

**SJR**

**5**

<target><bill>SJR 5</bill><subject>SJR  
5</subject><comm>SF26</comm></target>

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

2/3/09

Senate District H  
600 E. Railroad Avenue  
Wasilla AK 99654  
907-376-4866  
907-373-4724 :Fax



State Capitol, Room 119  
Juneau AK 99801-1182  
907-465-3878  
Fax: 907-465-3265  
800-862-3878

## Senate Rules Committee

### SPONSOR STATEMENT

#### CS for SJR 5

#### 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  
465-3878  
26-LS0468VA  
2/2/09

**SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT**  
**First Committee of Referral**

DATE: 1/28/09

FURTHER:

Date of 5-Day Notice: \_\_\_\_\_  
 (in accordance with Uniform Rule 23)

DATE TURNED  
 IN TO OFFICE: \_\_\_\_\_

**Finance Committee** considered SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 5

**SJR 5 AK TERRITORIAL GUARD RETIREMENT BENEFITS**

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

and recommends:

- be replaced with  SCS or  CS SJR 5 ( FIN )
- adopt previous  SCS or  CS \_\_\_\_\_ ( \_\_\_\_\_ )
- attached amendment(s)
- adopt \_\_\_\_\_ Letter of Intent
- further referral to \_\_\_\_\_ Committee

<b>SENATE BILL:</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Same Title
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	New Title
<hr/>	
<b>HOUSE BILL:</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Same Title
<input type="checkbox"/>	Technical Title Change
<input type="checkbox"/>	New Title w/ SCR # _____

**NEW FISCAL NOTE(S):**

**PREVIOUS FISCAL NOTE(S):**

Department	Date	Fiscal	Indet.	Zero	FN#
SFIN - ALL	2/2/09			✓	

Department	Date	Fiscal	Indet.	Zero	FN#

APPROPRIATION - no fiscal note

SIGNATURES AND RECOMMENDATIONS:	PRINTED LAST NAME	DO PASS	DO NOT PASS	NO REC	AMEND
	Ellison	✓			
	HUGHES	✓			
	THOMAS	✓			
	OLSON	✓			
	ELLIS	✓			
CO-CHAIR:		✓			
CO-CHAIR:		✓			

# FISCAL NOTE

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

Fiscal Note Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Bill Version:                     SJR 5                      
 () Publish Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Title                     SJR 5-AK TERRITORIAL GUARD RETIREMENT BENEFITS                     Dept. Affected:                     All Departments                      
 RDU \_\_\_\_\_  
 Component \_\_\_\_\_  
 Sponsor                     Senate Rules Committee                      
 Requester                     Senate Finance Committee                     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>		0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>CAPITAL EXPENDITURES</b>								
<b>CHANGE IN REVENUES ( )</b>								

**FUND SOURCE** (Thousands of Dollars)

	FY 2010	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
1002 Federal Receipts							
1003 GF Match							
1004 GF							
1005 GF/Program Receipts							
1037 GF/Mental Health							
Other Interagency Receipts							
<b>TOTAL</b>	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

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

**POSITIONS**

	FY 2010	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
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

*Amendment  
page 2*

*Adopted  
2/3/09*

26-LS0468R  
Bailey  
2/2/09

**CS FOR SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 5( )  
IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA  
TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION**

**BY**

**Offered:  
Referred:**

**Sponsor(s): SENATE RULES COMMITTEE**

**A RESOLUTION**

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

3 **BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

4 **WHEREAS**, in 1942, the Alaska Territorial Guard was formed by Territorial  
5 Governor Ernest Gruening in response to Japanese activity around Alaska; and

6 **WHEREAS**, during World War II, approximately 6,389 members of the Alaska  
7 Territorial Guard served without compensation in the state while the Alaska National Guard  
8 was deployed; and

9 **WHEREAS** the Alaska Territorial Guard engaged in combat with the enemy,  
10 protected the lend-lease route that stretched from North America to the Soviet Union, and  
11 rescued downed airmen; and

12 **WHEREAS** sec. 8147 of the Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2001 (P.L.  
13 106-259, 38 U.S.C. 106) requires the United States Secretary of Defense to issue certificates  
14 of honorable discharge to members of the Alaska Territorial Guard based on the nature and  
15 duration of each individual's World War II service; and

16 **WHEREAS** Alaska Territorial Guard members who have been honorably discharged

1 are considered to be on active duty for the purposes of all laws administered by the United  
2 States Secretary of Veterans Affairs, including laws relating to veterans' benefits; and

3 **WHEREAS** approximately 25 Alaska Native elders who served in the Alaska  
4 Territorial Guard are still receiving benefits; and

5 **WHEREAS** the recent decision of the United States Department of Defense to reverse  
6 the determination that service in the Alaska Territorial Guard during World War II be  
7 regarded as active duty for military retirement purposes is of grave concern because it will  
8 leave approximately 25 Alaska Native elders who live in the most remote parts of Alaska  
9 without critical funds to pay the costs, among the highest in the nation, of heating fuel and  
10 food during an already tough Alaska winter;

11 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests the United  
12 States Department of Defense to honor the service provided by the Alaska Territorial Guard  
13 by continuing retirement benefits for members of the Alaska Territorial Guard; and be it

14 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature thanks the Alaska  
15 Congressional delegation for <sup>its</sup> their swift action on behalf of the remaining elderly members of  
16 the Alaska Territorial Guard by their introduction of S. 342, which provides for the treatment  
17 of service as a member of the Alaska Territorial Guard during World War II as active service  
18 for purposes of retired pay for members of the United States armed forces; and be it

19 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests that  
20 the United States Department of Defense continue to use its emergency and extraordinary  
21 expense funds to provide retirement benefits for the Alaska Territorial Guard members until  
22 the United States Congress passes S. 342 or H.R. 744, or the United States Department of  
23 Defense reverses its January 2009 decision.

24 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Barack Obama, President of  
25 the United States; the Honorable Eric K. Shinseki, United States Secretary of Veterans  
26 Affairs; the Honorable Pete Geren, United States Secretary of the Army; and the Honorable  
27 Lisa Murkowski and the Honorable Mark Begich, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don  
28 Young, U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress.

AMENDMENT #2

*Adopted  
2/3/09*

OFFERED IN THE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE  
BY SENATOR HUGGINS

TO: SJR 5 (Version A\)

Page 1, Line 12, Insert:

WHEREAS, in 2000, because of the efforts of Alaska's U.S. Senator, Ted Stevens, the United States Congress passed legislation that required that service as a member of the Alaska Territorial Guard during World War II of an individual who was honorably discharged be considered active duty for purposes of all laws administered by the United States Secretary of Defense; and

A m e n d m e n t

OFFERED IN THE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE  
BY SENATOR HUGGINS

TO: CS SJR 5 (version "R")

Page 2, line 16, following "S. 342"  
Insert: "H.R. 744"

^  
and

1  
Adopted  
2/3/09

2/3/09

**SARAH PALIN**  
GOVERNOR  
GOVERNOR@GOV.STATE.AK.US



P.O. Box 110001  
JUNEAU, ALASKA 99811-0001  
(907) 465-3500  
FAX (907) 465-3532  
WWW.GOV.STATE.AK.US

**STATE OF ALASKA**  
**OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR**  
**JUNEAU**

January 27, 2009

President Barack H. Obama  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

It was with great concern that I learned of the recent decision by the Department of Defense to rescind the program that currently provides retirement payments to veterans of Alaska's Territorial Guard (ATG). This unfortunate decision was made without any notice to those affected and will cost a group of elderly Alaska veterans a significant portion of their retirement income at a time when the cost of living, particularly in rural Alaska, is substantially higher than in the rest of the United States.

In 2004, Congress fully vetted this issue and decided that service in the ATG was the same as military service. This is the right and proper way to honor these brave individuals who answered the call of duty during times of great national peril.

Prior to World War II, Alaska's territorial Governor was authorized by Congress to organize a two-branch military response organization - the organized National Guard, and the ATG, which would mobilize to help defend Alaskans in the event of an invasion. An estimated 6,600 men and women, mostly Alaska Indians, Eskimos, and Aleuts, responded to that call. Instead of hunting, trapping and fishing, they patrolled rural Alaska and served as the eyes and ears of the Army for more than five years without pay and benefits.

It took our nation almost 60 years to have these defenders of our territory honored for their time in the ATG, and for their service to be counted the same as federal military service. While most died waiting for their recognition, some have survived to receive their honorable discharge from the United States Army.

Now they are being told, again, that their ATG service is not worthy of federal recognition, and that is not right.

These people are our heroes.

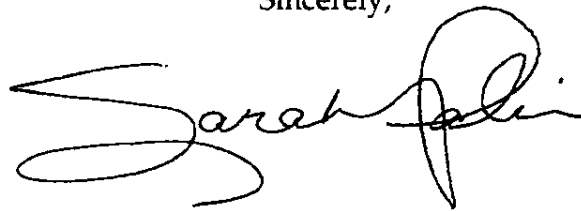
President Barack H. Obama  
January 27, 2009  
Page 2

The stellar service of these mostly rural, mostly Native, soldiers is to Alaska today what the service of the militia at Lexington and Concord was to New England.

I urge you to remember all that these valiant members of the ATG sacrificed while defending this country and ask that you reconsider this decision and immediately reinstate the retirement benefits that Congress already recognized in 2004 and that these heroes have certainly earned.

Thank you for considering my views.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Palin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping "S" at the beginning and a distinct "P" at the end.

Sarah Palin  
Governor

cc: The Honorable Robert Gates, Secretary, Department of Defense  
The Honorable Eric Shinseki, Secretary, Department of Veteran's Affairs  
The Honorable Pete Geren, Secretary of the Army  
The Honorable Lisa Murkowski, United States Senate  
The Honorable Mark Begich, United States Senate  
The Honorable Don Young, United States Congressman  
Major General Craig Campbell, Adjutant General/Commissioner  
Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs  
Jerry Beale, State Veterans Administrator, Office of Veteran Affairs,  
Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs  
Talis Colberg, Attorney General, Alaska Department of Law  
Michael Nizich, Chief of Staff, Office of the Governor

President Barack H. Obama  
January 27, 2009  
Page 3

bcc John W. Katz, Special Council to the Governor  
Mark Kelsey, Special Assistant, Office of the Governor  
Craig Tillery, Deputy Attorney General, Alaska Department of Law

SP/SC/MK/RR/JK/sf  
0101.01 comments thoughts concerns

Pres Obama ATG 109

# RECOGNIZED ATG MEMBERS

2/3/09



**Sam Herman, Sr., age 74, was the first ATG member to receive his federal discharge certificate, six decades after serving in World War II. Sam enlisted February 12th, 1942. He is from Nunivak Island but currently resides in Anchorage, Alaska. Presenting Sam's certificate is U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski, Bob Goodman, and Major General Craig Campbell.**



Roger Silook, Sr.



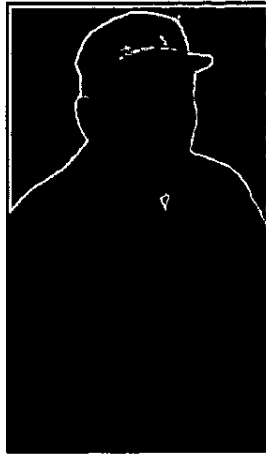
Teddy Koweluk  
Wales, AK



Vincent Tocktoo  
Shishmaref, AK



Henry J. Shaving



Fritz Beebe  
Eek, AK



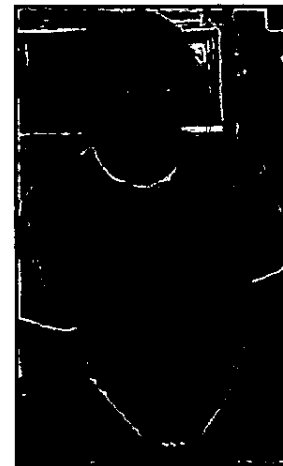
John A. Paulsteiner  
Seward, AK



Walter T. Amos



Samuel C. Henley  
Anchorage, AK



Thomas A. Pushruk  
King Island, AK



Truman T. Cleveland



Chester A. Topkok



Stanton O. Katchatag  
Unalakleet, AK



Chrisian Gundersen Jr.  
Sanak Island, AK



Kenneth A. Linn  
Palmer, AK



Oscar Watsjold  
Seward, AK



Eugene Blatchford  
Teller-Nome, AK



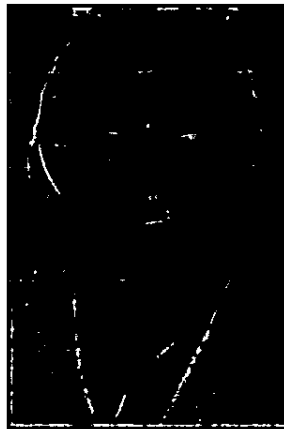
Jerry Protzman  
Seward, AK



Calvin Black  
Kwigillingak, AK



Emil Gundersen  
Sanak Island, AK



Edwin Roehl  
Dillingham, AK



Percy H. Blatchford  
Teller-Nome, AK



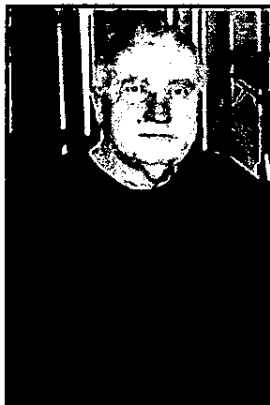
Jacob J. Hendricks  
Glacier Hwy, AK



Joel W. Johnson  
Juneau, AK



Ralph L. Kirby  
Douglas, AK



Gordon J. Zerbets  
Ketchikan, AK



James S. Osborne  
Hoonah, AK



Sigurd L. Olsen  
Juneau, AK



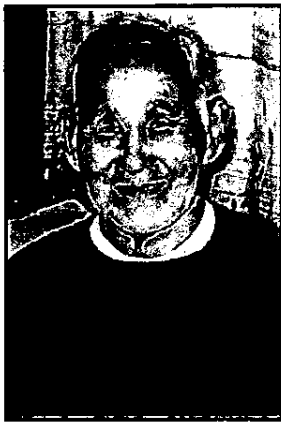
Howard C. Hayes  
Glacier Hwy, AK



William R. Osborne  
Hoonah, AK



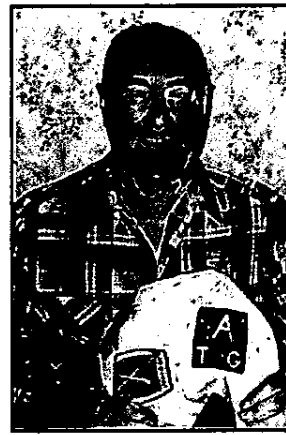
Roy K. Sereadlook  
Wales, AK



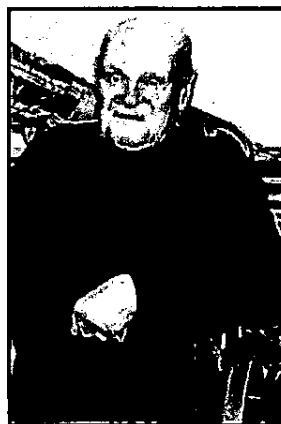
Paul P. Soolook  
Diomedes Island, AK



Julian B. Towsihea  
Point Hope, AK



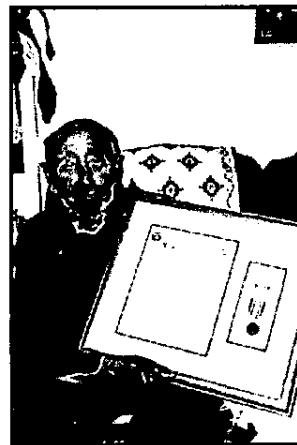
George F. Shaw  
Juneau, AK



Buell R. Smith  
Anchorage, AK



Chris Lauridsen  
Kwiguk, AK



John R. Samuelson  
Nunapitchuck, AK

### PHOTOS UNAVAILABLE:

- William S. Andrews - Dillingham, AK
- Clarence M. Irrigdo - Gamble, AK
- Francis John - Pitkas Point, AK
- Arthur H. Kassner - Juneau, AK
- John R. Samuelson - Nunapitchuck, AK
- Roger Silook, Sr. - Gamble, AK
- Jonathan Weyiouanna - Shishmaref, AK

2/3/09



# Alaska Congressional Delegation

Senator Lisa Murkowski  
Senator Mark Begich  
Congressman Don Young

Michael Brumas  
Senator Murkowski  
(202) 224-9301

Julie Hasquet  
Senator Begich  
(907) 271-5915

Meredith M. Kenny  
Congressman Young  
(202) 225-5765

**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.”

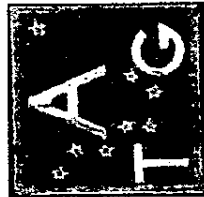
When Alaska’s delegation members received word last week that the ATG retirement payments had been suspended, Sens. Begich and Murkowski and Congressman Don Young immediately sent a letter to President Barack Obama asking the administration to intervene on the matter.

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.

###



# 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 X Y Z

## MAP

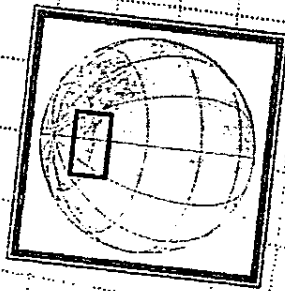
Total

Members by

Unit Location

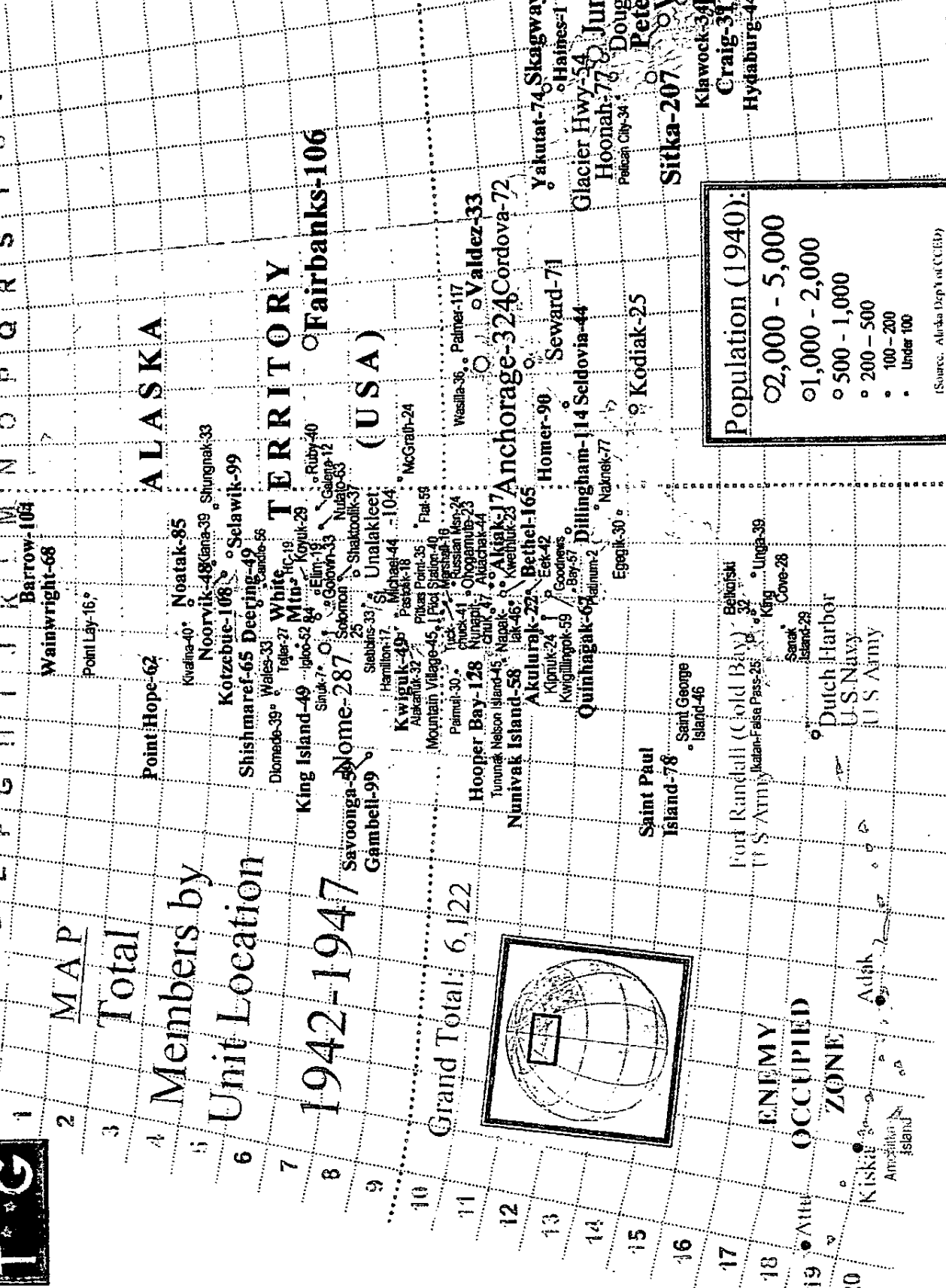
1942-1947

Grand Total: 6,122



ENEMY  
OCCUPIED  
ZONE

19  
20  
Aithu  
Kiska  
Amchitka  
Adak



**Population (1940):**

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

(Source: Alaska Dept of CEB)

2/3/09

2/3/09

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.

**From:** Esther Brown  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 27, 2009 4:52 PM  
**To:** Sen. Charlie Huggins  
**Subject:** AK Territorial Guard Ltr 1-27-09

2/3/09

**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

**From:** Esther Brown  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 28, 2009 10:04 AM  
**To:** Sen. Charlie Huggins  
**Subject:** Re: AK Territorial Guard Ltr 1-27-09

Honorable Charlie Huggins:

It was a great pleasure meeting you over the phone, Senator Huggins. I highly appreciate your quick and courteous response by phone and email, it means a lot to me.

I will gladly testify by phone to a Committee. My home phone # is 907-591-2735, cell phone # 907-591-6029.

I have a friend named Paul Kiuyna Sr. from Kipnuk, a retired ATG. He has been keeping in close touch with me lately. He was recently interviewed by the Washington Post and Anchorage Daily News. If you're interested in speaking to him his home phone # is 907-896-5315.

We shall keep in close touch. Thanks again.

Andrew Brown Sr.  
home phone: 907-591-2735  
cell phone: 907-591-6029

**From:** Beale, Jerry L (MVA) [jerry.beale@alaska.gov]  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 22, 2009 4:50 PM  
**Subject:** Another Day at the Office

## **Army cuts off pay for World War II Alaska Guard veterans**

Rachel D'Oro/The Associated Press

Originally published Thursday, January 22, 2009 at 1:12 p.m.  
Updated Thursday, January 22, 2009 at 3:44 p.m.

ANCHORAGE, Alaska -- The Army is terminating retirement credit for time served in 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 pay claims of 37 others have been suspended.

"This is earned income and it's not being paid," said Jerry Beale of the state Department of Military and Veterans Affairs.

Gov. Sarah Palin said 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."

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.

"It took nearly 60 years before the federal government honored these defenders of our territory for their service," Palin said in a statement. "While most died waiting for this recognition, the few who survive are now being told their Territorial Guard service is not worthy of federal recognition. This is unacceptable. These people are no less heroic than the militias at Lexington and Concord, or the defenders of the Alamo."

An Army official said the law was initially misinterpreted.

The reversal follows an analysis by the Department of Defense that determined that the Army is not authorized in the law to count territorial guard service for the purpose of calculating retirement pay, said Lt. Col. Richard McNorton, the Army's human resources command in Alexandria, Va.

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

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

An estimated 300 members are still living from the original 6,600-member unit called up from 1942 to 1947 to conduct various functions including scouting patrols and construction of military airstrips. 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 years old when he joined the Territorial Guard. His 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 than \$358 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."

**From:** Ron and Judy Hills  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 27, 2009 6:57 PM  
**To:** Sen. Charlie Huggins  
**Subject:** Alaska Territorial Guard

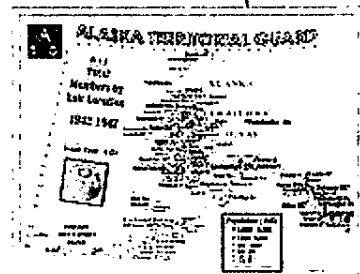
Hi there-I saw you on t.v. tonight speaking about the Territorial Guard. Thanks for standing up for them. Everyone I know is furious about the decision to stop their benefits. Is there anything that anyone of us can do to help with this?

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 our government for this decision. Thanks again. Judy Hills

# 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 American, Inupiaq, Haida, 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 Schreiber 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>[1]</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 American, Inupiaq, Haida, 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:

ATG members were also active in promoting racial equality in their communities, insisting on equal treatment for natives and whites alike at movie theaters, restaurants and other public facilities<sup>[10]</sup>.

## Recent developments

In 2000 Alaska's senior US Senator, Ted Stevens, sponsored a bill ordering the Secretary of Defense to issue Honorable Discharges to all Americans who served in the Alaska Territorial Guard (ATG)<sup>[11]</sup>. Stevens is himself a World War II veteran, flying with the Army Air Corps in China.

This bill, meant to repay a debt of honor long outstanding, was signed into law by President Bush that August. This recognition of the ATG's wartime military service includes retirement and/or survivors' pay and other benefits for many former ATG members, a very timely income boost for many seniors living well below the poverty line.

Unfortunately, no effort was made to find and inform these American heroes of their newly granted rights. Initially there was much disagreement as to whose responsibility it was to seek them out. <sup>[11]</sup>

Compounding the task, many people from this generation grew up without, and still do not own, a telephone. Their primary sources of news have been by radio broadcasts and word-of-mouth, yet not even these methods have been employed to any degree. The advanced age of former members creates an obvious urgency. Add to this the difficulty many will have finding old documents and filling out forms to bureaucratic standards, and the immediate need for a task force of personal assistants is clear. <sup>[11]</sup>

In 2003 Robert A "Bob" Goodman, a retired colonel, took a temporary position with the Alaska Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA) to find and assist as many former ATG members as possible. After the position ended that October, Bob continued the work, on his own and funded out of his own pocket. In support of this effort, he founded the Alaska Territorial Guard Organization (ATGO), a 501(c)(3) non-profit, in April 2006. He continues the work with the help of the small, dedicated underpaid and volunteer ATGO staff. To date, they have found and helped obtain an honorable discharge for about 150 ATG members. They estimate there are several hundred of these hardy souls yet to be found. <sup>[11]</sup>

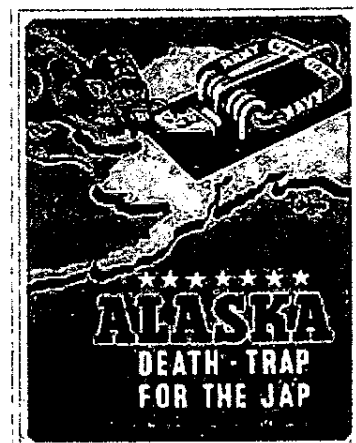
Bob and the ATGO have tirelessly pled the case of the ATG members and spouses with US senators two Alaskan governors, most of the state legislature, the Anchorage Assembly, as well as numerous Alaska Native Regional Corporations and other corporations and foundations.

The response is nearly uniform: "Yes, these people need and deserve help right away, and we'll gladly give you a letter of support, but that's not the kind of need we fund here." <sup>[11]</sup>

## Timeline of ATG-related events

- 1931 - The Imperial Japanese Army invades Manchou (Manchuria), confirming its intent to dominate East Asia and the Pacific.
- 1935 - Billy Mitchell declares Alaska's strategically important, goes unheeded by US military leadership<sup>[52]</sup>. Earlier, Billy Mitchell was court-martialled for advocating the value of military air power.
- 1937 - The US Army officially declines a request for an air base in Alaska<sup>[53]</sup>.
- 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 fails 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
- Schreibner, 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"

## References

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NEWS FROM THE OFFICE OF

**SENATOR LISA MURKOWSKI**  
*United States Senate*

**SEC. OF ARMY AUTHORIZES EMERGENCY PAYMENTS TO ALASKA'S ATG**

Delegation continues to work on legislative long-term solution

Thursday, January 29, 2009

WASHINGTON, DC -- 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.