

Project Name: Arctic Support Operations/Arctic West

Author: Tony Parisi

Organizations/People Involved:

Arctic Submarine Laboratory, NUWDC, San Diego, CA, Dr. Waldo Lyon

UCT Two, LCDR John Stamm, LT Tony Parisi, CE1 Dave Handley plus eight others

USCG Icebreaker Burton Island, USCG Cutter Rush

FPO-1

Contractor: Polar Research Lab

Date: 1974, 1975, 1976 and several follow-on years

Project Summary:

Specific to 1974:

LCDR Stamm and CE1 Handley joined a project team to perform surveys for future work. Personnel boarded the USCGS Burton Island in Nome. Also getting aboard was a Det from UDT-11 and a civilian engineer from FPO-1. The ship then proceeded north servicing aids to navigation, supporting some eskimo movement between islands and serving as temporary platform for other programs such ours.

Project surveys started at Gambell, St. Lawrence Island and worked between there and Fairway Rock. The project was for ASL and their contractor with diving support by UDT-11. UCT Two personnel made dives on St. Lawrence Island to survey the planned landing route and at the base of Fairway Rock where the landing was planned. Fairway Rock survey included travel by helo to the top while the contractor serviced the RTG.

Specific to 1975:

ASL requested UCT TWO support for three efforts in the Bering Sea: (1) Installation of a cable at St. Lawrence Island; (2) Repair/Replacement of a cable at Fairway Rock in the Bering Strait; and (3) Repair/Reburial of a cable at Point Barrow.

Since the project would likely involve placing cable on steep slopes, pre-deployment training included learning how to rappel, and appropriate gear was included on the deployment.

There were no icebreakers available at the time, so the Coast Guard made the USCG Rush available for the project. The UCT TWO detachment of ten people embarked at Kodiak, AK and loaded its equipment.

At St. Lawrence Island, the ship's helicopter was used to survey the best route for the terrestrial portion of the cable. Once that was determined, the small fiber optic cable was deployed from a hilltop down to the shoreline, and then laid on the seafloor using the team's zodiac. Divers using SCUBA and dry suits repositioned the cable as much as possible to protect it.

The ship then began its transit to Fairway Rock but had to loiter for several days until the ice cleared. Upon arrival, the detachment installed a new cable on the rock and underwater. Again, divers using SCUBA and dry suits repositioned the cable as much as possible to protect it.

At Point Barrow, the objective was to repair the existing cable originating at the ASL facility and bury it using a plow ASL provided. However, the weather deteriorated and the plow overturned in the surf. Divers were able to recover it but the damage precluded any further efforts.

Additional Efforts:

UCT Two provided logistic support, cable laying and various construction services to ASL over a multi-year period. The UCT Detachment deployed on USCG-provided craft for efforts undertaken at several locations in the Bering Straits.

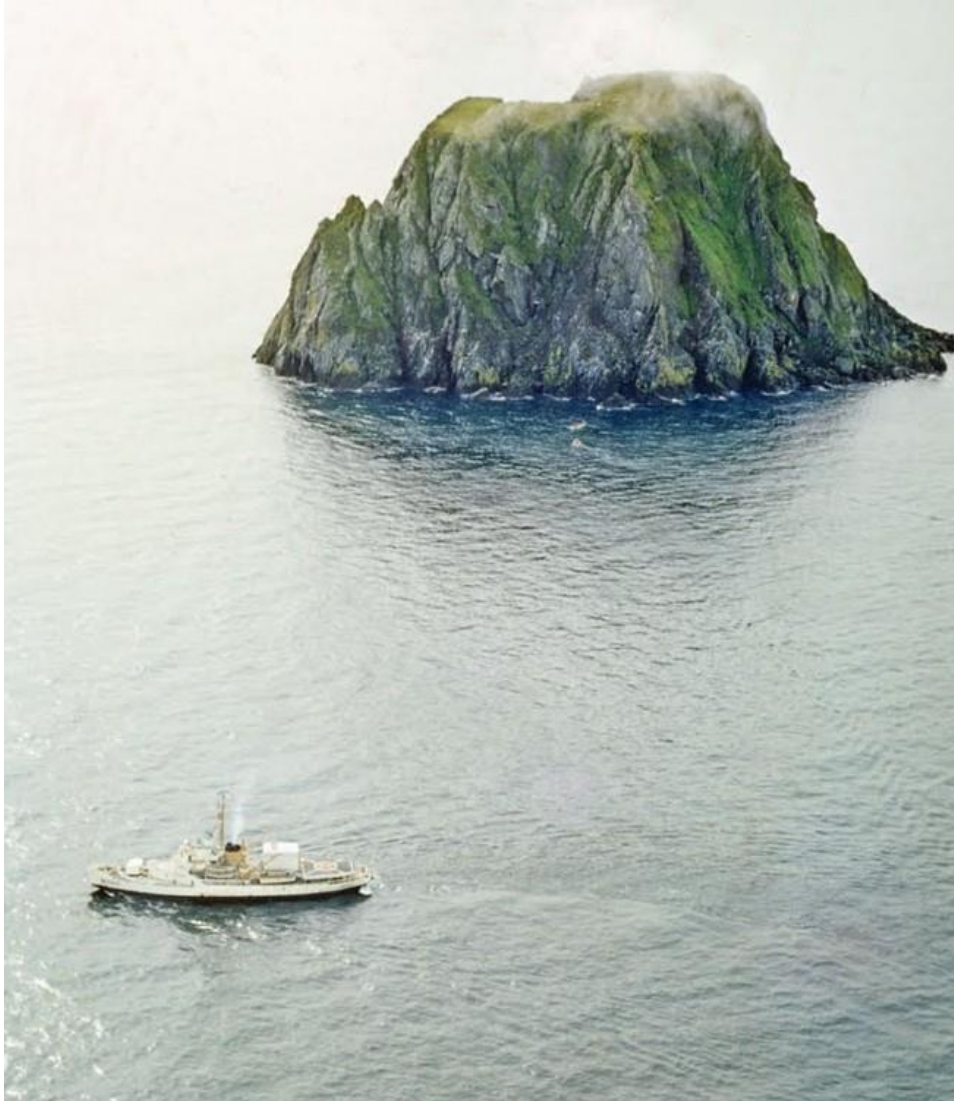
These efforts required UCT Two to develop skills in cold-weather diving as well as assessing various issued allowance items regarding applicability and usefulness in the Arctic environment. These assessments were used in the development of justification for the research and eventual establishment of a UCT Table of Allowance for Arctic operations (see Capabilities tab for TOA details).

Project Report Link:

The following article (Google/Wikipedia) provides an unclassified summary of research undertaken during the associated timeframes.

“There are two ‘Diomed Islands’, in the Bering Strait. The islands, one ‘Big’ and the other ‘Little Diomed’ are known in Russia as the Gvozdev Islands. They are literally the closest point between the USA and Russia – the larger island being Russian, the smaller American, and a distance of 2.4 miles lies between them.

Around 9 miles south-east of the islands, lies a small islet called ‘Fairway Rock’ a lump of granite providing nesting ground for various birds.



(Looks like a “Wind” class icebreaker in the foreground. Appears to still be sporting a twin 5” mount forward. Not sure if the ship is Navy or Coast Guard.)

In 1966, the US Navy put a strontium powered RTG (Radioisotope Thermoelectric Generator) on the island to power an oceanographic station which monitored detectors on the ocean floor looking for submarine traffic heading north. The RTG’s were seen as a useful way of using nuclear waste, and another two were added to the island. In 1995, all three were removed and taken to Hanford Nuclear Reservation for disposal.



Fairway Rock RTG onsite maintenance.



On top of Fairway Rock."