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THE OPERATIONS OF AMPHIBIOUS TASK FORCE NINE  
IN THE REOCCUPATION OF KISKA, 15 AUGUST 1943.  
(ALEUTIAN CAMPAIGN)  
(Personal experience of Reconnaissance Troop  
Commander and Hq. Commandant Southern Sector)

Type of operation described: AMPHIBIOUS OPERATION

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- A-2 The Battle of the Aleutians, Intelligence Section, Field Force Headquarters, Adak, Alaska, 1943.
- A-3 Bridge to Victory, Howard Handleman, 1943.
- A-4 The Great Pacific Victory, Gilbert Cant, 1943.

NOTE: Attached hereto are original letters to various Military Offices requesting data on the Kiska Operation and their answers thereto. As no information was forthcoming, it was necessary for this Officer to compose the action phase of this monograph from memory. This report may not be historically correct as the action is a personal report and is not substantiated by documents or other sources.

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INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of ATF Nine from the time it was activated at Fort Ord, California to the time it landed on the Island of Kiska and the subsequent action thereof.

In order to more fully understand this operation, it will be necessary to review the events leading up to the Kiska landing.

The move of Japanese forces into the North Pacific in June 1942 was part of a general offensive. The force reported to be in this area was made up of Cruisers, Destroyers, and Submarines of the Japanese Fifth Fleet plus additional Cruisers and two Aircraft Carriers, Fleet unknown.

On 2 June 1942, this force was reported to be approximately 400 miles south of Kiska. (1)

This move into the North Pacific was rather a surprise to the American Command but we were not without a few surprises of our own. Following Pearl Harbor, two secret landing fields were constructed; one at Cold Bay, the other on Umnak Island. (see map A) This secret construction was carried on under the disguise of being fish canning factories. The ruse must have succeeded as complete tactical surprise was attained by our planes when we moved to retaliate against the Dutch Harbor raids. (2)

The raid against Dutch Harbor was carried out by carrier based bombers and fighters on 3 and 4 June 1942. (3)

(1) A-1, p.1; (2) A-2, p. 1; (3) A-1, p. 1.

In our attempts to meet this enemy force we were hampered by the usual bad Aleutian weather. Air reconnaissance was reduced to a minimum. Fog protected the Japanese force right to the very entrance of Dutch Harbor. Our scout planes would spot the force but before our bombers could be brought to the area the weather would close in and we would lose them again. (4)

The surprise of meeting our stiff air opposition, when we finally did get it off the ground, plus continuing reverses at Midway convinced the Japanese that they should execute a strategic withdrawal. This was done without delay. (5)

On 6 June 1942, while this withdrawal was taking place, 500 Marines of the Number Three Maizuru Special Landing Party, commanded by Lt. Commander Hifumi Mukai, landed on and occupied Kiska. A successful landing by the enemy had been made in the Western Hemisphere. The ten man Naval Detachment of the U.S. Weather Station was quickly overrun and all but one man was captured. The one man that escaped was not captured until many weeks later. Lack of food forced him to surrender. He had hidden himself in the hills and had lived off the land. This is rather remarkable as there is practically nothing on the land to live off of. (6)

This landing of the Marines was supported by the following vessels riding at anchor in Kiska Harbor: The Cruisers Kiso and Tama, 3 Destroyers, 3 Corvettes, 3 Minesweepers, 3 Hydrographic vessels, and 4 Transports. (7) One of these transports was later sunk by the 11th Air Force and can now be seen battered and beached in Kiska Harbor.

Some sources claim that the Dutch Harbor raiders withdrew to Kiska (8) while others insist that two forces were involved. (9)

(4) A-2, p. 1; (5) A-1, p. 1; (6) A-1, p. 1; (7) A-1, p. 1;  
(8) A-2, p. 1; (9) A-1, p. 1.

It is the opinion of this Officer that part of the enemy North Pacific force proceeded directly to Kiska while the Carriers, plus the necessary support, went on to Dutch Harbor, pulled the raids, and then returned to Kiska without the Carriers, leaving them to return to Japan or Paramushiro.

The original landing by the Marines was reinforced, our bombers, Navy, and weather permitting, and in August, 1942 the island was designated by the Japanese as the 51st Naval Base under the command of Rear Admiral Akiyama. (10)

On 31 August 1942, our troops occupied Adak after a feverish race to beat the Japanese. It was vital that we hold Adak if we were to launch a counteroffensive. In twelve short days our Engineers carved an airfield out of the island and on 14 September our first big raid was launched against the enemy on Kiska. It wasn't until 3 and 4 October 1942 that the Japanese were able to retaliate and bomb Adak. (11)

It was known that the enemy had landed scout troops on Amchitka Island so on 12 January 1943 American combat troops stormed ashore on Amchitka. The enemy was not there so we now had a jumping off point from which to bomb Kiska and Attu at will. An airfield was soon built and the air offensive was accelerated. (12) With every passing day, weather permitting, our Air Force paved the way for the landings that would eject the enemy from the North Pacific. Amchitka is so close to Kiska that we were able to bomb with single engine planes. Bombs up to one thousand pounds were carried in this manner. This increased our air striking power considerably.

The Japanese must have realized by now that an invasion

(10) A-1, p. 1; (11) A-1, p. 1; (12) A-1, p. 2.

was inevitable. In the early Spring of 1943, the Kiska garrison was placed under the command of Major General Torichiro Mineki. Tactical command was removed from the Imperial Navy, Fifth Fleet, to the Commanding Officer, Northern Army with Headquarters at Sappora in Hokkaido. (13)

On 24 April 1943 a small portion of our Fleet made contact with a small enemy force between Attu and the Kommandorskis. Our force moved to the attack but was neatly trapped when enemy heavy cruisers appeared, unexpectedly, over the not too distant horizon. The advantage was now theirs. We were outnumbered and outgunned. We were straddled on the first salvo. Apparently the Japanese gunners knew their business. We turned and ran for it returning fire all the while. Hits were scored on the enemy and our Fleet withdrew successfully. Enemy supply ships had been observed in the convoy and the mere fact that our Fleet was operating in that area forced them to cancel their supply mission to Attu and Kiska. This was the last known attempt by the Japanese to supply the two islands by surface craft. (14) The sea and the air of the Aleutians was now in our complete power.

On 11 May 1943, U.S. forces landed on the island of Attu. Plans called for the operation to be a mere matter of days but the enemy, weather, and the terrain prolonged the battle to 30 May; three weeks of the bloodiest fighting recorded in the annals of Military history. Approximately 2200 Japanese defended the island and exacted a very heavy toll before they were killed to the last man. Bushido, Honor, and Face were very much in evidence in this battle. Would the enemy on Kiska die

(13) A-1, p. 3; (14) A-4, p. 70.

the same way? This point is brought out here because of the terrific influence this action had upon the minds of the troops of ATF Nine. If 2,200 men could fight that hard and long, what could the estimated 10,000 on Kiska do? It was a question that all thought about but few talked about.

Kiska was now ready for H hour, D day.

#### GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES

To describe the Kiska Operation without a description of the terrain would be like reading Life magazine without looking at the pictures.

The Islands are of volcanic origin and are entirely devoid of trees and bushes. The only vegetation is a soggy mass of grass commonly known as tundra. Some slopes are even devoid of this meager concealment. As with all the Aleutians, Kiska is noted for its violent gales or williwaws, heavy rains, rapid changes in temperature, long periods of fog, and cloudiness in general. Kiska is approximately 25 miles long by 8 miles at the widest part and 1.8 miles at the narrowest part. It is practically two islands in one as it is made up of two great land masses separated by a deep narrow gorge known as Middle Pass. Its shoreline is characterized by precipitous rocky cliffs, hidden reefs, rocks, rip tides, and treacherous undertows. Also included in this analysis is the rumor that a man could only live for twenty minutes in the so called frigid northern waters. The surf to windward usually runs seven feet with as high as thirty five feet being recorded. (15)

The northern mass is dominated by Kiska Volcano, rising to a height of 3,996 feet, and the the Morgan Hill, Rex Hill, Ranger

(15) A-1, p.8.



Hill ridge line. (see map B)

The southern area appears to hinge on the ridge line made up of Lame, Lard, Larry, Lark, Link, Lore, Loud, and Loren Hills.

Little Kiska Island guards the entrance to Kiska Harbor.

So much for the events leading up to the invasion and the necessary terrain analysis. Let us now consider the forces for the invasion.

FORMATION AND TRAINING OF ATF NINE AT FORT ORD,  
CALIFORNIA AND ADAK, ALASKA

Amphibious Task Force Nine was to be the most powerful, the most highly trained, and the best equipped force ever brought together for an amphibious operation. It was to profit by all the mistakes made in previous operations of this type. It was to have the support of the most powerful Fleet ever assembled in the Pacific.

ATF Nine was activated at Fort Ord, California by War Department General Order some time in May 1943. The Force was placed under the able command of Major General Corlett. General Corlett was wise to the ways of the Aleutians and intended that his troops would be the same. Approximately the following units or troops made up ATF Nine:

A Staff equivalent to a division staff

ATF Nine Headquarters Company

Ordnance (L)

Ordnance (H)

Signal (reinf)

332nd Quartermaster Depot Company

Quartermaster Truck Company

301st Cavalry Reconnaissance Company

28th Field Hospital  
 29th Field Hospital  
 30th Field Hospital  
 679th Medical Collecting Company  
 Attachments from 4th Infantry Regiment  
 1<sup>st</sup> Special Service Force  
 kaw ~~Attachment~~ 53rd Infantry Regiment  
 87th Mountain Infantry Regiment  
 184th Infantry Regiment  
 17th Infantry Regiment  
 One battalion 153rd Infantry Regiment  
 13th Canadian Brigade  
 48<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion (L)  
 601st Field Artillery Battalion (Pack)  
 kaw 31<sup>st</sup> Field Artillery Battalion (L)  
 602nd Field Artillery Battalion (Pack)  
 57<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion (L)  
 104th Engineer Combat Battalion  
 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 50<sup>th</sup> Engineer Combat Regiment  
 110th Engineer Combat Battalion  
 Company B, 133rd Engineer Combat Battalion  
 65th Anti-aircraft Artillery Group  
 372nd Port Battalion  
 Harbor and Small Craft Personnel (Army)  
 Alaskan Scouts  
 Bomb Disposal Units  
 Special Photographic Units  
 Naval Gun Fire Liaison Parties  
 Air Liaison Parties  
 Interpreter Teams  
 Interrogator Teams

Practically all units were reinforced with men and materiel.  
 If a commander figured that he needed something and it had the  
 approval of higher headquarters it was issued or attached  
 immediately.

The training at Fort Ord was tough, intensive, and as thorough as facilities permitted. Emphasis was placed on amphibious landings and the necessary co-ordination between all the different branches. Every possible method of hardening the troops was utilized. The only phase of specialized training that could not be duplicated was the treacherous Aleutian terrain. As only the Aleutians could furnish that, the entire Force was moved to Adak, in the Islands, for the necessary acclimatization and a chance to get the "feel" of the place.

On Adak the troops were in the field practically all the time. The days were long as darkness merely touches the islands during the month of August. They tramped the steep hills and discovered that their legs ached; as if they had not been hardened at Fort Ord at all. The truth of it is that marching over tundra uses an entirely different set of muscles. The men found that they had to watch where they were walking or they would fall into a pot hole. These phenomena of the Aleutians are from one to five feet deep and are well camouflaged. This was truly a different country. The men were a bit confused however. They had been told that in the Aleutians they could expect fog, rain, or both at least eighty percent of the time. While the troops were traing at Adak, they enjoyed one of the many freaks of the islands; sunshine and plenty of it. Some even made the remark that Fort Ord was colder and had more fog than Adak. It was very difficult to convince the men that the weather could really be bad; that weather could control the outcome of a battle; that weather could cripple more than the bullets of the enemy. Only the men new to the country needed convincing as the battle wise men from Attu had already learned this lesson - the hard way; by experience.

In spite of the good weather, the men became wise to the ways of the Aleutians. They could now climb up hills and travel over tundra without gasping for breath every twenty yards. They found that an Aleutian foxhole at its very best was a very uncomfortable and wet proposition.

While this training was progressing, various and interesting reports were beginning to come from Kiska via the returning flyers of the 11th Air Force. Reports such as, "all the huts are torn down", "that truck hasn't moved for a week now", or "no AAA fire received" tended to make the intelligence men reconsider the latest capability of the enemy on Kiska. Reports reflecting this thought started coming in after 1 August 1943.

The G-2, ATF Nine, evaluated these reports and took them to General Corlett listed as the following capabilities:

1. The enemy is preparing to defend in position and is keeping quiet in order to conserve ammunition.
2. The enemy has withdrawn to a better defensive position.
3. The enemy has evacuated the Island.

At this stage of the war the Japanese were noted for their refusal to surrender or withdraw, and to suggest that the enemy had evacuated - that was classed as wishful thinking or poor judgement.

General Corlett, however, did not look at it in that light. It was a possibility and had to be given due consideration. After conferring with his staff, he decided that the matter should be put before the Naval Commander of the Force. The Navy was in command of all forces up to the time the troops were on Kiska at which time the command would pass to the ground force commander. This meant that the Navy would decide as to whether or not reconnaissance would be allowed prior to the scheduled landings.

For many weeks the Navy had maintained an "airtight" blockade around Kiska and upon being questioned declared that "nothing, not even a rowboat, could escape through 'the ring of steel'. The blockade was being maintained and there was no doubt that the enemy was on the Island. They had merely moved their troops to better facilitate the defense". This precluded the use of scout troops as the tactical surprise would be given away if any were captured or spotted. The operation would continue as scheduled.

Time was growing short. D day had now been announced to the various commanders as 15 August 1943 with H hour set at 0626. More of the plan will be explained later.

During the final training phase, a full scale dress rehearsal for some of the troops was held on Great Sitkin Island, 26 miles from Adak. This was a tough maneuver. The hills were steep, rocky or tundra covered, and plenty slippery. The beaches were not too good. There were two major faults in this maneuver. The fog did not come down nor did it rain. The troops still had to learn how important these two items could be in an operation.

On Wednesday, 11 August 1943, ATF Nine began to board and load the transports, LST's, LCI's, and the various other craft peculiar to an amphibious operation. It was a tremendous armada; the most powerful ever assembled. In battleships alone it surpassed the imagination. Remember that this is "way back" in 1943 not too long after Pearl Harbor. Anchored in Kuluk Bay were the Pennsylvania, carrying the Flag, New Mexico, Idaho, Mississippi, and the Tennessee (16) not to mention the many Cruisers, Destroyers, Destroyer Escorts, and Motor Torpedo Boats.

The units with the mission of landing on Kiska were assigned the title of Landing Force 16.8. The troops of that force

(16) A-3, p. 72.

numbered approximately 35,000. Our troops had the advantage of about two to one when it came to actual fighting strength. This was not a great advantage against a determined enemy.

On Friday, 13 August 1943, the Task Force left Kuluk Bay. The movement to Kiska was uneventful and early on the cold, clear morning of 15 August 1943 the Task Force stood off shore and prepared to land its troops. It was estimated that the casualties on this operation would run from 8,000 to 10,000 men.

At this point we must consider the plan before starting the battle.

#### THE PLAN

The overall strategy was to deceive the enemy into thinking that our troops were going to land in Gertrude Cove. (see map B) This feint was to occur with the same H hour, 0626, as the actual landings at Quisling Cove and Lilley Beach. The feint was to include landing craft and a heavy Naval bombardment. It was hoped that this action would conceal the Southern Sector landings until the beachhead was firmly established.

With the enemy drawn to the shores of Gertrude Cove, the main body of the Southern Sector was to land at 0626, 15 August 1943. Prior to this landing however, at 0230, the 1st Special Service Force, a tough combination paratroop and reconnaissance unit, would land on the Southern Sector beachhead and drive to the high ground overlooking the landing areas. This would at least guarantee a foothold and prevent an opposed landing for the main body.

The first objective for the Sector was to secure and hold the high ground. This was another lesson learned the hard way on Attu.

The 1st Special Service Force would cover the landings until relieved by the regular Infantry troops. They would then be withdrawn and held as a floating reserve for special missions.

The South Force would then drive toward Middle Pass with the mission of cutting the Gertrude Cove area troops off from the main enemy positions around Kiska Harbor.

The Southern Force was to have the full support of all Naval gun fire, and the floating reserve was primarily on call, through the Commanding General, for the Southern Sector. The Southern landings were to be the main effort.

Early on D plus 1, the Northern Force was to land and drive inland to secure the Morgan Hill - Ranger Hill ridge. They would then push toward Middle Pass and attempt to join the South Force. After D day the North Force would also have Naval gun fire support.

The Tactical Air Force was to be "on call" for both forces. Air Force and Navy liaison parties were with all assault battalions.

To sum up, the plan was to pull a feint landing, land troops elsewhere, lure the enemy to stop that landing, then to land troops behind the confused enemy. The enemy forces would then be split and we could apply our overwhelming power as we saw fit.

#### THE LANDING ON KISKA

It was a weird scene that greeted the assault troops as they came out on the decks of the transports and filed to their designated landing craft. Overhead the sky was partially overcast, and during the few moments when it did clear, Kiska could be seen in the eerie moonlight. The men moved as phantoms must move; silent and breathless. You could see where their faces should be, yet their faces could not be seen. During the night, all assault

forces had applied face make-up as recommended by leading make-up men in Hollywood. The object was to break up the familiar shape and shadows of the face by skillful use of brown and green grease paint. It was very effective.

A terrific rumble could be heard in the distance. This added to the shaky confidence of the men as they now knew the feint was going off as scheduled. It gave them some satisfaction to know that the enemy wasn't getting any sleep either.

Before this, at 0230, the 1st Special Service Force troops had stolen ashore in rubber landing craft and the Command Transport had received the information that no enemy had been contacted and that the high ground was in our possession.

The plan was a success. The enemy had fallen for our ruse and within a few hours we would have the beachhead firmly established.

The landing craft were filled and quickly lowered over the side. As the time passed the different assault waves could be seen circling in the water. A guide boat would move toward them, converse for a few minutes, and the entire group would then move off for their assigned beaches.

The landings were made as scheduled and the troops moved toward their objectives. A message was received from the returning landing craft that caused worried frowns to appear in the control room of the Command Transport. It was reported that the beaches were bad, and that only two or three craft, at the most, could affect landings. Some of the troops even had to wade ashore, which would further complicate the prevention of the dreaded trench foot. Trench foot could cripple the operation; another lesson from Attu. To make things worse the approaches were reported to be strewn with seaweed and boulders. If an enemy counterattack in



force developed we would not be able to send troops ashore in sufficient number to hold the beachhead. Rubber landing craft were brought into play, and serious thought was given to putting an alternate plan into effect; to land troops in Kernel Cove, south of the main landings. This was risky business as the intentions and location of the enemy had not as yet been determined.

As the day progressed, the situation ashore became steadily worse. The tide, heavy in the Aleutians, was dropping fast and only one channel for landing craft was open on Lilley Beach. The same situation prevailed at Quisling Cove. These were not beaches in the true sense, they were merely a section of the Kiska shoreline.

As bad as the beaches were though, troops and supplies were being put ashore and we were more secure by the minute.

More reports were coming from our troops ashore now, and all reflected the same thought, "no contact with the enemy". Then came the message that brought smiles of "I told you so" to the faces of the Navy men. A flash message had come in to the effect that an enemy foxhole had been discovered, and further, that it had contained hot coffee in a Japanese bowl and a book written in Japanese. Could it be that we had been under observation all this time? Were we walking into a well planned ambush?

The attempts to put men ashore now became feverish but during this effort misfortune struck on Lilley Beach. An LCM had broached in the only channel to the shore. The same condition existed on Quisling Beach. In view of this, it was decided to employ the alternate plan of landing troops in Kernel Cove.

(see map B) Battalion Landing Team 53-1 carried out this operation during the afternoon of D day.

By afternoon, a wind had come up, the seas had started to rise, a light rain was falling, and last, but far from the least, the fog had covered the mountains and ridges with an impenetrable mark. Visibility was down to fifteen feet.

By nightfall we felt that the beachhead was secure, all troops were ashore as planned, and practically all assigned objectives had been reached. We had lost a few landing craft, but so far the price had been cheap.

Colonel Sutherland, Commanding Officer of the Southern Sector, ordered that extreme precautions be taken by all units to prevent any enemy infiltration and further that our patrols be kept active. Without knowing the enemy's position we were completely blind. Perhaps they had withdrawn to the southern part of the island for a last ditch stand. Perhaps they had evacuated but that thought could not be entertained - yet.

Sporadic firing of small arms and machine guns could be heard all through the night. Occasionally the sharp blast of a hand grenade gave credence to the thought that we were at last in contact with the enemy. Such reports that men had been bayoneted while asleep and that they, the enemy, could be seen moving in the fog led us to believe that tomorrow would bring great battles.

These reports were later proved to be mere rumors.

When morning broke, our casualties for the night were brought down from the hills to the hospital set up near the beach. Some told harrowing tales of close combat while others told of being shot at in the dark without even seeing the enemy. The dead were put to one side, away from the view of the troops.

Something was wrong here however. Not one Japanese body had been found. In fact, nothing could be found to indicate that the enemy had even been near our lines. Only American blood had

been spilled. Were we a match for this cunning or had we killed our own men? That was a tough question to ask ourselves.

On D plus one, the Northern Force under Brigadier General Ready came ashore with Task Group 184 and the Canadian Task Group 13 moving toward their assigned objectives. They, too, landed unopposed but suffered casualties during the night.

The Southern Sector on D plus one renewed its effort to find, fix, and finish the enemy. One patrol went as far as the camp in Gertrude Cove while another went to Middle Pass. An overnight patrol in force was sent to reconnoiter the south portion of the island.

As far as enemy action was concerned, D plus one was a complete failure. We did have a problem in logistics however. The beaches were practically inoperative and what few "cat trails" we did have were reduced to a quagmire. We had a one way "road" up from each beachhead; the stream beds. This allowed the Shore Parties to move a few supplies from the congested beaches to inland dumps. The term "inland" means 50 to 100 yards from the beach. This action did little to alleviate the supply jam. The only item being consumed in any quantity was food. Consequently, ammunition and other items peculiar to combat accumulated in vast piles.

The Navy was asked to desist and not send any more ashore but ashore they came. It was a hopeless task to clear the beaches.

On D plus 2, the Southern Sector made contact with the Northern Sector at Middle Pass. Nearly every inch of Kiska had been reconnoitered with the shocking revelation that there were no Japanese on Kiska. The mighty "ring of steel" had been full of holes. We had thrown the Task Force against nothing. The only life on the island was birds, fox, rats, thousands of them, and a few hungry dogs left by the long gone Japanese.

As to the enemy foxhole containing the hot coffee and the Japanese magazine, we later found that some 1st Special Service Force men had been in that area and in order to combat the fog and rain had brewed themselves some coffee. When they were withdrawn, the relieving Infantry troops discovered this same coffee and immediately jumped to the conclusion that it was enemy.

It was later deduced that the main body of the Japanese had evacuated Kiska on or about 28 July 1943 under the cover of fog and darkness by riding their organic landing barges out to the vicinity of Semispoichnoi Island and there loading aboard Naval craft which returned them to the homeland. Upon examining the enemy installations, it became apparent that the evacuation had been well planned and co-ordinated. All ordnance was smashed and everything of value completely demolished.

We had suffered approximately fifty killed and many wounded. The question now was what could we learn from this operation? This great maneuver with ball ammunition must have had something to contribute to the science of warfare and it did.

#### ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

The Kiska Operation was to be the perfect operation yet there were errors made, even though the operation did not develop into an actual engagement against the enemy. In order to eliminate known mistakes, every lesson learned from Attu was studied carefully and corrective measures taken wherever possible.

The Operation as a whole was brilliantly planned and the Field Order was a masterpiece of clarity, brevity, and completeness. Maps were accurate, up to date, and adequate. There was

some confusion concerning maps due to the fact that both the Army and the Navy issued maps without prior co-ordination. Upon comparing them, it was found that place names did not agree. It was too late to have new maps printed so they were issued as printed. Information concerning the enemy and our own forces was passed on to the troops, security permitting. Task Force Nine had excellent Esprit de Corps which was rather unusual for so new and large a force. Morale was high compared to troops stationed in the Aleutians.

The Force had complete air coverage and the full support of a mighty Fleet. The entire Force was well balanced looking at it from an operational viewpoint.

Points worthy of criticism are:

1. During the training in the United States, some of the amphibious landings should have been made on rocky beaches, not only to give the men experience in landing on such a beach, but to give the coxswains practical training.
2. Troops should be trained under the same weather and terrain conditions they will fight under. The troops at Adak did not know what it was like to operate in rain, fog, and wind.
3. The mere fact that buildings were torn down, that trucks remained in the same place day after day, and that no heavy caliber anti-aircraft fire was received should have convinced someone in the Higher Command that something was wrong and that prior reconnaissance was necessary.
4. Every possible capability of the enemy was not given enough thought and consideration. It was a tough decision to go on record as saying that the Japanese had evacuated but that is one of the responsibilities of command and rank. Some had declared that there were no Japanese on Attu and no one wanted

to make the same mistake again.

5. If there was any doubt at all as to whether or not the enemy was on Kiska, we should have determined that fact one way or the other through the prudent use of our highly trained reconnaissance units.

6. Some coxswains of small craft were not familiar with their duties and upon being questioned admitted that they had never piloted landing craft before.

7. The beach reconnaissance prior to the landing was not thorough enough. The aerial photos did not show the underwater rocks off shore nor did they indicate that the beaches were made up of large boulders.

8. The landings were started on a high tide and as the tide line dropped, the approach channels became steadily worse.

9. Troops were sent ashore loaded to and beyond capacity. As a result, the beaches and the first few hundred yards inland were strewn with equipment.

10. The troops did not have enough training in field sanitation. The filth of the island was sufficient without our troops adding their bit.

11. Regiments (TG's) were made up of three battalions (BLT's). Each of the Battalions was from a different regiment. The Task Group Staff was made up in a like manner. The Commanding Officers had never worked with their Staffs nor had the BLT's worked under the TG Commanders. There was not that feeling of unity which is so necessary in combat.

12. At the last minute, so to speak, the Landing Force 16.8 was split into two sectors with a complete headquarters in each sector. Again there were strange faces where there should have

been complete confidence and familiarity.

13. A few days before the operation, it was discovered that the Army and the Navy were using the same maps with the geographical features named differently. This could have caused serious confusion had there been any action at all, particularly in calling for Artillery or Naval Gun Fire support.

14. The command set-up was such that the Navy was in complete charge of all operations until the troops were ashore at which time command of those troops would pass to the Army Commander. There was no Supreme Commander of the operation. The Air Force went one way, the Navy another, and the Army still another. Command responsibility was very difficult to fix.

15. The methods and means of establishing identity among our own troops in poor visibility were not efficient.

16. The Navy appeared to be operating with the sole mission of putting the Task Force and its supplies ashore with complete disregard for the supply situation on the beachheads. With all beaches jammed to capacity and more coming in there was no alternative but to dump everything in the mud and attempt to straighten everything out when we had the time. Segregation by Class of Supply was nonexistent. This action cost the Government many dollars as some of the materiel could not be moved overland to our base in Gertrude Cove and had to be abandoned.

17. In summary it may be said that the Kiska Operation was one of the first spokes in the wheel for the unification of the Armed Forces.

## LESSONS

Some of the lessons to be learned from the operations of Amphibious Task Force Nine in the Kiska Operation are;

1. Field sanitation must be stressed in all phases of training.
2. Beaches must be thoroughly checked before being established as beaches suitable for landing craft.
3. A landing should not be made on a falling tide when bottom and gradient conditions are unknown.
4. Stronger measures should be taken to prevent looting of personal equipment brought in after the initial landings.
5. On operations in localities where there is a ground condition peculiar to that area and weather conditions are extreme, equipment should be so constructed that it can operate under those conditions. For example, Artillery pieces could not be moved over the tundra because of poor flotation. Sleds or skids must be constructed.
6. The Shore Party must be trained, selected personnel and not a melting pot of undesirables from the combat elements.
7. Commanding Officers, Staffs, and Battalions must work together for some time before being committed into combat. Task Groups should not be made up of battalions from three different Regiments.
8. An Operations Plan must have flexibility in order to cope with unforeseen circumstances involving the original plan.
9. It was found that Army and Navy communications and technique had to be standardized or placed under a joint command.
10. Unless extreme precautions are taken, a blockade cannot completely encircle an island and prevent a determined enemy from reinforcing, supplying, or evacuating.



11. All capabilities of the enemy must be given serious thought and checked by prior reconnaissance if the tactical situation permits.

12. A Task Force should not be thrown against an enemy that has not been located.

13. There must be one Supreme Commander. There can be no split responsibility.