

**SJR**

**5**

<target><bill>SJR 5</bill><subject>SJR  
5</subject><comm>HMLV26</comm></target>

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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## Senate Rules Committee

### SPONSOR STATEMENT

#### CS for SJR 5 (FIN)

#### A RESOLUTION

**Urging the United States Department of Defense to continue to provide retirement benefits for members of the Alaska Territorial Guard who served during World War II.**

In the middle of January 2009, the U.S. Army Human Resources Command mailed letters to approximately 25 elderly Alaskans, telling them that the Army has changed its mind, based on a legal interpretation, about whether their service in the Alaska Territorial Guard (ATG) during World War II -- defending the United States from Japanese invasion -- counts toward military retirement. The effect of this abrupt reversal in position is to reduce the monthly retirement payments to each of these elderly Alaskans by an average of \$386 per month. Six will lose more than \$500 a month in retirement pay. These reductions were to take effect on February 1, 2009, during the middle of a very cold winter in communities where resources are scarce and the cost of fuel has risen to levels that most people simply cannot afford.

Since the news broke of the Army's decision, there has been significant critical response from Alaskans and citizens across the country directed towards the Army and Congress. Our Alaska delegation in Washington immediately fought to bring this tragic decision to the attention of the President and the rest of Congress.

Since this resolution was first introduced, at the urging of Alaska's Congressional delegation, the U.S. Army has agreed to provide immediate temporary 60-day financial assistance to these elderly ATG members out of the "emergency and extraordinary expense fund".

We thank the Alaska delegation for introducing legislation on January 28, 2009 that would permanently clarify that service in the ATG is credible toward military retirement. We support S. 342 and H.R. 744, and it is our hope that this legislation will move swiftly through Congress and pass within the 60-day reprieve by the Army.

In an effort to further encourage immediate action, SJR 5 urges the Department of the Defense to continue to use their "emergency and extraordinary expense funds" to provide retirement benefits for these ATG members until either Congress passes S.342 or H.R. 744; or the Department of the Defense reverses their decision made in January.

Contact: Karen Sawyer  
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26-LS0468\E  
2/6/09

# FISCAL NOTE

**STATE OF ALASKA**  
**2009 LEGISLATIVE SESSION**

Fiscal Note Number: 1  
 Bill Version: CSSJR 5(FIN)  
 (S) Publish Date: 2/4/09

Title: SJR 5-AK TERRITORIAL GUARD RETIREMENT BENEFITS  
 Sponsor: Senate Rules Committee  
 Requester: Senate Finance Committee  
 Dept. Affected: All Departments  
 RDU: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Component: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Component Number: \_\_\_\_\_

**Expenditures/Revenues** (Thousands of Dollars)

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below.

	Appropriation Required	Information						
		FY 2010	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
<b>OPERATING EXPENDITURES</b>								
Personal Services								
Travel								
Contractual								
Supplies								
Equipment								
Land & Structures								
Grants & Claims								
Miscellaneous								
<b>TOTAL OPERATING</b>		<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>
<b>CAPITAL EXPENDITURES</b>								
<b>CHANGE IN REVENUES ( )</b>								

**FUND SOURCE** (Thousands of Dollars)

1002 Federal Receipts								
1003 GF Match								
1004 GF								
1005 GF/Program Receipts								
1037 GF/Mental Health								
Other Interagency Receipts								
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

Estimate of any current year (FY2009) cost: \_\_\_\_\_

**POSITIONS**

Full-time								
Part-time								
Temporary								

**ANALYSIS:** (Attach a separate page if necessary)

Prepared by: Senate Finance Committee Date/Time 2/2/2009  
 Approved by: Senator Bert Stedman, Co-Chair Phone 465-3873  
Senator Lyman Hoffman, Co-Chair Phone 465-4453

NEWS FROM THE OFFICE OF

SENATOR LISA MURKOWSKI

*United States Senate***MURKOWSKI FIGHTS FOR ALASKA TERRITORIAL GUARD RETIREMENT PAY**

Friday, January 23, 2009

Mr. President, sometime this week letters will be mailed from the U.S. Army Human Resources Command in St. Louis, MO, to 25 elderly Alaskans. Those letters will tell these 25 elderly Alaskans that the Army has changed its mind--it has changed its mind--about whether their service in the Alaska Territorial Guard during World War II counts toward military retirement. The effect of this abrupt reversal in position is to reduce the monthly retirement payments to each of these 25 elderly Alaskans. These retirement payments will be reduced by an average of \$386 a month. Six will lose more than \$500 a month in retirement pay. These reductions will take effect on February 1.

So in less than 10 days, these individuals who have been receiving these payments--these elderly Alaskans who served us during World War II--will be receiving a letter, maybe before their benefits are cut off, but they will be receiving a letter saying: Sorry, your service doesn't count toward military retirement.

Mr. President, I state again: None of these 25 elderly Alaskans knows this is coming. It will come as a complete surprise to them, possibly, when they receive that letter. Whether they are tuning in to C-SPAN and hear my comments tonight, we don't know.

It is going to take a while for these letters coming out of St. Louis, MO, to reach their destinations because these letters are being sent to some of the remotest parts of our State, of rural Alaska. Four of these letters are destined for the village of Noatak. This is an Inupiat Eskimo village of 489 people in northwest Alaska. I would suggest, Mr. President, that outside of you and I, there is probably nobody in Washington, DC, who could identify Noatak on a map. Four of these letters are destined for the village of Kwigillingok. We call it Kwig because it is so difficult to pronounce. This is a Yupik Eskimo community of 361 people.

All told, these letters are being sent to elders in 15 Alaska Native communities in interior and western Alaska. The poster board that I have behind me indicates some of the elderly gentlemen who may be receiving these letters in the next several weeks.

This decision is tragic. It is tragic because it affects veterans who defended Alaska and who defended the United States from the Japanese during World War II. It is a tragedy because these people were led to believe they would be compensated for their service to our Nation. It is a tragedy because most of the people I am talking about, most of these gentlemen, are Eskimos--among the first people of the United States, members of a class of people to whom the United States Government has broken its promises time and time again. It is a tragedy because they were misled into believing their retirement pay was increasing. It is a further tragedy because this bad news is going to be communicated in a letter signed by a branch chief in the Army Human Resources Command. These people deserve an apology from the Secretary of Defense. They do not need to be receiving this news about this error from a branch chief in the Army Human Resources Command.

It is also a tragedy because some of these people in the Department of Defense chose to implement this decision in the dead of an Alaska winter, when we know that our Native elders in rural Alaska are most vulnerable. Right now, in the village of Kwig and in Noatak and in the other communities, it is dark, it is cold, and resources are scarce. The increase in retirement pay, which was implemented just this last June, was very welcome news to those who were receiving it. It came at a time when the cost of fuel was rising to levels in our rural communities that people simply could not pay.

If you will recall, back home in June and July, in the cities, we were paying \$4.50, \$5 a gallon for our fuel. But out in the villages they were paying \$7, \$8 a gallon, and in some areas even higher than that. Throughout the State, but particularly in rural Alaska last summer, folks were anxious about whether they were going to be able to afford to heat their homes this winter.

Last week, in the Indian Affairs Committee, the Presiding Officer had an opportunity to join us, and I was able to put on the record the plight of some of the Native people in the community of Emmonak who have literally had to choose between buying stove oil to heat their homes or whether they should buy food for their families.

I guess some of the good news we have learned is that none of these letters informing these elders that they will see a reduction in benefits is going to the village of Emmonak, but I would suspect many of the villages to which these letters are going are no better off. You just have to ask the question: How can our government be so insensitive--taking money, taking retirement benefits out of the pockets of our elders, of our seniors, at a time of the year when they are absolutely the most vulnerable?

I hope I have gained the attention of some, and with the indulgence of my colleagues, I would like to fill in a little bit of the background. I will not be talking too long--I know one of our Senators is waiting--but it is an interesting story, and I think he will appreciate it.

The Alaska Territorial Guard was created in June of 1942 in response to increasing Japanese activity and attacks on and around Alaska. At the time, the U.S. Army was reassigning our Alaska National Guard soldiers away from the State, and so there were no ground troops left to protect Alaska. So Earnest Gruening, who was the territorial governor at the time, called for volunteers to defend our great land up there in the north. Some 6,389 Alaskans answered the call. These volunteers came to be known as the Eskimo Scouts, but they were representative of all of Alaska. They were Inupiat Eskimos, Yupik Eskimos, Aleut people, Athabascan and Tlingit Indians, and there were Caucasians.

With no pay and very little equipment, these volunteers--these Eskimo Scouts--patrolled 5,400 miles of coastline to fend off a possible Japanese invasion. They shot down Japanese air balloons carrying bombs and eavesdropping radios. They rescued downed airmen, they transported equipment and supplies, they constructed airstrips and support facilities, they manned the field hospital outpost, and they engaged the enemy in combat.

You see the picture behind me of the Eskimo Scout in his snowshoes standing guard, standing ready. These men answered the call of our country and they defended our homeland. The Territorial Guard stood as the first line of defense for the terrain around the Lend-Lease area, the route from America to Russia, and it was this vital lifeline that allowed the United States to supply our Russian ally with essential military aircraft and proved essentially crucial to Russia's defense against Hitler's Germany.

In March of 1947, the Eskimo Scouts were disbanded, but many of them went on to continue to serve our Nation in the Army and the Alaska National Guard. For more than half a century after the Territorial Guard was disbanded, these brave and truly dedicated volunteers received not one ounce of recognition from our Federal Government for the service they had performed. It wasn't until the year 2000 that Senator Stevens succeeded in adding language to the Defense appropriations bill to recognize the Territorial Guard, and that legislation required the Secretary of Defense to treat the Alaska Territorial Guard just like any other soldiers and to require them to issue discharge certificates to those who remain alive.

I was privileged to be at a couple of ceremonies where some of these elders received their official discharge certificates, and it was incredibly moving to be with them when, after decades, their Government finally recognized their service. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs was also directed to treat these people as any other veteran of the Armed Forces of the United States.

I do understand and we are told that the Department of Defense was slow to implement the mandate of this legislation. I can tell you from my own experience in dealing with many of the veterans and their families, the efforts to get these discharge certificates in a timely fashion has been very frustrating--frustrating for the families, frustrating for those who have served, most certainly, and frustrating for those of us who have been trying to make it happen. Some former members of the Territorial Guard are still waiting to get their discharge certificates. We have been assisted by a wonderful volunteer, Bob Goodman, who lives in Anchorage. He helps the former members of the Territorial Guard document their service, and he tells me that unless we can get this turned around, unless we can kind of move through this roadblock, we are going to see more of these fine Americans who will pass on before they get their long-awaited recognition.

I just don't understand. I can't understand why it took nearly 8 years--8 years--for the Defense Department to recognize the Alaska Territorial Guard's service for military retirement benefits. But, as I mentioned, back in June of 2008, they did it. Apparently, that decision did not please some at the Defense Department. Between Thanksgiving and Christmas, we learned they made a case that the members of the Territorial Guard are not eligible for retirement benefits. This was all happening over there at the Department under the radar of Secretary Geren here in Washington. The Secretary says there is nothing we can do at this point in time; the retirement benefits have been reduced on the computers of the Defense Finance and Accounting Service and the payments are going to go down effective February 1.

I am not going to stand here and blame the lawyers for telling their clients that the policy of crediting Alaska Territorial Guard service toward retirement pay doesn't comport with the law. But at the same time, the Defense Department hasn't released that legal opinion, so I can't judge--the presiding officer can't judge--whether this conclusion is really compelled by the law. If the conclusion was compelled by the law, I suppose we can't call out the lawyers for saying so. But I do fault their clients, the leaders who knew this was coming. They knew it was coming, but they didn't bother to tell any of the members of the Alaska Congressional Delegation.

I was not notified; you were not notified, Mr. President; our Member in the House of Representatives--nobody came to us late last year and said: Hey, we have a problem. We have a problem, and it requires a legislative fix. Can we work together, can we do something either at the end of the 110th Congress or immediately at the outset of this new Congress?

The senior leaders in the Army and DOD didn't even acknowledge that there was a problem until you and I contacted the Secretary of the Army and asked: Is there a problem? We hear there is stuff floating around. What is going on?

As far as I was concerned, the reason we suspected there was a problem was because the adjutant general of Alaska, after trying to work through this problem at his level and through the chain of command, told us something was coming and it was going to be coming imminently.

Then just last week, Army Secretary Geren confirmed those fears, the fear that it will be real, that the retirement pay will be cut effective February 1. He says there is nothing he can do about it.

This afternoon, the members of the Alaska Congressional Delegation are writing to the administration, asking that he intervene to ensure that those Native elders who are affected by this tragic series of events do not lose this safety net.

Senator Begich and I are also preparing legislation that clarifies that service in the Alaska Territorial Guard is to be regarded as Active-Duty service for purposes of calculating retirement pay. We need to clear up that vagueness in the statutes.

I would just say, as I am able to speak here on the floor of the Senate, to Secretary Gates, if you are within the sound of my voice, I believe

you owe an apology to these people. It was just a month ago that the Army Chief of Staff sent a letter of apology to 7,000 surviving families of the global war on terror who received letters addressed to John Doe. The blunder I speak of today affects far fewer people, but it is certainly no less of a blunder. I think we recognize we have just gone through a transition, moving from one administration to the other. Things happen during a transition period--things just happen. Sometimes policy blunders can occur. These things do happen, and then it falls upon Congress and the administration to come back and fix things.

I pledge to the Alaskans, and I know the Presiding Officer and our colleague in the House, Representative Young--I think we all make the commitment to do everything we can to clean up what we are dealing with here. But I am left to wonder, what kind of a government, what kind of a Cruella, could cut retirement benefits to a group of Eskimos in their eighties, in the dead of an Alaskan winter, and say: Sorry, there is nothing we can do.

It is time for some soul searching at the Pentagon. I am looking for answers. I know you are looking for answers. We are looking for solutions, and there is really very little time left.

I thank the Presiding Officer. Know that we will find positive solutions for those who have served us honorably.

January 23, 2009

Honorable Barack H. Obama  
President of the United States  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20500

Mr. President:

We are writing to express our deep disappointment over a decision of the Department of Defense to reverse a determination that service in the Alaska Territorial Guard during World War II is to be regarded as active duty service for purposes of military retirement. The effect of the initial decision was to increase the military retirement pay disbursed to 25 Alaska Native Elders. The effect of the reversal is to reduce retirement pay to these Native people effective February 1, 2009. Some will lose income in excess of \$500 a month. Those affected live in the remotest villages of rural Alaska. Communities with names transliterated into English from Alaska Native languages like Akiachak, Kwigillingok, Kongiganak, Kwethluk and Shaktoolik. These communities suffer from some of the highest living costs anywhere in our Nation. We are gravely concerned that this abrupt change of position, coming in the dead of Alaskan winter, will weaken the safety net for these Elders at a time of the year that they are most vulnerable.

The Alaska Territorial Guard was formed in June 1942 by Territorial Governor Ernest Gruening in response to increasing Japanese activity around Alaska. The Alaska National Guard was deploying away from Alaska at the time leaving no ground troops to protect the State. It was an uncompensated volunteer force of 6,389 Alaskans. While the Territorial Guard took on the moniker "Eskimo Scouts," the force included Aleut people, Alaska Indians, and Caucasians as well as Eskimos. From 1942 – 1947 members of the Territorial Guard shot down Japanese air balloons, rescued downed airmen, protected the Lend-Lease route from America to Russia, and engaged in combat with the enemy. When the Territorial Guard disbanded in 1947, many of its members were absorbed into the Army and the Alaska National Guard. The 25 Alaska Native Elders referenced in this letter earned military retirement benefits as a result of this service.

From 1947 until 2000 America did not recognize the sacrifices of the Alaska Territorial Guard members as service to America. Section 8147 of the Defense Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2001, Public Law 106-259, attempted to correct this injustice. It required the Secretary of Defense to issue certificates of discharge to members of the Alaska Territorial Guard and it required the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to make veterans benefits available to these individuals.

The Defense Department initially concluded that the issuance of the certificate of discharge entitled members of the Alaska Territorial Guard to military retirement credit for their years of service in that organization. That policy has been reversed effective February 1, 2009, leading to an impending reduction in retirement benefits to the 25 Alaska Native Elders. We are told that the decision is the result of legal review, but we have neither been provided with a copy of the legal opinion nor have we been briefed on the deliberative process that led to the shift in policy.

Little effort has been made to outreach to the affected Native Elders and address the consequences of this sudden loss of income. We are informed that the Elders will first learn that their benefits have been reduced by a letter from the Army Human Resources Command, St. Louis, mailed on or about January 22, 2009.

Ideally, the Defense Department would find a way to continue to credit Alaska Territorial Guard service for retirement purposes without further legislative action. However, if this is not possible, we believe it is only fair that the administration works expeditiously to send legislation to Congress before the reduction in benefits takes effect and works with us to enact that legislation. The legislation would end all doubt that Alaska Territorial Guard service is to be credited for military retirement and clarify that benefits are to be paid retroactive to the effective date of Section 8147. The Native Elders whose benefits have been reduced deserve an apology from a senior Defense Department official. Outreach needs to be done to assess the impact that the abrupt loss of income will have on the Elders and thought should be given to whether this difference can be made up through payments from other federal programs or donations from military oriented charities.

It is unfortunate that your administration inherited this issue in its initial days in office. We are disappointed that the Defense Department did not bring this issue to our attention at the same time it was working to eliminate the enhanced retirement benefit for former members of the Alaska Territorial Guard. It was not until we brought the issue to the attention of the Department that our worst fears were confirmed. As you instill a new sense of responsiveness and responsibility within federal agencies, we look forward to working with you to resolve this problem for these brave Alaskans.



Respectfully,

Lisa Murkowski  
United States Senator

Mark Begich  
United States Senator

Don Young  
Congressman for All Alaska

cc: Honorable Robert M. Gates, Secretary of Defense  
Honorable Pete Geren, Secretary of the Army

## Courant.com

# Army cuts off retirement pay for members of World War II Alaska militia

By RACHEL D'ORO

Associated Press Writer

10:29 PM EST, January 22, 2009

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — The Army has decided to cut off retirement pay for veterans of a largely Native militia formed to guard the territory of Alaska from the threat of Japanese attack during World War II.

The change means 26 surviving members of the Alaska Territorial Guard — most in their 80s and long retired — will lose as much as \$557 in monthly retirement pay, a state veterans officer said Thursday. The payments end Feb. 1.

Applications for retirement pay from 37 others have been suspended.

The state is pursuing a remedy for "these brave Alaskans, who did so much for the cause of freedom during a time of great national peril," Gov. Sarah Palin said.

The action comes almost a decade after Congress passed a law qualifying time served in the unpaid guard as active federal service. The Army agreed in 2004 to grant official military discharge certificates to members or their survivors.

An Army official said the law was misinterpreted. The law applies to military benefits, including medical benefits, but not retirement pay, said Lt. Col. Richard McNorton, with the Army's human resources command in Alexandria, Va.

"The focus is to follow the law," he said. "We can't choose whether to follow the law."

The Army doesn't intend to seek to recoup past pay, he said.

About 300 members are still living from the original 6,600-member unit called up from 1942 to 1947 to scout patrols, build military airstrips and perform other duties. But only a fraction had enough other military service to reach the 20-year requirement for retirement pay.

Among those who did is 88-year-old Paul Kiunya in the western Alaska village of Kipnuk. Kiunya was 16 when he joined the territorial guard and worked in communications, reporting by radio any unusual noises or the direction of aircraft, including some Japanese planes he spotted.

"We did not get one cent being in the territorial guard," he said. "And we worked hard."

Kiunya — who later put in 22 years in the National Guard and another decade in the Guard reserves — will lose more

<http://www.courant.com/news/nationworld/nation/wire/sns-ap-native-militia,0,1550390,print.story>

1/26/2009



than \$358 a month in his retirement package because of the Army's decision. With gasoline in his village at almost \$10 a gallon, that's a huge amount to lose.

"I don't know why they trying to cut the pay. It's not good for us right now," he said in a phone interview. "It's not right."

U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski said she and fellow Alaska Sen. Mark Begich are preparing legislation clarifying that service in the territorial guard counts as active duty for calculating retirement pay.

Murkowski said Alaska's congressional delegation has sent a letter to President Barack Obama, asking him to intervene so that those affected by "this tragic, tragic series of events do not lose the safety net."

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## Army ends retirement payments to Alaska Territorial Guard members

Todd Walker  
 Updated: 01/23/2009 02:43:39 PM AKST

They served Alaska and America in their time of need in World War II. Just recently, members of the Alaska Territorial Guard were recognized for that service, but now, surviving members are about to lose a major lifeline.



(KTVA)

"We've been informed that the Army intends to stop payments for retirement benefits for those members of the ATG," said Lt. Gen. Craig Campbell, Commissioner of the Department of Military

and Veterans Affairs.

Those retirement benefits paid up to \$1,000 per month to the 27 surviving servicemen. Exactly why the payments are being taken away has not been made clear.

"(The Army) believes the current program isn't compliant with public law," Campbell said.

That law was written by Sen. Ted Stevens in 2000. It provided honorable discharges for ATG members, but the only specification about benefits says they would not be paid retro-actively, nothing requiring a benefit payment.

"If this is the way we are going to treat our veterans, our WWII veterans," said Bob Goodman, president of the Alaska Territorial Guard Association, Inc. "Seniors that are 80 and 90 years old, and their surviving spouses, we are



Lt. Gen. Craig Campbell, Commissioner of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, explained the Army's reasoning. Thursday, January 22, 2009. (KTVA)

pretty sick."

Goodman has been fighting for ATG members for years.

"Once they started issuing the discharges," he said. "I don't see how they can take the entitlements away from the people who have already drawn the discharges."

Goodman said Lt. Gen. Campbell and Gov. Palin have been dragging their feet for years in regards to ATG issues and that it wasn't a priority of Campbell's.

Campbell said it's unconscionable the Army would take this kind of action. It's so

unconscionable that it made it's way to the floor of the U.S. Senate. Sen. Lisa Murkowski said she and the rest of Alaska's congressional delegation are working to shore up any vagaries in the law and is disappointed in Defense Secretary Robert Gates.

"I believe you owe an apology to these people," she said.

ATG members who received the checks may owe the money back to the federal government. Any other benefits they currently get, like healthcare, may also be cut off.



Bob Goodman, president of the Alaska Territorial Guard Association, Inc., denounced the Army's actions. Thursday, January 22, 2009. (KTVA)

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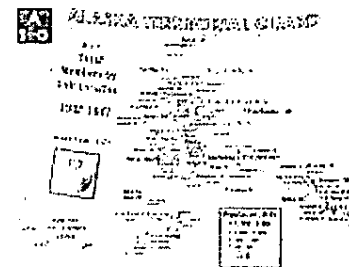
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# Alaska Territorial Guard

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The **Alaska Territorial Guard (ATG)** or **Eskimo Scouts** was a military reserve force component of the US Army, organized in 1942 in response to attacks on American soil in Hawaii and Alaska by Japan during World War II. The ATG operated until 1947. 6,368 volunteers who served without pay were enrolled from 107 communities throughout Alaska in addition to a paid staff of 21, according to an official roster<sup>[1]</sup>. The ATG brought together for the first time into a joint effort members of these ethnic groups: Aleut, Athabaskan, European, Inupiaq, Haida, Jewish, Tlingit, Tsimshian, Yupik, and most likely others. In later years, all members of some native units scored expert sharpshooter rankings<sup>[2]</sup>. Among the 27 or more women members were at least one whose riflery skills exceeded the men<sup>[3]</sup>. The ages of members at enrollment ranged from 80 years old<sup>[4]</sup> to as young as twelve<sup>[5]</sup> (both extremes occurring mostly in sparsely populated areas).



Map showing the locations of Alaska Territorial Guard units (with membership counts), major military bases, and evacuated Aleutian villages

One first-hand estimate states that around 20,000 Alaskans participated, officially or otherwise, in ATG reconnaissance or support activities<sup>[6]</sup>.

The ATG served at least two vital strategic purposes to the entire Allied effort during World War II:

- They safeguarded the only source of the strategic metal platinum in the Western Hemisphere against Japanese attack<sup>[7]</sup>.
- They secured the terrain around the vital Lend-Lease air route between the United States and Russia.

In addition to official duties, ATG members are noted for actively and successfully promoting racial integration within US military forces<sup>[8][9]</sup>, and racial equality within the communities they protected<sup>[10]</sup>.

Several former members of the ATG were instrumental in achieving Alaska Statehood in 1959, as members of the Alaska Statehood Committee and/or delegates to the Alaska Constitutional Convention.

In 2000 all ATG members were granted US veteran status by law, finally acknowledging the contribution of these American heroes, a surprising number of whom are still living<sup>[11]</sup>. But efforts to find the surviving ATG members and assist them through the application process have been stymied by years of bureaucratic evasiveness and a generally neglectful attitude among those that have benefited most from their sacrifice<sup>[11]</sup>.

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## Conditions leading up to the ATG

Before World War II, Alaska was regarded by US military decision makers as too distant from the contiguous United States to effectively protect, and of little strategic importance<sup>[12]</sup>.

"...the mainland of Alaska is so remote from the strategic areas of the Pacific that it is difficult to conceive of circumstances in which air operations therefrom would contribute materially to the national defense." - General Malin Craig, US Army Chief of Staff, November 1937<sup>[13]</sup>

This stands in marked contrast to the attitudes of US military leaders during the Cold War immediately after World War II:

"...as I continue to correspond and to talk with people throughout the United States and the Department of Defense, they too can see clearly the importance of these two battalions which you make up. The real honest-to-God and real-world first line of defense in Alaska ... nearer our opponent, Communist Russia, than any other armed troops in the United States." - General James F Hollingsworth, Commanding General, US Army Alaska (USARAL), February 1971<sup>[14]</sup>

True to the earlier viewpoint, the US Army reassigned all Alaska National Guard units out of Alaska to Washington State in August 1941<sup>[15]</sup>. Alaska was now without military reserves or any form of Home Guard. In the face of an encroaching enemy, the defense of nearly 34,000 miles (55,000 km) of US coastline was left to the best efforts of unorganized local citizens and already overworked seasonal laborers.

That enemy was demonstrating a definite interest in taking Alaska. In the early months of 1942, a Japanese Navy reconnaissance unit was caught on film making detailed surveys of Alaska coastline.

Enemy combatants strode unopposed onto American soil and made inquiries among the populace about the local economy.<sup>[16]</sup> Enemy aircraft and submarine sightings were common, inspiring great fear among the locals<sup>[17]</sup>, and culminating in the raid on Dutch Harbor and the occupation of the Aleutian Islands of Attu, Kiska and Adak that June.

## Creation of the ATG

By the time of the Dutch Harbor bombing, a Major Marvin R Marston had submitted a new plan to defend the entire Alaska coast by enlisting the local citizens<sup>[18]</sup>. He had conceived this plan while visiting Saint Lawrence Island and contemplating the fate of the locals he'd met<sup>[19]</sup>. Marston's proposal finally met with favor when word of it got to Alaska territorial governor Ernest Gruening<sup>[20]</sup>. Gruening had sought to organize a new guard for Alaska, including every able man and boy, since he got word that the US Army would reassign the Alaska National Guard<sup>[15]</sup>.

Motivated by the recent Dutch Harbor attack, the Alaska Command assigned Major Marston and Captain Carl Schreibner within days to serve as military aides to Governor Gruening. Shortly after, Gruening and Marston flew a chartered plane to begin setting up units of the new **Alaska Territorial Guard (ATG)**. This included one of the most strategically important sites in all Alaska, a tiny mining town called Platinum -- the only source of that strategic metal in all the Western Hemisphere. <sup>[21]</sup>

The enrollment drive continued into early 1943, the organizers travelling in all kinds of weather and by every available mode of transport, including plane, boat, snowmobile, foot, and the most reliable means in the region, dogsled. When a promised plane failed to arrive after a week, Major Marston set out by dogsled on an epic 680-mile (1,090 km) trip around the Seward Peninsula, during the coldest winter in 25 years<sup>[22]</sup>. He survived by foregoing standard military survival training in favor of the native methods of his Eskimo guide, Sammy Mogg<sup>[23]</sup>.

Thanks to Marston and Mogg's heroic effort, the **ATG** stood as a first line of defense for the terrain around the Lend-Lease route from America to Russia, against attack by Japan and the Axis Powers. This vital lifeline allowed the US to supply its Russian ally with essential military aircraft<sup>[24]</sup>. This lifeline had proven to be crucial to Russia's survival during Hitler's Operation Barbarossa<sup>[25]</sup>.

## Organization of the ATG

### Authority

The **Alaska Territorial Guard (ATG)** was organized in June 1942 under the authority of the office of the territorial governor, Ernest Gruening, who served as Commander-In-Chief. All members took an oath to obey the Governor's orders. The governor was directly supported by the **ATG** Adjutant General, J P Williams. Headquarters was in the territorial capital, Juneau.

### Mission

The mission of the **ATG** was to play a defensive role for the entire coast of Alaska<sup>[25]</sup>. Offensive action was the responsibility of the Pacific Theatre commanders, operating from large bases at Dutch Harbor, Cold Bay and Anchorage.

Explicit within the **ATG** mission was that of protecting the terrain around the American terminus of the Lend-Lease air route to Russia on which warplanes were flown from Great Falls, Montana to Whitehorse, Yukon Territory, Canada, then to Ladd Field, Alaska (now Eielson AFB) and on to Nome. Here, Russian pilots flew the planes on to their intended use, combat against Hitler's Third Reich. <sup>[24]</sup>

### By Date

The Alaska Territorial Guard operated from its inception in June 1942<sup>[26]</sup> until it was officially disbanded on 31 March 1947<sup>[27]</sup>.

### By Geographic Area

The Territory of Alaska was divided vertically by the 156th Parallel<sup>[28]</sup> into Eastern and Western Areas. To the Eastern Area was added Southwest Alaska, including the Aleutian Islands, which had been evacuated of non-combatants<sup>[29]</sup>.

The Western Area had a Field Headquarters in Nome, with the offices of the Commander, Quartermaster, Instructors, Public Relations Officer and Chaplains. Other field staff were located in Anchorage, Koyuk, Selawik and Gambell

(on Saint Lawrence Island, where Major Marston first conceived his plan).

The Eastern Area was headquartered in Juneau and held the offices of Property Officer (a role filled by the Adjutant General) and Instructors. Field staff were assigned to Glacier Highway, |, |, Palmer, | and Sitka.

### By Ethnic Group

The **Alaska Territorial Guard** was drawn from 107 communities and from these ethnic groups: Aleut, Athabaskan, European, Inupiaq, Haida, Jewish, Tlingit, Tsimshian, Yupik, and probably more.

### By Rank

The **ATG**, being organized by US Army officers<sup>[30]</sup>, made use of the same US Army rank structure, with these exceptions:

- Throughout the duration of the **ATG**, no member rose above the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, including the Adjutant *General*.
- The designation "Private" appears to have been little used, though most members were in fact of Private rank.<sup>[1]</sup>

### By Workload and Pay

The 21 staff officers were all full-time, paid positions (except for the governor, whose **ATG** duties were in addition to his regular office and without added salary). All other positions were strictly part-time volunteer, without pay.

### By Sex

That total includes at least 27 **ATG** members who were women. Most women served as nurses at the field hospital in Kotzebue, although at least one woman served the **ATG**'s primary mission alongside the men. Laura Beltz Wright of Haycock is also noted for being the best sharpshooter in her company, scoring 98% bulls-eyes. She was chosen Queen of Fairbanks in a beauty contest, an honor her daughter later shared. One of her sons rose to become an airline vice president.<sup>[3]</sup>

### By Age

The age of **ATG** members at enrollment ranged from 80 years old<sup>[31]</sup> to as young as twelve<sup>[20][5]</sup>, even though official regulations put the minimum age at sixteen.

### By Number

All told, there were 6,389 members of the **Alaska Territorial Guard (ATG)**, according to an official roster<sup>[1]</sup>.

### Unofficial tally

Alongside those who served in the **ATG**, many others worked to support them, including food service, providing equipment and supplies to the Quartermaster, repair work, etc. Major Marston put the estimate at 20,000 Alaskans who materially participated in **ATG** activities, in his Western Area alone<sup>[6]</sup>.

## ATG Activities

All **ATG** members except the 21 staff officers served without pay, and had to perform their new **ATG** duties in



addition to the often difficult challenges of subsisting in Arctic and extreme marine environments.

The **ATG** trained for and/or actively carried out the following:

- Issuing of weapons and ammunition<sup>[32]</sup>
- Instruction, drill and target practice<sup>[33]</sup>
- Transport of equipment and supplies<sup>[34]</sup>
- Construction of ATG buildings and facilities<sup>[35]</sup>
- Construction of airstrips and support facilities for other military agencies as needed<sup>[36]</sup>
- Coastal and inland scouting patrols
- Breaking hundreds of miles of wilderness trails<sup>[37]</sup>
- Setup and repair of dozens of emergency shelter cabins<sup>[37]</sup>
- Distribution of emergency food and ammunition containers for the US Navy<sup>[38]</sup>
- Firefighting<sup>[37]</sup>
- Land and sea rescue<sup>[37]</sup>
- Enemy combat

The **ATG** received commendations for:

- Shooting down Japanese air balloons carrying bombs and eavesdropping radios<sup>[39]</sup>
- Rescue of a downed airman<sup>[37]</sup>

In addition, some **ATG** members performed the following:

- Medical care at the field hospital in Kotzebue<sup>[40]</sup>

## ATG Artists

During the 1930s, as part of FDR's New Deal programs to ease the country out of Great Depression, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) hired many noted American artists. On the US entry into World War II, several WPA artists took work with the War Department. A few of these artists made their way to Alaska to help document the Aleutian Campaign and other Alaskan military operations, including the new **Alaska Territorial Guard**. Some of their work was featured nationwide on a number of wartime posters. The artists included:

- Magnus Colcord "Rusty" Heurlin - An ATG lieutenant, his painting was reproduced as the posters "Back the Attack"<sup>[41]</sup> and "From Metlakatla to Barrow - The Territorial Guard"<sup>[42][43]</sup>, <sup>[44]</sup>
- Joe Jones<sup>[45][46]</sup>
- Henry Varnum Poor - His "Major Muktuk Marston Signs Up Soldiers" now hangs in the Pentagon's Hall of Fame<sup>[47]</sup>.

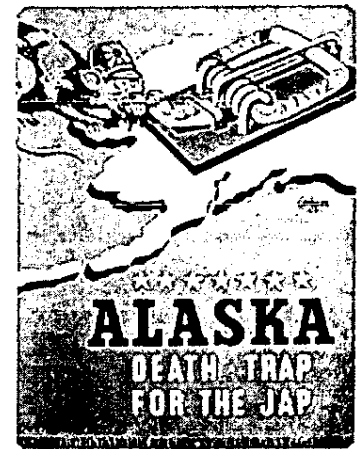
Other artists, born in Alaska and already well-known, gained further exposure through contact with ATG members and artists:

- Florence Nupok Melewotkuk<sup>[1]</sup> - a Siberian Yupik from Saint Lawrence Island. Her work was promoted in the 1920s by Otto Geist<sup>[2]</sup>, later an **ATG** major<sup>[48]</sup>.
- George Aden Ahgupuk<sup>[3]</sup> - a Shishmaref artist since boyhood, he was befriended by Major Marston, who wrote and spoke of his artistry within and outside the **ATG**. <sup>[49]</sup>

## ATG influences

Several former members of the ATG were instrumental in achieving Alaska Statehood. In 1958 three of the eleven

- 1939 - Ernest Gruening is appointed Alaska territorial governor by his friend, US President Franklin D Roosevelt (FDR). Gruening gets four National Guard units organized in the Alaska Territory.
- 1940, Mar - A bill for an air base in Alaska failes to pass in the US House<sup>[13]</sup>.
- 1940, April - Hitler invades Norway and Denmark (whose territory includes Greenland).
- 1940, May - US Congress approves an air base in Alaska<sup>[13]</sup>. Air raids from northern Alaska would help counter any Nazi bases built in Greenland, as a polar projection map will attest).
- 1941, Mar - Marvin Marston is commissioned at the Pentagon as a major with orders to Alaska<sup>[54]</sup>.
- Mid-1941 - Ernest Gruening seeks a new guard organization for Alaska, anticipating the reassignment of the Alaska National Guard<sup>[15]</sup>.
- 1941, August - The US Army reassigns Alaska National Guard soldiers away from Alaska, leaving the state with no military reserves or Home Guard<sup>[15]</sup>.
- 1941, December 7 - The Imperial Japanese Navy bombs the USA at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, sinking most of the US Pacific Fleet. Soldiers' families are ordered evacuated from Alaska<sup>[55]</sup>.
- 1942, Feb-Mar - A Japanese Navy reconnaissance unit is filmed making detailed surveys of the Alaska coastline. Japanese crewmen (enemy combatants) came ashore and questioned the locals about the area. <sup>[16]</sup>
- 1942, Mar - Major Marston realizes the practicality of a 'tundra army' to defend the entire Alaskan coast.
- 1942, Mar - Japanese aircraft are sighted over Saint Lawrence Island<sup>[56]</sup>.
- 1942, Mar/April - Major Marston presents a formal plan for the defense of Alaska shoreline<sup>[57]</sup>.
- 1942, Jun - Japanese forces raid Dutch Harbor and take control of Attu, Kiska and Adak.
- 1942, Jun - The Alaska Command assigns Major Marvin Marston and Captain Carl Schreiber as military aides to Governor Gruening. Gruening and Marston soon embark on a trip to form the first units of the new **Alaska Territorial Guard**<sup>[58]</sup>.
- 1942 - Major Marston (by now known as "Muktuk" after an eating contest with a village headman) opts to make an **ATG** recruiting run by dogsled when a promised plane fails to show up<sup>[59]</sup>.
- 1943, Jan - Major Marston completes his circuit around the Seward Peninsula by dogsled during the coldest winter in 25 years<sup>[22]</sup>. Living by native methods, he continues to travel the Arctic through 1945.
- 1945, August - VJ Day, The Empire of Japan surrenders.
- 1947 - The **Alaska Territorial Guard** is disbanded<sup>[27]</sup>.
- 1966 - The State of Alaska awards a medal to all **ATG** members<sup>[27]</sup>.
- 2000 - US Senator Ted Stevens' (R-AK) bill granting **ATG** members full veteran status is passed into law. Little is done to find and inform surviving **ATG** members and spouses, many of whom relocated numerous times in the intervening 53 years. <sup>[11]</sup>
- 2003 - Robert A "Bob" Goodman, Colonel (Retired), Alaska Air National Guard, takes up the task of finding as many former **ATG** members as possible, to help them apply for recognition as US veterans<sup>[11]</sup>.
- 2006 - Bob Goodman founds the Alaska Territorial Guard Organization, a 501(c)(3) non-profit, to support his efforts on behalf of all former **ATG** members. To date, they have found and helped gain approval for about 150 **ATG** veterans<sup>[11]</sup>.



U.S government poster from WWII

## Noted ATG members

- Atwood, Robert - Editor and publisher of the Anchorage Times, **ATG** lieutenant, Statehood Committee chair
- Egan, William A - territorial & state representative, **ATG** corporal, Constitutional Convention president, state governor
- Geist, Otto William - Pioneer Alaskan archaeologist, promoter of Alaskan artist Florence Nupok Malewoktuk, **ATG** major and quartermaster<sup>[60]</sup>. The University of Alaska Museum's main building is named for him.
- Gruening, Ernest - Friend of FDR, territorial governor, **ATG** founder<sup>[61]</sup>, Statehood Committee member, US Senator
- Heurlin, Magnus Colcord "Rusty" - WPA artist, **ATG** lieutenant, famed Alaskan artist, first art teacher at the

University of Alaska Fairbanks, influenced fellow artist Fred Machetanz

- Ipalook, Fred - Inupiaq native, ATG lieutenant, teacher for 39 years<sup>[62]</sup>.
- Ipalook, Percy - Inupiaq native, ATG chaplain, territorial & state legislator<sup>[63]</sup>, Statehood Committee member
- Johnson, Maurice Theodore - ATG member, Constitutional Convention delegate
- Jorgensen, Holger - ATG sergeant, commercial airline pilot<sup>[64]</sup>
- Knight, William Wellington - ATG member, Constitutional Convention delegate
- Lisbourne, Daniel - ATG member, mayor
- Marston, Marvin R "Muktuk", Major, US Army - ATG organizer of Western Alaska, Constitutional Convention delegate, author of the book **Men of the Tundra: Alaska Eskimos at War**
- McNealy, Robert J - ATG corporal, Constitutional Convention delegate
- Mogg, Samuel Snell "Sammy" - ATG lieutenant, guide who led Major Marston by dogsled on an epic 680-mile (1,090 km) mid-winter organizing circuit around the Seward Peninsula.
- Nolan, James - ATG member, Constitutional Convention delegate
- Peratrovich, Frank J - Tlingit native; ATG captain; mayor; territorial & state representative; senator & senate president; Statehood Committee member; Constitutional Convention first vice president
- Reader, Peter L - ATG member, Constitutional Convention delegate
- Schreiber, Carl, Captain, US Army - ATG organizer of Eastern Alaska
- Wright, Laura Beltz - ATG member, best sharpshooter in her company, shooting 98% bulls-eyes, former Queen of Fairbanks

## See also

Former United States special operations units Gutierrez, Fermin "Rocky"

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2. <sup>^</sup> Gruening, Ernest (1969), *Introduction - Men of the Tundra: Alaska Eskimos at War*, October House, pp. 7-8
3. <sup>^</sup> <sup>a</sup> <sup>b</sup> Marston, Marvin (1969), *Men of the Tundra: Alaska Eskimos at War*, October House. pp. 104e
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5. <sup>^</sup> <sup>a</sup> <sup>b</sup> Gruening, Ernest (1969), *Introduction - Men of the Tundra: Alaska Eskimos at War*, October House, pp. 5
6. <sup>^</sup> <sup>a</sup> <sup>b</sup> Marston, Marvin (1969), *Men of the Tundra: Alaska Eskimos at War*, October House, pp. 190
7. <sup>^</sup> Marston, Marvin (1969), *Men of the Tundra: Alaska Eskimos at War*, October House, pp. 51,54-57
8. <sup>^</sup> Marston, Marvin (1969), *Men of the Tundra: Alaska Eskimos at War*, October House, pp. 210-212
9. <sup>^</sup> Necrason, C F (1969), *Epilogue - Men of the Tundra: Alaska Eskimos at War*, October House, pp. 210-212,215-217
10. <sup>^</sup> <sup>a</sup> <sup>b</sup> Marston, Marvin (1969), *Men of the Tundra: Alaska Eskimos at War*, October House, pp. 130-140
11. <sup>^</sup> <sup>a</sup> <sup>b</sup> <sup>c</sup> <sup>d</sup> <sup>e</sup> <sup>f</sup> <sup>g</sup> <sup>h</sup> <sup>i</sup> <sup>j</sup> *Alaska Territorial Guard Organization*, <http://www.goodmanforatg.com>
12. <sup>^</sup> Gruening, Ernest (1969), *Introduction to Men of the Tundra: Alaska Eskimos at War*, October House, pp. 2-3
13. <sup>^</sup> <sup>a</sup> <sup>b</sup> <sup>c</sup> Gruening, Ernest (1969), *Introduction - Men of the Tundra: Alaska Eskimos at War*, October House. pp. 3
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16. <sup>^</sup> <sup>a</sup> <sup>b</sup> Marston, Marvin (1969), *Men of the Tundra: Alaska Eskimos at War*, October House. pp. 32-33
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18. <sup>^</sup> Marston, Marvin (1969), *Men of the Tundra: Alaska Eskimos at War*, October House, pp. 37-48
19. <sup>^</sup> Marston, Marvin (1969), *Men of the Tundra: Alaska Eskimos at War*, October House, pp. 31-32
20. <sup>^</sup> <sup>a</sup> <sup>b</sup> Marston, Marvin (1969), *Men of the Tundra: Alaska Eskimos at War*, October House, pp. 45-47
21. <sup>^</sup> Marston, Marvin (1969), *Men of the Tundra: Alaska Eskimos at War*, October House, pp. 51,54-57
22. <sup>^</sup> <sup>a</sup> <sup>b</sup> Marston, Marvin (1969), *Men of the Tundra: Alaska Eskimos at War*, October House, pp. 123
23. <sup>^</sup> Marston, Marvin (1969), *Men of the Tundra: Alaska Eskimos at War*, October House, pp. 66-70
24. <sup>^</sup> <sup>a</sup> <sup>b</sup> Marston, Marvin (1969), *Men of the Tundra: Alaska Eskimos at War*, October House, pp. 401,65-66
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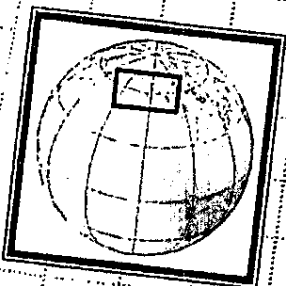


# ALASKA TERRITORIAL GUARD

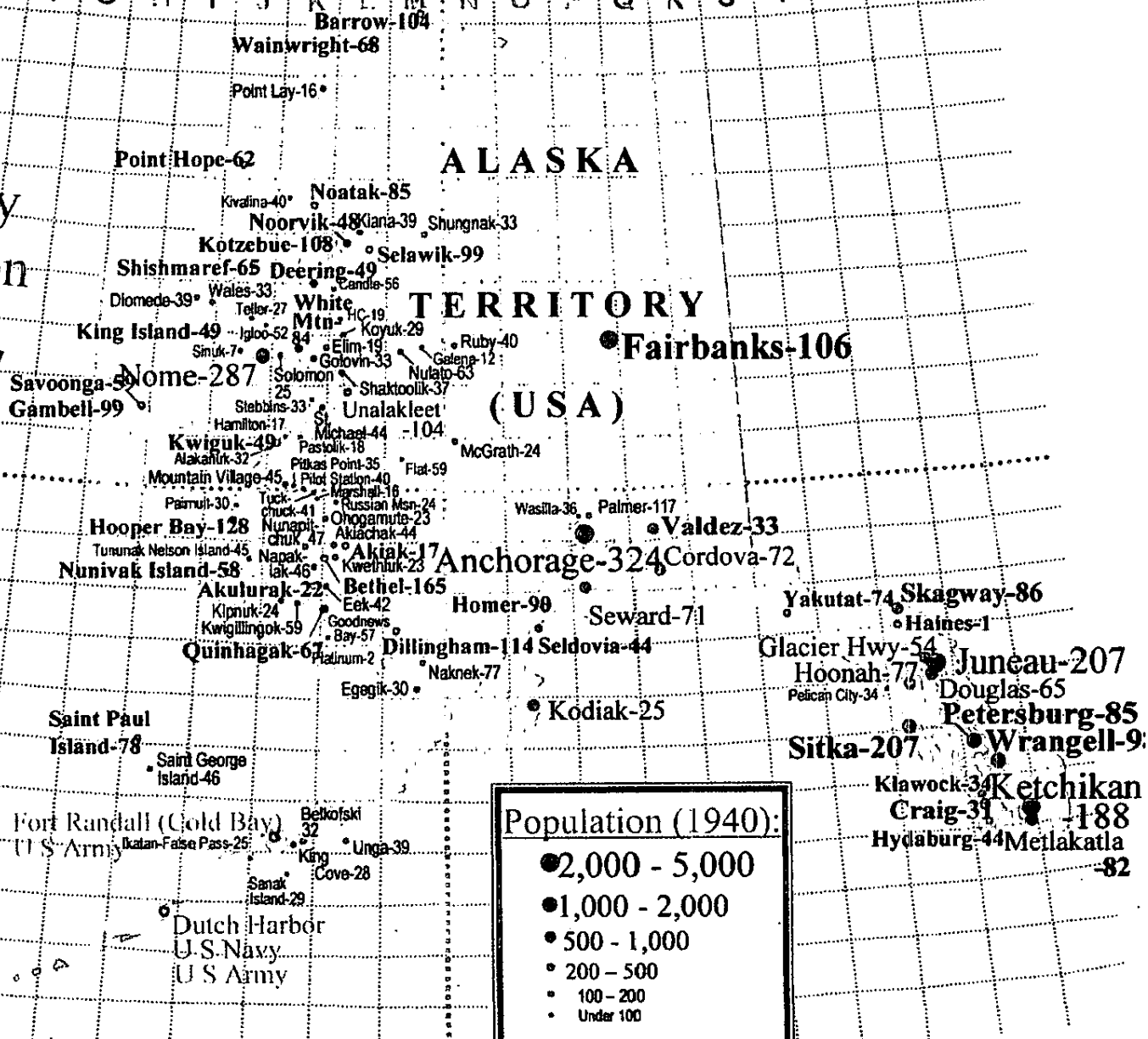
A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W

MAP  
Total  
Members by  
Unit Location  
1942-1947

Grand Total: 6,122



ENEMY  
OCCUPIED  
ZONE

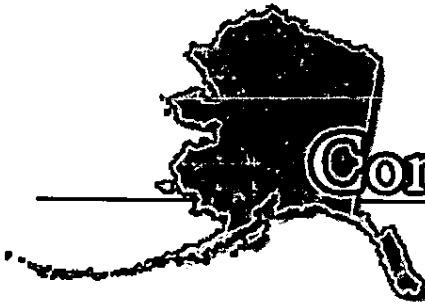


**Population (1940):**

- 2,000 - 5,000
- 1,000 - 2,000
- 500 - 1,000
- 200 - 500
- 100 - 200
- Under 100

(Source: Alaska Dep't of CCED)

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# Alaska Congressional Delegation

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

January 28, 2009

## **Sec. of Army Authorizes Emergency Payments to Alaska's ATG** *Delegation continues to work on legislative long-term solution*

At the urging of Alaska's Congressional delegation, the U.S. Army has agreed to provide temporary financial assistance to 26 members of Alaska's Territorial Guard (ATG) whose retirement checks will be reduced on February 1 following a legal interpretation that ATG service does not count toward military retirement.

Secretary of the Army Pete Geren has authorized a two-month payment for each member, giving the delegation time to ask Congress to revisit the issue. Sec. Geren told delegation members early today the Army will use the "emergency and extraordinary expense fund" to bridge the shortfall through the end of March.

The move comes after the Army announced that it misinterpreted a section of federal law when it allowed service in the ATG to be counted toward military retirement.

"This is great news for these Alaska Territorial Guardsmen who fought bravely to defend our country during World War II," Sen. Begich said. "I appreciate Secretary Geren's intervention on this issue and giving it the priority attention it deserves. These emergency payments will give us some time to get the problem resolved while making sure these brave Alaskans get the retirement pay they so deserve."

"I am grateful that the Secretary of the Army has agreed to use emergency funds under his control to provide a temporary safety net for these 26 Native Elders who served Alaska and our Nation with distinction during World War II. In this era of high fuel and food costs, it would be tragic to reduce the retirement checks of these Elders who have done so much for our nation," Sen. Murkowski said. "This decision in no way lessens my resolve to ensure that their service in

the Alaska Territorial Guard is respected as active duty service and fully credited toward military retirement. This is an earned benefit and it must be restored.”

“I truly appreciate the assistance of my former colleague, Secretary Geren,” Rep. Young said. “The loss of retirement benefits for the brave Alaskans who served in the Alaska Territorial Guard is disgraceful and a huge misstep by the Department of Defense. I understand budgetary concerns, but cutting the retirement benefits of 26 Alaskans who fought for their country is not near the answer. Back in 2001, when we worked in getting recognition and benefits for members of the Territorial Guard, the intention was that it would be for life, not until the DOD reinterpreted legislative language to suit their needs. I spoke with Secretary Geren and am grateful that he was able to recognize this as a problem and is granting us the two-month extension while we work out a solution.”

When Alaska’s delegation members received word last week that the ATG retirement payments had been suspended, Sens. Begich and Murkowski and Congressman Don Young immediately sent a letter to President Barack Obama asking the administration to intervene on the matter.

The delegation today introduced legislation that would permanently clarify that service in the ATG is credible toward military retirement.

With Sen. Begich presiding over the Senate, Sen. Murkowski last Thursday evening spoke about the issue on the Senate floor criticizing the Defense Department for reducing the retirement pay of the former Territorial Guardsmen, most of whom are in their 80s, during the harsh Alaska winter. Sen. Begich brought the issue up Tuesday at the Armed Services Committee meeting with Sec. of Defense Robert Gates.

Sec. Geren has told the delegation the checks could be sent as soon as today.

###

111TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# S. 342

To provide for the treatment of service as a member of the Alaska Territorial Guard during World War II as active service for purposes of retired pay for members of the Armed Forces.

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## IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JANUARY 28, 2009

Ms. MURKOWSKI (for herself, Mr. BEGICH, and Mr. INOUE) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Armed Services

---

## A BILL

To provide for the treatment of service as a member of the Alaska Territorial Guard during World War II as active service for purposes of retired pay for members of the Armed Forces.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*

2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. TREATMENT AS ACTIVE SERVICE FOR RETIRED**

4 **PAY PURPOSES OF SERVICE AS A MEMBER OF**

5 **THE ALASKA TERRITORIAL GUARD DURING**

6 **WORLD WAR II.**

7 (a) IN GENERAL.—Service as a member of the Alas-

8 ka Territorial Guard during World War II of any indi-

1 vidual who was honorably discharged therefrom under sec-  
2 tion 8147 of the Department of Defense Appropriations  
3 Act, 2001 (Public Law 106-259; 114 Stat. 705) shall be  
4 treated as active service for purposes of the computation  
5 under chapter 71, 371, or 1223 of title 10, United States  
6 Code, as applicable, of the retired pay to which such indi-  
7 vidual may be entitled under title 10, United States Code.

8 (b) APPLICABILITY.—Subsection (a) shall apply with  
9 respect to amounts of retired pay payable under title 10,  
10 United States Code, for months beginning on or after Au-  
11 gust 9, 2000. No retired pay shall be paid to any indi-  
12 vidual by reason of subsection (a) for any period before  
13 that date.

14 (c) WORLD WAR II DEFINED.—In this section, the  
15 term “World War II” has the meaning given that term  
16 in section 101(8) of title 38, United States Code.

○



111TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 744

To provide for the treatment of service as a member of the Alaska Territorial Guard during World War II as active service for purposes of retired pay for members of the Armed Forces.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 28, 2009

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Armed Services

---

## A BILL

To provide for the treatment of service as a member of the Alaska Territorial Guard during World War II as active service for purposes of retired pay for members of the Armed Forces.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. TREATMENT AS ACTIVE SERVICE FOR RETIRED**  
4 **PAY PURPOSES OF SERVICE AS A MEMBER OF**  
5 **THE ALASKA TERRITORIAL GUARD DURING**  
6 **WORLD WAR II.**

7 (a) IN GENERAL.—Service as a member of the Alas-  
8 ka Territorial Guard during World War II of any indi-

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10 United States Code, for months beginning on or after Au-  
11 gust 9, 2000. No retired pay shall be paid to any indi-  
12 vidual by reason of subsection (a) for any period before  
13 that date.

14 (c) WORLD WAR II DEFINED.—In this section, the  
15 term “World War II” has the meaning given that term  
16 in section 101(8) of title 38, United States Code.

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**Karen Sawyer**

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**From:** Rowland, Mindy B (GOV) [mindy.rowland@alaska.gov]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 28, 2009 5:44 PM  
**To:** GOV Legislators All; GOV Legislators Staff Partial  
**Subject:** Governor Palin Pleased with Army Payments to ATG Veterans

Dear Legislator,

Our valued AK Territorial Guard Veterans will be able to continue receiving their retirement benefits. Let me know if you have any questions.

Thank you  
Mindy

*Mindy Rowland*  
Deputy Legislative Director  
Office of Governor Sarah Palin  
465-3994

**Governor Palin Pleased with Army Payments to ATG Veterans**  
***Letter urges President Obama to permanently reinstate benefits***

January 28, 2009, Juneau, Alaska – Governor Sarah Palin applauded Secretary of the Army Pete Geren's decision to continue retirement payments to the Alaska Territorial Guard members on a temporary basis. A congressional fix will be needed to fully reinstate the retirement money rightfully earned by these veterans.

The Alaska Territorial Guard members are primarily Alaska Natives living in rural areas.

"Rural Alaskans face the highest food and energy costs in the nation, and these veterans need their retirement checks now more than ever," Governor Palin said. "Using the emergency fund to provide monetary protection for these 26 veterans is the right thing to do."

Governor Palin sent a letter directly to President Barack Obama asking him to honor these Native Alaskan veterans who gave their service without question during World War II, and asked for nothing in return. She urged the president to immediately reinstate their retirement benefits.

"The nation is in an economic downturn, and this is the worst time for the Army to cut these retirement checks to veterans who are in their late 80's and early 90's," said Palin.

A copy of Governor Palin's letter to President Obama can be found at:  
<http://gov.state.ak.us/pdf/GovernorJan29-PresObama.pdf>

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## Army provides pay to militia members

by Rachel D'Oro  
The Associated Press  
Wednesday, January 28, 2009

ANCHORAGE, Alaska -- Sen. Mark Begich says the Secretary of the Army has decided to provide emergency funds to surviving members of a World War II Alaska militia whose retirement pay was being cut off because of a legal technicality.

Army officials last week said a military analysis determined the law recognizing the Alaska Territorial Guard's service as federal active duty had initially been misinterpreted.

Julie Hasquet, a spokesperson for Begich, said Army Secretary Pete Geren will dip into an emergency fund to cover the pay for 26 former members of the largely Alaska Native guard for two months while Congress works on legislation to fix the law.

Hasquet said the survivors will receive a one-time emergency payment equal to two months pay.

The benefits amount to as much as \$557 a month.



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**Karen Sawyer**

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**From:** Esther Brown [ebrown@loweryukon.org]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 27, 2009 4:52 PM  
**To:** Sen. Charlie Huggins  
**Subject:** AK Territorial Guard Ltr 1-27-09  
**Importance:** High

My name is Mr. Andrew Brown Sr. of Mountain Village, Alaska. I am a 79 year Alaska Territorial Guard Veteran and proudly served our country in a time of great crisis when our nation faced two world wars against Japan and Germany from 1941 to 1947. I and my native comrades were recruited with no pay by Muktuk Marston. With no hesitation we knew it was critical as Mr. Marston made every effort to recruit every capable man state-wide at a time when we were most needed. I even had to forego my high school education to defend our country which I did not mind. The only benefits we received at that time were rifles, steel head ammunition, and uniforms. What we were most grateful of was the armed forces aggressively protecting our nation and allies in an extremely difficult position. We were assigned to patrol the coast line to look out for enemy aircrafts, ships, or unusual activities at sea.

Our service to our country cannot and should not be ignored at that time or any other time. We were willing to sacrifice our lives for the freedom that is always our nation's privilege. As you may be aware we were finally recognized for our service just last spring 2008 at Hooper Bay, AK; we had finally received our discharge papers and were told we can apply for veteran's benefits. And then just recently we discovered our pensions were impermissible which brings forth my purpose in writing this letter asking you to kindly please recognize us territorial guards with fairness and honor and to develop new legislation that allows our right to receive benefits that are well deserved.

It is known other veteran soldiers receive veteran's benefits with no restrictions. The territorial guards were predominately native and we live in a country where discrimination is not allowed. To brush us aside is neither proper nor patriotic. Please find it in your heart to bring honor to us territorial guards that are still surviving and to those that passed away and give us the benefits we surely deserve. Your time and efforts would be very much appreciated. Thank you again.

Sincerely,  
Andrew Brown Sr.  
P.O. Box 32187  
Mtn. Village, Alaska 99632  
907-591-2735

**Karen Sawyer**

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**From:** Ron and Judy Hills [judynron@mtaonline.net]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 27, 2009 6:57 PM  
**To:** Sen. Charlie Huggins  
**Subject:** Alaska Territorial Guard  
**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Blue

Hi there-I saw you on t.v. tonight speaking about the Territorial Guard. Thanks for standing up for them. Everyone I know is furious about the decision to stop their benefits. Is there anything that anyone of us can do to help with this? As Mr. Nugen from Nugens Ranch said several years ago about the longevity bonus-----we are dying as fast as we can!!! I am ashamed of iur government for this decision. Thanks again. Judy Hills

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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**Charlie Huggins**  
**Senator**

## MEMORANDUM

**Date:** February 6, 2009

**To:** Representative Carl Gatto, Chairman  
Military and Veterans Affairs Committee

**From:** Senator Charlie Huggins

**Subject:** Hearing Request for CS for Senate Joint Resolution 5 (FIN)

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I respectfully request a hearing for the CSSJR 5, which has unanimously passed the Senate.

We would appreciate this resolution being scheduled in your committee as soon as possible.

Attached please find the updated sponsor statement, legislation, fiscal statement, and background information. If you have any questions, please call my staff person, Karen Sawyer, at 465-3878.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charlie Huggins".

**Charlie Huggins**  
**Senator**

**Attachments**