



**BERG Salute: (Welcome to the Arctic, Sir.)**

#### **THULE AIR BASE, GREENLAND**

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:** International tensions prompted the United States Air Force, working for mutual Danish/U.S. defense, to construct an air base at Thule in 1951 at a cost of 370 million dollars. The original Eskimo village of Thule, numbering 130 persons, was moved 70 miles north, however, the air base retained the name of Thule. The base was a Strategic Air Command (SAC) installation, until it converted to Air Defense Command upon completion of the free world's first Ballistic Missile Early Warning System (BMEWS) in 1960.

**MISSION:** To equip, administer, train and furnish personnel to operate and maintain Thule Air Base, Greenland; provide administrative and logistical support to units or agencies as specified in applicable support agreements; and to provide contract monitoring for contractual operations at Thule Air Base.

**LOCATION:** The Air Force's northern-most base, Thule is approximately 76 degrees, 30 minutes North and 68 degrees, 30 minutes West; some 690 nautical miles north of the Arctic Circle and about 800 miles south of the North Pole.

Greenland is the largest island in the world, with an area of approximately 849,000 square miles. The island stretches

about 1,400 nautical miles north and south and, at the widest point, 700 miles east to west. In several places the ice cap reaches a level of 9,000 feet, and experts estimate that a complete melting of the ice cap would cause the water level of all the world's oceans and seas to rise 20 feet. The terrain is extremely mountainous, with many peaks rising to nine thousand feet. The highest peaks are on the eastern coast, with Mt. Gumbjoern the highest at 11,000 feet.

**PHYSICAL:** The Thule defense area consists of 338,000 acres. Over 500 buildings are located in the defense area, with the majority on the shore of North Star Bay, between North and South Mountains. Included in these structures are 39 fuel tanks with a total capacity of 92.5 million gallons.

Over 96 miles of roadway provide access to the various units in the defense area.

Heat is generated in 10 steam plants which produce over 86 million pounds of steam per month, consuming over 600,000 gallons of fuel. The heat is guided to each building through the above-ground pipes which give the base its distinctive "plumber's dream" appearance.

There are over 694,000 square yards of taxiways and ramps in addition to the main runway, which is 10,000 feet long and 200 feet wide.