

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 Kodiak Naval Operating Base and Forts Greely and Abercrombie

and or common US Coast Guard Support Center and Fort Abercrombie State Historic Park

2. Location

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town \_\_\_\_\_  vicinity of Kodiak

state Alaska code 02 county Kodiak District code 150

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name U.S. Coast Guard, 17th USCG District, Pouch 3-5000, Juneau, AK 99801

and Alaska Division of Parks, Dept. of Natural Resources,

street & number 619 Warehouse Ave., Anchorage, AK 99501

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. 17th U.S. Coast Guard District, U.S. Dept. of Transportation,

Pouch 3-5000, Juneau, AK 99801 and

street & number Division of Land and Water Management, Dept. of Natural Resources,

Alaska

city, town 3601 C Street, Anchorage state Alaska

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title National Register of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date October 27, 1970  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records National Register of Historic Places

city, town Washington state D.C.

# 7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

## Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Kodiak Naval Operating Base and Fort Greely were the principal advance bases in Alaska on the outbreak of World War II. They are five miles southwest of the city of Kodiak, the oldest permanent Russian settlement in Alaska. Construction began in 1939 and both were formally established in 1941. These installations, adjacent to each other, are now one reservation administered by the U.S. Coast Guard. The naval facilities were located between the head of Womens Bay and Buskin River and on Nyman Peninsula. Fort Greely's main developments were north of Buskin River, from Buskin Lake in the west to St. Paul Harbor in the east. Construction was first carried out by a civilian contractor; at the beginning of 1943, Naval Construction Battalions (Seabees) gradually took over all construction for both services. Today, most of the World War II naval structures remain standing and are used by the U.S. Coast Guard Support Center. Few army structures remain in the Fort Greely area.

### Naval Operating Base

There are two areas possessing historical significance at the former naval base: 1. the seaplane station and submarine base at Womens Bay, and 2. the land-plane airfield south of Buskin River. The contractor's administrative area and the extensive naval housing do not contribute significantly to the operational history of the base.

### Land-plane Airfield

At the north end of the naval reservation and south of Buskin River, the airfield was used by both the army and navy. There are three runways, roughly in a figure 4 configuration. The two shorter runways (Nos. 1 and 2), 5,400 by 150 feet and 5,000 by 150 feet, were constructed by the navy. Later, to station bombers at the field, the army funded construction of the third (No. 3), 6,000 by 150 feet. All three were paved. Along the north side of the field several plane revetments cut into the side of a low hill remain from World War II. Nothing remains of some 25 wartime hangars that stood around the runways. Today, light planes park in the revetments. Commercial and private air operations and facilities are leased or permitted at the field today. The field belongs to the U.S. Coast Guard and is used by it in carrying out ocean air patrols in the Alaska region. A mile-long taxiway joins the airfield to the seaplane facilities to the south.

### Naval Air Station (Seaplanes)

The seaplane (primarily PBY, or Catalina, flying boats) facilities were at the head of Womens Bay. There are two large, permanent seaplane hangars, 320 by 250 feet each, and a large, paved parking area around and between them. The hangars now serve Coast Guard patrol (land) planes and helicopters and have been extensively modernized, some \$10 million having been spent on them.

# 8. Significance

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

**Specific dates**      1941-1944      **Builder/Architect**

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

Naval Operating Base: The naval operating base, with its air station, submarine base, headquarters for Rear Adm. Robert A. Theobald (later, Rear Adm. Thomas C. Kinkaid), North Pacific Force, and joint operations center for the Navy, Army (Maj. Gen. Simon B. Buckner), and Army Air Force (Brig. Gen. William O. Butler), was operational at the time of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. It was then the principal advance naval base in Alaska and the North Pacific. Coordinating with the naval establishments at Sitka to the east and Dutch Harbor to the west, its flying boats made their vital patrols of the Gulf of Alaska, Bering Sea, and North Pacific Ocean. The ships and submarines of North Pacific force played critical roles in the Aleutian Campaign. Establishment of the joint operations center allowed for coordinated planning to drive the Japanese from the North Pacific.

Fort Greely: In the uncertainties following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the Alaskan outpost of Fort Greely, with its coast artillery, and infantry troops, stood ready to repel an invader. For over a year, the Japanese threat remained real but, in the end, the enemy did not come. Army bombers stood ready in Kodiak's hostile weather until, in June 1942, the opportunity came to meet the enemy force attacking Unalaska in the Aleutians. The coastal defenses remain as evidence of the time when World War II came to Alaska.

A History

During the 1930s, the War Department considered the possibility of a war in the Pacific and prepared War Plan Orange to meet that eventuality. The plan concluded that the "strategic triangle" of Alaska, Hawaii, and Panama should form the main line of defense. Despite this concept, Alaska possessed no defenses. Even as Europe prepared for war, the only army installation in Alaska was a tiny garrison at Chilkoot Barracks near Haines. The navy was no better prepared. Not until 1937 did it succeed in obtaining a few thousand dollars to begin a seaplane base at Sitka. Late in 1938, a naval board urged the strengthening of Sitka and the establishment of seaplane and submarine bases at Kodiak and Dutch Harbor. Congress approved and a civilian contractor, Siems Drake Puget Sound, began construction at Kodiak in September 1939. Congress also appropriated funds to strengthen the army in Alaska, including defenses for the Kodiak naval installation. Because the navy's contractor was already at work at Kodiak, the army employed him to construct its facilities, which were eventually named Fort Greely, in honor of the Arctic explorer, Maj. Gen. Adolphus W. Greely.

The Kodiak Naval Operating Base eventually included a naval air station, with facilities for both land- and seaplanes, submarine base, net depot, ammunition

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

# 10. Geographical Data

Naval Base and Fort Greely

Acreeage of nominated property 3,000 acres

Quadrangle name Kodiak

Quadrangle scale 1:250,000

## UTM References

A 

0	5	5	3	1	2	0	0	6	4	0	2	8	0	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

B 

0	5	5	3	1	2	0	0	6	4	0	1	0	0	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

C 

0	5	5	2	9	4	0	0	6	3	9	7	1	0	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

D 

0	5	5	2	7	8	0	0	6	3	9	7	1	0	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

E 

0	5	5	2	9	3	0	0	6	4	0	1	8	0	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

F 

0	5	5	3	0	4	0	0	6	4	0	2	8	0	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

G 

Zone	Easting				Northing									

H 

Zone	Easting				Northing									

## Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheet.

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

state code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Erwin N. Thompson, Historian

organization Denver Service Center, National Park Service date April 9, 1984

street & number 755 Parfet Street telephone (303) 234-4509

city or town Lakewood state CO 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

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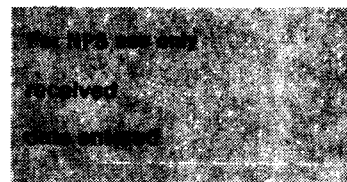
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: date

Chief of Registration

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The western hangar has a control tower that served the seaplanes in World War II. At the head of Womens Bay are three concrete seaplane ramps. During the 1964 earthquake this area sank several feet, rupturing the ramps where they entered the water. A large dike now separates them from the aircraft parking area. Inland from the hangars is the large engine-overhaul and aircraft maintenance building (essentially, a third hangar), still used as such. East of this building are six smaller structures in the industrial area: cold storage and commissary, two general aircraft storage buildings, two workshops, and a storehouse.

Beyond but close to the southeast corner of the aircraft parking area, near the shore of Womens Bay, the navy's Alaska Sector Command, or administration, building stood until 1983. Nothing remains of the two-story structure torn down that year.

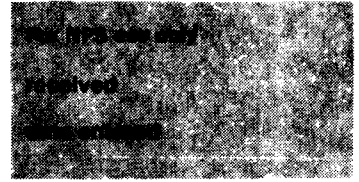
Six hundred feet farther out on Nyman Peninsula, on Womens Bay shore road, stands the bombproof naval air station power plant. This sturdy, reinforced-concrete building is similar in construction to existing naval bombproof plants at Dutch Harbor and Sitka.

### Submarine Base Area

Most of Nyman Peninsula was occupied by a submarine base that consisted of frame barracks, mess halls, small shops, and fuel storage tanks, these last still remaining. Two historic structures in this area are the tender and tanker pier, 450 by 50 feet, which is used for importing petroleum products and is in excellent condition, and the marginal pier, 1,400 by 30 feet, which is intact but not maintained. A 30-ton, stiff-leg derrick once on this pier is no more.

### Fort Greely

Between 1940 and 1944, the U.S. Army maintained a garrison and coastal defense works at Fort Greely, carved out of that portion of the naval reservation north of Buskin River. More than 11,000 officers and men were housed in a limited area that resulted in a cramped and crowded physical layout. Virtually nothing remains today of Garrisons 1 and 2 and other post facilities. Today, modern Coast Guard family housing occupies part of Fort Greely; commercial fishermen lease other areas to store crab pots and other fishing equipment. On the east shore of the army base, historically important coastal defense installations are found on Artillery Hill and Buskin Hill. Both areas belong to the U.S. Coast Guard, but Buskin Hill is leased by the Alaska Division of Parks which has established there the Buskin State Recreation Park.

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Of prime importance on Artillery Hill is the underground Harbor Defense Command Post (HDCP), the control center for all coastal defenses at Kodiak. This reinforced-concrete structure is in a cut-and-fill position near the top of Artillery Hill. Access is difficult, the one entrance having been filled with earth to prevent vandals from entering. Although the interior has not been examined, it is known to contain six concrete-walled rooms that were offices and the necessary utilities. The structure measures 84 by 40 feet. Along the military road leading up the hill to the HDCP are several personnel airraid shelters, each constructed with corrugated metal (similar to quonset huts) and covered with rock and earth. Also found on the hill are several collapsed quonset huts, quite beyond salvage.

Buskin Hill has at least two (of four) 155mm gun emplacements, Panama mounts.<sup>1</sup> This battery was one of three at Kodiak that provided the primary coastal defense for the naval base for the first two years of the war, until the permanent coastal gun batteries were completed.

#### Fort Abercrombie

At Miller Point, four miles northeast of the city of Kodiak, the army erected a permanent 8-inch gun battery (Battery No. 403) and established it as a sub-post of Fort Greely, naming it Fort Abercrombie in April 1943.<sup>2</sup> Today, the two concrete-and-steel, barbette gun emplacements are on the cliff's edge overlooking the Pacific Ocean. To the rear is a casemated ammunition magazine. Two rear entrances join in the interior to create a U-shaped corridor, off which are the ammunition rooms. On top of the magazine is the reinforced-concrete battery commander's station, missing its (wooden?) roof. In front of the magazine is a reinforced-concrete, partly-damaged, canopy of, possibly, a fire control station. Farther to the rear, along the approach road to the battery, are a large, reinforced-concrete, war reserve, ammunition magazine, and a smaller reinforced-concrete structure that possibly was a communications-switchboard facility.

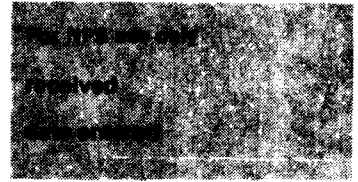
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1. The search for all four emplacements was thwarted by a combination of heavy vegetation, foul weather, and illegal squatters.

2. Two other sub-posts, Forts Tidball (6-inch gun battery on Long Island in front of Kodiak) and J.H. Smith (8-inch gun battery at Cape Chiniak south of Kodiak) were established at the same time. The practice of designating batteries as forts may be unique to Alaska.

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When the army abandoned Fort Abercrombie, it did not remove the two 8-inch guns, but destroyed them in place with explosives. As a result, the gun pits today contain twisted steel from the gun carriages. The gun tubes, partially destroyed at their breech ends, are also present and have been placed on concrete pedestals for display.

Fort Abercrombie is a state historical park and is on the eve of interpretive development. A museum concerning World War II coastal defense is planned for the casemated magazine.

Summary

The following structures and areas are considered significant to Kodiak's World War II history:

Kodiak Naval Operating Base--Two seaplane hangars; aircraft parking area; three seaplane ramps; engine overhaul and aircraft maintenance building; the industrial area; power plant; and the tender and tanker pier and the marginal pier at the submarine base.

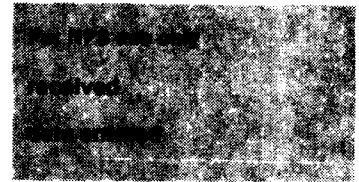
Land airfield, Naval Air Station--Three runways and aircraft revetments on north side of field. Modern air terminal facilities at west end of the area are excluded.

Fort Greely--Harbor defense installations on Artillery Hill and Buskin Hill.

Fort Abercrombie--An 8-inch coastal gun battery and supporting facilities.

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and fuel storage, docks and piers, and provisioning facilities. When Admiral Chester Nimitz, Commander in Chief, Pacific, at Pearl Harbor, learned of the coming Japanese attack on the Aleutians, he allotted Task Force 8 (later redesignated as North Pacific Force), under Rear Adm. Robert A. Theobald, to Alaska. Theobald, "one of the best brains and worst dispositions in the Navy," and distrustful of army brass, established his flag aboard cruiser Nashville and took personal command of his main body of five cruisers and four destroyers. The admiral concluded that the Japanese would not invade the western Aleutians but would attack farther east. He therefore deployed his main body 400 miles due south of Kodiak to defend the eastern Aleutians and Alaska. Because of this decision, Theobald's force was out of any possible action when the attacks came. Further, the imperative need for radio silence resulted in his inability to issue orders to his air and other surface groups. Afterwards, realizing he could not control events from a ship, Theobald established his headquarters at Kodiak.

During the Japanese landings in June 1942, Maj. Gen. Simon B. Buckner, commanding the army's Alaskan Department, operated from his joint operations center at Fort Richardson outside Anchorage. Far removed from the field and out of touch with the navy, Buckner discovered that his center was wholly inadequate to the task. Despite Theobald's condescending airs, Buckner and his chief of air, Brig. Gen. William O. Butler, moved their advance command post to Kodiak, occupying the navy's Alaska Sector building, alongside the admiral. (While this move improved operational control in the Aleutian Campaign, discord between the admiral and the generals continued to fester. Finally, Theobald was reassigned and replaced by the South Pacific warrior, Rear Adm. Thomas C. Kinkaid, who succeeded admirably in working with the army.)

The Kodiak joint command post continued to direct Alaskan operations until March 1943, when Buckner and Kinkaid moved to Adak Island to be closer to the forthcoming invasions of Attu and Kiska. The post commander at Fort Greely was Brig. Gen. Charles H. Corlett, who later distinguished himself by leading the ground forces that landed at Kiska, by commanding the Seventh Infantry Division in capturing Kwajalein Island in the Marshalls, and, still later, by commanding an army corps in Europe.

The first army troops arrived at Kodiak in April 1941 and the post of Fort Greely was formally established that September. Construction of both permanent and temporary coastal gun batteries and anti-aircraft positions was

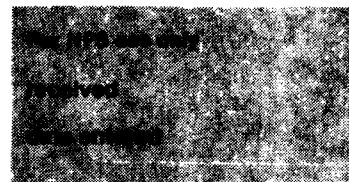
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1. Samuel Eliot Morison, Coral Sea, Midway and Submarine Actions, May 1942-August 1942. History of United States Naval Operations in World War II (Boston 1975), p. 171.



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undertaken by the civilian contractor, but completed by Seabees, all under the watchful eye of Col. B.B. Talley, Corps of Engineers. The permanent works consisted of three batteries, each with two guns in barbette emplacements and a casemated magazine to the rear:

- Fort Abercrombie at Miller Point, two 8-inch guns
- Fort J.H. Smith at Cape Chiniak, identical to Abercrombie
- Fort Tidball on Long Island, two 6-inch guns, steel turrets

Other coastal defenses consisted of three 155mm batteries on Panama mounts (four guns each) and two 90mm batteries (two fixed guns each). A total of 52 .30 caliber machine guns were emplaced at strategic points. Also, an undetermined number of field artillery pieces was brought to Kodiak. At Fort Greely, the all-important harbor defense command post was constructed on Buskin Hill, overlooking the naval base.

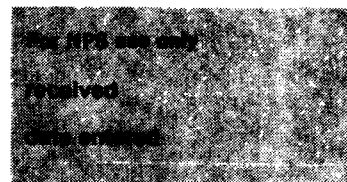
The 155mm batteries played an important role in the early months of the war because their emplacements could be constructed quickly. Construction of the heavier batteries, with their reinforced-concrete, casemated magazines, took longer. These three batteries were completed in 1943, about the time the Aleutians were freed from Japanese forces. As the war moved farther from Alaska, the coast artillery companies began leaving Kodiak until, in December 1944, Fort Greely was placed in a caretaker status.

In addition to defense installations, the army added to Kodiak's offensive capabilities through the Eleventh Air Force's medium and heavy bombers. The navy's two land runways being too short for these planes, the army funded construction of a third runway, 6,000 feet in length. In addition to American aircraft, the Royal Canadian Air Force stationed its Bolingbroke bombers at Kodiak from time to time in order to patrol the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea. In the fall of 1942, Canada also stationed a fighter squadron there, making Kodiak its rear base in Alaska.

The navy continued its operations at Kodiak, not decommissioning its submarine base until May 1945. The naval air station remained active throughout the war and on into years of peace. Back in 1941, when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, and again in 1942, when the Japanese invaded the Aleutians, Kodiak was a strong link in America's thin chain of defense in the northwest corner of North America. It fulfilled its mission well.

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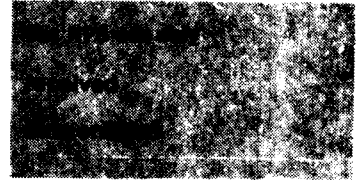
Item number 9. Bibliography Page 2

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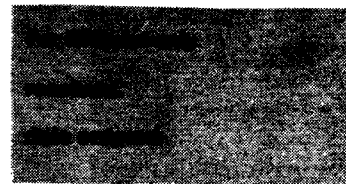
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\_\_\_\_\_. Map. "Permanent Defense Plan," Alaska, no date. Record Group 338, WNRC.

\_\_\_\_\_. Supplement to Harbor Defense Projects, 1944. Harbor Defenses of Kodiak. Record Group 338, WNRC.

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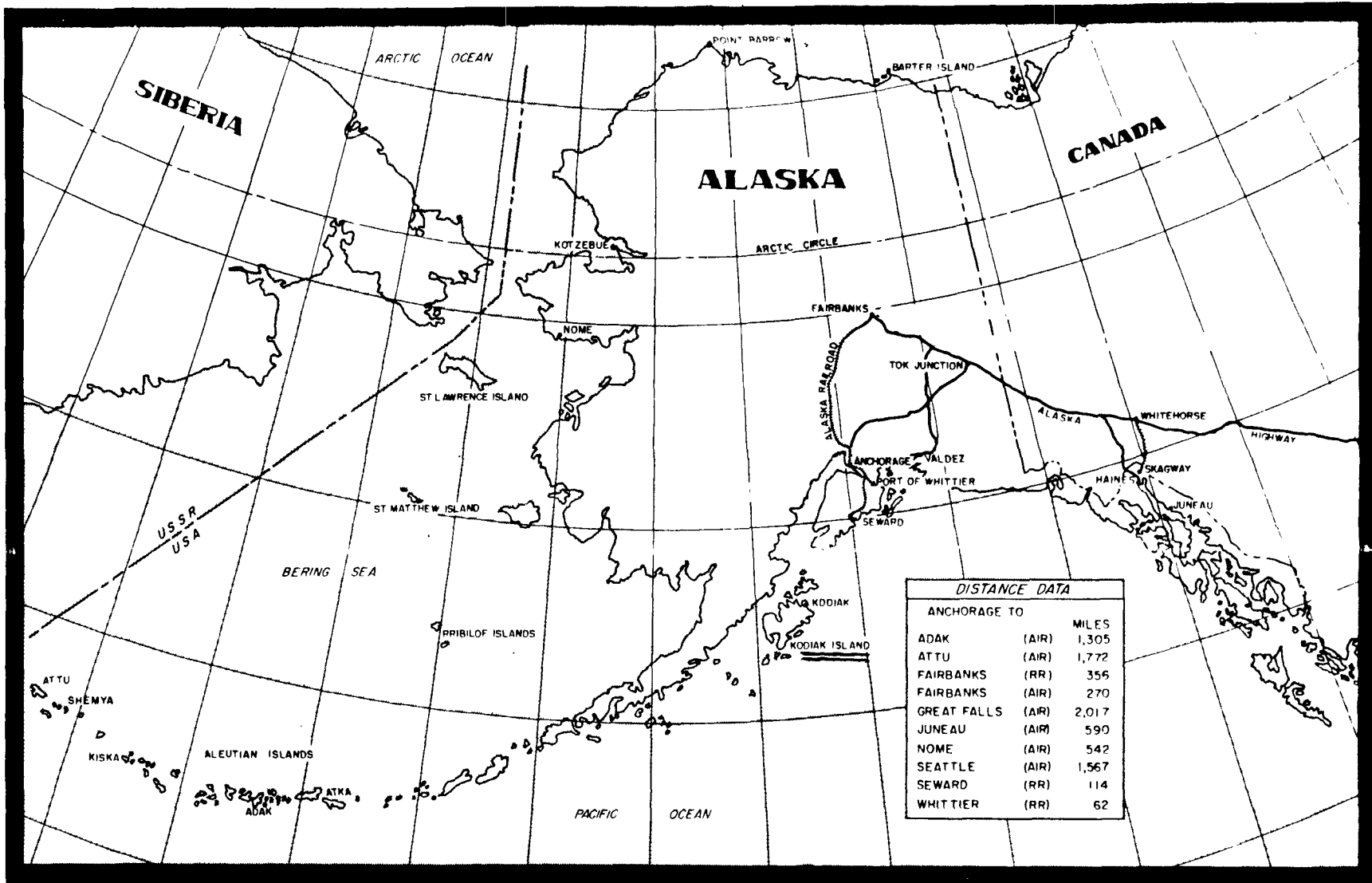
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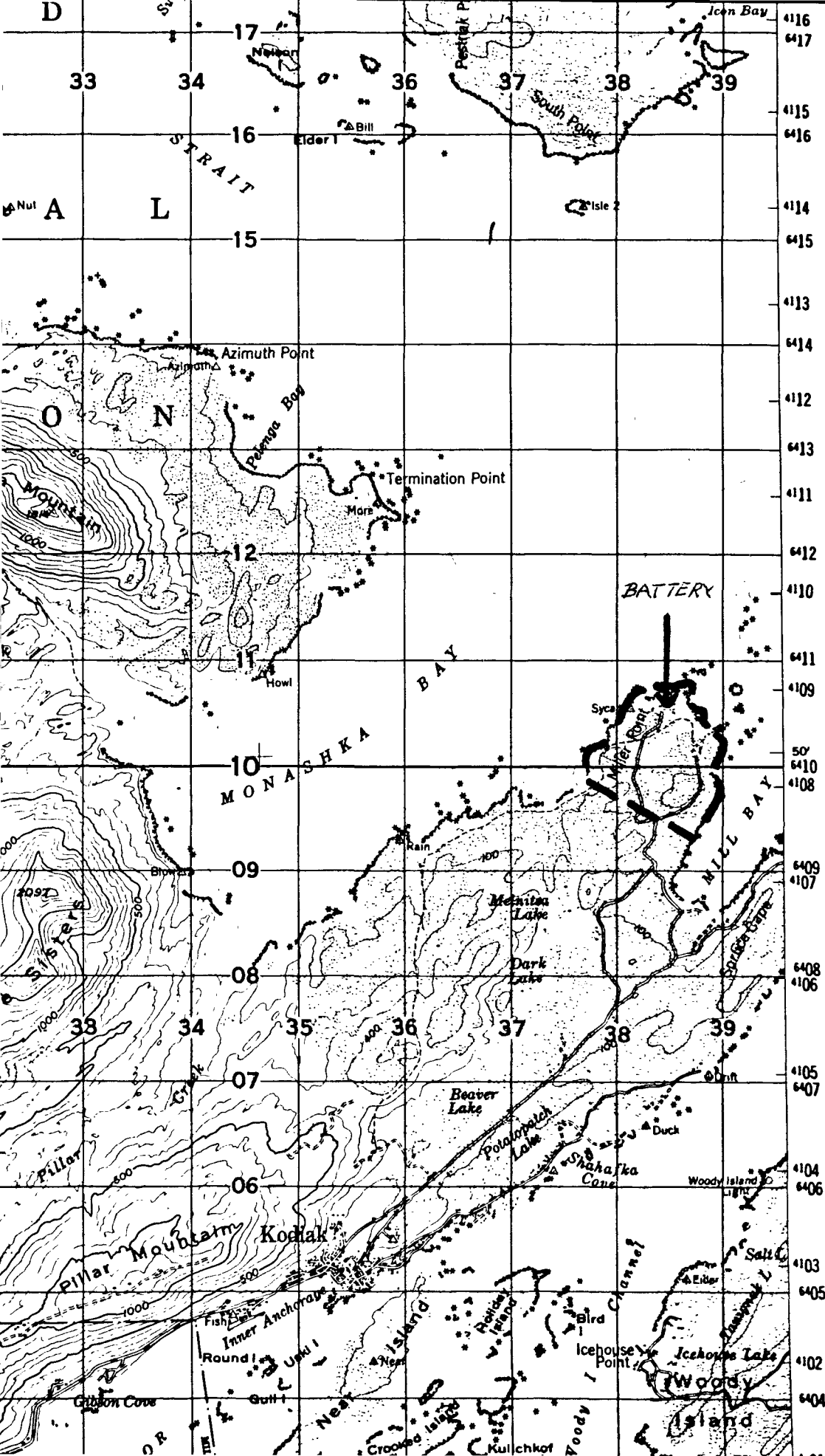
Beginning at a point where the northeast corner of Artillery Hill meets the sea at St. Paul Harbor, then following the coast of Kodiak in a southerly and southwesterly direction past Artillery Hill, Buskin Hill, the mouth of Buskin River, Finny Beach, and along the east side of Nyman Peninsula to its southeast corner at Nyman Spit; then in a northwest direction along the tip of Nyman Peninsula to its southwest corner; then in a northeast direction along the northwest coast of Nyman Peninsula so as to include a marginal pier and a petroleum pier to the southeast corner of a paved aircraft parking area; then in a straight line in a northwest direction along the southwest side of the parking area so as to include three concrete ramps to the western corner of the parking area; then in a straight line in a northeasterly direction along the northwest boundary of the parking area to the southwest side of a paved road; then in a straight line in a southeasterly direction along the southwest side of this road to its junction with a paved road coming from the northeast; then in a straight line in a northeast direction along the southeast side of this road to its junction with a paved road running northwest-southeast; then in a straight line in a southeast direction along the southwest side of this road to its end; then projecting that line to where it meets the edge of a taxiway; then in a generally northeasterly direction along the northwest side of the taxiway and an adjoining runway to the intersection of that runway and a northwest-southeast runway; then in a northwesterly direction along the edge of this runway to its intersection with an east-west runway; then westerly along the southern edge of this runway to its western end; then around this runway's western end to an unimproved road on its northern side; then following the south edge of this road easterly to its junction with a dirt road coming from the northeast; then in a northeasterly direction along the eastern side of this road to a bridge that crosses Buskin River; then in a line in a northeastern direction that parallels the coast along St. Paul Harbor and which is about 1,200 feet distant from the coast to an east-west dirt road along the north side of Artillery Hill; then along the southern side of that road in an easterly direction to the point of beginning.

These boundaries enclose the following historically significant features: the naval seaplane base, bombproof power plant, submarine base piers, aircraft hangars and maintenance buildings, army-navy airfield, 155mm gun battery on Buskin Hill, and the harbor defense command post on Artillery Hill.

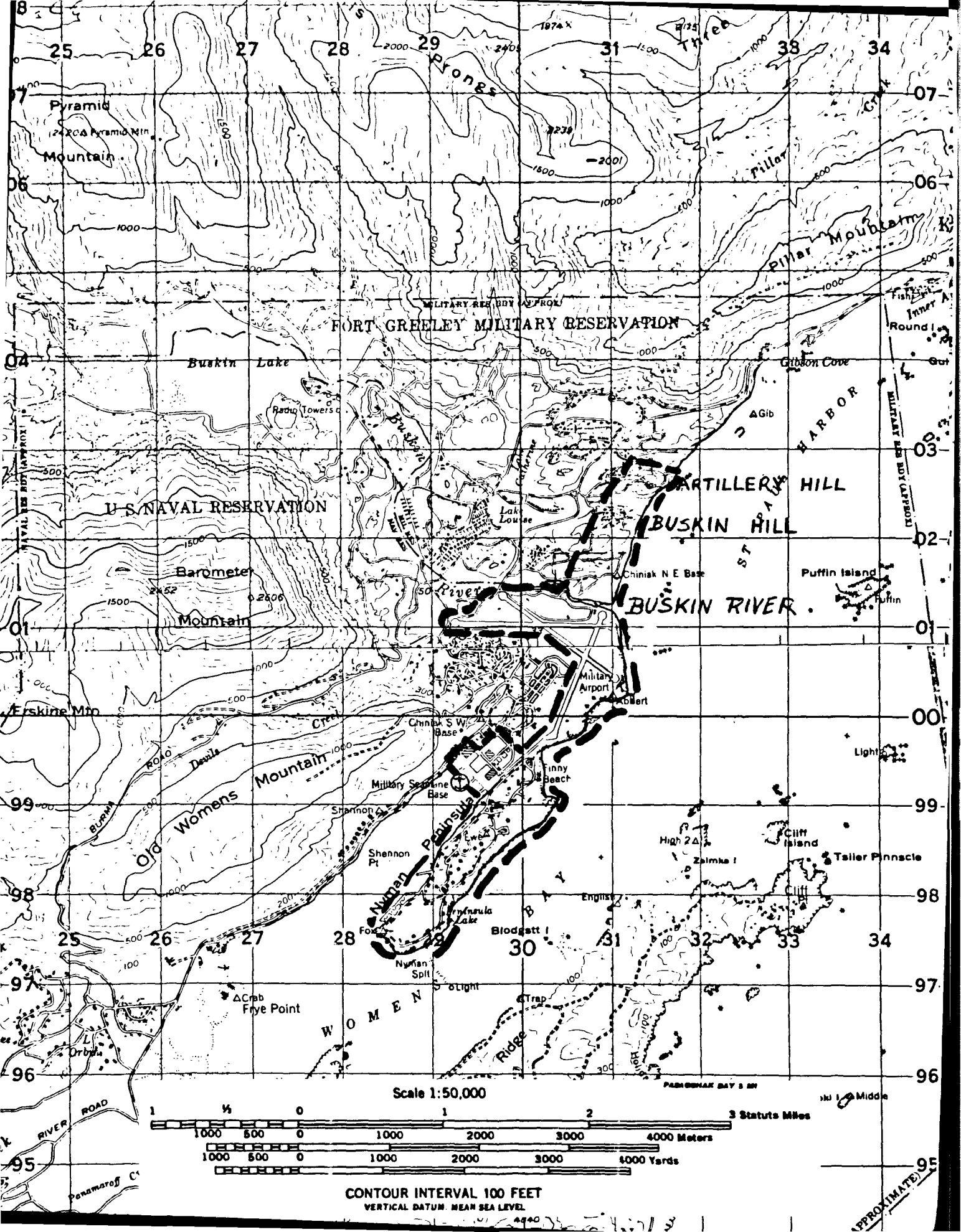
Fort Abercrombie: The boundary is the water boundary on three sides of Miller Point. The fourth side is a straight line cutting across Miller Point from Monashka Bay to Mill Bay, 2,500 feet inland from Miller Point. The boundary encloses the 8-inch gun battery and its supporting fortification structures.



# ALASKA



FORT ABERCROMBIE



FORT GREELEY MILITARY RESERVATION

U.S. NAVAL RESERVATION

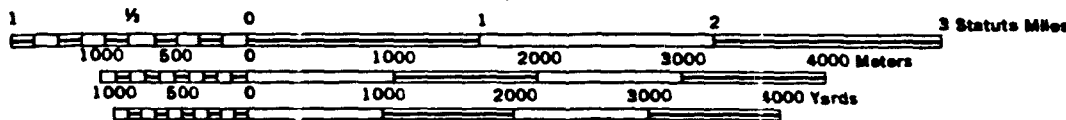
ARTILLERY HILL  
BUSKIN HILL

BUSKIN RIVER

Barometer Mountain

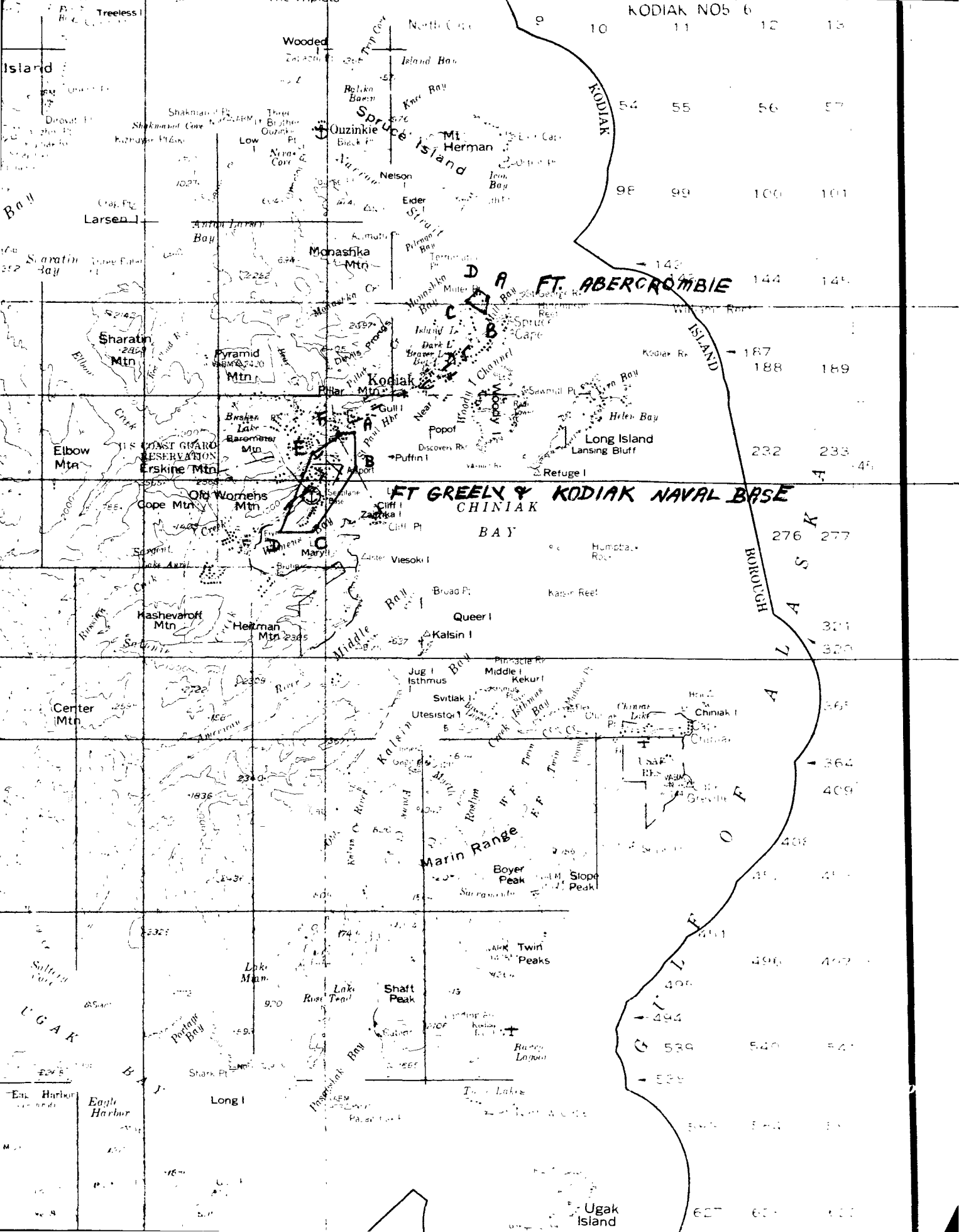
Old Womens Mountain

Scale 1:50,000



CONTOUR INTERVAL 100 FEET  
 VERTICAL DATUM: MEAN SEA LEVEL

APPROXIMATE



KODIAK NOS 6 9 10 11 12 13

54 55 56 57

98 99 100 101

144 145

167 188 189

232 233

276 277

321 320

363

364 409

408 411

496 497

539 540 541

599 600 601

627 628 629

FT ABERCROMBIE

FT GREELY & KODIAK NAVAL BASE

CHINIAK

BAY

BOROUGH  
L A S K  
A

O F

G

5

Ugarik Island