

Alaska, at Russia's Back Door, Bristling as Atom Age Fortress

Editor's note: The U.S. territory of Alaska stands at the back door of Russia and lies on the main air route between Moscow and Washington, D.C. It is therefore in America's first line of defense against atomic attack. A United Press staff correspondent has visited our military bases in Alaska and talked to top commanders. This is the first dispatch in a series of two.

By GLENN STACKHOUSE
United Press Correspondent
Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska—(U.P.)—Alaska has become an atomic age fortress—

with radar beams for lookouts and jet interceptors for cannon. This Arctic land, with an area twice the size of Texas and a population that could fit comfortably inside the city limits of Phoenix, Ariz., lies just a 15-minute MIG flight from the back door of Soviet Russia.

It sprawls astride the main air route from Russia to the United States. Most military men feel it is over Alaska that So-

viet bombers would come if there is ever all-out atomic war against the United States.

For the military, Alaska is strictly an Air Force show. All three services are represented in a unified command, but it is no coincidence the whole shooting match is bossed by a three-star Air Force general.

The 'Top Cover'
He is Lt. Gen. J. H. Atkinson, a hard-bitten cigar-chewing pilot who is well aware his Alaskan command is furnishing the "top cover" for America.

Army and Navy operations in Alaska are pretty much on a shoestring basis.

The Navy, under Rear Adm. Kenneth Craig, maintains almost no fleet activities and comparatively insignificant air activities. The Navy headquarters is at Kodiak, and its mission is merely to maneuver around the territorial waters.

The Army, under Gen. James F. Collins, numbers less than a full division of infantry, with headquarters at Fort Richardson, a few miles from Anchorage.

The primary mission of the military is the defense of the United States, not Alaska. The Air Force's early warning radar network is here to furnish the first red alert if bombers streak out of Siberia toward the heart of America.

A Calculated Risk
And Air Force pilots are ready to scramble their rocket-firing F-89 Scorpion jets into the air in an attempt to blast the bombers from the sky before they can reach the inner defenses of the homeland.

The defense of Alaska itself is set up on a calculated risk basis. Although it is only a 60-mile trip across the Bering Strait from Russia's Chukotski Peninsula, no one in the military feels the Russians would try an actual invasion of Alaska.

"I don't think there ever will be any big land campaign in Alaska," Atkinson said. "I don't rule out the possibility of at least limited action due to enemy paratroop operations, but these we can handle as they occur."

What if the Soviets try to establish a beachhead on some remote coastal area? "We'd just leave him there," Atkinson said. "He couldn't go anywhere in that kind of country."



HE'S ROPED IN—Liberace is lassooed in his showplace home in Sherman Oaks, Calif. by Coraleen Jurian, queen of San Francisco's Cow Palace. Coraleen visited Liberace, rope in hand, to officially remind him of his one-day engagement for a "pop" concert in the Cow Palace Feb. 27.

Truck Hits Train; Brakeman Killed

McMinnville — (U.P.)—A railroad brakeman was injured fatally last night when the locomotive he was riding was struck by an empty logging truck at Valley Junction crossing.

Emil Pearson, 52, was thrown beneath the wheels of the shuttle locomotive by the impact. He was brought to McMinnville hospital where he died a few hours after the mishap.

Driver of the truck, Chester Beeson of Otis, was treated for cuts at the hospital along with his five-year-old son, Chester Jr. State police reported that Pearson was riding the side of the locomotive which was headed into a mill siding when the accident occurred.

PRISON COMMENT

Stillwater, Minn. — (U.P.)—An account of the chaplain's sermon at recent Sunday services, reported in the Prison Mirror, publication of the state penitentiary here, noted in part: "Let us not be ashamed of our faith, nor fear our enemies who laugh at us, but fear worldly judges, as they are fickle and unjust."

Jack Benny in 40th Year for 11th Time

Hollywood — (U.P.)—Jack Benny entered his 40th year today for the 11th time, but promised this time he will make it stick.

The comedian celebrated what actually was his 61st birthday last night with a quiet dinner at home with Mary Livingston, his wife. Benny started passing himself off as 39 on his radio show in 1943 and has stuck to the gag ever since.

"But next year I'll turn 40," he said, "and we'll make it a national event."

Actress Gail Russell Faces Court Hearing

Hollywood — (U.P.)—Actress Gail Russell, 30, today faced arraignment Feb. 23 on a hit-run driving charge growing out of a minor traffic mishap last week.

A citation on the misdemeanor was issued yesterday against Miss Russell, who already faces trial on an old drunk-driving charge. The former wife of actor Guy Madison told police she drove off after bumping into rear of another auto Friday because she was nervous and upset.

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