

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Dutch Harbor Naval Operating Base and Fort Mears, U.S. Army

and or common Amaknak Island

2. Location

street & number _____ not for publication

city, town Unalaska _____ vicinity of

state Alaska code 02 county Aleutian Islands code 010

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
☐ district	☐ public	☒ occupied	☐ agriculture
☐ building(s)	☐ private	☐ unoccupied	☒ commercial
☐ structure	☒ both	☐ work in progress	☐ educational
☒ site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	☐ entertainment
☐ object	☐ in process	☐ yes: restricted	☒ government
	☐ being considered	☒ yes: unrestricted	☐ industrial
		☐ no	☐ military
			☒ other: unused

4. Owner of Property

name Ounalashka Corporation, P.O. Box 149, Unalaska, AK; City of Unalaska, Unalaska, AK; and

street & number Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, Juneau, AK

city, town _____ vicinity of _____ state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Alaska State Office, Bureau of Land Management, USDI, Anchorage, AK,

street & number and State Magistrate Alaska, Unalaska, AK

city, town _____ state

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title None has this property been determined eligible? _____ yes ☒ no

date _____ federal _____ state _____ county _____ local

depository for survey records

city, town _____ state

7. Description

Condition

☐ excellent
☐ good
☒ fair

☐ deteriorated
☒ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☐ unaltered
☒ altered

Check one

☒ original site
☐ moved date

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Dutch Harbor Naval Operating Base and Fort Mears are on Amaknak Island in Unalaska Bay, which is on the north side of Unalaska Island, one of the Fox Islands in the Aleutians. Unalaska is approximately 1,000 air-miles southwest of Anchorage. Amaknak Island lies within the city limits of Unalaska. It is about 5½ miles long and varies in width from a few hundred yards to about one mile. It may be divided into four areas: In the north Mount Ballyhoo and Ulakta Head rise dramatically from the sea. Ulakta Head still contains World War II coastal defenses and some coast artillery quarters: a reinforced-concrete, casemated 8-inch gun battery; two 155mm gun emplacements (Panama mounts); a dug-in, concrete battery command post; two fire control stations; a joint army and navy combination harbor entrance control post and harbor defense command post; eight igloo- and elephant-type magazines; several frame barracks and storehouses; and numerous quonset huts mostly in ruins. The army named Ulakta Head "Fort Schwatka" and it is known locally today as "Eagle's Nest."

To the south of Mount Ballyhoo lies the site of former Dutch Harbor Naval Operating Base on relatively low but rolling terrain. This area was intensely built up during World War II and most structures remain, although many are fast deteriorating and some are already ruins. Principal features include: the short (4,385-foot) navy runway which serves the commercial airport today, plane revetments along the north side of the runway, magazines, aerology-operations building (now an airline terminal), double hangar, bombproof power plant, two wharves, brick apartment house, a large number of occupied cottages (former naval quarters), torpedo storehouse and two hillside tunnels for torpedo explosives, and a large number of deteriorated naval structures, including storehouses, shops, barracks, and hospital. A new air terminal is under construction.

South of the naval base is the original site of Fort Mears which was taken over by the Navy in 1944. This was primarily the army's housing area and it contained many frame, two-story, mobilization-type barracks, storerooms, mess halls, theater, and a hospital. Several of the barracks remain standing but all of them are in poor condition. In the Fort Mears area are several concrete pillboxes and, on the hillsides, personnel trenches. South of and close to Fort Mears is what might be called "downtown" Amaknak. Located here are a motel, shopping center, modern housing, and, at the former submarine base dock, a large container shipping facility. Also in this area, at the narrowest part of the island, stands a wartime marine railway.

The south end of Amaknak is called Little South America because its outline resembles that continent in shape. Like the north end of the island, it is dominated by a hill. The army named it Hill 400, while it is now known locally as Bunker Hill--from its coastal defense structures. Along its west and south base are fifteen reinforced concrete or steel ammunition magazines and a warhead tunnel. A winding road leads to the top of the hill and several more igloo- or elephant-type magazines are scattered along it. On the very top is a dug-in, two-level, reinforced-concrete battery commander station. Nearby is a frame fire control station which, considering it is wood, is in remarkably good

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
☐ prehistoric	☐ archeology-prehistoric	☐ community planning	☐ landscape architecture	☐ religion
☐ 1400-1499	☐ archeology-historic	☐ conservation	☐ law	☐ science
☐ 1500-1599	☐ agriculture	☐ economics	☐ literature	☐ sculpture
☐ 1600-1699	☐ architecture	☐ education	☒ military	☐ social/
☐ 1700-1799	☐ art	☐ engineering	☐ music	☐ humanitarian
☐ 1800-1899	☐ commerce	☐ exploration/settlement	☐ philosophy	☐ theater
☒ 1900-	☐ communications	☐ industry	☐ politics/government	☐ transportation
		☐ invention		☐ other (specify)

Specific dates 1940-1945

Builder Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

When Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, the naval air station at Dutch harbor and the adjacent army post, Fort Mears, both on Amaknak Island, Unalaska, were the only defenses the United States possessed in the entire Aleutian Chain. On June 3 and 4, 1942, Japanese carrier aircraft made a two-day attack on Amaknak Island, the most serious air attack on North American territory during the war. These strikes were coordinated with the enemy's attack on Midway and his occupation of the western Aleutians. Dutch Harbor continued to have important missions throughout the war. The naval air station expanded into a naval operating base, Unalaska Bay being one of the best anchorages in the Aleutians. Among its many tasks was that of controlling the steady stream of Soviet shipping that passed through Dutch Harbor and adjacent Akutan Pass en route to and from Siberia and the United States.

History

In 1912, the U.S. Navy installed a radio station at Dutch Harbor. In the Washington Naval Treaty of 1922, the United States agreed not to fortify the Aleutians. Even when Japan withdrew from this treaty in 1934, the United States took no steps to fortify either the Aleutians or the Alaska mainland. Not until 1938 did a navy board urge the construction of naval air and submarine bases at Dutch Harbor and Kodiak and an air base at Sitka. At Dutch Harbor construction began in July 1940 on both army and naval installations, the army mission being defense of the naval air station. Dutch Harbor has an excellent anchorage, but there is little level land on Amaknak; the naval air station, therefore, was designed for seaplanes and Catalina flying boats (PBYs). A seaplane ramp yet remains at Dutch Harbor. As for land planes, the navy first contrived a small landing strip equipped with catapult and arresting gear, similar to an aircraft carrier's. Eventually, a regular, if short, runway was carved out of rock at the foot of Mount Ballyhoo for fighter aircraft. It continues to serve Unalaska's commercial flights.

When the first army troops arrived at Dutch Harbor in May 1941, they found a new Marine Barracks and Dutch Harbor's "landmark," a large brick residence at the naval radio station. Over in the town of Unalaska (population 300, mostly Aleuts), they noted a U.S. Coast Guard station with its 60-man bunkhouse.

Construction proceeded on both bases and soon the tiny island was crowded with new buildings. The naval air station was commissioned on September 1, 1941. The army base was formally named Fort Mears on September 10, in honor of Col. Frederick Mears, a member of the original Alaskan Engineering Commission, which built the Alaska Railroad, and chief engineer of the Panama

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 1,000 acres

Quadrangle name Unalaska

Quadrangle scale 1:250,000

UTM References

A

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4	0	2	6	0	0
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5	9	7	6	4	0	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B

0	3
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3	9	8	6	0	0
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5	9	7	0	0	0	0
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Zone Easting Northing

C

0	3
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3	9	6	5	0	0
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5	9	7	0	0	0	0
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D

0	3
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3	9	9	1	0	0
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5	9	7	6	4	0	0
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E

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F

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheet.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Erwin N. Thompson, Historian

organization National Park Service, Denver Service Center

date March 23, 1984

street & number 755 Parfet Street

telephone (303) 234-5206

city or town Denver

state Colorado 80225

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☐ national ☐ state ☐ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title _____ date _____

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date _____

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date _____

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 7. Description

Page

2

condition. Also on top are four 155mm gun emplacements (Panama mounts). Wooden ready magazines at these emplacements are also in good condition. Elsewhere on the hill are ruins of a few quonset huts and frame buildings.

The historic areas and features being considered are the army coastal defense systems at Ulakta Head and Hill 400 and the following naval structures at Dutch Harbor, all on Amaknak Island:

Brick apartment house at the naval radio station. Pre-war construction. Navy no. 618. Said to be the only brick building in the Aleutians. During World War II, it was the Marine command post. Its interior has been wrecked by vandals.

Bombproof power plant. Navy no. 409. Reinforced concrete. Designed to withstand a direct hit by a 500-pound bomb. Said to be the strongest structure in the Aleutians. Presently being renovated as a power plant.

Aerology-operations building. Navy no. 417. Also used by the Naval Air Transport Service, whose insignia is inlaid in today's waiting room floor. The building presently serves as a terminal for a commercial airline.

Air administration building. Navy no. 416. Today it serves as an air terminal for a commercial airline. There is also a restaurant in the building.

Torpedo assembly complex. Navy nos. 443, 444, 445, and 447. Torpedo assembly building (443). Lower half of walls is reinforced concrete; upper portion is wooden. Later used as aviation supplies storehouse. Torpedo shop annex (447), reinforced concrete. Two tunnels cut into hillside (444 and 445) for storage of explosives and torpedoes.

The above areas and features are owned as follows:

Brick apartment house, no. 618, and the torpedo complex, nos. 443, 444, 445, and 447, are owned by the Ounalashka Corporation.

Bombproof power plant, no. 409, is owned by the City of Unalaska.

Aerology-operations building, no. 417, and air administration building, no. 416, are owned by the State of Alaska.

Former military installations on Unaaska Island proper are not included in this nomination inasmuch as the significant events occurred on Amaknak Island.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 8. Significance

Page

2

Railroad. When war came, the civilian contractor gave way to navy seabees who continued construction for both the army and navy. Naval facilities expanded, new missions were added, and the Dutch Harbor Naval Operating Base was commissioned January 1, 1943, to include the air station, submarine base, ship repair facility, and facilities for provisioning the fleet. Strength figures eventually reached 5,680 naval and 10,000 army personnel.

As the number of men increased, the army began moving its facilities to Unalaska, principally to Unalaska and Pyramid valleys. As the army moved out, the navy moved in until, in 1944, the navy took over all of Amaknak, except the harbor defenses. At Ulakta Head, the army installed a battery of two 8-inch guns and a battery of two 90mm guns, naming the complex Fort Schwatka. On Hill 400, the principal defense was a battery of four 155mm guns. On the east side of Unalaska Bay, near Summer Bay, stood Fort Brumback with four 155mm guns. And at Fort Learnard, on the west side of the bay, the army installed two 6-inch guns and a two-gun 90mm battery.

After the June 1942 Japanese air raids, the military anticipated an enemy landing before winter. Defenses were increased. The army installed a series of strong points on the ridges around Unalaska Valley, dubbing it the Iron Ring. Concrete pillboxes appeared at every road intersection. Additional 3-inch anti-aircraft batteries were installed around Unalaska Bay. And the unfortunate native Aleuts were forced to leave their homes and move to a strange and hostile environment in Southeast Alaska. By fall 1942, however, invasion scares diminished and, as new bases were established farther west, Unalaska's strength began to decline.

Japan Attacks

Unalaska's first alert came even before the United States entered World War II. On July 4, 1941, a radio message arrived warning that a possible collapse of the Russian front might open the way for enemy operations against Alaska. Within a few weeks, however, activity returned to normal. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor resulted, of course, in stepping up work to obtain a state of readiness.

In May 1942, Imperial General Headquarters in Tokyo ordered an attack on the Midway Islands, with the dual mission to occupy those islands and to destroy the remnants of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, and an attack on the Aleutians for the purposes of diverting American attention from Midway, protecting the Imperial Navy from an attack from the north, and obstructing communications between the United States and Russia--a communications line of which Dutch Harbor was a key link. Having broken Japanese codes, the United States was alert to the forthcoming attacks. On May 17, Fort Mears was notified that Japan was preparing to attack sometime between June 1 and 10. Later, word came that the enemy would probably hit the Aleutians on June 1.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 8. Significance

Page

3

Steaming toward Unalaska at that time was Rear Adm. Kakuji Kakuta's Second Carrier Striking Force, consisting of aircraft carriers Ryujo and Junyo (40 fighters and 42 bombers), heavy cruisers Takao and Maya, and three destroyers. The task force reached its launching position early on June 3 and, despite fog, launched its planes. Junyo's planes were forced to return because of the fog and an encounter with an American flying boat. The eleven bombers and six fighters from Ryujo arrived over Amaknak in clear skies. Having been alerted by a patrol plane, the few American ships in the harbor had already put to sea. At 5:45 a.m., the first flight of Japanese fighters roared over the island, followed five minutes later by bombers. Fourteen bombs fell on Fort Mears, destroying five buildings, killing 25 soldiers, and wounding 25 more. A second strike caused no damage; but a third damaged the radio station and killed one sailor and one soldier. All planes returned to Ryujo safely except one Zero fighter which made a forced landing on Akutan (thus providing the Americans their first example of this excellent plane).

Just west of Unalaska, on Umnak Island, the United States had recently completed an airfield (Fort Glenn) and its aircraft were also anticipating the Japanese attack. On June 3, however, communications difficulties between the two islands resulted in Umnak being unaware of the attack until after the enemy planes had returned to the carrier. Later in the day, Umnak's P-40 fighters intercepted two Japanese reconnaissance planes, to the latter's great surprise, and shot one of them down into Umnak Pass. The enemy now knew that the Americans had an air base on or near Unalaska, but fog protected its location.

That night the Japanese force sailed toward Adak to carry out a pre-invasion bombardment in the mistaken belief that Adak was garrisoned. The weather became so foul that Admiral Kakuta decided to turn back and deliver a second strike on Unalaska. In late afternoon, June 4, a force of nine fighters, eleven dive bombers, and six level bombers struck, this time concentrating on Dutch Harbor. They hit the 3,000-ton S.S. Northwestern, a beached vessel near Dutch Harbor dock that served as housing for civilian workers.* The vessel caught fire and was destroyed, as was an adjacent warehouse. A bomb hit a naval gun emplacement, killing four men; and another destroyed an army gun, leaving two dead and two wounded. Bombs destroyed four new steel fuel tanks and 22,000 barrels of oil--a month's supply for Dutch Harbor. A naval hangar, still under construction, had a big hole punched through its roof and a Catalina flying boat inside was damaged. The total death list for the two-day attack mounted to 43: 8 navy, 1 marine, 1 contract employee, and 33 army. Another 50 were wounded.

*Many Unalaskans, today, believe that a sunken hull at the head of Captains Bay is the Northwestern. Seabee records, however, state that they raised the Northwestern, repaired it, and had it towed to Seattle where she yielded 2,700 tons of scrap steel. U.S. Navy, Bureau of Yards and Docks, Building the Navy's Bases in World War II (Washington, 1947) 2:177.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 8. Significance

Page

4

While this second raid was in progress, navy PBYs and army bombers located the carrier force and attacked; no hits were scored, however. For the next two days bombers continued to make search and attack sorties, to no avail. (A bomber did attack the Pribilof Islands through error, while P-38 fighters attacked a Soviet freighter.)

Also on the raid of the 4th, Junyo's planes selected as their rallying point the west end of Unalaska. Eight P-40s from Umnak met them, shooting down four with a loss of two of their own. During this action, Japanese pilots, at last, spotted the airfield below them. American air losses during the two-day battle amounted to five army aircraft and six naval Catalinas. The Japanese reported a loss of eleven planes also. The enemy carriers now withdrew to the west, to a point off Kiska to screen their forces who were landing there.

The Soviets

When American lend-lease to the Soviet Union got in full swing, Russian ship traffic increased greatly between the Siberian ports of Provideniya and Petropavlovsk and the West Coast. One of the better passages through the Aleutians from Bering Sea to the Pacific is Akutan Pass just east of Dutch Harbor. Thus, the responsibility of controlling this shipping fell to the navy at Dutch Harbor. Westbound vessels were not boarded, but many entered Unalaska Bay for refueling or repairs. Eastbound Russian ships were required to stop at Dutch Harbor to pick up recognition signals. American naval personnel boarded each vessel and interviewed the ships' officers. A small flurry of excitement occurred at the base on January 3, 1943, when the first Russian submarine entered the port.

By mid-October 1942, Russian ships entering Dutch Harbor had increased to the point where the navy decided to establish a separate refueling, repair, and provisioning station on Akutan Island, 35 miles to the east, to divert them from Unalaska's busy waters. The new station opened in November 1942, with the completion of six 5,600-barrel oil tanks, a coal yard, a 250-foot dock, and mooring buoys. With the war drawing to a close, the navy decommissioned the fueling station on April 30, 1945. From then on, Russian ships again put into Dutch Harbor. No fewer than seventeen Soviet vessels were in port at Dutch Harbor on V-J Day 1945.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 9. Bibliography

Page

2

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**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 9. Bibliography

Page

3

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**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 10. Geographical Data Page 2

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Ulakta Head-Mount Ballyhoo: Beginning at a point where the northwest corner of the aircraft runway meets the waters of Unalaska Bay, then following the coastline of Amaknak Island generally northeasterly, around the northern end of the island, then southwesterly so as to exclude a spit of land, to the northeast corner of the runway, then in a straight line northwesterly along the northern boundary of the runway to the point of beginning. This boundary encloses the complex of fortifications and structures that belonged to Fort Schwatka.

Hill 400: Beginning at a point where the head of a narrow inlet meets the east end of the isthmus that joins Hill 400 (Little South America) to the rest of Amaknak Island, then following the coastline of Hill 400, east, south, west, north, and northeast, to where Hill 400 meets the west end of the isthmus, then in a straight line along the southern edge of the isthmus in an easterly direction to the point of beginning. This boundary encloses the coastal fortifications, antiaircraft gun emplacements, magazines, and tunnels constructed on and around Hill 400.

Air Operations, No. 417, and Air Administration, No. 415, Buildings:

Beginning at a point at the east corner of a gate that opens onto the runway west of the operations building, then in a straight line in an easterly direction 200 feet along a fence that separates these two buildings from the runway, then 90 degrees in a straight line in a southerly direction paralleling the east side of the administration building to the north edge of an ill-defined dirt road, then 90 degrees westerly following the northern edge of that road 200 feet to its junction with a north-south dirt road, then 90 degrees north in a straight line along the east boundary of this north-south road to the point of beginning. This boundary encloses the two structures which stand on unsurveyed land.

Torpedo Assembly Complex: Beginning at a road junction 50 feet northwest of the northwest corner of the torpedo assembly shop, then in a straight line in an east northeasterly direction along the southern edge of an unimproved dirt road 200 feet, then 75 degrees in a straight line in a southerly direction 525 feet, then 90 degrees in a straight line in a west northwest direction 250 feet to the edge of an unimproved north-south road, then along the eastern edge of this road in a straight line in a northerly direction 500 feet to the point of beginning. This boundary encloses the torpedo assembly shop, the annex, and the two torpedo tunnels.

Power Plant, No. 609: Beginning at a point on the west side of the shore road along Dutch Harbor and 25 feet northeast of the northeast corner of the power plant, then in a generally southern direction along the landward side of this road 250 feet, then in a straight line in a westerly direction paralleling the southern side of the power plant and 20 feet from it for a distance of 200 feet to the east side of a dirt road, then in a straight line paralleling the west side

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

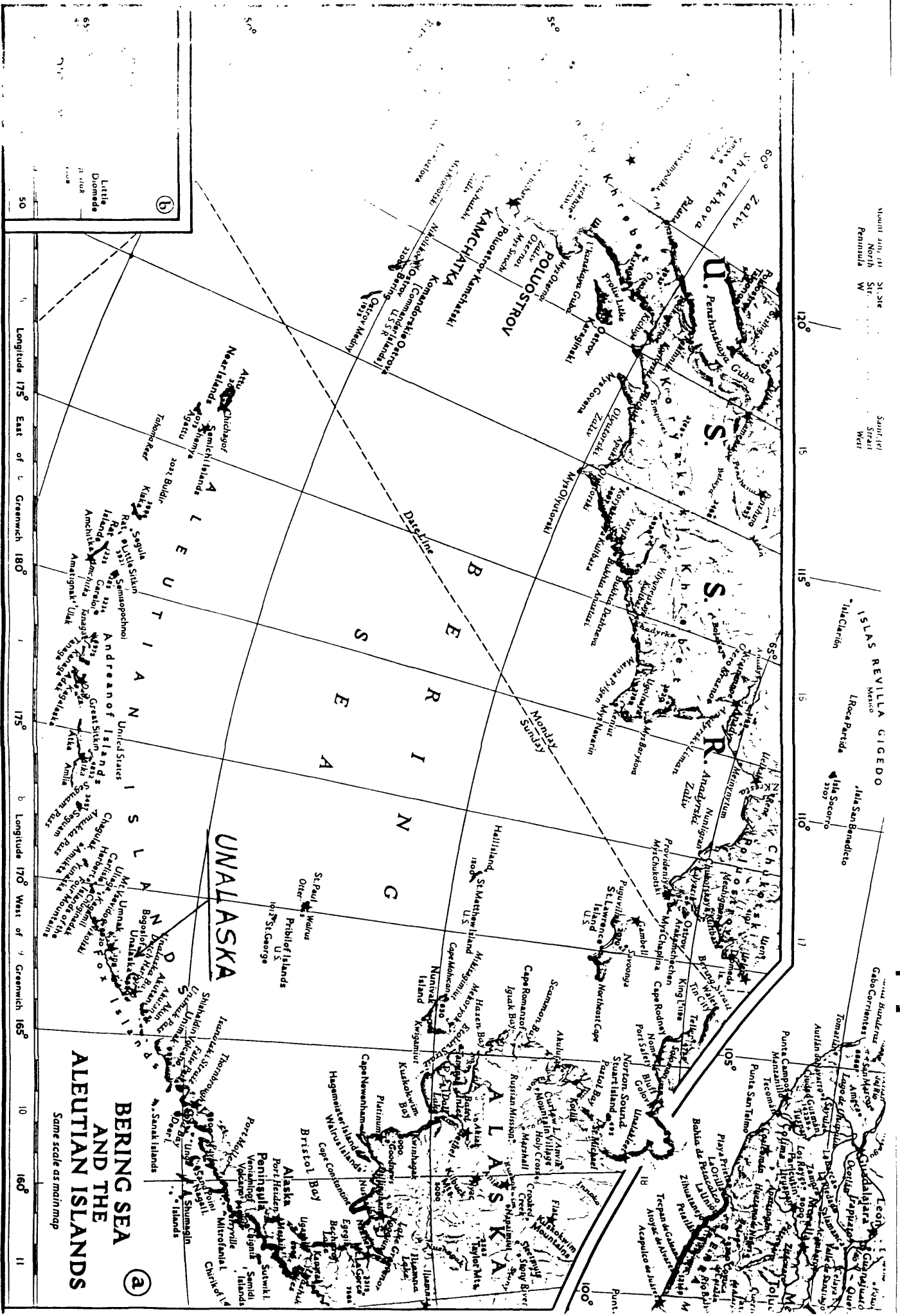
date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 10. Geographical Data Page 3

of the power plant and 30 feet from it in a northerly direction for 250 feet, then in a straight line paralleling the north end of the power plant in an easterly direction 125 feet to the point of beginning. This boundary encloses the large, irregularly shaped power plant structure.

Brick Apartment Building, No. 618: Beginning at a point on the west side of a dirt road on the east side of Amaknak Island that formerly ran from the naval base to the ferry dock to Unalaska and 100 feet east of the northeast corner of the apartment building, then along the inland edge of this road in a south southeasterly direction 200 feet, then 90 degrees in a straight line in a west southwesterly direction 200 feet, then 90 degrees in a straight line in a north northwesterly direction 225 feet to the point of beginning. This boundary encloses the brick apartment building and the (natural) grassy area that surrounds it.



**BERING SEA
AND THE
ALEUTIAN ISLANDS**
Some scale as main map

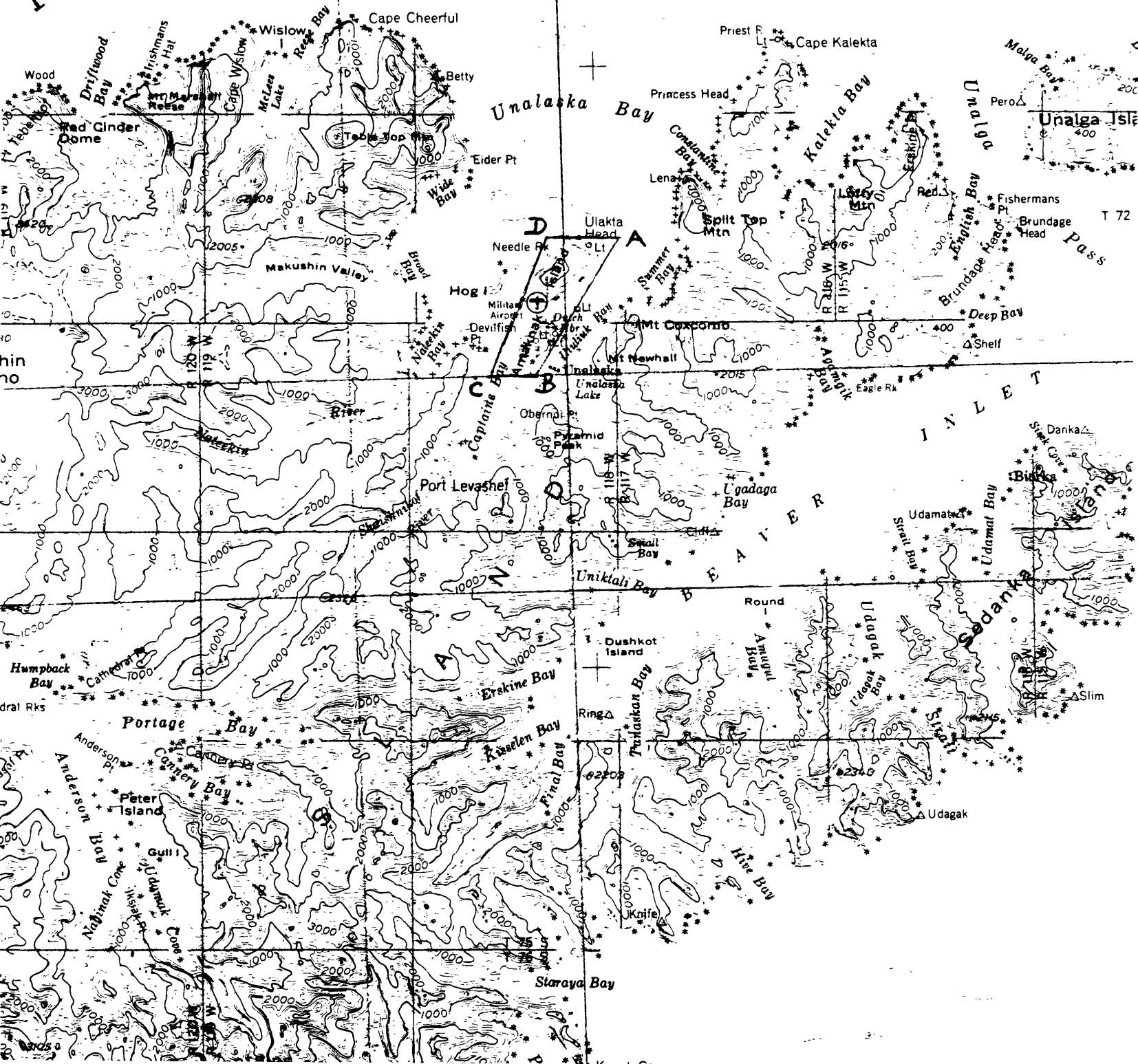
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ALEUTIAN

Chelan Bank

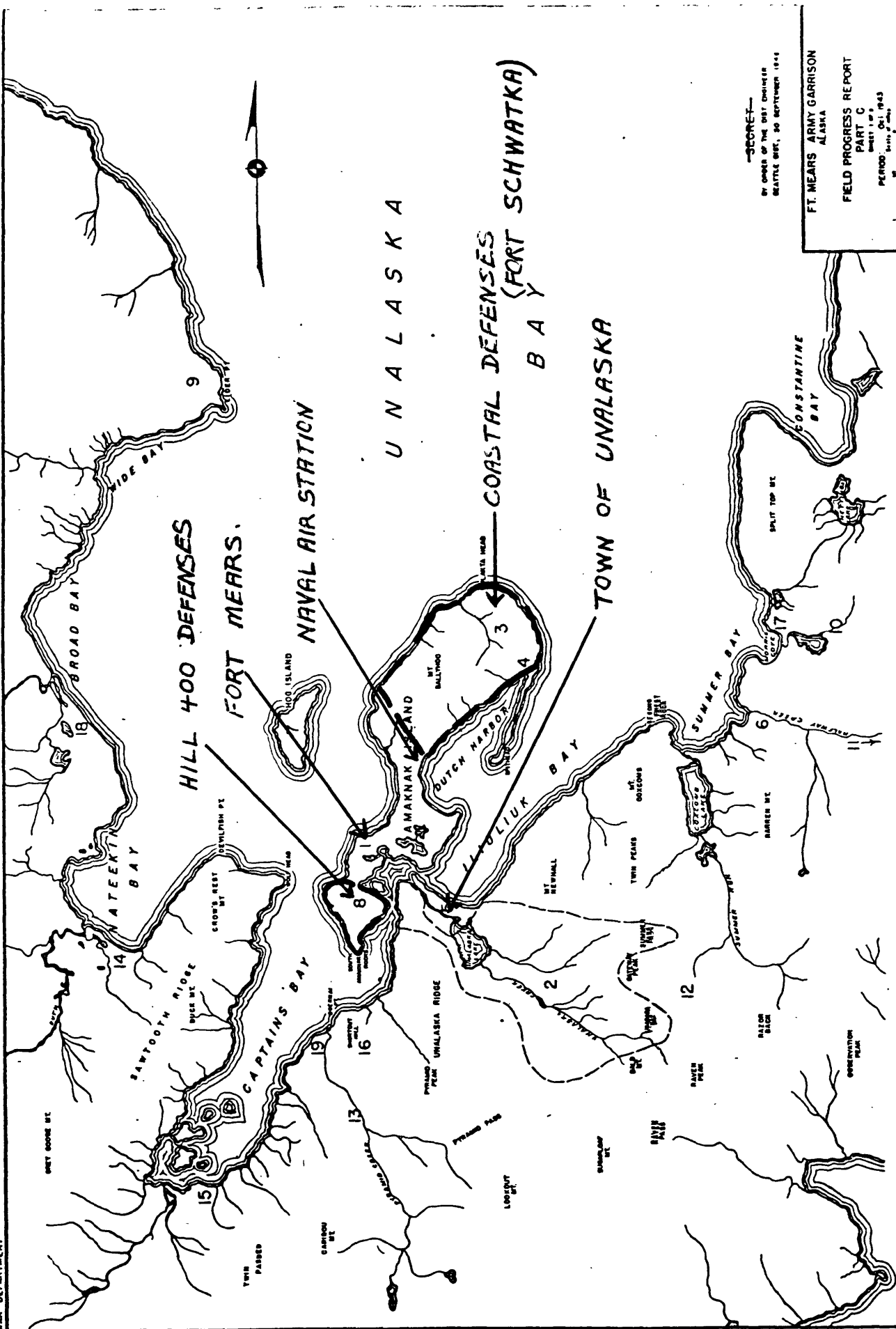
AKUTAI.

Reef P...



CORPS OF ENGINEERS, U.S. ARMY

WAR DEPARTMENT



SECRET

BY ORDER OF THE DIST CHIEF OF ENGINEERS
SEATTLE DIST., 30 SEPTEMBER 1943

FT. MEARS ARMY GARRISON
ALASKA

FIELD PROGRESS REPORT
PART C

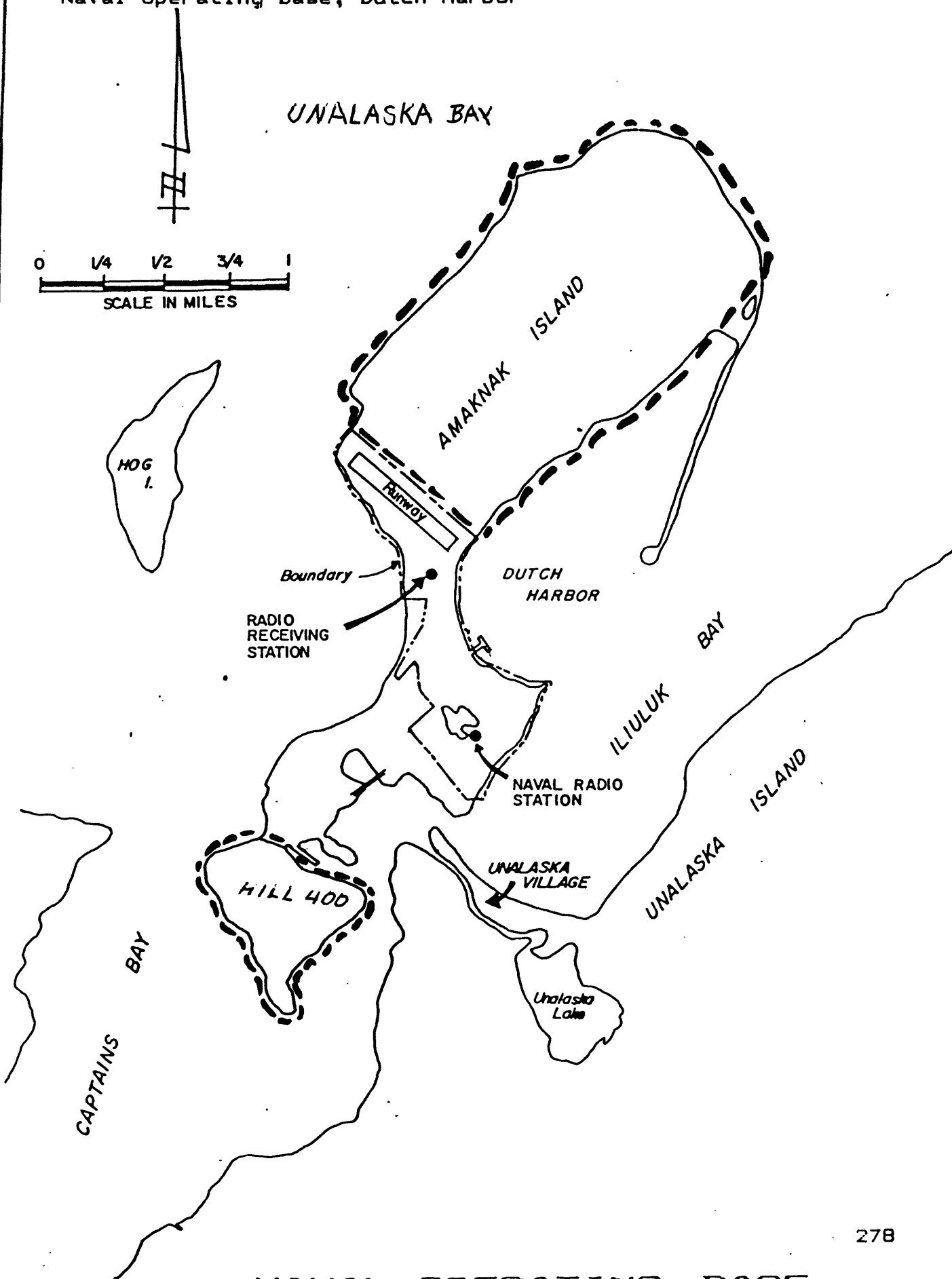
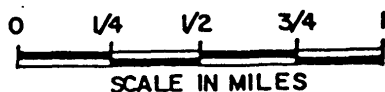
PERIOD
1941-1943

U.S. ENGINEER OFFICE, SEATTLE, WASH.
PREPARED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF
A. HARRIS, DIST. CHIEF OF ENGINEERS

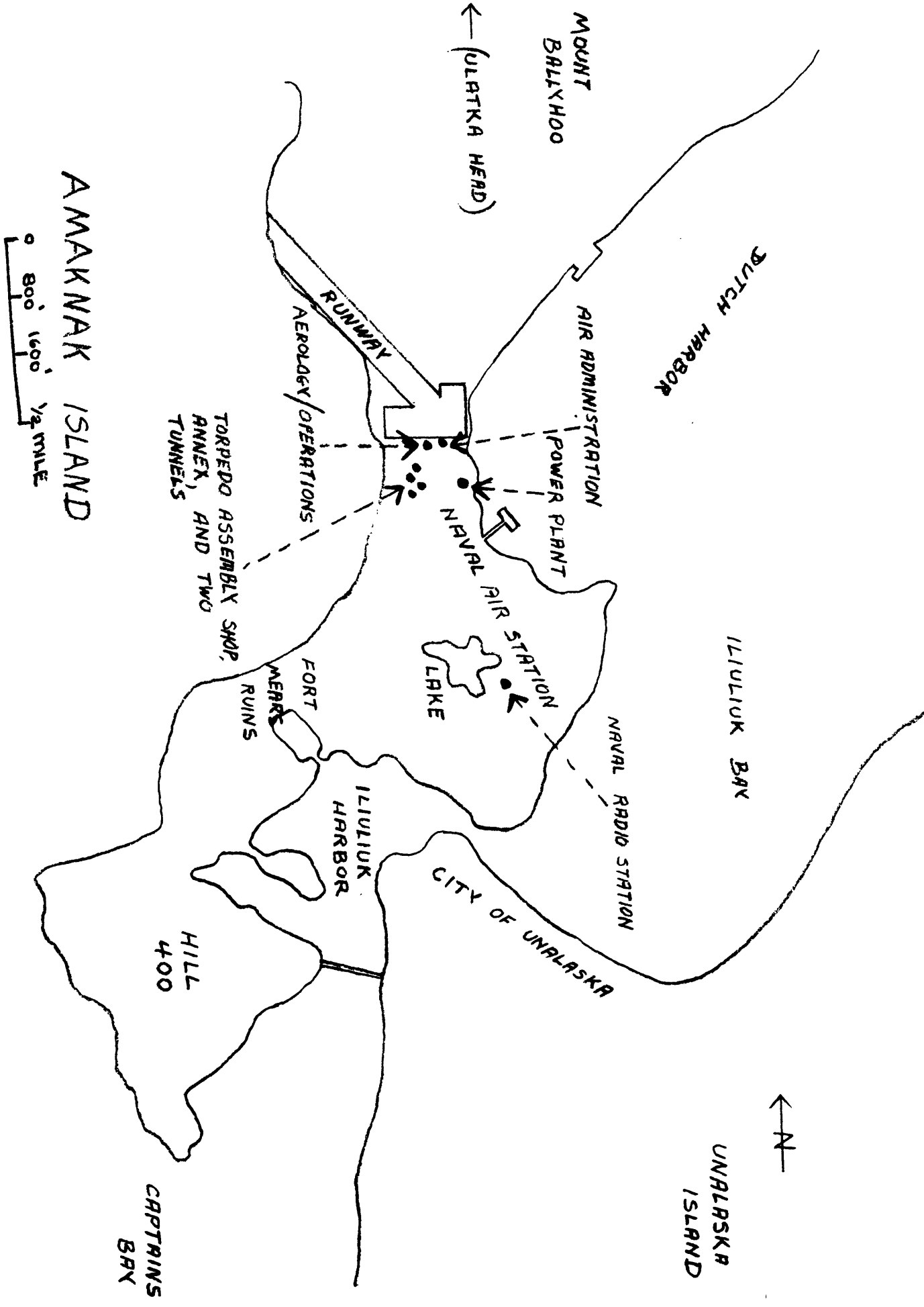
SECRET

Naval Operating Base, Dutch Harbor

UNALASKA BAY



NAVAL OPERATING BASE ,
DUTCH HARBOR



DUTCH HARBOR

RAMP

RUNWAY

GATE

609

447 445

443

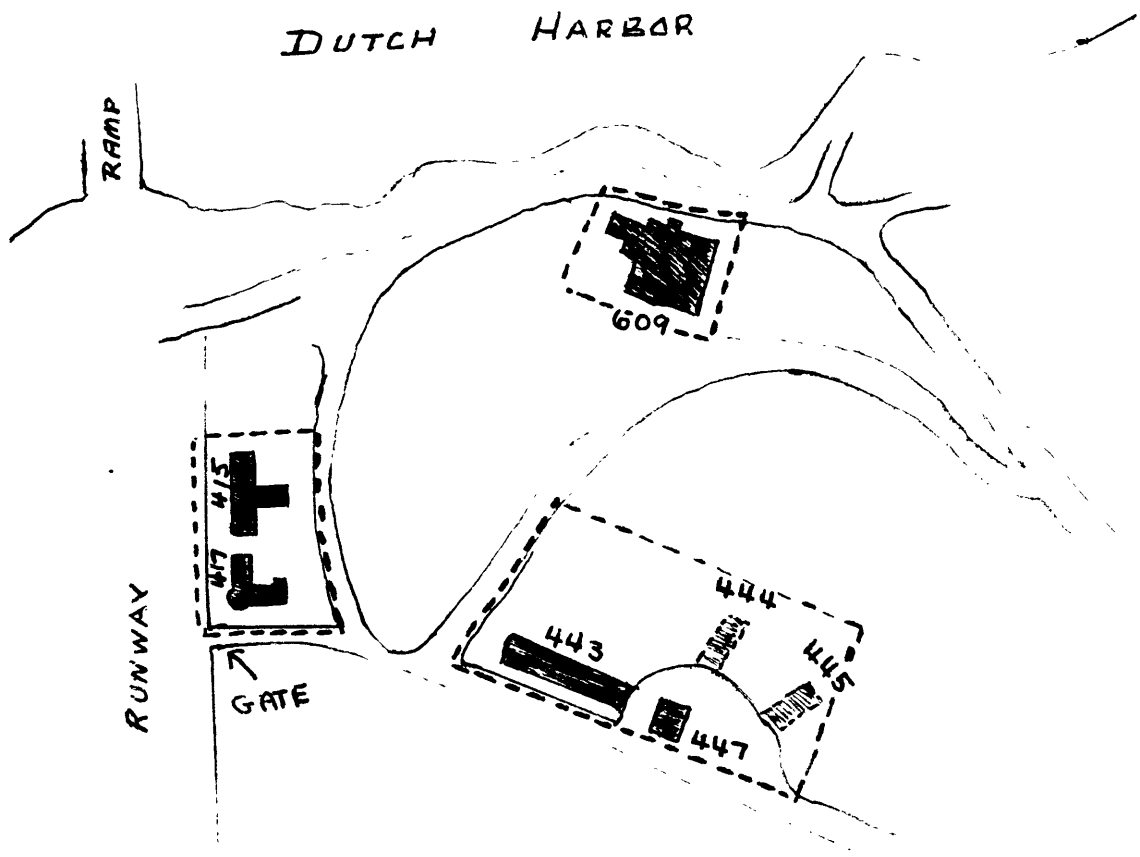
444

445

447

0 200 400 600 800 FEET

SCALE



ILULIUK BAY

→
TO FORMER FERRY

← TO NAVAL BASE

BRICK APARTMENT BUILDING
No. 618

FORMER NAVAL RADIO
STATION AREA

POND

