

# Little Diomedé Eskimo Scouts Keep Watch on Icefield Airstrip

On Little Diomedé Island in the Bering Strait, a half-dozen Alaska National Guardsmen are waiting and watching the ice in the sea. They watch because the ice is the only aircraft landing field they have, and if they are going to be able to attend the annual field training encampment at Camp Carroll in Anchorage, next week, the ice must grow heavier and stronger.

Each year, when plans are made for the annual field training of National Guard units in Alaska, a major effort goes into planning the transportation arrangements for the more than 1000 members of the 1st and 2nd Battalions.

The majority of the members of the two battalions are Eskimos and Indians who live in the remote villages of the western half of the state.

Because most of the villages have only small airfields, light aircraft must be used to ferry them from their homes to one of the larger towns, where better airfields exist, permitting the landing of large multi-engine passenger planes.

At these "staging areas," the men are formed into groups large enough to fill the specially chartered transports for the flight to Anchorage.

The staging areas are located at Nome, Kotzebue, St. Mary's, Ft. Yukon, Unalakleet and Bethel.

The U.S. Property and Fiscal Office for Alaska is assigned the task of arranging the massive airlift effort, and of contracting with bush lines and larger air carriers for the required number of flights.

Working closely with representatives of the air carriers, USP & FO transportation specialists schedule about 150 separate flights from 65 villages. The number of men to be transported varies widely.

From the village of Diomedé, the total will be six men. Depending on the size aircraft used to fly them out, two or three flights may be required. On the other hand, there will be about 32 men from Alakanuk, requiring eight separate flights.

Once the men are gathered

into the staging areas, the problems of transportation diminish considerably. Normally, only sudden changes in the weather will cause delays in scheduled flight departures.

But until all the men are reported as gathered at the staging areas, there's going to be quite a bit of tension in the Transportation Section, USP&FO.

Meanwhile, back at Diomedé, the six Scouts are waiting and watching. It might have been yesterday (Jan 22) before anyone knew for certain that Diomedé will be represented at Camp Carroll.

Then in two weeks, the whole process will have to be reversed, to return the Scouts to their homes.