

GENERAL INFORMATION

LORAN STATION

MATRATIN



**COMMANDER
COAST GUARD ACTIVITIES EUROPE
LONDON, ENGLAND**

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
U.S. COAST GUARD**



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

Address reply to:

Commander
Coast Guard
Activities Europe
Box 50
FPO, New York
N.Y., 09510

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LETTER OF PROMULGATION

1. This publication was written for the general enlightenment of interested personnel and to provide relevant information for Commanding Officers and Liaison Officers or enlisted men preparing for assignment to this Loran station.
2. In addition to operational and military responsibilities particular to this station, information of a more general nature is included. Men assigned to this station must adjust to native customs and attitudes. A picture is given of the people unique to this area, the topography of the surrounding country, the prevailing climatic conditions and the available recreational facilities. Familiarization with these aspects will enable the prospective relief to prepare himself for his new surroundings.
3. This publication was compiled from information submitted by men actually engaged in active duty on the Loran station. Very few alterations have been necessary, and perhaps one of the values of this publication is to be gained through the tone and manner of expression of the author, who, in many cases, is found to be interesting, informative and imaginative. The insights offered are based on first-hand experience and should prove valuable to an American living in a foreign country.
4. It is requested that errors and omissions noted, as well as suggestions for improvement, be addressed to Commander, Coast Guard Activities, Europe, Box 50, FPO, New York, N.Y., 09510.

R. E. HAMMOND
CAPTAIN, U.S. COAST GUARD
COMMANDER, COAST GUARD ACTIVITIES, EUROPE

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USCG LORAN STATION
MATRETAH, LIBYA

Chapter I - General Information

A. Location

1. Matretah is located on the Gulf of Sirte on the southern coast of the Mediterranean. It is approximately 450 miles east of Tripoli on the Trans-Libyan highway, which runs from Tripoli in the west to Benghazi in the east. It is located in the same latitude as Jacksonville, Florida.

B. Climate

1. The climate is basically warm and dry. It is quite similar to that found in some areas of the southwestern United States such as the deserts of Arizona and New Mexico. Temperatures can range from a night time low of 40 degrees in the winter to a daytime high of 125 in the summer. Temperatures in a 24 hour period may vary as much as 50 degrees.

C. Environs

1. The general environment around the station is a semi-desert area with the only vegetation consisting of low scrub bushes and thorn bushes.

2. The local inhabitants are of two types. The nomadic tent dwellers who tend herds of sheep and camels and drift across the country following their flocks and the stationary inhabitants or "city dwellers" who are only a few years removed from this. Both groups are strict Moslems and as such use no alcohol, will eat no meat unless killed facing the east, keep their women out of sight of any man not their husband, usually will object to picture taking and etc. The people are a comparatively primitive people, but a very proud people. Theft is considered acceptable among many of the people and graft is common. The station employs two (02) indigenous laborers and nine (09) gate guards and these will be the only local inhabitants you will have to deal with.

3. Due to the recent growth of oil activity in the area, two primary contacts exist which are useful to the station. These are the American and English personnel working at the two oil terminals near the station. These people are more than generous and are a ready source of help with parts and equipment.

4. The 64th Engineering Battalion at Wheelus Air Base, Tripoli and the MAAG (Military Aid and Advisory Group) at Benghazi both make extensive use of the station and will usually give whatever support they can.

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Chapter II - Operations

A. Aids to Navigation facilities at Matratin consists solely of Loran-C transmitting equipment.

B. Communications

1. Communications consists primarily of the traffic between stations necessary to Loran-C operation. Communications is also maintained with the section office via the Naples Radio Station. At present our primary communication with Wheelus is through the Oasis Oil Company's radio net. There is no ham gear available at Matratin. LORSTA Matratin is also a member of American Embassy Tripoli's Pine tree Net which maintains communications with several other outlying U. S. desert outpost.

C. Other Coast Guard Functions

1. There are no other "official" Coast Guard functions at this unit.

D. Vehicles and Boats

1. Vehicles-- The station at this time has a 3 ton stake truck, one 2½ ton stake truck, one 1 ton Power Wagon with crew cab, one nine passenger carryall and one ¾ ton Weapons Carrier. All of these are reasonable new except the Weapons Carrier. All maintenance and repair is accomplished at this unit.

2. Boats - The station has a 16 foot outboard equipped with a 40 horsepower Johnson motor. This board is used primarily for fishing and water skiing.

Section

Chapter III - Personnel

A. Assignment and Rotation

1. Assignment to this unit is an assignment to duty in a "restricted" area, that is, no dependents allowed. It is for a period of twelve (12) calendar months.

2. Rotation requests for reassignment in CONUS are submitted to Commander, Mediterranean Section as follows:

- WT Personnel - Six (06) months prior to rotation date
- All Other Personnel - Five (05) months prior to rotation date.

These requests indicate the individual's three (03) choices of districts or Headquarters units upon return to CONUS. In so far as possible, Headquarters works from these choices in making the man's assignment.

B. Compensatory absence

1. All personnel attached earn 2 1/2 days per month compensatory absence. This is leave earned, but not charged, if taken, against a man's regular leave record. This type leave is generally used as delay enroute to the man's next duty station.

C. Emergency leave

1. Emergency leave, when warranted, is granted by COMCOCAGTEUR through COMMEDSIC. Verification of the emergency must be made through the American Red Cross. Time will be saved if verification is sent to American Red Cross Naples, Italy.

D. Medical

1. The unit has one HM assigned. In addition two physicians are available for emergencies. One is located at the Oasis Oil Camp four miles away and the other at Mobil Oil some fourteen miles away.

2. Routine medical procedures beyond the scope of attached personnel are handled by the Airforce Hospital at Wheelus. Emergent dental work is also accomplished by Wheelus.

3. Medical Air-Evac is available from either Naples or Wheelus depending upon the nature of the case.

4. Supplies and equipment are deemed adequate to meet anticipated demands.

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E. Training & Education

1. In addition to regular drills and instructions required by directives, instructions in problems relative to this unit are added. For example: Snake Bites - We have three (03) poisonous snakes in the area. The Sand Viper, the Horned Viper and the Egyptian Cobra. In addition to these three snakes, there are also two (02) varieties of scorpions in the area. Snake Bite Kits and Snake Boots are issued to all new men.

2. Training films are available from both the Air Force at Wheelus and the Navy at Naples.

3. Both USAFI courses and CGI courses are available and self study is encouraged.

F. Morale

1. Morale, generally speaking, is high at this unit. This is probably due to the realization of necessary inter-dependence on one another to make things go. This realization in turn fosters a sense of cooperation and team work.

G. Recreation

1. In addition to the boat afore mentioned, there are many recreational outlets provided. Among them are handball, tennis, badminton, volleyball, pool, stereo equipment with a good record selection, slide projector, dark-room for film development, nightly movies, the beach and beach house for barbeques and etc.

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Chapter IV - Engineering

A. Electronics equipment at Matratin consists of the following:

1. Loran-C AN/FPN-38 Timers & AN/FPN-39 Transmitters.
2. Communications - AN/URT-17 Transmitters and R-840/URR receivers used in conjunction with CV-591/URR single side band converters.

B. Generating Plant

The station is supplied electrical power by three (03) Caterpillar D397 electric sets. The D397 diesel engine is a 60 degree V-type, 12 cylinder, 4 stroke cycle, water-cooled and valve in head unit. It has a 5 3/4 inch bore, 8 inch stroke and a total piston displacement of 2,493 cubic inches. The generator is a self-regulation constant voltage, 250 KW, 0.8 power factor, 3 phase, 60 cycle, 1800 RPM, 4 wire, 120/208 volts. The generator is excited by a 115 volt D.C. generator. These units can be run single or in parallel if needed. Normal load requires only one generator on the line at a time.

C. Antenna Tower

1. The Loran Transmitting Antenna consists of the standard 625' tower.

D. Fuel and Water

1. Fuel is trucked in via commercial carrier from Wheelus. The station has a storage capacity of 60,000 gallons of diesel fuel and 2,000 gallons of gasoline.

2. Water is distilled with evaporators. These are two (2) MECO Water Distilling Units Model P.E.E. 85K. They are capable of producing 85 gallons an hour or 2,080 gallons a day. These units are of the Vapor Compression, Electric Powered type. Their operation is described as follows:

Raw sea water is boiled or evaporated inside the tubes of the vertical tube evaporator. The resulting steam goes through the separator in the evaporator, and on into the compressor. The vapor compressor takes this steam, which is at 1.0 P.S.I.G. and compresses it to a higher pressure discharging the steam into the steam chest of the evaporator. The condensed steam is called distillate or distilled water or fresh water. This distilled water is pumped from the distilling unit through the cooler. Most of the heat is thus transferred in the cooler to the incoming seawater. From the cooler the fresh water goes to the storage tanks. The station has a storage capacity of 10,000 gallons of fresh water and 10,000 gallons of salt water.

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Chapter V - Comptroller

A. Commissary

1. This unit is known for its good food. It without a doubt has the best food in Libya. This is mainly due to the fine cook, but is also largely dependent on the fresh foods we get from Naples.

2. Fresh milk, eggs, vegetables, and fruit are flown in from Naples every two (02) weeks. This is a big help, because it is impossible to get these provisions in Libya. All other commissary supplies are obtained from Wheelus Air Base Commissary.

3. Commissary supplies through Naples are purchased on form DD 1155 SM with the exception of milk and eggs which are purchased on form DD 1348 (Mil-strip). The commissary supplies from Wheelus are purchased on form DD 1149.

B. Pay

1. Pay records for personnel stationed at Matratin are maintained by the Naval Support Activity in Naples. Pay checks are sent to the station every two (02) weeks on the logistics flight originating at the Coast Guard Air Station, Naples, Italy. Checks are cashed on the station through a fund set up for that purpose.

2. Money orders and such are available only through Wheelus Air Base and are procured by the monthly logistics trip made by station personnel.

C. Clothing

1. Clothing is not available at Matratin and one should make sure that he has a complete sea bag prior to departing the U. S. Laundry service at Matratin is handled by indigenous laborers and is very rough on clothing, so don't plan on partially worn clothing lasting for the full year.

2. Civilian clothing is authorized off the base and is required for any trips to Wheelus Air Base.

D. Transportation

1. Transportation to Matratin is in one of the following ways:

a. Via military aircraft to Wheelus Air Base and then by Coast Guard truck to Matratin.

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b. Via commercial or military aircraft to Naples and then via Coast Guard aircraft to Matratin. Coast Guard aircraft normally land on a WW II German fighter airstrip located approximately 15 miles from the station. This last routing is the one most frequently used. Leaving Matratin is of little concern until one has been here long enough to know the way out.

E. Supply

1. Fresh milk and dairy products are flown in bi-weekly via Coast Guard aircraft from Naples. Maintenance spares and equipment normally arrive via this route also. The remainder of the supplies and commissary items as well as exchange items are obtained at Wheelus Air Base when the station vehicle makes the monthly logistics run. Fuel is trucked to Matratin from Wheelus via commercial carrier.

F. Imprest Fund

1. A class "A" cashier (LIMITED) is a person who receives an advance or funds from a Treasury Department disbursing office on an "imprest" or "fixed" basis. The fund is replenished to a fixed amount as spent. He is in fact an agent of the disbursing officer to pay, in case, small obligations of the Coast Guard as they occur. The cashier has no status as a procurement officer or certifying officer. He is spending official funds and his performance of this duty is closely controlled. Coast Guard class "A" cashiers are no longer agents of Coast Guard Assistant Disbursing Officers. Matratin is provided with a 470.15 imprest fund.

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Chapter VI - Administration

A. Paper Work

1. The majority of the outgoing station reports and personnel paper work is routed through the HMI who serves as yeoman as well as corpsman. Any HMI receiving orders to restricted duty such as Matratin, would benefit greatly by spending a few days on the job with a competent yeoman. Considerable knowledge of the routine of personnel work, which would benefit both the Coast Guard and the individual, could be gained in this manner. All requisitions with the exception of electronics also pass through the HMI for processing and recording prior to leaving the station.

B. Discipline

1. Discipline at Matratin follows the chain of command and Coast Guard Regulations as at any Coast Guard unit. Due to the isolated locality and environment of the station, many of the disciplinary problems of stateside units are non-existent at Matratin.

C. Safety

1. Safety at Matratin is, as everywhere, a constant challenge. The majority of the safety problems are the same as any Coast Guard unit. A few problems requiring extra caution are the large number of poisonous snakes, extremely hazardous road conditions and adaptation to survival in the desert.

D. Relations with Local Military Commands and Civil Officials

1. There is very limited relationship with either local military or civil organizations. There are no military installations in the immediate area of this station.

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Chapter VII - Words of Wisdom for Reliefs

A. General

1. It isn't as bad as the stories you hear. Not Quite

B. Advance Preparations

1. Order subscriptions to any magazines you personally desire. For example, a personal copy of "Playboy" would be nice or maybe you're a car buff and would like to get a copy of Motor Trend and etc.
2. Take care of all business matters prior to leaving CONUS. It can be very difficult by mail.
3. If possible, order desired Institute Courses prior to departing CONUS.

C. What to Bring

1. All clothing required for a year tour of duty. If you will be going through Naples during winter, bring some winter clothing.
2. Most personal comfort items (ex: shaving supplies, etc.) are available in the station exchange. Other larger items can be ordered from the AFEX at Wheelus Air Base.

D. Directions Enroute

1. Sobriety and attention to instructions given by transportation personnel are of the utmost importance if you are to have a trouble free trip abroad.