

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

To: "P" Div.

ADDRESS REPLY TO:

Commanding Officer
USCG LORSTA
Navy 961, Box 10, FPO
San Francisco, Calif.

POA



9 July 1956
A7
Serial No. 119-56

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AIRMAIL

From: Commanding Officer, USCG LORSTA, Batan Island, R. P.
To: Commandant (PO-2)
Via: (1) Commander, Philippine Section
(2) Commander, 14th Coast Guard District (p)

Subj: Duty on USCG LORSTA, Batan; report on

Ref: (a) Commandant (PO-2) ltr A7 of 22 May 1956

1. In compliance with reference (a), a narrative report on the conditions relative to duty on this station is forwarded herewith as enclosure (1).

H. J. Straut, Jr.
H. J. STRAUT, JR.

Encl: (1) "Duty on USCG LORSTA, Batan Island, R. P."

FIRST ENDORSEMENT 9 July 1956

From: Commander, Philippine Section
To: Commandant (PO-2)
Via: Commander, 14th CG District (p)

1. Forwarded.

J. A. Palmer
J. A. PALMER

P
16 July 1956
A7

SECOND ENDORSEMENT

From: Commander, 14th CG District
To: Commandant (PO2)

1. Forwarded.

N. W. Spron
N. W. SPRON
By direction

INFORMATION CONCERNING

1 July 1956

DUTY ON USCG LORAN TRANSMITTING STATION,
BATAN ISLAND, R. P.

Batan Island is one of several small islands stretching from 20°16' N to 21°07' N to form the northern-most province of the Republic of the Philippines, Batanes. In addition to Batan Island, Batanes Province consists of the islands of Sabtang, Ibahos, Dequey, Itbayat, Diogo, Siayan, North, and Y'Ami, the first five of which are visible from Batan. Although there are no accurate figures available, the population of Batan is estimated to be approximately 10,000 people centered in the villages which are situated along the coast of this 20 square mile island and shown on the map attached to this report.

The people of the island are devout Catholics whose spiritual life is administered by a bishop and four priests, all of Spanish birth. There is also a small Protestant sect in Basco, the largest town. At present, the only Americans on the Island are a man, wife, and 10 month old daughter who are members of the Summer Linguistic Institute, here to reduce the local dialect to a written dictionary and then translate the Bible into the dialect.

Due to the impracticability of escape and the few items of value on the island, there is an amazingly low rate of crime. In addition there is a detachment of 40 Philippine Constabulary troops centered in Basco to enforce the law in the province. The major occupations of the populace are cattle raising, farming, and fishing. Although the people are quite industrious, the terrain is such that a great deal of hard work is required to produce just enough to subsist on. As opposed to most other areas in the Philippines, rice is not one of the staple crops. In its place is a form of sweet potato called the kimodie is the basic crop. There are several varieties of tropical fruits such as pineapple, banana, coconut, etc. found on the island, but all in small quantities. The island is without modern conveniences.

Basco (pop. 3500), the provincial capital, is approximately 15 miles distant from the station via the national road, and is located at the base of cloud-covered Mount Uria which towers above the rest of the mountainous terrain at a height of 3306 feet. Basco is also the site of the island's only airfield, a grass strip which rises some 150 feet over its length. It is here that the Philippines Air Line makes its scheduled landings each Tuesday and Thursday, as well as being the site of the bi-weekly Coast Guard logistic landings.

On the southeast side of the island, between the villages of Itbud and Imnajbu, lies the loran station site bounded on the south and west by rugged hills, on the east by the Pacific Ocean which is some 250 yards distant and 40 feet below down a sandy slope, and on the north by this same slope. The national road, an intermittantly paved dirt affair, which runs from Imnajbu around the island to Basco, passes directly behind the station.

1 July 1956

DUTY ON USCG LORSTA BATAN ISLAND, R. P. (Cont'd)

Operationally, the station serves as a double slave, working with the master station on Miyako Jima, Ryukus Islands on loran rate LL4 and with the master station on Catanduanes, R. P. on loran rate LL5. As a secondary mission, this station is charged with reporting local weather three times daily to United States Navy Fleet Weather Control, USNS, Sangley Point, R. P.

The island lies in a fairly active typhoon belt and the station was hit by two typhoons in 1954. All buildings are of typhoon-proof construction to reduce this hazard to a minimum. The following table of weather conditions for the past twelve (12) months should present a good picture of the local climate:

<u>MONTH</u>	<u>AVERAGE NOON TEMPERATURE (°F)</u>	<u>AVERAGE HUMIDITY (%)</u>	<u>TOTAL RAINFALL (inches)</u>
July 1955	86.5	87	10.81
August 1955	85.2	92	29.83
September 1955	86.6	79	0.82
October 1955	86.6	80	6.97
November 1955	77.0	88	14.04
December 1955	76.1	79	0.16
January 1956	71.0	80	0.53
February 1956	79.1	77	2.20
March 1956	82.6	81	0.84
April 1956	83.1	81	1.86
May 1956	92.1	74	1.50
June 1956	89.3	78	2.40

A prevailing breeze of speed 10 knots helps to make conditions more desirable. There is temperature drop in the night ranging from 5 to 15 degrees so that sleeping conditions are good.

Cost of living on this station is quite low. The average cost per month for enlisted personnel is approximately \$20.00 of which \$12.50 is spent in the station canteen for toilet articles, beverages, and sundries. The remaining \$7.50 covers the individual's share of the monthly wages for the two local galley helpers and two laundry employees. Upon final approval of the Coast Guard's plan to employ indigenous labor in the Philippines under Civil Service, this cost will no longer be borne by the station complement. There is little, if anything at all, to be bought on the island, as the only souvenirs are straw hats, capes, and pocket-books.

In the case of the one officer assigned, the cost of living is approximately \$70.00 per month, since in addition to the above expenses, he must pay a mess bill of about \$50.00 per month (based on the effective daily commuted ration). Since the only practical way to pay this bill is by check, it would be advisable for any officer assigned to establish a checking account in the States and bring along his check-book.

3 July 1956

DUTY ON USCG LORSTA BATAN ISLAND, R. P. (Cont'd)

There is no distinction made between officer or enlisted man with respect to the use of recreational facilities. The station has a pool table, basketball court, and of course, nightly movies. Presently, there is under construction a photographic dark-room which will provide a fully equipped working space for those who are amateur photographers. Although there is not a decent swimming area in the immediate vicinity of the station due to the surrounding coral ledge and rough seas, there are several much frequented spots on the opposite side of the island around Mahatao. Upon the receipt of some equipment now on order, it is expected that the sports of fishing and skin diving will grow in popularity with station personnel.

As a result of the excellent relationship which has been established between station personnel and the local inhabitants, the crew is frequently invited to village fiestas and dances, thereby offering an opportunity for organized recreation trips to the site of the activity.

Since this is an isolated duty station, there is no over-night liberty and personnel leave the station only on organized recreation parties.

There are no facilities available for dependents nor is the presence of dependents on the island authorized.

The bringing of a private automobile to this station is not authorized and there would be little use that could be made of an American passenger car on the one mountainous and winding road on the island.

Mail, movies, and supplies are brought in by Coast Guard plane every two weeks. In addition, the KUKUI and the NETTLE bring in fuel and heavy supplies, averaging one visit per quarter. As an addition to the frequency of the mail service, the Philippine air mail system is used thus making possible the receipt of mail twice weekly.

One (1) Hospitalman First or Chief is assigned to this unit to provide for medical treatment. In addition there is a doctor in the town of Ivana, and an emergency hospital in the town of Basco, either of which might be used in an emergency.

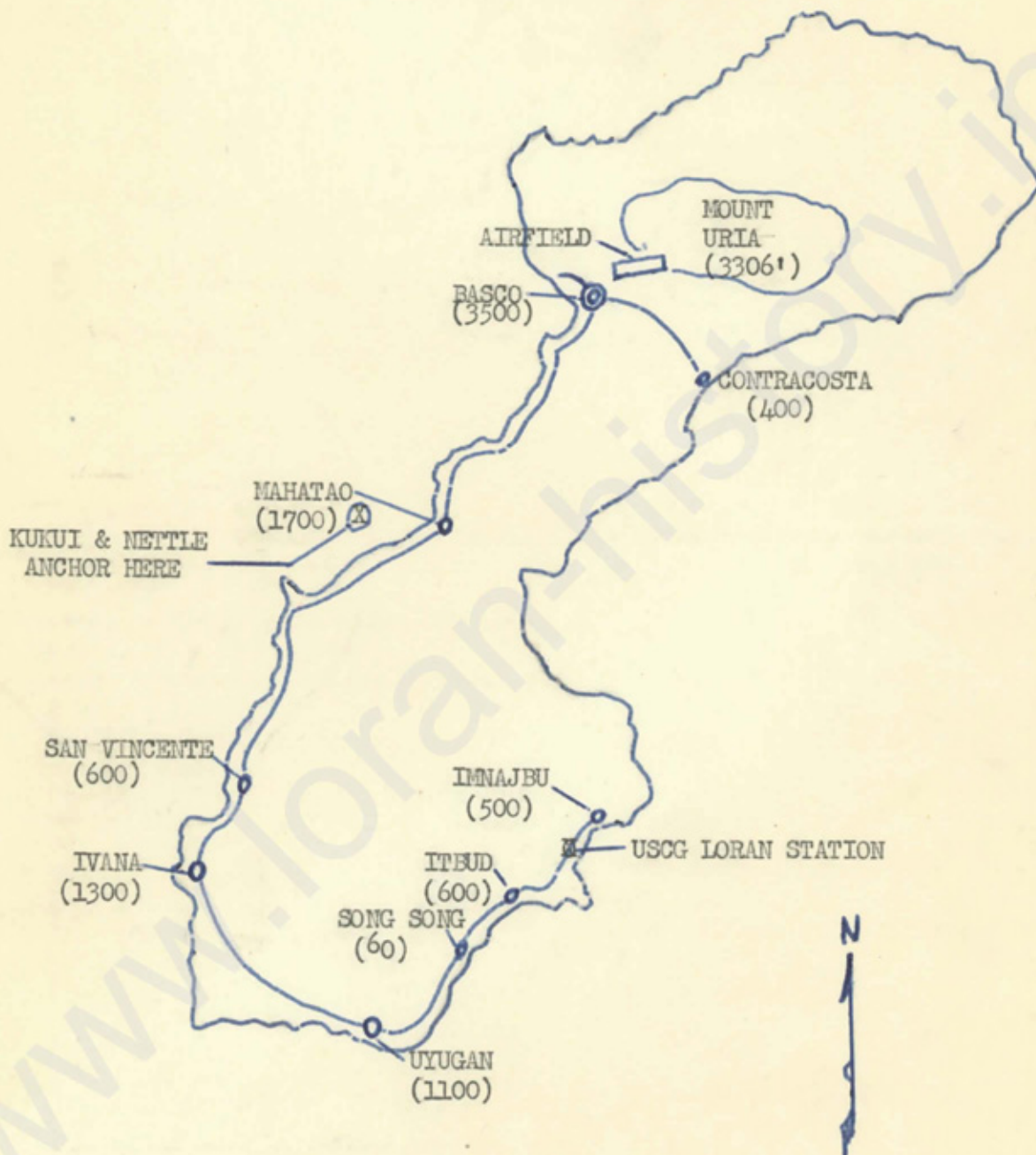
The only disadvantages of this station in comparison with other isolated units are: (1) The fifteen mile ride over a rugged road to move supplies from the airfield and/or ship off-loading anchorage. (2) the fact that the station lies in an active typhoon area.

There are facilities on the station to provide "hot-locker storage space" for all hands, thereby cutting down the possibilities of mildew on personal effects and clothing.

There are presently no pictures and/or negatives of the station available for transmission with this report. Upon availability they will be forwarded.

H. J. Straut, Jr.
H. J. STRAUT, JR.

MAP OF BATAN ISLAND



Populations show in parenthesis.