

Alpha Ridge Test of Appurtenance (ARTA)

Newsletter #3

25 March 2008,

It's cold again this morning – about 40 below, but there is no wind. The sky is clear, the visibility is good, and the scenery is quite beautiful. There seems to be a perpetual fog over the runway. Every airplane that takes off produces a lot of water vapour as it powers out of here. This water vapour hits the very cold air and immediately condenses into a fog. And, since the wind is almost nil, the fog hangs over the air strip for a long time.

Several of the other aircraft that arrived late last night were bringing in Rangers (First Canadian Ranger Patrol Group), who are a component of the Canadian military composed of residents of all three of the northern territories. There will be about 30 of them coming through Eureka, and they will be doing a sovereignty patrol on snow-machines starting at Eureka and running eastward along the northern coast of Ellesmere Island. I understand that there will be another 30 starting at Alert and running to the west (toward Eureka). They will meet somewhere in the middle, and they will all return to Eureka.

Robert Olsen and Kirby Kleiter, two of our younger 'blasters' went out again with an early Otter to the Hydrographic Camp to help them prepare the camp and the runway. There had been some talk last night about sending out quite a few extra people this morning, but the weather forecast for this afternoon is for high winds – perhaps a blizzard – and it was thought that the work might have to be curtailed early, and a lot of extra people might end up being more of a hazard than a help.

Isa Asudeh and his co-workers continue to ready the seismometers and the recording boxes. The picture to the right shows some of the boxes all laid out on shelves and racks. The two pictures on the next page show Mingjhou Li and Thomas Funck wiring them up so that every box is in communication with the computer.





Because it is so cold outside, the heaters in this large workroom aren't quite capable of bringing the temperature up to what Isa would like. He wants to get the hot-packs in the boxes as warm as possible (e.g., 20 degrees) before they are set out on the ice. Various heating options are being considered – including taking out most of the gel-packs and warming them up elsewhere.

19:00

Our five helicopters, which sat in Resolute for quite a number of days, have arrived in Eureka. While they were en route, Dave Maloley, through the magic of GPS beacons was able to monitor their positions on a continuing basis. At any time Dave could flash up a map that showed a helicopter's track as well as its present position. This is great for safety.

Another bit of news is that the high winds forecast for the Hydrographic Camp have not net materialized. Ken Asmus, our weatherman, says that the high winds may yet come; he says it's hard to forecast winds when the computer models have so little input data. We have heard rumours that the lack of wind has made it possible for the workers at the Hydrographic Camp to complete their landing strip for the Skyvan aircraft. We hope it's true.

There have been five Twin Otters working around Eureka this afternoon, two of them ours and the others military. A sixth Otter – the one that was coming up from Resolute to take Ben Saunders to Ward Hunt Island – was not able to leave Resolute because of mechanical problems. And now there are five helicopters. Who says that Eureka is a sleepy little weather station at the top end of the world. With all these people coming and going, Al Gaudet, Eureka's Program Manager, has been very busy juggling meals, sleeping quarters, etc., etc.

Best wishes, Ron Verrall

We'd like to hear from you. Name: ronverrall Address: gmaildotcom