

711 AIRCRAFT CONTROL AND WARNING SQUADRON



MISSION

711 Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron mission was to maintain operational readiness as a surveillance station under the operational control of the N/AM Control Center; maintain operational readiness as a FACP in the Alaskan Tactical Air Control Center; and operate and maintain an Air Force installation (Oct 1979)

LINEAGE

711 Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron
Activated, 8 Dec 1952

STATIONS

Cape Lisbourne, AK

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

2Lt Joel B. Krausse, 20 Jun 1951
Lt E. P. Duerksen
Cpt Eton V. Loomis, 21 Jul 1952
LTC Arthur L. Miller, 27 Nov 1952
Maj William J. Holland, 21 May 1953
Maj William Rutherford, May 1954
Maj Jon A. Laird, 21 Oct 1954
Maj Arthur B. Lyon, Jr., 3 Dec 1954

Maj James W. Combs, 1 Oct 1955
Maj John F. Deal, 14 Nov 1955
Maj George T. Lewis, 18 Dec 1956
Maj Sidney Murdock, Nov 1957
Maj Gorge E. Sabine, 19 Dec 1958
Maj Frank Gallagher, Oct 1959
Maj John Rudovsky
Maj Homer J. Staggs, 24 Jul 1961
Maj Roger C. Ashley, Mar 1962
Maj Carter H. Cowan, 16 Nov 1962
Maj Royal Lua, 8 Oct 1963
LTC Mervin L. Henry, Aug 1964
Maj Clark C. Aubel, 16 Oct 1964
Maj Luverne Indorf, Fall 1965
Maj William A. Berger, 23 Aug 1966
Maj Joseph W. Boyce, 30 Jul 1967
Maj Richard E. Lakey, 20 Jun 1968
Cpt William D. Rothe, 10 Jul 1968
Maj Harley P. Evans, Jr., 10 Oct 1968
Maj Richard D. Brewer, 5 Sep 1969
Unknown, Aug 1970
Cpt Clifford Kobland, 22 May 1973
Maj John P Rhude, 18 May 1974
Maj Daniel G. Robinson, 22 Mar 1975
Maj Eugene R. Culp, 9 Mar 1976
Maj Joseph T. Zadareky, Mar 1977
Maj John D. Cunningham, 8 Mar 1978
Maj Jessie B. Usrey, Mar 1979
Maj Charles T. Ohlinger, III, 10 Mar 1980

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM



The field of our shield is quartered and our air force yellow and air force blue colors are counterchanged; the lightning bolt and scope screen are portrayed on the first and primary quarter of the shield to indicate the might of the Air Forces power behind our early warning facilities. The red accents this power theme. The North Star is the honorable chief area of the second quarter symbolizes our location in the world. The white band in the third quarter is an honorable heraldic marking and indicates our loyalty and purity of purpose to accomplish the right; the blue chain over the sphere in the fourth quarter symbolizes unity, teamwork, strength and coordination of each part of the Air Forces and its individual units. Each link is a unit that helps makes the whole. The whole defends the land. Our land is portrayed by the sphere with the North American continent prominently shown. Our ACW network is thought of a chain thrown around the continent and of being only as strong as its weakest link. (Approved, 18 Feb 1957)

MOTTO

PRO PATRIA VIGILANTES--Always Watchful

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

On 8 Dec 1952, the 711 ACWS was established at Cape Lisburne AFS, AK. It had taken almost 18 months to construct the site starting on 21 Jun 1951.

The first year at Cape Lisburne was indeed harsh. Fresh food was paradropped and the men often watch with concern as much of it landed in the ocean and was unrecoverable. The master dinner menu in September 1951 consisted of three 2.5 cans of pears, 20 pounds of meat and two pounds of potatoes for the unit which had grown to 37 men.

The road to the tower was cleared but by the time the cat came back down the snow had drifted again blocking traffic.

Stove installed in the outhouse for obvious reasons.

During the first winter, detachment strength was reduced to one officer and 14 airmen. With the arrival of spring, detachment strength was increased again and the construction contracting returned.

On 9 Aug 1952 detachment personnel moved into the completed south wing of the NCO quarters. Along with the individual rooms, latrine and shower facilities were made available so that the long trek up the hill for some of life's necessities is no longer required.... Within a matter of a few days.

The dining hall, kitchen, exchange, and theater were completed. They were completed along with the steam plant and power plant in Sep 1952. Also in September an emergency landing strip and eight man shack was established at the lagoon nine miles east.

By Oct 1952, Det F-7 strength was 3 officers and 35 airmen. Also on station to install the eyes of the unit was a radar installation team for the AN/FPS-7 from Griffiss AFB, NY consisting of 1 officer and five airmen. As the station neared becoming operational so did the perceived threat from the Soviet Union. Air attack was serious concern and in Nov 1952 an M-55 quad-four machine guns were installed on the station.

On 8 Dec 1952 the 711 ACWS was at 50% manning. It took 2 more months for the unit to become operations. On 11 Feb 1953 the squadron became part of the Alaskan early warning system.

On a shield quartered first and fourth quarters air force yellow; second and third quarters air force blue, first quarter over a red lightning bolt a black radar scope; second quarter, a white star in chief, third quarter, a white hand; fourth quarter over a sphere, water areas light blue; land areas red a linked chain bendwise air force blue. Approved 17 May 1957

Mission

To man and maintain a permanent early warning type radar station at Lisburne, AK reporting air surveillance information, surface vessel activity (where possible) and all other electronic activity to the Ladd Air Defense Control Center through his parent air defense direction center in support of the maximum defense of the 11th Air Division Defense (Dec 1954)

To support administer, train and prepare air defense forces, to operate and maintain an air defense surveillance station under the operational control of the appropriate NORAD control center, to operate and maintain an air force station. (Jun 1962)

On 20 Jun 1951 Det F-7, 142 ACWS was officially activated at Ladd AFB, AK. The mission of the det was to provide the security guard during the site construction period at Cape Lisburne. With a strength of 2 officers and 29 enlisted men, the det arrived at Cape Lisburne by ship on 21 Jun 1951 set up tents, and began to offload 550 tons of cargo. High winds, rains and heavy seas made the operations extremely hazardous to all personnel involved.

On 8 Dec 1952 det F-7 was inactivated and 711 ACWS established.

Generation of adequate water supply was then as it today of daily concern to all assigned personnel. SSgt Jack Herdon, squadron NCOIC of AIO invented a new snow melting machine that has alleviated our water problems to great extent. This machine is completely mobile and has the capability of producing 650 gallons of water per hour.

Within radar operations, two operators on duty at all times, one operating 0-150 miles and other the 100-250 miles, both on the lower beam. It must have been frustrating for the operators; with typical monthly communications availability of 16% for teletype, 61% for voice, and 62% for HF. Track reporting must have been limited.

By March of 1954, the squadron was at full manning, six officers, 132 airmen and 3 civilians.

On the afternoon of 26 Mar 1954 a fire broke out in the dispensary which adjoins the orderly room. The cause of the fire was not officially determined but was surmised to have been caused by static electricity igniting some alcohol which the medic was mixing. The bachelor officer's quarters which are adjacent to the orderly room and dispensary by a rampway could not be saved as primary effort was directed at saving operations and the power and steam plant. All of which adjoins the orderly room by rampways.

The destruction of all the records presents a terrific workload on the administrative section in the months to come. All of the records will have to be re-accomplished and everything started from scratch.

The greatest threat from fire, in addition to the obvious loss of property and facilities is that it can only be put out by water. Water is a most precious commodity at Cape Lisburne. During the winter of 1953-1954, the water supply was already less than desired. As a result of the fire more drastic measures were initiated to make the water supply last until the projected thaw of the reservoir which was estimated at 1 Jun 1954. Water has been rationed on this site since 22 Oct. The average daily consumption was limited to 2500 gallons of water a day for all uses including the steam plant. Consumption rose above this level at times due to increased in personnel strength. Coupling this with the losses of water due to the fire, causing the following new measures to be initiated: all drinking facilities were shut off except the one in the mess hall. MSgt Henderson, the medic was placed as overseer for the monitoring of clothes washing. Personnel were limited to two buckets of water for all their clothes washing and were restricted to washing their clothes once every two weeks. Steam pressure was reduced to the greatest possible degree depending upon the temperature.

Controls which were in effect but which were tightened included the conservation of water for personnel cleanliness with showers limited to once a week; limitation on water for use in housekeeping and the use of water in the mess hall.

The internal organization of the squadron varied considerably over the years with little change in the actual functions which were performed.

Communications with other sites continued to be a problem into 1956. On 24 Jun 1955, radar operations initiated direct voice contact with the Air Defense Direction Center at Campion AFS. Operators at Cape Lisbourne couldn't hear well but Campion's usually could. In sending lots to the ADDC this station has been accepting loud whistles from the ADDC as Roger to the plots sent in. If the whistles fade out and there is negative contact with Whales also, the plots are told in the blind and also sent by CW (Morse code). However, traffic routed by CW suffers from long delays.

In late Jun 1955 in response to the continuous yearning of Cape Lisbourne personnel to take a break from the station itself, a small hut approximately 7.5 miles from the site was renovated for squadron recreational use. The hut is located near a large lagoon which can be reached by tracked vehicles.

The summer of 1955 also saw a renovation of Top Camp. A new inflated radome was installed and a new 12 man living quarters were built. It was not until the summer of 1957 that interior toilet facilities were installed.

Many supply problems have been resolved over the years but at times events occurred that were odd. During one quarter, the same problem existed that have since the site was activated It appeared that black cherry pop has priority over critical items such as caterpillar tractor parts and plumbing supplies.

Another fire occurred on 16 Nov 1956, an estimated monetary loss of 3000 dollars were cause by fire in the transmitter building. Defective wiring was believed to be the cause of the fire.

Just three months later on 17 Feb 1957, the commissary containing more than 2700 feet of floor space and all its contents were destroyed by fire whose origins remained undetected. All available personnel from the site fought the fire with two men sustaining frostbite and one suffering from asphyxiation. It was not until Jun 1957 that the new commissary was completed.

During the summer of 1957 the White Alice communications system was installed a Cape Lisburne. This system initially owned and operated by Federal Electric Company provided the station with communications with all other stations in Alaska for the first time. Prior to this information derived from the radar scopes sometimes could not be given to the control centers. Telephone conversations with higher headquarters were almost nonexistent. Landline teletype messages were often misconstrued due to constant garbling. With White Alice information could

be passed to control centers and to other sites with the ease of just pushing a button. Telephone conversations can be carried on with any telephone exchange within reach of the Bell system. Teletype messages can be received with the same accuracy with which they were originated.

On Friday 13 Sep 1957 a button was pushed and Levi (Campion AFS) answered as never heard before. With White Alice the radio relay system was eliminated.

Also during the summer of 1957, an early attempt to replace many of the military personnel with civilian contractors was instituted. Under project Donna Marie, four civilian contract technicians reported in August and many more were due in during the fall. But in September, the project was abruptly cancelled and the civilians left the site. Another attempt at using civilian contractors was not to be made for another 20 years.

The resolute determination of the Cape Lisburne personnel to the station on the air occurred on 24 Oct 1957. While trouble shooting the drive system, personnel assigned to the AN/FPS-3 radome pushed the antenna by hand in order to keep our operational status.

Modernization of equipment occurred on a regular basis and during the summer of 1958 the CPA-27 modification of the AN/FPS-3 was done. The radar was re-nomenclature the AN/FPS-20A. Concurrently, UPA-35 PPI operator consoles were installed. In June 1961 a rigid radome was installed replacing the inflated radome which had caused continuous problems over the years.

On 19 Dec 1962 a fire again struck the station. The fire started in the dining hall and quickly moved through the hallways. In addition to destroying the dining hall, the BOQ was destroyed. Following the fire, food services sections moved into the motor pool and continued operations. It was functional but it was still the motor pool. The new dining hall didn't open until Jun 1963.

In the fall of 1963, the current gymnasium was completed but it was not until June of 1964 that it was connected into the arctic hallway system.

As of June 1965 Cape Lisbourne AFS consisted of 26 buildings including those at Top Camp. At bottom camp, the main buildings were: operations, weather, dining hall; dispensary; recreation hall, fire station, power plant; BOQ quarters; AFRS & library; NCO club and EM quarters.

During the same period several equipment modernizations also occurred. The radar simulator was installed in Jul 1969 and the radar set which had gone through a series of modifications was again modified and renominclatured the AN/FPS-93A. The video mapper was installed in the fall of 1969.

Most supplies were still brought in by aircraft in 1974 and not always to the satisfaction of station personnel. Resupply from Elmendorf still presented a problem. Aircraft were scheduled but never arrived. When aircraft did arrive some refused to back haul materials and equipment to Elmendorf which created a storage problem for supply.

On 8 Sep 1974 at a little before 0400 local time, a steady point of light was observed passing rapidly at what appeared to be a high altitude over Cape Lisbourne AFS, from horizon to horizon. In the next couple of hours seven more objects were seen passing overhead in an east-west track and one from north to south; five travelled in formation. None of these registered on the operations radar scope. Coordination with other sites yielded no explanation. Six other people including the operations officer observed the phenomenon. No official explanation was given.

In the fall of 1976, AAC requested bids from civilian companies to assume operation and maintenance of all functions at the site, except radar operations and postal service. Unlike the Donna Marie project some twenty years ago, this program became a reality. Because of the expected transition to a contractor in the summer of 1977, the air force military personnel center began cancelling incoming projected personnel in Jan 1977. During March 1977, the last month military manning was at its normal level the Cape Lisborne AFS had 98 personnel assigned out of 102 authorized.

On 27 May 1977, the O&M contract was awarded to RCA Operational, Maintenance and Service Company. The first two contractors arrived on station on 12 Jun 1977. The transition continued during the summer sometimes quite painfully to military personnel. Many personnel received short notice assignments and departed without orders in hand.

By the end of September an adequate number of contractors were on station and military manning was reduced to; there were a total of 61 military, civilian and contractors assigned to the station. The overall purpose of contracting to reduce remote tours while saving money had been met. As a result of the contract, instead of 94 military personnel authorized there were only 15 authorized.

As a result of the contract the chain of command changed. Whereas previous commanders had reported directly to the commander of AAC, the commander now reported to the commander of the 531st ACWG. This change provided military personnel at the group to perform staff functions in support of the squadron commander.

On 21 May 1979, the White Alice Communications System was officially deactivated and satellite communications replaced older troposcatter system. No difficulties were experienced in the changeover and communication reliability was increased even more.

Air Force Lineage and Honors
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Sources

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

