



1987 Photo by [unreadable]

A navy jet lands on the USS Enterprise, a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, during a major exercise last week.

Adak hosts major Navy exercise

by **Holly F. Relmer**
Tundra Times reporter

ADAK ISLAND — Adak, near the end of the Aleutian Chain, is one of the most important Naval bases in the North Pacific. It was the site of a recently concluded Naval exercise called NorPacEx — North Pacific Exercise, which began Nov. 8.

The naval exercise fleet included the

USS Enterprise, 100 aircraft, 11 vessels and two nuclear-powered submarines. Other forces included the Alaskan Air Command and the Alaska Air National Guard, which provided refueling aircraft. Also, some Canadian forces were involved earlier in the exercise.

During the exercise there were simulated attacks on the *Enterprise* by anti-aircraft and surface-to-surface

missiles. Also, various types of reconnaissance missions were practiced.

Although it was only a mock "war," three men were killed during the exercise. Two Navy pilots were killed after a mid-air collision over Cook Inlet, and one man was swept off the *Enterprise* and lost at sea.

Reporters were allowed onto the air-

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• NorPacEx teaches warfare — Alaska-style

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craft carrier last week to view the exercise.

The *Enterprise* is a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier which was commissioned on Nov. 25, 1961. Horizontally the ship compares to a 25-story building and weighs around 90,000 tons. On board the carrier is a 10,000 man crew, making it much like a floating city. The average age of a sailor aboard the *Enterprise* is 20 years old.

At a press conference onboard the *Enterprise*, 53-year-old Vice Admiral Diego E. Hernandez, commandar, told reporters about a Soviet intelligence ship that had been tracking his fleet for about a week. He also told of three Russian surveillance fighter planes that came within 300 miles of the aircraft carrier.

"The Soviet ship followed us into the confines of a bay in Alaska," Diego said. Because it came so close to U.S. waters, Diego consulted with a naval lawyer onboard the *Enterprise* to determine what steps should be taken in this type of situation.

"We asked him to leave the area by radio, and he left," Diego said, talking about the ship.

Diego assumed command of the *Enterprise* as commander of the Third Fleet in August 1986.

"The intelligence ship is interested in what our ship is doing, and we want the Soviets to see our capabilities first-hand," he said.

Diego informed the Soviets that the Third Fleet would be conducting a training exercise near the Aleutian Islands.

Petropavlovsk in the Soviet Union is the only Soviet naval base with immediate access to the open sea. Today the Soviet Pacific Fleet is numerically larger than the entire U.S. Navy, and is increasingly more capable.

"I'm very concerned about the increase of Soviet subs, and I think about Soviet capabilities," Diego said. "I need to know what I'm going to do with my capabilities."

Although the Soviets have recently increased their naval forces, Diego is convinced the U.S. Navy is much more capable individually in their ability to operate.

During the actual exercise, the action was continuous.

While supervising F-14s' takeoff and landing routine, Norm Westerbuhr, the Air Boss in the Primary Flight Control center, pointed out a green flare that popped out of the water.

"That means we've just been hit by a missile. There's a sub right down there," Westerbuhr said as he pointed to the water.

Adak was the site for much of the activity, but at present no naval vessel has been assigned to a home port in Alaska. This may change, Diego said.

The entire island of Adak is a naval base with tours of duty lasting from 18 to 24 months. Newly stationed residents may find themselves at home

with endless activities planned through various different local organizations, schools and church groups.

Communication Master Chief Jerry Engleman, his wife Dora, and 13-year-old daughter have been on the

island for more six months. They said they like their new life on the island.

"The people who say there is nothing to do here are the ones that don't participate in island activities," Dora Engleman said.