short letters, supplying phone connections for talks with families, and furnishing up to date sports results. The amateur equipment kept short letters flowing to the families in the U.S. during the mail famines.

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24. Another benefit of the amateur radio equipment became evident very recently when daily schedules were established with the Coast Guard Training Station, Groton, Connecticut. The present commanding officer has had several good voice contacts with his prospective relief and has passed such information as the relief has requested. Several radio amateurs in the United States have rendered outstanding service to this unit during the past year and a report will be made to the Commander, First Coast Guard District, about 1 August 1956.

25. In order to operate amateur radio equipment in Greenland personnel must hold a general class radio amateur license prior to their departure from the United States. The Greenland certificate of authorization is issued by the Northeast Air Command and application for it can only be made after arrival at the duty station in Greenland.

26. Outdoor recreational facilities consist of snowshoeing, skiing, and hiking. No hunting is allowed although arctic fox and hare are found in the area. No other wildlife has been observed although polar bear have been killed by the Eskimos at Petowik glacier which is nine miles south of the station. During the late winter (March and April) the ice is excellent for hiking. It is very safe and level. Several hiking excursions were made - one to Cape Atholl and two to Petowik glacier. The hike to the glacier involves an 18 mile round trip and is strenuous. Two parties made the trip, one party led by the commanding officer, and the second party by the ETC. All personnel who made the hike have stated that the physical effort is well worth the sight of the glacier from "iceward". The hike to Cape Atholl was made in 20 degree below zero weather and none of the recreation party suffered any discomfort except tiredness at the end of the journey.

27. In general the cold caused no major discomforts during the entire winter and no problems beyond the capabilities of the crew were encountered.

28. The duty can be summed up in a statement which has been made by personnel of other armed forces who have visited the station. This statement is "if you have to come to Greenland, this is the place to come to". One of the distinctive features of this unit in relation to other U.S. installations in Greenland is the presence of flush type toilets. All other units utilize hand-pumps and extremely bad waste water is used the year round. Although the flush toilets at this unit utilize the waste water from showers and wash basins during the short-water period, no offensive odors are present except in the sewage disposal compartment itself. During the summer, when visitors are more common to the station and water is plentiful, the station boasts fresh water in the sewage disposal system - a convenience which is the acme of luxury in this section of the world.



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29. Many interesting and new experiences confront the commanding officer and crew of this unit in their year's tour of duty. Some of it is challenging some of it is routine, but almost all of it is interesting. The present complement of the station performed their duties in a most cheerful and above average manner, and the tour has been enjoyable.

30. It is felt that the enclosed picture of the station taken on 27 January 1956 conveys the spirit of duty at this station - "it appears dark but the station is bright".

31. It is hoped that this letter did not deviate too far from the information requested by reference (a) and if any other information is desired, all efforts will be made to supply such information prior to this officer's return to the United States. Information received in an amateur radio conversation with the prospective commanding officer indicates that he desires to relieve the present commanding officer on 1 August 1956.

*W. K. Vogler*  
W. K. VOGLER

Encl: Photograph (8x10) 2 copies.

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19 June 1956  
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FIRST ENDORSEMENT on CO, Cape Atholl LTS Ltr F21 of 6 June 1956

From: Commander, First Coast Guard District  
To: Commandant (PO-2) ✓

Subj: General station information; forwarding of

1. Forwarded. The Commanding Officer is to be complimented on the amount of information contained herein.

*p r mavor*  
F. B. MAVOR  
By direction

*We must  
commend this  
lad for a  
good report.  
jms*

*Lt. Miller*