

Native Alaska-Military Relations 1867 to Current

Army Government

President Andrew Johnson signed the treaty purchasing Alaska from Russia for \$7,200,000 on March 30, 1867. Newspapers of the era claimed that America had made the purchase for four reasons: maintaining friendship with Russia, facilitating the acquisition of British Columbia, gaining benefits from Alaska resources, and moving closer to the markets in Asia. The Army, acting on behalf of the U.S. Government, took possession of Alaska on October 18, 1867, in a formal ceremony held in Sitka, the Russian capital of Alaska. Brigadier General Lovell H. Rousseau, officiated on behalf of the U.S. Army, and Brevet Maj. Gen. Jefferson C. Davis was assigned to command the Military District of Alaska. Garrisons were established at Sitka, Wrangell, and Tongass in Southeastern Alaska; on Kodiak Island, the Pribilof Islands and on the Kenai Peninsula. (*Ibid.*, p. 226.)

The Army was tasked to assert national sovereignty, assume civil powers and enforce laws. Congress did not provide a framework under which the Army could operate and there was no civil means of government. (Lyman L. Woodman, "Duty Station Northwest, The U.S. Army in Alaska and Western Canada, 1867-1987," Vol. I, Alaska Historical Society, Anchorage AK, 1996, p.87.)

Major General Henry W. Halleck, Commanding General, Division of the Pacific, provided detail instructions on October 29, 1867, to General Davis, outlining his responsibilities. The instructions for dealing with Alaska Native included protecting them from abuse and regulating their trade. He also cautioned General Davis to deal fairly but firmly with the Alaska Natives and to keep his stockade guns loaded at all times. (Ltr. Maj. Gen. H.W. Halleck, CG, Mil. Div. of Pacific, "Gen. Instructions in regard to the Military District of Alaska to Gen. Davis USA on the formal transfer of that Territory to the United States," 6 Sep 1867.)

With the purchase, a number of Americans moved to Alaska, most going to Sitka. Few went to other locations, and as a result, the Army closed all the garrisons except Sitka by 1870. Wrangell was reopened in 1874 following the discovery of gold nearby. The Army abolished the Military District of Alaska and placed Sitka under the Military Department of Oregon. (Antoson and Hanable, p. 226.)

During its governance of Alaska, the Army came into contact with the Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian Indians in Southeastern Alaska, the Aleuts and Eskimos on Kodiak, the Aleuts in the Pribilofs and the Athabaskan Indians on the Kenai Peninsula and Cook Inlet region. The Army found the Aleuts to be peaceful and industrious, the Athabaskans proud and fearless but peaceful, and the Eskimos generally kind and well disposed. The Army's encounters with the Native People of Southeast proved difficult. (Woodman, p.57)

The Native tribal groups who lived in Southeast Alaska for centuries had developed a more advanced culture compared to the other Alaskan Natives due to the

more abundant resources and a temperate climate of the region. Additionally, they had a long history of dealing with white traders, first the Russians and later the British and Americans and were familiar with many articles of European and American manufacture. As with the Russians, they resented the incursion of others into lands and waters they felt rightly belong to them. (*Ibid.*)

The Army experienced most of its difficulties at Sitka where it had a larger presence, the population much bigger and the contact between the Tlingit and whites more frequent and intense. Troubles in Southeastern Alaska centered on the illegal importation of alcohol and firearms. (Woodman, p. 5.) The presence of sometimes drunken and rowdy troops contributed to the problem, although it was probably no more different than at other frontier post at the time. (*Ibid.*, p. 84.)

Lacking mobility the Army in Alaska elected to establish military post close to Alaska Native villages to better control them. The stockade at Sitka consisted of a log palisade and three blockhouses separating the whites in Sitka from the Tlingit Indian village referred to as “the Ranche.” The Army mounted armed cannon aimed at the village and imposed a curfew. (Jonathan M. Nielson, (*Armed Forces on a Northern Frontier, the Military in Alaska’s History, 1867-1987*, Greenwood Press, New York, 1988, pp. 15, 19, 28-29.)

While it lacked mobility, the Army in Alaska did enjoy one tactical advantage not enjoyed by the Army in the western United States. Unlike the Plains Indians, the tribes of southeastern Alaska established permanent settlements, which represented their wealth, status and power. It also made them more vulnerable to attack. (*Ibid.*)

The Army in Alaska attempted to exercise a fairly benevolent attitude towards Alaska Natives in contrast to the western plain where “the only good Indian is a dead Indian,” philosophy sometimes prevailed. Retribution occurred only when there was a need to exert authority and the Army avoided interfering in Native governmental affairs. (Woodman, p. 85.) Nevertheless, historians such as H.H. Bancroft and Earnest Gruening noted that its presence had a demoralizing affect on the Native people (Robert D. Arnold, “Alaska Native Land Claims,” Alaska Native Foundation, Anchorage, AK, 1978, pp. 63 and 65.)

During its ten-year rule, the Army in Alaska reacted with force on two occasions. Both were minor skirmishes compared to operations in the American West. Both resulted from the consumption of too much alcohol during holiday seasons. (Nielson, p. 27.)

The first occurred on New Year’s Day 1869, when a sentry at Sitka kicked a Chilkat chief who had not followed the proper path across the stockade. The chief and his companions seized the sentry’s rifle and fired at the troops dispatched to retrieve it. General Davis threatened to destroy the village if the chief did not surrender himself and the rifle. The chief complied and the matter appeared settled until the next day when soldiers at the stockade killed a Kake and a Chilkat, who were out gathering wood. The soldiers believed the two were violating orders restricting the Indians to the Ranche. The Kake tribe, seeking revenge, then killed two white men. (Nielson, pp. 28-29.)

Responding to the murder of the two white men, General Davis obtained the services of the U.S. Navy ship, *Saginaw*. The *Saginaw*, with Army and Marine troops aboard, anchored off the Kake village on Kupreanof Island on February 11. When the village refused to surrender those involved in the killing, General Davis ordered it destroyed. General Davis' force next destroyed three other smaller Kake villages. The Kakes then delivered the individuals who had killed the two white men. (Nielson, pp. 28-29.)

The next incident occurred on Christmas Day 1869 when a drunken Stikine named Lowan bit off the finger of the post laundress at Fort Wrangell. It escalated when soldiers sent to the nearby village to apprehend Lowan killed him instead. The next day, a shaman named Scutdoo, killed the post trader in retribution. Lieutenant William Borrowe, commander of the garrison at Wrangle, then ordered the surrender of Scutdoo. When his order failed to bring a response, Lieutenant Borrowe ordered the fort's cannon to bombard the nearby village. The villagers then surrender Scutdoo, who was tried by a military courts martial, found guilty and hanged. The incident resulted in a Congressional hearing and was featured in the April 5, 1870 edition of the *New York Times*. (Nielson, pp. 28-29.)

The two military operations confirmed a belief that the best way to overcome opposition of Alaskan Natives living in southeastern Alaska and maintain peace was to use force to destroy their personal possessions and the means of livelihood. (Nielson, p. 29.)

By 1877, the Army had reached the point where it felt that its presence in Alaska was no longer justified based on the high cost and the fact that very few people were migrating to the territory. The Secretary of the War, on April 10, 1877, ordered the Army to abandoned Alaska. Plans called for the Treasury Department to assume responsibility for protecting its citizens and suppressing liquor smuggling with its Revenue Cutter Service cutters. (Woodman, p 89.)

With the Army's pending departure, the Tlingits in Sitka began showing signs of hostility. Two were caught robbing the quartermaster stores and the white citizens expressed fears of an uprising. Natives friendly to the Army noted that there might be trouble, but nothing came of it. (*Ibid.*, p. 89.)

The Army withdrew from Sitka on June 15, 1877, and Wrangell the following day when a steamer arrived to pick up the garrisons. The local citizens, Natives and whites, immediately looted the buildings, and the Tlingits at Sitka began displaying an arrogant attitude. (*Ibid.*, p. 91)

Despite its unsuitability for the role into which it was thrust, and in the absence of civil government and clear direction, the Army performed its role to the best of its ability. It maintained peace between the Native and whites, it largely suppressed illegal trade in arms and liquor, it discouraged corrupt businesses from taking advantage of Native people, and it opened day schools and established the first Native Protestant Church. The

Army was denied the exercise of jurisdiction to enforce civil law on one hand and held accountable for the law and order on the other hand. (*Ibid.*, pp. 91-92)

With the departure of the Army, the white citizens began fearing for their safety. The customs agent at Sitka feared that the Tlingits would attack them since “many of these Indians have wrongs to redress and injuries to be made good, inflicted upon them while the country was in the hands of the military.” (Arnold, p. 65.)

Navy Government

The departure of the Army left Alaska without a formal system of government other than custom agents and the occasional visit by a Revenue Cutter Service cutter. The custom agents were able to maintain a peaceful relationship with the local Alaska Native people for the next two years. The period of tranquility ended in early 1879 when the Tlingits at Sitka, under the leadership of Katlian, also known as Sitka Jack, became increasingly belligerent to the point where the non-natives began fearing for their lives. In early 1879, they appealed to the British authorities in Victoria, British Columbia for protection. (Ernest Gruening, *The State of Alaska*, Random House, New York, 1954, pp.36-40.)

The British, with the concurrence of Washington, sent the HMS *Osprey*, which arrived on March 1, 1879. The Revenue Cutter Service cutter *Oliver Wolcott* arrived shortly afterwards followed by the U.S. Navy ship, *Alaska* on April 5, 1879. Its arrival marked the beginning of a five-year period where the Navy would provide the government for Alaska from its base at Sitka. The Navy, because of its mobility, was better suited for maintaining law and order along the waterways of southeast Alaska. (*Ibid.*)

Lieutenant Commander L.A. Beardslee, the commander of the *Alaska*, proved to be an understanding individual. He took the time to learn the Native culture and as a result earned their respect. He was able to maintain order, although he continued to encounter problems from white merchants who insisted on selling numerous barrels of molasses to the Natives. The molasses provided the ingredient for bootleg rum called “Hoochenoo.” Beardslee and others were convinced that it caused most of the difficulties between the Natives and the whites. Because of his understanding of southeastern Native culture over property rights, he was able to negotiate agreements allowing white to cross their territory. (Philip Drucker, “The Bombardment and Burning of Angoon, Alaska in 1882, a 82-page research paper by anthropologist Drucker in support of a law suit against the Navy by Angoon, not dated.)

Commander Henry Glass, who relieved Beardslee in 1880, proved equally effective. Nevertheless, the Natives continued to resent the intrusion of whites into their lands. The Chilkat Tlingits refused to allow whites to transit their territory into Canada. In response, Commander Glass sent a warship carrying a Gatling gun to escort five sailing boats into Chilkat territory. The ship’s officer explained to the Chilkat chiefs how the gun worked and read a letter assuring them that whites would not interfere with their fur trade. The chiefs agreed to open the Dyea pass into Canada. (*Ibid.*, Arnold, p. 68.)

This action plus others such as the encouragement of a treaty of peace between the Stikine in the Wrangle area and the Hutsnuwu Tlingits in Angoon weaken tribal laws governing land and water ownership. (Arnold, p. 68.)

Commander E.C. Merriman replaced Commander Glass in 1882. He proved less understanding of Native culture and his heavy handed handling of affairs led to the naval bombardment and burning of the Tlingit village of Angoon on 26 October 1882. (*Ibid.*)

The Angoon incident began when Tith Klan, a Tlingit shaman in the employment of the Northwest Trading Company, was accidentally killed while hunting whales for the company on October 22, 1882. The other Tlingits in the whale boat took the boat and gear ashore along with two white crew members, and in keeping with Tlingit custom, demanded compensation for the death of their shaman and another tribal member who had died earlier. The Tlingits also seized another boat and a steam launch. The company superintendent reported the seizures to Commander Merriman and the fact that the Tlingits were threatening to kill the two men and burn company property if their demands for 200 blankets could not be met. (*Ibid.*; Alec Wilkinson, "The Uncommitted Crime," *The New Yorker*, 26 Nov 1990.)

Commander Merriman responded by sending the Revenue Cutter Service *Corwin* on loan to him and the tugboat *Favorite*, onto which he had loaded a howitzer and a Gatling gun. The vessels arrived at Kootznahoo Inlet where the two men and the property were being held in the summer fishing camp. The Tlingits readily gave up the two men and the property. Commander Merriman then demanded 400 blankets, threatening to destroy the fish camp and the village of Angoon if they were not delivered. When the Tlingits could not deliver on the demand, Merriman ordered the fish camp along with the boats there burned. At the same time, he ordered the bombardment and the burning of Angoon. Six children were killed and the village leveled except for a few structures left standing to house the villagers during the winter months. All the food stores were destroyed along with most of the canoes, which the Tlingits relied on to gather subsistence. (See note above.)

Commander Merriman, the commander of the *Corwin* and the customs agent at Sitka filed reports, which proved to be conflicting, self-serving and racist in tone. Congress asked for an explanation, and by the spring of 1884, the reports became part of a debate leading to the passage of the First Organic Act that year, which provided for an appointed governor and authorized a district court system. (Wilkinson, Antonson and Hanable, p.282..)

The Navy continued to maintain a presence in Alaska until 1887. Despite the actions of Commander Merriman, the Navy significantly improved the maintenance of peace in the territory by appointing Native leaders as police. They helped reconcile problems of cultural differences. The Navy, like the Army, had to function without clear guidance on how to carry out its civil governmental duties. Likewise, its area of responsibility was mostly confined to southeastern Alaska. (Antonson and Hanable, p.282.)

The villagers at Angoon survived the winter and rebuilt. The number who might have died to privation and exposure was never documented. Their account of the destruction of the village was handed down by word of mouth. Only one first hand account, by a 13 year old boy at the time, exists. An anthropologist taped an interview with him in 1950. He described the suffering and the fact that the government never came to their aid. (Wilkinson)

In 1973, the Tlingit and Haida Central Council on behalf of Angoon filed a lawsuit against the government before the Indian Claims Commission. Under the law, the council could only ask for the cost of communal property lost in 1882, and not compensation for individual losses, death, or pain and suffering. Philip Drucker, an anthropologist retained by the plaintiff, estimated the community cost at \$109,051.50. The case was settled out of court for \$90,000 and a delegation met with the Assistant Secretary of the Navy expecting a formal apology. The Navy instead issued a letter stating in part that: "The destruction of Angoon should never have happened and it was an unfortunate event in our history. (Wilkinson, Drucker Report.)

The people of Angoon marked the 100 anniversary of the destruction of their village in 1982 with a three-day commemoration. A documentation team made a film. Angoon continued to press its case. In 1998, the Alaska State Legislature issued a resolution urging President Clinton to issue a formal apology. (Wilkinson, Legislative Resolve No. 66, Alaska State Legislature, 1998.)

The discovery of a letter by one of Commander Merriman's crew members in 1998, raised hopes, according to newspaper accounts, that Angoon's concerns for an apology and compensation would be addressed. The writer of the letter called the destruction of the village "a brutal and cowardly thing," and accused Commander Merriman of being a "glory seeker." ("1882 Letter Sheds Light on Angoon Tragedy," *Juneau Empire*, 12 Aug 1999.)

Exploration and Contact with Alaska Natives

For the most part, the military contact with Alaska Natives had been limited to southeast Alaska where the bulk of the non-native population lived. Military contact along coastal Alaska including the Aleutians and the Bering Sea islands was limited to short visits by the Revenue Cutter Service ships on Bering Sea patrols. While much was known about the coastal regions, interior Alaska remained relatively unexplored. (Antonson and Hanable, pp. 234-244; Woodman, pp. 111-132.)

Between 1881 and 1899, the Army, and to a lesser extent the Navy, sent out a series of small expeditions into the interior to chart new routes and document conditions. Their contacts with the Natives were limited to the hiring of guides and porters or simply passing through. While the interior Natives were not always receptive to the intruders crossing their lands, they were not openly hostile and on occasions rendered support to near destitute expeditions. What the expeditions did accomplish that impacted on Native culture in the long term was the opening up of land and water routes throughout the vast interior of Alaska. (See note above.)

The Gold Rush

The discovery of gold in the Canadian Klondike in 1896 and subsequent discoveries at various locations in Alaska resulted in the mass influx of people seeking their fortune. Between 1890 and 1900, the population doubled to about 63,000. While Canada required those entering the Klondike region to be self sufficient, no such requirements were imposed on those entering Alaska. As a result, many became destitute. The boom town atmosphere also created lawlessness which the local civil authorities were incapable of dealing with. The Army returned again to Alaska and established a series of forts along the Gold Rush routes, which were later linked with a long-line communications system. (Antonson and Hanable, p. 247; Woodman, p. 135.)

The Army, in enforcing law and order by its presence, also protected the Alaska Natives from the depredations of the newly arrivals. The commander of an Infantry company that arrived in Skagway on February 25, 1898 was immediately confronted by a group of angry white stevedores who were attacking Indians willing to work for lower wages. The newly arrived troops had to drive the whites back at bayonet point in order for the Indians to complete unloading their ship. (Woodman, p. 144.)

Elsewhere, the Navy, who continued its presence in the waters of Southeastern Alaska, removed the Aukwan Tlingits from the mining camp of Rockwell, later renamed Juneau, rather than expel the miners who came into the area. The officer in charge claimed that the Tlingits had been paid for their lands, although the transfer of the lands was not legal in view that there were no land laws at the time. (Arnold, p. 68.)

As elsewhere, the influx of gold seekers impacted on the Alaska Native's culture and lifestyle. The new arrival took what they needed, depleting game and spoiling fishing streams. Colonel George M. Randall, garrison commander at Fort St. Michael at the mouth of the Yukon River, in his annual report commented: (Woodman. p. 208.)

Considerable has been said about the indigent white man in Alaska, but the indigent Eskimo has been unnoticed by those whom he has befriended, and has been allowed to die for lack of proper care and food. For years he has extended his hospitality to adventurous white men. His hut has been shelter for the shipwrecked sailor and frostbitten miner. Poor as were his supplies, they have been opened to the weary and hungry traveler. The tales that could be told of acts of charity on the part of the Eskimo would in themselves constitute a powerful plea in his behalf.

The Second Withdrawal of the Army

Following the end of the Gold Rush, the Army remained in Alaska until shortly after World War I, building and then operating a communications system that linked Alaska with the rest of the world and supervising a road construction program. The

Alaska Home Rule Act of 1912, strengthen Alaska civil government and created a two house territorial legislature. With the end of World War I, the military undertook a major reduction in forces. By 1925, the only fort remaining in the territory was Fort Seward, near Haines. (Woodman, p. 303-328.)

World War II

The threat of war brought the military back in force and resulted in its permanent presence in Alaska. The war changed Alaska forever, affecting virtually every community and impacting on the lives of almost all its citizens. Alaska's Native people felt its impact the most, both negatively and positively. The war saw the forced evacuation of the Aleuts from the Aleutian Islands and the Pribilofs and the creation of the Alaska Territorial Guard. (Antonson and Hanable, p. 309.)

The evacuation of the Aleuts from a potential battleground resulted from military necessity and was executed in a flawed manner. The Japanese bombed Dutch Harbor and occupied Kiska and Attu in early June 1942, creating concerns that the seizure of the two islands was preliminary to further offensive operations. (Dr. Gary Stein, "A Transportation Dilemma: Evacuation of the Aleuts In Word War II," paper given in the annual meeting of the Alaska Historical Society in Fairbanks, 1982.)

Alaska's territorial government and the military had already considered the possibility prior to the Japanese thrust into the Aleutians. Acting Governor Bob Bartlett, except for Unalaska, where the presence of a large number of military threatens social disruption, rejected the idea. Major General Simon Buckner, Commander, Alaska Defense Command, stated that it would be a "great mistake...that evacuating them was pretty close to destroying them." (*Ibid.*)

With the Japanese occupation of the two western Aleutian Islands, the mood changed. The military hastily evacuated the 477 inhabitants of the Pribilofs on June 15, over fears that the Japanese were planning to occupy the remote islands. The transport then stopped at Dutch Harbor on June 17, where it picked up 83 Aleuts who had been removed by the Navy from Atka Island, after it was bombed by the Japanese. (*Ibid.*)

While the evacuation was underway, local military and civilian authorities discussed various final destination locations including Port Graham on the Kenai Peninsula and Marysville in Washington State. The Bureau of Indian Affairs in Washington DC, however, decided to send them to southeastern Alaska where they could be housed in abandoned canneries. The Pribilof group was put ashore at Funter Bay and the Atka group at Killisnoo. (*Ibid.*)

For a moment, it appeared that the evacuations were over. The Navy, however, felt uneasy about the presence of Natives in the eastern Aleutians. As non-essential civilians in a war zone, they placed a strain on the supply system; and concerns about a further Japanese offensive in the Aleutians lingered. The tone had been set by the school teacher at Nikolski on Umnak Island who requested evacuation of the small village out of fear that the Japanese were coming and concerns of a growing shortage of food. (*Ibid.*)

As a result, 159 Aleuts from Nikolski, Akutan Village on Akutan Islands, and Biorka, Kashega and Makushin on Unalaska Island were relocated to Ward Cove near Ketchikan in mid-July. The second transport of Aleuts from the eastern Aleutians was completed July 26, when 110 Aleuts from Unalaska were deposited at Burnett Inlet on Etolin Island. (*Ibid.*)

They were out-of-the-way places, abandoned canneries, gold mines and Civilian Conservation Camps; no longer useful for commercial purposes; dilapidated and unsanitary. Governor Earnest Gruening complained in a September 20, 1943 letter about what he found at one of the camps: "Shocking...I have no language at my command, which can adequately describe what I saw." ("Aleuts Seek Damages for World War II Treatment," *Anchorage Daily News*, 12 May 1982; "Commission Recounts Trauma of Aleut Relocation," *The Anchorage Times*, 12 May 1982.)

The Aleutians Pribilof Islands Association compiled an incomplete list of 69 names of those who died in the relocation camps, the victims of influenza, measles, pneumonia and tuberculosis. The Aleuts remained in the camps until 1944, when they were allowed to return to their villages except for those who had lived in Biorka, Kashega and Makushin. Alaska Indian Service personnel deemed the three small villages too expensive to support. The villagers went to other villages. (See note above.)

When they did return, the Aleuts found their homes vandalized, their personal belongings stolen and their churches desecrated. The civilian and military authorities who were responsible for their plight, made an effort to compensate them, but it was not enough and nothing could make up for the loss of such items as religious icons and other precious family belongings. (Eric Scigliano, "The Other Internees, the Untold Story of the Aleuts' World War II Exile," *We Alaskans*, 6 Mar 1983.)

The manner in which the Aleuts were treated reflected the racism of the times. A military intelligence report in 1942 described them as a "mentally undeveloped people whose manner of life is a reflection of the hard, restrictive environment to which they are subject." (Intelligence Center Pacific Ocean Areas Bulletin 5-42, p. 6.) There was also bureaucratic insensitivity resulting from a long tradition of paternalism and a feeling that the Aleuts were wards of the state; and, therefore, as a small, isolated minority, did not matter in the scheme of larger events. (Scigliano.)

On the positive side, the experience in the camps changed the Aleuts forever. No longer isolated from the rest of society in their remote Aleutian homes, they were exposed to society as a whole. Some found employment outside the camps and all came in contact with other cultures. They learned that participation in the democratic process, no matter how uneven, brought its rewards. It allowed them to understand the right of citizenship and fact that they were not merely wards of the state. It provided the catalyst for a new era when they would choose their own direction, and enter into the world of capitalism and politics. (Dean Kohlhoff, "When the Wind Was a River, Aleut Evacuation in World War II," University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1995, p. 169.)

While the Aleuts, who had been evacuated, suffered in their unfamiliar surroundings, the fate of those interned in Japan was much grimmer. The Japanese, after landing on Attu, sent the 42 Aleuts living on the island to Otaru on Hokkaido Island. Twenty-four survived the ordeal of internment. The rest, including four infants born in captivity, died of neglect and starvation. Compounding their misery, the government decided to resettle the survivors among their traditional enemies on Atka rather than sending them back to Attu. The military still occupied the battle scared island and the small numbers did not justify the cost. (Ethel Ross Oliver, "Journal of an Aleutian Year," Seattle, 1988, Appendix 3.)

The landmark Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 gave the Aleuts the political leverage they needed to seek justice for what they had undergone. The Aleutian/Pribilof Islands Association was formed, and its leaders, some of whom had spent part of their youth in the camps, decided to explore legal actions. They retained the services of a Washington D.C. law firm, Cook and Henderson. The young lawyer who worked on the case, John Kirkland, a U.S. Naval Academy graduate, proved an effective advocate. (Kohlhoff, p. 182.)

The Aleutian/Pribilof Islands Association was able to join forces with Japanese Americans who had been sent to internment camps during the war. Together, with the help of Alaska's Congressional delegation, they succeeded in the passage of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians Act, which President Carter signed into law on 31 July 1980. (*Ibid.* p. 183.)

While it assured Aleutian/Pribilof Islands Association a political platform and agenda, it did not provide the funding they needed to document their case and pursuing legal redress. The Alaska State Legislature appropriated \$165,000 for the project. It, and later funds provided by the Aleut Corporation, Atlantic Richfield and Exxon, allowed for the collection of documents, the formation of World War II Task Force, the holding of public hearings and the introduction of legislation before Congress. (*Ibid.* pp. 185.)

President Reagan signed Public Law 100-383, "An Act Concerning Wartime Relocation," on August 10, 1988, implementing the recommendations of the Commission of Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians Act. Title II of the act, "Aleutian and Pribilof Islands Restitution," created a restitution fund and appointed the Aleutian/Pribilof Islands Association as its administrator. A trust fund of \$5,000,000.00 was established and another \$1,400,000.00 as compensation for churches destroyed during the war. Each surviving Aleut who had spent time in the camps received \$12,000.00 for pain and suffering. Unfortunately, those who had been interned in Japan were not eligible. The Aleut Corporation, the profit entity of the Aleutian/Pribilof Islands Association, was allocated a sum not to exceed \$15,000,000.00 in compensation for the loss of Attu. (*Ibid.*, p. 186.)

Perhaps, more importantly, the President and Congress issued letters of apology; something the village of Angoon had not been able to achieve. (*Ibid.* p. 170.)

In 1992, Gaff Rigged Productions of Girdwood, Alaska, produced a 59 minute video "Aleut Evacuation: The Untold War Story," for the Aleutian/Pribilof Islands Association, which aired for the first time on June 12, 1992, the fiftieth anniversary of the evacuation of Attu. The Aleutian/Pribilof Islands Association along with the University of Washington Press published Dean Kohloff's book, "When the Wind Was a River, Aleut Evacuation in World War II," in 1995.

While the war disrupted the lives of Alaska Natives and non-natives alike, it also brought positive changes. One was the acceptance of Alaskan Natives as equal partners in the military. When Col. Lawrence Caster, the G-2 (Intelligence) for the Alaskan Defense Command, began recruiting for his Alaska Combat Intelligence Detachment, he looked for Alaska Natives to fill its ranks. What he wanted was an organization of men familiar with the outdoors and use to hardships. His organization composed of Alaska Natives, trappers and miners were known as "Castner's Cutthroats," was the first to go ashore on every island occupied by allied forces during the Aleutian Campaign. (John Weiss, "Castner's Cutthroats," *The Anchorage Daily News*, 27 Aug 1967.)

Another individual who took a personal interest in Alaska Natives during the war and became an Alaskan "legend?" was Maj. Marvin "Muktuk" Marston. With the United States entry into World War II, the Alaska National Guard in Alaska was called to active duty. Governor Gruening asked the Alaska Defense Command to support the formation of an Alaska Territorial Guard (ATG) composed of volunteers who would provide local defense. General Buckner agreed and provided one of his staff officers, Major Marston, to assist in the recruiting. Major Marston drew the Arctic coastal region, largely inhabited by Eskimos. Initially, there was some reservation. The Eskimos had suffered at the hands of white intruders, enduring diseases and starvation, and Governor Gruening wondered if they would join the ATG. The Eskimos readily joined the ATG and became enthusiastic members, providing security along the coastal regions. (Muktuk Marston, "Men of the Tundra, Alaska Eskimos at War," October House, NY, 1969, p. 4.)

Following the war, Muktuk Marston, now a civilian, along with Governor Gruening and Otto Geist, the ATG quartermaster, succeeded in getting the ATG made part of the Alaska National Guard. They became the 1st Scout Battalion headquartered in Nome and the 2nd Scout Battalions, headquartered in Bethel, better known as "The Eskimo Scouts." Its members proved adept at scouting and intelligence collection, providing "Eyes and Ears of Arctic." They also proved to be loyal and enthusiastic soldiers. (C.A.Salisbury, "Soldiers of the Mists, Minutemen of the Alaska Frontier," *Pictorial Histories*, MT, 1992, pp. 84-87.)

The Alaska National Guard provided an opportunity to Alaska Natives to rise to positions of high responsibility. Lieutenant Colonel John Schaeffer, an Eskimo and Commander of the 1st Scout Battalion, became head of the NANA Regional Corporation, and then State Adjutant General. He succeeded Maj. Gen. Edward Pagano, the first Alaska Native to command the Alaska National Guard. (*Ibid.*, pp. 122-123.)

Major General Jake Lestenkof, who as a boy had been among those evacuated from the Pribilofs during the war, assumed command of the Alaska National Guard in

1994 and retired in 1999. He took over leadership during a period of racial tensions in the guard's ranks and developed education standards and opportunities for members throughout the state. ("Jake Lestenkof, A Good Soldier Calls it a Career," *Anchorage Daily News*, 14 Jan 99.)

The Cold War and Beyond

With the Soviet development of a nuclear capability and the means of delivery, the military in Alaska embarked on a massive construction of air defense facilities consisting of radar and communications sites and forward operating bases, the bulk of which were located in widely scattered and remote areas. Many were sited near Alaska Native villages. At the time, little thought was given to the impact on the environment and the social structure of Alaska's first inhabitants. (John H. Cloe, "Top Cover and Global Engagement, A History of the Eleventh Air Force," Alaska Quality Publishing, Inc. 2001, pp. 11-13.)

The development and operation of the air defense radar network and alert bases and the White Alice Communications System that linked it together had a positive affect. It provided employment in remote areas that would not have otherwise been available. It also facilitated the extension of modern communications to remote communities. The annual re-supply of the remote radars sites also provided an opportunity to ship goods to nearby villages. (*Ibid.* p. 13.)

The construction and development of the air defense system also impacted negatively on Alaska Native culture. The Air Force selected Barter Island near Kaktovik as the prototype site for new radar it was developing for the Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line radar system. Construction workers moved in and relocated the village so that a runway could be built. The area quickly became littered with debris including thousands of discarded empty 55-gallon barrels. (Nielson, p. 149.)

Kaktovik was symptomatic of the devastation military construction had on the environment during the 1950s and the continuing operations of the widely scattered infrastructure of radar sites and forward bases. The Air Force created a legacy of hazardous contamination and unsightly facilities and debris. The environmental and social movements of the 1960s and 1970s brought about an increased awareness of the need to correct the mistakes of the past. The Department of Defense instituted the Environmental Restoration Program in 1980 and the Air Force implemented it in 1984. The military embarked on a cleanup program, which gained increased momentum in the 1990s. (Hist, 11AF, 1996, p. 81.)

To remedy the problems in Alaska, the Eleventh Air Force created an environmental organization focused exclusively on overseeing the removal of debris and hazardous waste and restoring the lands back to their natural condition. Steps were taken to consult with local Alaska Native villages and a system of local environmental restoration advisory boards was established. At the same time, the Air Force took steps to insure that local labor and expertise be used to the maximum extent in the cleanup and restoration effort. (*Ibid.*)

Another effort to increase Alaska Native participation involved the emphasis on awarding contracts to native owned firms to operate and maintain the remote forward bases and radar system. It began when the Air Force awarded a contract to Space Mark, Inc., a subsidiary of The Aleut Corporation, in 1993 to operate and maintain Galena. The Air Force awarded similar contracts for the other remote bases and the radar system during subsequent years. (Hist, 11AF, 1993, p. 69.)

In a reflection of the times, the Air Force Aeromedical Laboratory at Ladd AFB (now Fort Wainwright) conducted a series of experiments on Alaska Natives between 1955 and 1957 without informing them of the scope and potential risk. The lab had been created to study effect cold weather on humans. (Hist, 11AF, 1998, p. 22.)

The experiments involved using orally ingested radioactive Iodine 131 as a tracer to measure the thyroid in determining the ability of various ethnic groups to withstand cold weather. Medical personnel conducted the test on African Americans, Alaska Natives and Caucasians in order to determine if the thyroid gland played a part in helping humans to adapt to cold weather. The majority of the 121 Alaska Natives who participated in the test lived in northern and central Alaska. (*Ibid.*)

When Alaska Native leaders learned of the experiments in 1993, they initiated a law suite claiming that the Air Force medical personnel did not adequately explain the test and ask for their formal consent. They further claimed that the native subjected to the test had suffered stress over concerns that the radioactive tracer could cause cancer. One was subsequently diagnosed with thyroid cancer. (*Ibid.*)

The National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine conducted a study at the request of Alaska's Congressional delegation. It was released in early 1996. While the study determined that the amount of Iodine 131 posed little risk, the way in which the experiments were administrated violated medical ethics. ("New Study Blames Feds for Tests on Natives," *Anchorage Daily News*, Jan 31, 1996.)

Secretary of the Air Force F. Whitten issued a formal letter of apology, which was presented to those who had participated in the test during a October 24, 2000 ceremony at Point Barrow. ("Experiment Victims Paid," *Anchorage Daily News*, 27 Oct 2000.)

It came at a time when the military was seeking to address past wrongs in its relations with America's Native People. President Clinton had signed Executive Order 12875, *Enhancing the Intergovernmental Partnership*, and 12866, *Regulatory Planning and Review*, on April 29, 1994. Secretary of Defense William Cohen signed implementing *Department of Defense American Indian and Alaska Native Policy*, on October 20, 1998. It called for the military to establish a government-to-government relationship with tribes and other Native groups. Shortly afterwards, Lt. Gen. Thomas Case, Commander, Alaskan Command, began taking aggressive steps to implement the policy in Alaska. (Hist, ALCOM, 1999, pp. 6-11.)

While the military had dealt with Alaska Natives in the past on such issues as maneuver and training area rights, the policy now placed the responsibility of

establishing an on going dialog firmly in the hands of Alaska's senior military leaders. In May 2001 Lt. Gen. Norton Schwartz, Commander, Alaskan Command, signed "DoD American Indian/Alaskan Native Policy: Alaska Implementation Guidance." This order, policy and guidance promised an end to the sometimes troubled and often unequal relationship that had existed since the military assumed responsibility for the territory of Alaska in 1867

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