

'Flying Hospital' Proposed by Mike Gravel for Native Health

United States Senate candidate Mike Gravel today proposed that the Public Health Service convert an Air National Guard flying boxcar into a "Flying Hospital" to bring medical aid to native villages.

He also suggested that one or more medically-equipped helicopters such

as those being used in Vietnam be permanently assigned to strategic points in rural Alaska and be available to transport ill or injured natives to the nearest hospital.

"Although substantial progress has been made in treating sickness and injury among native Alaskans,"

Gravel said, "a quick glance at the facts is enough to convince anyone that much more remains to be done.

"The infant mortality rate in native villages is the highest in the United States, and the life expectancy is the lowest.

"The tuberculosis rate is the highest in the country, and TB and other infectious diseases are not under control.

"The accident rate is excessive, and the chances of a native surviving a serious accident in his village are much less than that of a city resident.

"It would not cost a great deal of money—an infinitesimal amount in comparison to what the government spends on many programs—to bring medical care directly to the villages."

The "Flying Hospital" envisioned by Gravel would be staffed with doctors and nurses, and equipped to dispense medicine and perform minor operations.

"I think this is the least we can do for our native people," Gravel said.