

CHAPTER TWO

AIR OPERATIONS

1. Pre-deployment

The BURTON ISLAND's Aviation Department was formed as Aviation Detachment 65 at ATC Mobile on 23 May 1977. Helicopters CGNR 1428 and 1449 were assigned and major inspections commenced. The helicopters departed Mobile on 28 June 1977 and arrived at CGAS San Francisco on 2 July 1977. The Aviation Department chopped to the BURTON ISLAND on 3 July 1977. The remainder of the Aviation Department arrived via commercial air on 5 July 1977. The helo's were hangared at NAS Alameda. The HSK arrived on 6 July and was taken aboard and stored. On 7 July, Helo 1449 was flown aboard and 1428 the following day. Our sailing time, 1000 hours 9 July, arrived with the Aviation Department completely embarked, all aircraft and gear secured, eager and ready for sea.

2. Operations

Flight operations began on 21 July as the BURTON ISLAND cleared Unimak Pass. These flights were for training Landing Signal Officers, tiedown crews, rescue and firefighting personnel. The BURTON ISLAND arrived Nome, Alaska on 23 July and log flights were made in support of the Arctic Submarine Laboratory Chukchi Sea Scientific Project. The helos were used for ice reconnaissance and flights into as much as 40 miles from the ice edge. The CTD probe (conductivity, temperature, depth) was lowered from the hovering helicopter over open leads. Log flights were also made to Point Barrow during this period. Flight operations were severely limited by weather. Fog was the greatest problem with ceilings of 100 feet and visibilities less than 1/8 mile throughout the days.

On 6 August, the Arctic Submarine Laboratory scientists were flown ashore at Point Barrow, and the 17th District Aids to Navigation Team embarked. From 8 August to 16 August, all four of the planned reconnaissance towers were installed. Equipment and personnel used for the construction of the towers were transported ashore entirely by ship's helos. The towers were assembled by the construction party and lifted into position by the helos. ECV personnel estimated that using the helos for this purpose saved a day's construction time per site. Again, fog was the greatest problem. The weather at one site deteriorated to zero visibility and zero ceilings after the construction party was ashore. On 17 August, the CCGDSEVENTEEN team was flown ashore and the scientists from the University of Connecticut embarked. The project was completed on 28 August, and the team flown ashore at Point Barrow.