

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

15/

ADDRESS REPLY TO:  
Commanding Officer  
USCG LORSTA, Cape Christian  
APO 677 New York, N. Y.



22 June 1956  
F16

From: Commanding Officer, USCG LORSTA, Cape Christian  
To: Commandant (PO-2)


Subj: Overseas Loran Station Survey, submission of narrative report

Ref: (a) Commandant ltr dtd 22 May 1956 File A-7  
(b) Cape Christian msg dtg 201300Z June 56

1. In accordance with paragraph three of reference (a) the requested Narrative Report on this station is being air-mailed directly to Commandant (PO-2). There is no scheduled pick-up of mail from this unit (reference (b)), however this letter will be sent by the next available means.

2. Photographs and negatives of station buildings and surroundings are enclosed as per request.

3. It will be noticed that the phrase ". . .to Arctic Zone. . ." has been appropriated from the Coast Guard Song "Semper Paratus" as a title for this report.

  
C. J. AESCHLIMANN

Copy to:  
C1CGD(p) *LESS ENCL*

Encl: (1) Narrative Report  
(2) Photographs and negatives

". . .to Arctic Zone, . . ."

U. S. Coast Guard Loran Transmitting Station Cape Christian is located on the east coast of Baffin Island in the Canadian Arctic: coordinates 70°31'N 68°19'W. With its two sister stations, Cape Atholl--near Thule AFB--Greenland, and Nipisat--Disko Island--Greenland, this double slave station provides an essential Aid-to-Navigation covering a service area of approximately one million square miles of trackless waste, much of which has not yet been accurately charted. As air travel is the only possible means of transportation during the greater part of the year in the Arctic, Loran is utilized primarily by aircraft flying from Frobisher Bay, Sondrestrom Fjord, and Thule Air Force Bases, as well as northern RCAF air fields. During the short summer shipping season Loran Rates 1L1 and 1L7 can be utilized in Davis Strait, Hudson Bay, Foxe Basin, and Baffin Bay.

Cape Christian, on the tip of which the station is located, is essentially a sand-bar which juts north-eastward into Baffin Bay. The station buildings themselves are located on a small knoll at the head of the cape, but the surrounding area for about ten miles to the south, west, and north-west consists of low, sandy, flat-lands, with numerous small lakes and streams. The ground is covered by muskeg, or Caribou moss. Some arctic birch grows here, however, this is not a "tree" in the usual sense of the word, as it never grows more than six inches tall: no plants grow taller than that in this climate. In summer the colorful arctic poppy abound.

Even during the short summer, when there is twenty-four hours of sunlight, the ground does not melt more than about two feet down; this is the "active layer" over the continuously frozen permafrost which extends nearly 400 feet down. Because of this permafrost, drainage is poor during the wet summer months, and mosquitoes breed in the swamplands in summer.

The station Engineering plant is extensive and presently consists of four 75 KW generators powered by Caterpillar D 1300 diesels. In 1957 these will be replaced with 150 KW threephase generators, and additional electronic equipment including TACAN will be installed. The station heavy equipment includes two TB-18 International Crawler - tractors, Athey-wagons, and road scrapers. Water for the station is pumped up a heated utiliduct from the reservoir. In past winters difficulties have been encountered with freezing in pipes and pumps when pumping water at below zero temperatures, however, during the summer of 1956 a newly improved pumping system is being installed which should eliminate this trouble.

Despite the excellent facilities provided, and the constant improvements which are being made and will no doubt continue to be made, the arctic climate and problems of isolation will continue to present succeeding Commanding Officers and crews with a unique and interesting challenge.

Cape Christian is virtually completely isolated for three quarters of each year. Resupply is on an annual basis by vessel: in addition items can be received in the monthly Air-Drop of mail. There is no scheduled pick-up of mail except during the shipping season, however in the past years there have been an average of two aircraft landings during the winter which will take out mail. The station has a very well equipped amateur radio "shack". "Ham" radio affords a means of year-round contact with the United States for message traffic and occasional phone patches with home.

There is a Royal Canadian Mounted Police post situated at Cape Christian. At Clyde River, about twelve miles south-west of the Loran Station is an Eskimo settlement varying in population from twenty to two hundred natives depending on the time of year. There is also a Canadian Weather Station situated there, as well as a Hudson Bay Trading Post. Occasionally crewmembers may visit Clyde River for recreation as well as to buy some skins or Eskimo craft from the H. B. P. Eskimo dog-sleds are used to travel to Clyde. The next nearest white settlement is more than two hundred miles away. As there is no liberty granted at this isolated unit, each man receives thirty days compensatory liberty after a year's duty at Cape Christian. This compensatory leave is additional to regular accumulated leave.

In addition to thirty days extra leave crewmembers returning to CONLUS from isolated duty have their choice of district. In some cases men have been able to choose duty stations in or near their home towns and performing the particular type of duty of their choice.

The presently authorized complement is as follows: LT or LTJG; ETC, ENC, BM1, EN1, EM1, CS1, HM1, RM2, DC2, 2 ET2, 2 ET3, EN3, and 5 SN or SA.

In conclusion, the following reasons may be listed why a man may wish to volunteer for duty at USCG LORSTA, Cape Christian:

- (1) In order to receive thirty days additional "compensatory" leave upon return to CONLUS;
- (2) To get his choice of CG District upon return to CONLUS;
- (3) To save money, as there are virtually no "living expenses" at Cape Christian.
- (4) To experience a totally different and challenging life of great interest and novelty, but a life which will entail a lot of good old-fashioned hard work;
- (5) To do some self-study and reading; CG Institute and USAFI courses are taken by many crewmembers who are studying for advancement, or in preparation for further schooling under the benefits of the GI Bill after release from active service;
- (6) Or, just for the sake of living one year in the arctic.

Any man who comes to an isolated station such as this should be able and willing to cooperate, work, and live more closely together with his shipmates than is necessary at any other type of unit operated by the Coast Guard. He must also be the type of stable and mature individual who can live with himself for one year without the diversions of "liberty in port".

No man should volunteer for isolated duty in order to escape troubles back home, there is too much time up here to brood on problems left behind.

To a man with some of the old "pioneer" or "frontier" instincts which made out country great, this can turn out to be a really good duty-station.

Under Canadian law only Eskimos may hunt, however this does not prevent one seeing and photographing some of the wildlife of Baffin Island. Occasionally Polar Bear tracks are discovered quite near to the station, and one may see this "king of the north" out on the sea ice. All station personnel must go armed when leaving the station buildings because of the rather remote, but existent, danger from wolves or Polar Bear. Other game include white fox, lemming, hare, caribou, wild dogs, and some few ermine. Birds which pass here during certain seasons are gulls, crows, sandpipers, ptarmigan, auks, blue heron, snow-birds and bos'n birds.

A fishing license may be obtained from the local RCMP for \$ 2.00 and arctic char can be caught in lakes and streams.

From November through June sea-ice covers Baffin Bay from the beach to beyond the horizon. This ice will become more than six feet thick entrapping huge icebergs within it; once the ice is thick good landing strips can be constructed on it for C-47 type aircraft. Although only about six inches of snow fall during the winter, this will drift more than twenty feet high in places because of the frequent high winds from the north-west. During the winter there is approximately a two months period of continuous darkness,--the arctic night. During this time temperatures can be expected to fall to forty below zero and winds of gale force may howl for days at a time.

These climatic conditions would truly be grim if it were not for fact that this station was especially designed for such weather, and every effort was made by the Coast Guard to make these arctic stations as self sufficient and habitable as possible.

Living quarters are comfortable and well furnished. Each man has his own room with inner-spring-matress bed, desk, chairs, and locker. There is a large Mess-Rec Deck provided with pool-table, ping pong, shuffle-board, darts, and many other games. The station has an extensive library. The station Mess can afford to feed well and operate an open galley because the special "Arctic Ration" of 150% of the District ration value is authorized. This has one disadvantage that the Commanding Officer's monthly Mess Bill averages about \$50.00. The necessary toilet articles can be purchased at the station's exchange, as well as candy, cigarettes, and beer--the station is granted the beer privilege. Sufficient movies are supplied so that different movies can be shown three or four times per week throughout the year. During the year many men build model ships or airplanes, do leather-craft work, or assemble Electronic Heath Kits, from the varied assortment of Hobby Items available at this unit. Carpentry and wood-work can be done in the well equipped station DC shop.