

U.S. TROOPS OCCUPY ISLES 250 MILES NEARER KISKA

NEW ARMY BASE IN ALEUTIANS SET UP BEFORE JAPS KNEW OF IT

Surprise Move Made During Lashing Storm; Soldiers Rushed to Get Ready to Fight Off Enemy Planes That Never Showed Up.

(By RUSSELL ANNABEL.)

An Aleutian Island, Sept. 9.—(Delayed.)—An army task force has occupied this remote mountainous sea island in a surprise move which gives our air force a striking base within 240 miles of Kiska.

There was no opposition from the Japanese who apparently were unaware of a force so near them.

The landing was preceded by combat scouts who reconnoitered the island for possible enemy outposts.

Five days after the arrival of the convoy, despite a storm which handicapped a landing operation, a military outpost was established with roads, communication facilities, and a usable air field.

OCCUPATION WAS DRAMATIC EPISODE.

The occupation of the island during the storm and under imminent danger of attack was one of the most dramatic episodes of the Aleutian war.

The convoy, escorted by one of its captains as a "Spanish armada," because it contained almost every sort of craft—stubby power barges, tugs, troopships, freighters, a converted yacht and even an ancient four-masted sailing vessel—was buffeted with mishap thru submarine-infested waters and anchored at daybreak in a bay.

Within seconds after hooks were dropped, landing barges were lowered down the sides of big gray troopships. Navy bombers roared overhead. Warships prowled the mist-shrouded harbor mouth as troops swarmed down swaying rope nets to wildly pitching boats.

No one doubted this task would have to be accomplished under bombardment and probably no man would not have bet his pay check that Japanese bombers would be over by noon.

VOLUNTEER TO WORK 24-HOUR SHIFTS.

The need to get guns, ammunition and supplies ashore before an attack developed was so urgent that officers and men volunteered to work two-to-four-hour shifts until the job was finished.

"Got to get that ack-ack set up," men were saying, "before the Japs find us and start laying eggs."

When the flagship's loudspeaker boomed the order, heavily loaded craft slammed in thru combbers beneath slate-gray, low-rolling clouds.

A strip of beach, then a thin line of gray sand dunes created with grass hummocks lay ahead. Beyond were the green Aleutian mountain peaks, their treeless slopes had hidden in the storm.

Troops floundered ashore carrying heavy field packs thru the icy surf. Some soldiers were neck deep in water, others were knocked down and "rolled in."

WIND WHIRLS SPRAY HIGH INTO AIR.

Now the rain was pouring down and the wind was howling down the beach in such force that it tore the "tops" off the waves, sending spray high into the air.

Unit leaders, who had rehearsed the landing until they could have recited backwards, deployed their men over the dunes and vanished. Landing boats sped back across the bay for more men, guns, ammunition and supplies.

But the enemy did not interfere—or could not.

Before an hour had passed, this island—previously a sanctuary for choice foraging blue foxes—became the busiest spot in an extremely busy far north.

SOLDIERS SWARM OVER ISLAND IN MACHINES.

Soldiers swarmed about in bulldozers and tractor trains, and helmeted lads hurtled along the kelp-strewn beach in army jeeps, bobbing in and out of gullies and ravines. Roads were built, command posts set up, telephones strung and dumps built.

The storm increased in intensity and by midafternoon the wind had piled several landing barges on the beach above the waterline.

Crews unloading the barges formed "human chains," passing boxes and bales from hand to hand. Many stood in bitterly cold water to their waists, with no opportunity to dry their clothes. No tents, stoves or field kitchens had been brought ashore when darkness fell.

During that long night we stood around spitting fires built from soggy driftwood, drinking coffee and wondering when the Japs would come. The more optimistic curled up to sleep in holes dug from the sides of dunes.

Even the few Aleuts who live on the island were appreciative of the white man's ability to "take it."

ISLAND HARDEST PLACE ON A MAN'S FEET.

Said Messman Sam Green, Negro, of Birmingham, Ala.: "The only trouble is, my feet hurt. This island is the hardest place on a man's feet I ever visited."

Shoes, I discovered, are not meant to take the treatment this island offers. Amazing quantities of sand and pebbles collected in our shoes.

MOVE CLIPS HOURS FROM FLIGHT TIME Bombers Get Better Protection From Fighters

Washington, Oct. 3.—(A. P.)—American army forces in the Aleutian islands have advanced at least 250 nautical miles nearer Japanese bases in the north Pacific, the navy announced Saturday, and already have undertaken strong aerial operations against the enemy from their new positions.

The advance—first in the north Pacific area since the Japanese occupied islands in the westernmost Aleutians in early June—was covered and supported by naval units and accomplished without enemy opposition.

It carried American forces a long stride west of Dutch Harbor, heretofore regarded as the main United States base for all operations against the Japanese-held islands of Kiska, Attu and Agattu.

GROUP OF ISLANDS STRETCHES 240 MILES.

The new islands occupied—the navy did not identify them specifically—are in the Andreanof group, mountainous segment of the Aleutians stretching about 240 miles between Segoum pass on the east and Amchitka pass on the west. The westernmost island, a relatively small one, is only about 125 miles from Kiska.

The effect of the advance, in the first instance, will be to cut valuable hours of flying time off the round trip bombing expeditions against the main Japanese base at Kiska which army planes have been pounding steadily for many weeks. This reduction in time means the planes can carry greater bomb loads and operate with even better fighting protection than they have had.

Whether, beyond that advantage, the new advance positions may be used as jumping off points for an actual amphibious invasion of the Japanese-held Aleutians, was a possibility on which the navy offered no comment.

JAPS NOW ARE IN TOUGHER SPOT.

It was obvious however, that even without invasion of Kiska and the other enemy islands, the Japs are now in a rather precarious position in the Aleutians, with American planes able to make heavier and more frequent attacks on them, and with the onset of bitter winter weather characteristic of that region at hand.

The Japanese already have lost heavily in ships in their efforts to keep their Aleutian bases supplied and protected against attack. Saturday's navy communique which reported the American advance also said

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U.S. ARMY TAKES OVER ISLANDS 250 MILES NEARER KISKA BASE

Strong Air Bastion Set Up in the Andreanofs Enabling Bombers to Carry Heavier Loads and Have Better Fighter Protection.

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that on Sept. 30, the army's four-engine Consolidated Liberator bombers had attacked ships in the harbor at Kiska and that an enemy transport was set afire by two direct hits.

The camp area also was bombed and several fires resulted, the mission being carried out without the loss of an American plane.

The successful attack on the transport raised the number of ships which the Japanese have sunk or damaged in the Aleutians to thirty-eight, made up of thirteen vessels sunk, three probably sunk and twenty-one damaged.

ENEMY FREIGHTER APPEARS TO BE DERELICT.

The communique also said that an enemy cargo ship which had been attacked northwest of Kiska on Sept. 28 was again bombed and strafed by army aircraft on Sept. 29 and appeared to have been abandoned.

There was no indication in the communique as to when the advance was carried out, but the assumption here was that it probably was made several days ago, at least. Navy communique in recent days have told of heavy aerial attacks on Japanese shore installations and ships at Kiska and also on ships operating west of that island.

Navy communique No. 138 said: "North Pacific: "1—United States army troops, covered and supported by units of the United States navy, have recently occupied positions in the Andreanof group of the Aleutian Islands. Occupation was effected without enemy opposition. Army aircraft, including B-24 (Consolidated) and B-17 (Flying fortress) bombers and P-38 (Lockheed Lightning), P-39 (Bell Airacobra), and P-40 (Curtiss) pursuit planes are now operating from airfields in these islands."

"2—On Sept. 26, the enemy cargo ship which was attacked northwest

of Kiska on the 25th was again bombed and strafed by army aircraft. No opposition was encountered and the ship appeared to have been abandoned.

"3—On Sept. 30, in the face of considerable anti-aircraft opposition, army Consolidated B-24's bombed ships in the harbor at Kiska and an enemy transport was set afire by two direct hits. The camp area also was bombed and several fires resulted. All our planes returned."

The eastern tip of the Andreanof island group is approximately 245 miles from Dutch Harbor. And it is somewhere beyond that distance that the American forces have established their new positions.

Today's Pictures Today

Gunners Kept Close Watch for enemy planes as United States troops moved on islands in the Andreanof group of the Aleutians, but the Japs either were unaware of the move or hampered by weather, and they didn't show up. A phase of the occupation of the islands, where strong bases have been set up, is shown in this picture of a soldier manning a 50-caliber machine gun as fellow troops take over a beach. At the right are ammunition boxes.

Associated Press Wirephoto



Today's Pictures Today

toward Japanese bases in the northern Pacific have been occupied by United States forces with the landing of troops in the Andreanof group of islands in the Aleutians (designated by a circle in this map). The move, announced Saturday by the navy, reduces the bombing distance to Japanese-held Kiska island by at least 250 miles. The westernmost of the Andreanofs is only 125 miles from Kiska.

Associated Press Wirephoto

