

400th BASE HEADQUARTERS AND AIR BASE SQUADRON

MISSION

LINEAGE

400th Base Headquarters and Air Base Squadron

STATIONS

Cold Bay, Territory of Alaska

Shemya, Territory of Alaska AK, 27 Jul 1943-15 Aug 1946

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

Securing sand proved to be another major problem in the runway construction program. Sand finally had to be taken from between the buildings located in the 400th Base Headquarters and

Air Base Squadron Areas. When this quantity was insufficient, the whole Air Base Headquarters had to be relocated so that all the sand located in the east sector could be used.

July also saw the arrival of the first contingent of four officers and thirty-eight enlisted men of the 21st Bombardment Squadron, 30th Bombardment Group. LST 461 brought them from Amchitka on July 17, 1943. The 400th Base Headquarters and Air Base Squadron composed of twenty-two officers and 227 men also arrived that day. They had been stationed at Fort Randall, Alaska, and were transported to Shemya by the S. S. Delarof.

As part of the plan to reduce the strength of the entire Service Command, Provisional Unit Number Six, whose personnel were formerly with the 400th Base Headquarters and Air Base Squadron, received orders on September 15, 1944, to return to the United States, to be stationed at McChord Field, Washington. This unit was composed of thirty-six officers and 224 enlisted men, and its departure on October 14, 1944, proved to be an outstanding morale builder. Personnel housing conditions were much eased after this unit's departure.

As late as May 1944, there was a conspicuous absence of running water throughout the base. For example, there were no shower facilities at all in the 344th Fighter Squadron area, while there were only three in the 400th Base Headquarters and Air Base Squadron areas. The personnel housing was extremely over-crowded and uncomfortable. Not until September 1944, did the phrase "slightly overcrowded but adequate" begin to appear. Inconsistencies in the furlough policy were another contributing factor in the lowering morale. The original rotation plan required two years service in the Alaskan Theater before orders for reassignment could be issued. The real problem was that a furlough could be issued in lieu of a reassignment. In May 1944, the Air Base Commander indicated that the personnel would be better oriented if there were a free working furlough and rotation plan. "Eighteen and twenty-four months in the Aleutian area is not particularly conducive to high morale especially when the present rotation plan is so dependent on inadequate transportation." In simpler words of the Daily Diary for Base Operations, May 22, 1944: "Furloughs to states to start as soon as transportation becomes available, very depressing." The adjutant's section outlined the leave procedures at this time which restricted leave to one per cent of the total base population, or approximately eighteen men. It was pointed out that "Our only problem is when will we be able to take advantage of a leave or furlough." The Daily Diary of the Base Quartermaster for May 24, 1944, gives an excellent example of how the enlisted troops felt about the furlough policy. "When T/5 Good was notified of his being the fortunate one to receive a furlough, it was the most difficult condition anyone ever encountered, explain to him that he really did have a furlough, boy these G.I.'s won't believe a thing anymore."

On the other hand it took little to please the GI's. On May 28, 1944, the first delivery of ice cream was made to the mess halls. A week or so before, this "symbol of American luxury and refinement" had been put on sale at the Base Exchange. In addition, May also saw the arrival of diversified food supplies to brighten the menus. The old mess kits were replaced with trays at the 400th Base Headquarters and Air Base Squadron Mess Hall, and more civilization had come to Shemya.

The Air Base Exchange provided another area of morale building for the men. The original Exchange and Barber Shop was opened during the week of August 14, 1943. This exchange, at approximately 1800 hours on December 13, 1944, burst into flame. It was extinguished in twelve minutes after the alarm was sounded, but not before fifteen hundred dollars worth of property was destroyed. The new exchange, when completed, was a vast improvement over the original. Another facility that the men found invaluable was the Shoe Repair Shop, which opened in July 1944. The 400th area took on the looks of a zoological gardens in May 1944, with the arrival of "Flipper." The men came from all over the island to see this seal. He or she had first snapped at anyone who came near, but as time passed, the seal would cuddle her little flippers around a man and want to be babied. Its diet consisted of fish and milk.

Detachments: Attu (Casco Cove)

Air Force Order of Battle
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Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.