

St. Lawrence Village Seeing Strange Things

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Near Gambell on St. Lawrence Island, just a hop, skip and jump from the Soviet Siberian coast, the camp of Clifford Iknokinok was recently attacked by four to five strange men. Clifford claimed the strangers tore up his camp and dumped gasoline on the ground, also tearing up his boat. The following interview, taken from the Nome Nugget, probes possible reasons behind mysterious incidents on the island.)

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By Clarence Irrigoo

For several years now The Village of Gambell reported seeing unidentified ships, submarines and airplanes as well as human beings—far and near. One time they came so close that what smelled like their engine exhaust was noticed all over town and the towns-people almost panicked thinking it would be noxious gas! Who knows whether these are friends or foe in these days of "Lukewarm" War with Viet Nam.

Most recent incident took place early this month according to Clifford Iknokinok who was in town Wednesday—Aug. 24, and whose family at camp was attacked. Mr. Iknokinok told that other happenings were reported to them later, some which were seen and heard, presumably the same night of the attack or the following day.

Here are some of the late reportings:

(1) The same night Cliff's Camp was attacked, a lone camper on the west coast of the island reported hearing an airplane flying in dark, first going east and then going west into the Bering Sea.

(2) South west Cape campers reported seeing a float plane land and take off from lakes near the coast and from inland lakes. These took place after the Coast & Geodetic Surveyors left the island. (These float planes were seen three days after Cliff's camp was attacked.)

(3) Boxer Bay campers reported hearing blasts of some sort between them and Southwest Cape. Charles Siwooko who was camping with his family at the time tried to flee with his boat but the outboard motor wouldn't start. He returned to Gambell later.

(4) Another camper with his family on the west coast 15 miles outh of Gambell reported hearing a motor boat go by at night. No Gambell boats were in the area at the time.

(5) An aircraft with no identification whatsoever flew over Gambell and went back from where it appeared—Siberia.

(6) All summer, boat, ships of all sizes are seen to the West and northwest almost everyday. Some are awful big, much like those Aircraft Carriers. All of them appear and disappear in the direction where the large light beacon is located.

After a lengthy conversation over the coffee cup with Mr. Iknokinok, we concluded with two possible solutions: (a) Russian plot going for years. (b) Our own people sneaking for valuable mineral thought to be somewhere on the island. If the former is right, Mr. Iknokinok and I feared the next move the intruders make is going to be danger and will possibly result in the loss of life and limb.

We are told that the Eskimo National Guardsman (Scouts) are the "Eyes and Ears" of the whole Alaska Military and they are just that. But what if something is reported to headquarters in Nome and no one seemed to be interested at all? Take for instance the recent attack—when reported as very serious incident, no assistance came. It was five days later when the state trooper came along looking for a clue. If there is somebody (there is definitely somebody) doing something, he was given lots of time (three days) to either hide, run or go home. While our "big shots" are thinking with tight lips, that somebody either completed his plot or is ready for his next move.

In spite of all the reports made then and now, no one seems to care according to Mr. Iknokinok. The Gambell National Guard unit is terribly discouraged because they are not 100 percent backed. Every guardsman has this to say—"What is the use of having a National Guard unit in Gambell when we are not going to be backed 100 percent from our headquarters."

Let's forget the "Swamp-Gas" belief and be on the alert.