

Canadian Military History

Volume 24 | Issue 2

Article 4

11-23-2015

“When We Got There, The Cupboard Was Bare”: Le Regiment de Hull and Kiska, 1943

Galen Roger Perras

Recommended Citation

Galen Roger Perras (2015) ““When We Got There, The Cupboard Was Bare”: Le Regiment de Hull and Kiska, 1943,” *Canadian Military History*: Vol. 24: Iss. 2, Article 4.

Available at: <http://scholars.wlu.ca/cmh/vol24/iss2/4>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Scholars Commons @ Laurier. It has been accepted for inclusion in Canadian Military History by an authorized administrator of Scholars Commons @ Laurier. For more information, please contact scholarscommons@wlu.ca.

“When We Got There, The Cupboard Was Bare”

Le Régiment de Hull and Kiska, 1943

GALEN ROGER PERRAS

Abstract: In August 1943, Le Régiment de Hull, a French-speaking infantry battalion, part of Greenlight Force, a Canadian Army brigade, landed on the Aleutian Island of Kiska in tandem with a larger American Army force. LRH was unique, being the only Francophone Home Defence unit sent into combat by Canada during the Second World War. This paper explains how LRH was chosen, outlines the many problems it faced and overcame in the training process, and details how the Canadian Army played down or hid the linguistically-based bigotry faced by LRH from both Canadian and American units at Kiska.

ON 31 DECEMBER 1943, Major E.T. Jacques, Le Régiment de Hull's (LRH) acting commander, assessed LRH's part in Greenlight Force, the Canadian army brigade group that landed on Kiska Island that August. Certain that this “priceless experience ... will surely serve us in good stead when, might it be next month or next year that we are called upon again to do our bit in a new theatre of operation,” Jacques proclaimed “come what may the boys of the 1st Bn Le Régiment de Hull are ready.”¹ C.P. Stacey, Canada's official army historian, however, judged Kiska a “fiasco” as Japan's garrison had fled before the attack. Prime Minister W.L.M. King, lobbied by

¹ Le Régiment de Hull (LRH) War Diary, 31 December 1943, Department of National Defence Records, RG24, vol.15183, Library and Archives Canada (LAC).

Winston Churchill in September 1944 to do more in the North Pacific, “did not wish to see our men assigned to any second Kiska role,” carping later that Kiska’s “expedition should never have taken place.”²

Though their regimental histories outlined how the Canadian Fusiliers (CDF) and Rocky Mountain Rangers (RMR) fared at Kiska, LRH has been largely ignored.³ In his official US army history of Canada-US wartime ties, Stanley Dziuban said only that LRH “was reorganized and equipped to provide the amphibious engineer support.” Another US army history about outpost defence failed to name Greenlight’s units. Brian Garfield’s popular Aleutian campaign chronicle alleged that the US military had trouble with Greenlight given language, “equipment, terminology, organization, and even insignia of rank.”⁴ Utilising deflective passive phrasing—“it being considered desirable to include a French-speaking unit”—Stacey wrongly equated a Beach Combat Team (BCT) to US army combat engineers.⁵ In their revisionist study of Canada’s wartime effort, W.A.B. Douglas and Brereton Greenhous did not identify Greenlight’s formations. David Bercuson’s book about Canada and the Second World War made just a passing mention to LRH. J.L. Reginald Roy, General George Pearkes’ biographer, labelled the Québécois “the life and the soul of the whole party.”⁶

Francophone writers did no better. In a 1995 edition of *Bulletin d’histoire politique*, 35 articles explaining French Canada’s part in

² C.P. Stacey, *Six Years of War: The Army in Canada, Britain and the Pacific* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1955), 500; diary, 14 September and 26 October 1944, W.L.M. King Diaries, LAC.

³ Bill Corfield, *Silent Victory: The Canadian Fusiliers in the Japanese War* (Surrey: Timberholme Books, 2003); Vincent Bezeau, *The Rocky Mountain Rangers: The First 100 Years, 1908–2008* (Kamloops: Rocky Mountain Ranger Museum & Archives, 2008).

⁴ Stanley W. Dziuban, *Military Relations Between the United States and Canada 1939–1945* (Washington DC: Department of the Army, 1959), 257; Stetson Conn, Rose C. Engleman, and Byron Fairchild, *The Western Hemisphere: Guarding the United States and Its Outposts* (Washington DC: Department of the Army, 1964), 295–300; Brian Garfield, *The Thousand-Mile War: World War II in Alaska and the Aleutians* (New York: Bantam Books Edition, 1982), 294.

⁵ Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 498–500 and 506.

⁶ W.A.B. Douglas and Brereton Greenhous, *Out of the Shadows: Canada in the Second World War* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1977), 223–224; David Bercuson, *Maple Leaf Against the Axis: Canada’s Second World War* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1995), 58–59; Reginald H. Roy, *For Most Conspicuous Bravery: A Biography of Major-General George R. Pearkes through Two World Wars* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1977), 187–188.



Rt. Hon. W.L. Mackenzie King talking with Major-General G.R. Pearkes during a visit to the 1st Canadian Infantry Division. [Library and Archives Canada PA-132774]

the Second World War ignored LRH and Home Defence (HD) draftees. Yves Tremblay's study of Québécois volunteers mentioned LRH only once.⁷ An official history about bilingualism in Canada's military agreed that as a Non-Permanent Active Militia (NPAM) battalion attached to Military District Number 3 in Kingston, Ontario, LRH "had to be bilingual." Jean Pariseau and Serge Bernier, however, misidentified LRH as an "armoured" unit, a postwar transformation.⁸ Pierre Vennat's 1997 book about Québec's forgotten heroes wrongly claimed that King had insisted that Greenlight must field a Francophone formation. Vennat's 2004 biography of Dollard Ménard, LRH's commander at Kiska, cited Major General T.L. Tremblay's

⁷ *Bulletin d'histoire politique* 3 (printemps-été, 1995); Yves Tremblay, *Volontaires Des Québécois en guerre (1939-1945)* (Montréal: Athéna Éditions, 2006), 16.

⁸ Jean Pariseau and Serge Bernier, *French Canadians and Bilingualism in the Canadian Armed Forces. Volume 1, 1763-1969: Fear of a Parallel Army* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 1986), 97 and 114. Stacey branded this tome "a prolonged whine, quite unworthy it seems to me of the French Canadians who have served in our various wars"; Stacey to W.A.B. Douglas, C.P. Stacey Papers. B90-0020, box 41, file DHist Corresp 1980-1988, University of Toronto Archives (UTA).

comment to Ménard “surtout que la réputation du Hull avant votre arrivée n’était pas brillante.”⁹

Such historiographical disregard demands rectification. Not only did Canadians at Kiska serve “under United States higher command and higher organization” for the first time, LRH was unique too as Canada sent no other Francophone HD unit into combat, Greenlight’s commander opposed LRH’s selection, and LRH became a BCT, a role oft handed to black soldiers in a segregated US military.¹⁰ Linguistic bigotry intruded too, but that discussion was redacted from the Army Historical Section’s (AHS) Greenlight historical narrative. Stacey also censored his official history.

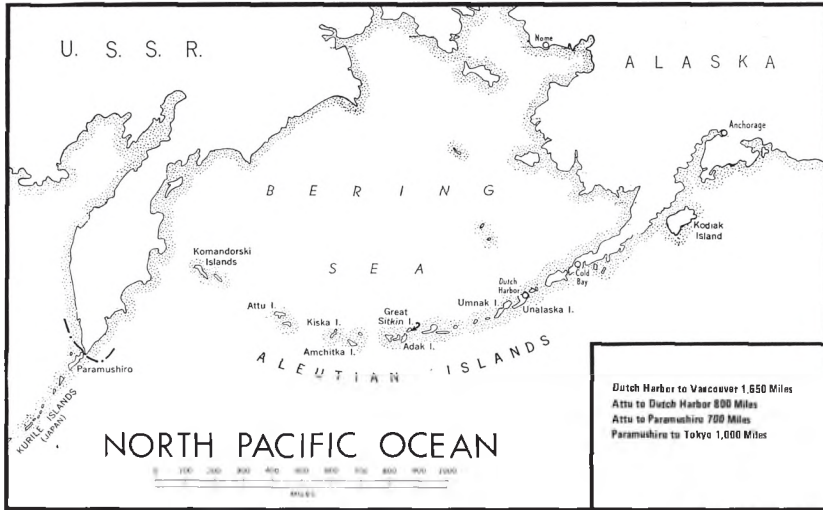
How did LRH find itself at Kiska? In March 1921, C.F. Hamilton, a Royal Canadian Mounted Police intelligence analyst, posited that Japan’s “intense and insular pride” would clash with America’s “curious and dangerous frame of mind.” As America might become “an uncommonly ugly neighbour” that could grab British Columbia (BC), Canada must become “a sufficiently powerful neutral, in appearance as well as reality, to impose respect upon both parties,” or covertly aid America.¹¹ Although 1922’s Washington Naval Treaty demilitarised the Aleutians, when Brigadier General Billy Mitchell proposed in 1923 that Canada and America could bomb Japan from Aleutian bases, the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) had HMCS Thiepval spy on US, Japanese, and Soviet territories in the North Pacific in 1924. Testing Mitchell’s notion, the US Army Air Corps sent bombers across Canada to Alaska in 1934. Though Canadian officers opposed this mission, O.D. Skelton, under-secretary of external affairs (USSEA) did not. Upon ascertaining the flight’s true rationale, Skelton scolded a US diplomat that the flight “would stir up the Japanese, who are very suspicious anyway.”¹² In January 1938, at President Franklin

⁹ Pierre Vennat, *Les Héros Oubliés: L’histoire inédite des militaires canadiens-français de la Deuxième Guerre-mondiale* (Montréal: Méridien, 1997), 215–216; Pierre Vennat, *Général Dollard Ménard: De Dieppe au référendum* (Montreal: Art Global, 2004), 147.

¹⁰ Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 505.

¹¹ C.F. Hamilton memorandum, March 1921, C.F. Hamilton Papers, vol. 3, file 12, LAC.

¹² Galen Roger Perras, “Covert Canucks: Intelligence Gathering and the 1924 Voyage of HMCS Thiepval in the North Pacific Ocean,” *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 28 (June, 2005), 505–528; Galen Roger Perras and Katrina E. Kellner, “‘A perfectly logical and sensible thing’: Billy Mitchell’s Advocacy for a Canadian-American Aerial Alliance Against Japan,” *The Journal of Military History* 72 (July, 2008), 785–823; O.D. Skelton quoted in Roger Sarty, *The Maritime Defence of Canada* (Toronto: Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, 1996), 96.



Historical Section, G.S.

[C.P. Stacey, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War: Volume I. Six Years of War: The Army in Canada, Britain and the Pacific*]

Roosevelt's behest, King allowed Canada's senior officers to meet their US counterparts. But when General Malin Craig asked about putting US bases in BC, the flummoxed Canadians produced Defence Scheme Number 2, a posture of armed neutrality if America and Japan fought. In October 1938, historian Arthur Lower, citing a "steadily narrowing" Pacific and "vast millions on the other side" forcing themselves "on our attention," publicly admonished Canadians for assuming that US Navy (USN) "shelter" was "automatic and of right." If Japan seized the Aleutian Islands, America "would ask for, perhaps demand," BC bases.¹³

When King accepted Roosevelt's 1940 offer of a Permanent Joint Board on Defence (PJBD) to coordinate continental security, the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) and RCN agreed to help defend Alaska. In July 1941, ratifying Plan ABC-22, Canada and America pledged to safeguard North America "to their utmost capacity." In May 1942, after USN cryptographers exposed Japan's Midway offensive—Japan bombed Dutch Harbor in the eastern Aleutians and seized Kiska

¹³ Joint Service Chiefs, "Defence Scheme No. 2," 11 April 1938, file 322.016 (D12), Directorate of History and Heritage, Department of National Defence (DHH); A.R.M. Lower, "The Defence of the West Coast," *Canadian Defence Quarterly* 16 (October, 1938), 32–38.

and Attu—US officials, citing ABC-22, sought Canadian planes for Alaska. While the RCAF and Canada's Chief of General Staff (CGS) Lieutenant General Kenneth Stuart, oppugned US intelligence, two RCAF squadrons flew to Alaska.¹⁴ In August 1942, RCN warships went to the Aleutians without prior approval from Canada's Cabinet War Committee (CWC).¹⁵

Canada's army resisted longer. On 10 December 1941, although Canada's chiefs of staff (COS) thought Japanese diversionary attacks upon the west coast could happen, Stuart would not alter dispositions and play "into the hands of our enemies."¹⁶ King, fretting that BC's invasion "seemed wholly probable," employed journalists to force Stuart's hand. Fearing for his job, Stuart created three HD divisions in March 1942, two in BC.¹⁷ Japan's invasion of the Aleutians did not quickly alter army views. Briefing CWC on 1 July, Vice-Admiral P.W. Nelles contended that Japan was countering Dutch Harbor while Vice CGS Major General J.C. Murchie averred that Japan had attacked Alaska "with a probable eye on Russia." But Canada sent three army HD anti-aircraft (AA) units to Annette Island off Alaska's Panhandle in September.¹⁸ One reason for this decision was strategic as the COS thought that Japan might raid continental America or grab the Queen Charlotte Islands. The second reason was political. Although the COS insisted on 13 August that North Pacific offensives could not

¹⁴ "Joint Canada-United States Basic Defence Plan No. 2," 28 July 1941, in David R. Murray, ed., *Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1939-1941, Part II, Volume 8* (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1976), 249-261; W.A.B. Douglas, *The Creation of a National Air Force: The Official History of the Royal Canadian Air Force, Volume 2* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 412.

¹⁵ Galen Roger Perras, *Stepping Stones to Nowhere? The United States, Canada, and the Aleutian Islands Campaign, 1942-1943*, PhD thesis, University of Waterloo, 1995, 170-173.

¹⁶ "Appreciation presented by the Chiefs-of-Staff to the CWC," 10 December 1941, Cabinet War Committee Minutes and Documents, RG2 7c, vol. 6, LAC.

¹⁷ Diary, 9 December 1941, King Diaries, LAC; and Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, 47n. Predicting that "Japan will attack Russia in the east, Dutch Harbor and Alaska and British Columbia just as soon as the Japs could muster the men and materials" and having done "nothing to quiet the row on the Pacific coast for more defence," King "egged Bruce [Hutchison] and me to keep banging away at the generals"; Grant Dexter memorandum, 28 February 1942, Grant Dexter Papers, box 3, file 21, Queen's University Archives (QUA).

¹⁸ CWC minutes, 1 July 1942, RG2 7c, vol. 10, LAC; Order in Council PC7995, 4 September 1942, Minutes and Orders in Council 1867-1959, RG2 1, vol. 1520, file 2639G, LAC.

be justified as Germany's defeat had priority, parliamentary queries forced the Annette decision.¹⁹

Although initially he had agreed to retake Kiska by May 1943, judging Japan's North Pacific capabilities to be overrated, at the January 1943 Casablanca Conference US army Chief General George C. Marshall approved only "operations to make the Aleutians as secure as possible." That choice forced Western Defense Command (WDC) to delay attacking Kiska, defended by 10,000 Japanese, to retake a more weakly held Attu.²⁰ Seeking an alternative supply of soldiers to invade Kiska by September 1943, WDC chief Lieutenant General John DeWitt visited Pearkes on 19 April. While DeWitt did not explicitly request troops, Pearkes, fired from divisional command in England in 1942, eagerly proffered observers for Attu and greater help at Kiska.²¹ Stuart, though, delayed Major General Maurice Pope, chairing Canada's Joint Staff Mission (CJSM) in Washington DC, relayed a State Department official's request for Canadian action in the Aleutians. To Pope's chagrin, Stuart initially wanted Pearkes to deal only with DeWitt before reconsidering and seeking Marshall's view.²² When Marshall authorised DeWitt to consult Pearkes, DeWitt sought an infantry battalion and AA unit to garrison Attu or

¹⁹ COS, "Japanese occupation of the Aleutian Islands," 15 July 1942, C.G. Power Papers, box 70, file D-2028, QUA; COS, "An appreciation of the world military situation with particular regard to its effect in Canada (as of 1 July 1942)," 4 August 1942, J.L. Ralston Papers, vol. 37, file Appreciations Military Gen. (Secret 1940-42), LAC; COS to CWC, 13 August 1942, RG2 7C, vol. 10, LAC; CWC minutes, 26 August 1942, Ibid.

²⁰ Forrest C. Pogue, *George C. Marshall: Organizer of Victory, 1943-1945* (New York: Viking Press, 1973), 154-155; CCS170/1, "Report to the President and Prime Minister," 23 January 1943, *Wartime Conferences of the Combined Chiefs of Staff: Arcadia, Casablanca, Trident*, Scholarly Resources Inc., reel 1.

²¹ Lt. General DeWitt to General George C. Marshall, 1 April 1943, RG165, Office of Chief of Staff, Top-Secret General Correspondence 1941-47, box 10, file Alaska, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA); Marshall to DeWitt, 8 April 1943, *ibid.*, box 57, file OPD381 Security (Section II), NARA; "General Staff report on Greenlight Force period from inception to despatch to Adak," July 1943, RG24, vol. 2921, file HQS9055-1, LAC. Pearkes was fired as "he has no brains. I consider he is unfit to command a division in the field"; General Bernard Montgomery to Lt. General H.D.G. Crerar, 25 April 1942, H.D.G. Crerar Papers, vol. 2, file 958C.09 (D182), LAC.

²² Major General Maurice Pope to Stuart, 10 May 1943, RG24, vol. 2919, file HQS9055(1), LAC; Stuart to Pope, 10 May 1943, file 314.009 (D49), DHH; Stuart to Pearkes, 11 May 1943, file 322.009 (D490), DHH; Stuart to Pope, 12 May 1943, RG24, vol. 2919, file HQS9055(1), LAC; and diary, 3 June 1943, Maurice Pope Papers, vol. 1, LAC.

Amchitka Island plus a brigade group ready for action by 1 August.²³ Presenting DeWitt's proposals to cwc on 26 May, Stuart emphasised narrow service and broad national goals. First, combat experience would bolster draftee morale, increase army prestige, and lessen hostility to "zombie" conscripts. Second, by expunging foes from US soil, Canada would better relations with America, show resolve to fight Japan, and act in accord with PJBD plans.²⁴

Certain that Stuart had contacted DeWitt, an angry Prime Minister King wanted to say no. But when cwc reconvened on 27 May, King's ire had ebbed thanks to USSEA Norman Robertson. Not only would Aleutian combat remind Australia "the United States was not the only American country helping in the Pacific war," it could reinforce the good impression made by RCAF planes operating in Alaska. Agreeing with British High Commissioner Malcolm Macdonald that US projects such as the Alaska Highway imperiled Canadian sovereignty (Macdonald used the phrase "Army of Occupation"), Robertson thought that troops at Kiska might balance those projects.²⁵ Though he faithfully relayed Robertson's suggestions to cwc, King worried that success at Kiska would accrue little credit while failure could cause disproportionate harm, a pointed reference to sharp Canadian defeats at Dieppe in August 1942 and Hong Kong in December 1941. A blunter Minister of National Defence (Air) C.G. Power—he had opposed sending planes to Alaska and his son sat in a Japanese POW camp after Hong Kong—disliked "inactive" garrison options. cwc agreed to help if Roosevelt or War Secretary Henry Stimson asked. Although Pope predicted a sharp rebuff, on 29 May, Stimson invited "participation by the Canadian army alongside United States troops in the common cause, either as garrison forces or in offensive operations in the area in question, would be highly

²³ Marshall to Pope, 23 May 1943, War Department Records, Office Director of Plans and Operations (OPD), RG165, box 39, file OPD 336 Security, NARA; Pearkes to Stuart, 23 May 1943, file 322.009 (D490), DHH.; and Pearkes to Stuart, 25 May 1943, *ibid.*

²⁴ Stuart to Ralston, 26 May 1943, RG24, vol. 2919, file HQS9055(1), LAC; CWC minutes, 26 May 1943, RG2 7c, vol. 13, LAC.

²⁵ Diary, 26 May 1943, King Diaries, LAC; N.A. Robertson to King, 27 May 1943, W.L. M. King Papers, Memoranda & Notes, vol. 348, file 3770, LAC; Malcolm Macdonald to C.R. Attlee, "Notes on developments in North-Western Canada," 7 April 1943, Malcolm Macdonald Papers, file 12/5/1-61, Durham University Archives.

gratifying to the United States War Department.” On 31 May, CWC authorised a brigade for Kiska.²⁶

Pacific Command had 30,000 troops, 60 percent of them being National Resources and Mobilization Act (NRMA) draftees, but Pearkes cut the pool on 29 May by ruling that “ALL untrained soldiers had to be eliminated” from Greenlight.²⁷ After consulting with his divisional commanders about the fitness of twenty infantry battalions, on 2 June, Pearkes, aided by Brigadiers B.N. Bostock and W.H.S. Macklin, selected Canadian Fusiliers, Winnipeg Grenadiers, and Rocky Mountain Rangers, a company of Saint John Fusiliers (SJF—a machine-gun unit), 24th Field Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery (RCA), 24th Field Company Royal Canadian Engineers (RCE), plus 13th Brigade Headquarters (HQ) and support units.²⁸ When Pearkes came to Ottawa on 7 June, Stuart disqualified Pearkes’ command choice, Brigadier D.R. Sargent, for his low physical category. Instead, Dieppe veteran Brigadier Harry Foster would command while Sargent led training. Facing charges that ill-trained troops had died at Hong Kong, Stuart and Pearkes decreed that Greenlight men must have six months of training (later cut to four) by 1 August 1943. As it “was very desirable to have French-Canadian representation” so that all of Canada was represented, “as a result of discussion with General Pearkes the CGS stated that he now proposed to recommend the addition of Le Regt de Hull.” Stuart told Ralston on 10 June that a fourth battalion was needed “for relief purposes.”²⁹

²⁶ CWC minutes 27 and 31 May 1943, RG2 7c, vol. 13, LAC; Henry Stimson to Ralston, 29 May 1943, file 314.009 (D49), DHH; and Stuart to Ralston, 31 May 1943, RG24, vol. 2919, file HQS9055(1), LAC; diary, 27 May 1943, Pope Papers, vol. 1, LAC; Pope to Stuart, 28 May 1943, file 314.009 (D49), DHH.

²⁷ Colonel J.H. Jenkins to Stuart, 2 March 1943, file 122.1009 (D203), DHH; “Progress Report No. 112 Canadian Army,” 18 March 1943, RG24, vol. 4047, file NSS1078-5-18, LAC; Pacific Command staff conference minutes, 29 May 1943, file 322.009 (D510), DHH. In July 1943, 70.7 percent of 6th Division, 68.8 percent of 7th Division, and 72.4 percent of 8th Division were draftees; Daniel Thomas Byers, *Mobilizing Canada: The National Resources Mobilization Act, the Department of National Defence, and Compulsory Military Service in Canada, 1940-1945*, PhD thesis, McGill University, 2000, 228.

²⁸ “Proceedings regarding co-operation with the US Army in the Aleutians,” June 1943, RG24, vol. 13181, file May 11–June 30 1943, LAC; Captain G.W.L. Nicholson, “The Canadian Participation in the Kiska Operation” [Nicholson Report], December 1943, file 595.013 (D2) DHH.

²⁹ “Record of discussion of Military Members held 1145 Hours on Monday, 7th June 1943,” RG24, vol. 2919, file HQS 9055-1, LAC; Stuart to Ralston, 10 June 1943, *ibid.*

LRH's selection was indeed desirable. Perhaps 50,000 Francophones had served in the Great War, 8 percent of enlistments, and just one Francophone infantry unit, Royal 22e Régiment, had fought. By the Second World War, with over seventy units at least 75 percent Francophone, Stacey put Quebec's enlistment rate, including Anglophones, at 25.69 percent; the next lowest province was Saskatchewan was 42.38 percent (BC was highest at 50.47 percent).³⁰ Yves Tremblay, noting "il est impossible d'établir avec précision le nombre exact de francophones par armes de service parce que le Forces canadiennes n'ont pas tenu de statistiques sure le sujet," said that 131,618 Québécois served, 94,500 in the army, while Francophone volunteers, including Acadians and Franco-Ontarians, numbered 55,000. While Serge Bernier put Quebec volunteers at 161,603, with 65,000 in the army, J.L. Granatstein termed these figures "too generous." Although Quebec contributed 139,000 men to an army strength of 708,000, half were Anglophones and 43,000 were draftees.³¹ Ten percent of army officers in 1939 spoke French; by 1943, nine of 123 generals and eight percent of colonels could do so.³² While Stuart, a Trois Rivières native who spoke some French and was no bigot, told King in February 1942 that he sought to avoid the bitter disunity that conscription had incited in 1918. Minister of National Defence J.L. Ralston thought that "there is only limited room in our army for these men. They can't speak English. We have no French Canadians officers to handle them. Their fighting ability is questionable, etc. etc."³³

³⁰ J.L. Granatstein, *The Generals: The Canadian Army's Senior Commanders in the Second World War* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1993), 239; Major J.S.A Bois to Director Personnel Selection, "French personnel bilingualism," 14 August 1943, RG24, vol. 6543, file HQ650-99-12-2, LAC.

³¹ Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, 590; Tremblay, *Volontaires*, 13 and 17; Serge Bernier, "Participation des canadiens français aux combats: évaluation et tentative de quantification," *Bulletin d'Historique Politique* 3 (printemps-été, 1995), 16 and 19; J.L. Granatstein, *Canada's Army: Waging War and Keeping Peace* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 193n.

³² Desmond Morton, "La pénurie d'officiers francophones dans l'armée canadienne aux deux guerres mondiales," *Bulletin d'Historique Politique* 3 (printemps-été, 1995), 100-102.

³³ Granatstein, *Canada's Generals*, 220-221, 224, and 256; Dexter memorandum, 9 December 1941, in Frederick W. Gibson and Barbara Robertson, ed., *Ottawa at War: The Grant Dexter Memoranda, 1939-1945* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Record Society, 1994), 232.

Francophone soldiers handled such attitudes variously. For Les Voltigeurs de Québec (LVQ), based in Ontario's Niagara region, other ranks (OR) read nationalist Quebec newspapers while officers perused *Toronto Globe and Mail* "with the apparent purpose of providing themselves with 'good' arguments in favour of French Canadian nationalism." Less humorously, when ten BC-based units with the highest and lowest absent with leave (AWL) rates were compared in 1943, the highest units had five times more Francophones. A December 1942 troop survey found that 83 percent of men in majority Francophone formations thought that GS-HD worked well. Only 34 percent of Anglophone troops agreed; 45 percent castigated draftees as "French Canadian or unspecified non-Anglo-Saxon" shirkers seeking "safety from a country they will not protect."³⁴

After *Vancouver Province* suggested on 14 May 1943 that Aleutian operations would "inevitably include" Canada, Pacific Command asked unit commanders to gauge soldiers' reactions. Brigadier H.W. Murdock of 18th Infantry Brigade, based at Nanaimo, said 20 percent of his men were enthused, 55 percent were willing, 15 percent were "not anxious to fight outside of Canada," and 10 percent had "protests of varying degrees." But the willing 75 percent, who "will NOT go active," wanted Ottawa to "make up its mind" while "willingness would be greatly lessened" if Europe was substituted for Japan. Esquimalt Fortress commander Brigadier J.F. Preston presented similar results. Though GS officers were keen, Regina Rifles HD personnel were "non-committal." LRH officers welcomed the news but the men "did not read English speaking newspapers."³⁵ If such factors informed CWC as it pondered Greenlight's composition on 12 June, neither CWC minutes nor King's diary offered much illumination. As "broad geographical representation" and the need for "a valuable reserve" required a French battalion, CWC added a French unit.³⁶

³⁴ Captain Jean Martin to Special Services Directorate (SSD), "Les Voltigeurs de Quebec," 12 May 1942, RG24, vol. 6543, file HQ650-99-12, LAC; R.H. Roy, "Morale in the Canadian Army during the Second World War," *Canadian Defence Quarterly* 16 (Autumn 1986), 42; Katherine Harvie, "HD personnel," 1 February 1943, RG24, vol. 6543, file HQ650-99-7, LAC.

³⁵ "Hint Canadians to Attack in North Pacific, Must Oust Japan from Key Islands," *Vancouver Province*, 14 May 1943; Brigadier H.W. Murdock to 6th Division HQ, 20 May 1943, Brigadier J.F. Preston to 6th Division HQ, 19 May 1943, file 322.009 (D490), DHH.

³⁶ CWC minutes, 11 June 1943, RG2 7c, vol. 13, LAC; diary, 11 June 1943, King Diaries, LAC.

LRH was the only Francophone infantry battalion in Pacific Command. Born in August 1914 as 70th Battalion, the unit, residing in Canada, sent men to CEF's 230th Overseas Forestry Battalion, a good job, AHS averred, as more suitable men could not "have been found anywhere than those of the 230th, recruited largely from those born and bred on the Ottawa [River]."³⁷ Renamed *Le Régiment de Hull* by 1923, "le seul régiment de langue française à l'ouest de Montréal" was also the only French battalion reporting to an Ontario military district. In August 1939, LRH personnel guarded Ottawa's Air Station as war loomed.³⁸ Prospects improved in July 1941 when National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ), seeking "to correct the existing situation respecting French-Canadian units"—just 16.6 percent of Canadian soldiers in Britain spoke French—formed a Francophone 15th Infantry Brigade that included LRH. Lieutenant-Colonel M.C. Grison took command on 20 October, but "great disappointment" ensued when NDHQ terminated the unit's GS recruiting in November. Forced to absorb LVQ's HD men and other conscripts, LRH officers did not look "forward with pleasure to the task facing them of having charge of a battalion of "R" recruits, in place of the home-district volunteers they had hoped to lead."³⁹

When Stuart transferred LRH to Nanaimo in April 1942, Military District Number 5 chief, Brigadier Georges Vanier, told LRH that it was a signal honour to man "an important post on the Pacific coast." LRH arrived at Nanaimo on 19 April where 13th Brigade chief, Brigadier W.C. Colquhoun pronounced that "they were very much on 'active service'" as "nothing stood between them and an Axis nation (Japan) than the ocean."⁴⁰ LRH stood guard and trained though

³⁷ Pariseau and Bernier, 113–114; AHS, "Le Régiment de Hull (RCAC)," February 1964, file 145.2R3 (D1), DHH.

³⁸ *Le Régiment de Hull Octobre 1989* (Hull: Le Régiment de Hull, 1989), 4, Canadian War Museum Archives (CWMA); Pierre Vennat, *Général Dollard Ménard de Dieppe au référendum* (Montréal: Art Global, 2004), 146–147; "10,000 Canadian Militia Answer Call of Ottawa All Key Points Guarded," *Toronto Telegram*, 22 August 1939; Directorate Military Operations & Intelligence (DMOI) War Diary, 26 August 1939, RG24, vol. 1252, LAC.

³⁹ AHS, "Report No. 7, Sixth Canadian Division," 1946, file AHQ No. 7, DHH; Colonel L.M. Chesley to Crerar, 24 June 1941, file 112.3S2009 (D217), DHH; AHS, "Report No. 6, The Employment of Infantry in the Pacific Coast Defences," 1946, RG24, vol. 6921, LAC; LRH War Diary, preamble, 19 November 1941, RG24, vol. 15182, LAC.

⁴⁰ Stuart to Pacific Command, 4 April 1942, DMOI War Diary, RG24, vol. 13253, LAC; LRH War Diary, 14–20 April 1942, RG24, vol. 15182, LAC.

Colquhoun claimed that 80 percent of LRH's men could not speak English and Grison admitted to a shortage of instructors qualified to train in English. Opposed to dispatching scarce bilingual instructors westward, NDHQ recalled some LRH personnel to Ontario. While *Ottawa Citizen* averred "Hull Boys Learning English" on 14 May, if some men from "remoter rural areas" were unilingual, the "great majority speak English—idiom, slang, cusswords and all—with a fluency that would put many a Vancouver Islander to shame."⁴¹

Changes came. LRH took in eighty-eight Francophones from Royal Rifles of Canada and Sault Ste. Marie and Sudbury Regiment.⁴² It left Nanaimo in October 1942 to guard Esquimalt, a move that suited the unit. *The Bull's Eye* declared in December 1942 that as "sons of Quebec and daughters of BC have found that the Rockies do not divide," LRH had formed an "entente très cordiale" with Vancouver Islanders who respected "our individual customs of tongue and religion."⁴³ On 27 February, LRH began two weeks of amphibious warfare instruction at the Combined Operations School at Courtenay, BC. General training was assessed as fair, beach protection was poor, boat discipline was very poor, and speed marching was poor as LRH men "were not in best physical condition." As the school's commandant commented, LRH training was "somewhat hampered by difficulty of language." The men were "very keen" and "platoon commanders worked well to interpret to their men" but "briefing of platoon commanders, NCO's and men was either non-existent or incomplete."⁴⁴

Key US officers opposed using Canadian soldiers in the Aleutians. For Rear Admiral C.M. Cooke, the USN's main planner, "except as an aid to [Canadian] morale, I see no reason for bringing them in at this late date in the operations. No great political benefits are apparent."

⁴¹ Brigadier W.G. Colquhoun to Pacific Command, 24 April 1942, RG24, reel C4995, file 8589-73, LAC; Major General R.O. Alexander to NDHQ, 2 May 1942, *Ibid.*, LAC; Lt. Colonel R.H. Keefer to Alexander, 14 May 1942, *ibid.*; LRH War Diary, 5–6 May 1942, RG24, vol. 15182, LAC; "Hull Boys Learning English," *Ottawa Citizen*, 14 May 1942.

⁴² *The Bull's Eye*, 15 June 1942, and LRH War Diary, 29 June 1942, RG24, vol. 15182, LAC.

⁴³ LRH War Diary, 1–5 October 1942, and *The Bull's Eye*, December 1942, *ibid.*

⁴⁴ Major D. Bult-Francis to 6th Division, 18 March 1943, RG24, vol. 10852, file 23006.009 (D22), LAC. The Combined Operations School was "a misnomer" as neither RCAF nor RCN forces trained there although they provided resources to "lend realism to some maneuvers"; Major Henry Archer, report 6366, 21 November 1944, RG127, Marine Corps Records, Entry A1 1011, History & Museums Division, Subject File Relating to World War II, box 1, file Alaska (General), NARA.

Accepting Cooke's rationale, USN Chief Admiral Ernest King would back Canadian participation if Marshall wanted such help. Marshall's deputy, General Joseph McNarney, feared that sparse time available to train Canadians "would seem to limit their use to that of a floating reserve," a verdict that DeWitt accepted on 31 May.⁴⁵ When Pearkes traveled to WDC HQ in California on 11 June, Stuart cabled to ask if DeWitt would accept LRH. Both Pearkes' response on 12 June plus a 13 June letter to Stuart from Colonel Francis Graling, US Army attaché in Ottawa, said that DeWitt would take a fourth Canadian battalion. But Graling intimated that DeWitt had agreed only "after a long discussion," a curious phrase given DeWitt's ardent desire for Canadian troops.⁴⁶ DeWitt's request for confirmation, sent via Pearkes on 14 June, asserting that the War Department had received "no notification of inclusion for R de Hull," caused consternation. Replying on 15 June that Canada had approved LRH, Stuart told Pope to so inform Washington, puzzling Pope who presumed "this increase in strength has been worked out by our respective commanders on the West Coast." Bemused, McNarney seconded Pope's view of this "appreciated" change.⁴⁷

Why did LRH become a BCT? As relevant documents are terse and passively deflective, definite conclusions are difficult. Reginald Roy contended that Pearkes told Stuart on 7 June that US regimental combat teams used more engineers than Canadian brigades to manage beachheads. Yet that meeting's minutes did not mention a BCT role for any unit. Perhaps DeWitt, calling Pacific Command "helpless" on 31 May and likely perturbed that Pearkes had foisted a Francophone unit upon him, proposed a BCT function for LRH to bar it from an explicit combat role. Reporting to Stuart on 15 June, Pearkes stated that when he and DeWitt met General Charles Corlett, commanding

⁴⁵ C.M. Cooke to Admiral Ernest King, 15 May 1943, Strategic Plans Division Records (SPD), Pacific Section, 1940-1946, Series XII, box 175, file Alaska Misc., US Navy Operational Archives Branch [OAB]; Admiral King to Marshall, 19 May 1943, RG165, box 39, file OPD 336 Security, NARA; Joseph McNarney to Admiral King, 27 May 1943, *ibid.*; transcript DeWitt-General J.E. Hull conversation, 30 May 1943, RG165, OPD, Exec file 8, item 10, NARA.

⁴⁶ Stuart to Pearkes, 11 June 1943, file 322.009 (D487), DHH; Pearkes to Stuart, 12 June 1943, *ibid.*; Colonel F.J. Graling to Stuart, 13 June 1943, RG24, vol. 2919, file HQS9055(1), LAC.

⁴⁷ Pearkes to Stuart, 14 June 1943, file 322.009 (D487), DHH; Stuart to Pearkes, 15 June 1943, RG24, vol. 2919, file HQS 9055(1), LAC; Pope to McNarney, 16 June 1943, file 314.009 (D49), DHH; McNarney to Pope, 17 June 1943, *ibid.*

the Kiska-bound Amphibious Task Force 9 (ATF9), on 12 June—using the deflective passive voice—“it was agreed” that Greenlight would become three battalion landing groups (BLGs) and “Regt de Hull would fulfil the duties carried out by the US Engineer Bn in the equivalent landing group.” Stacey’s claim that a BCT corresponded to a US army combat engineer team is not entirely accurate. The June 1943 edition of FM21-105, *Basic Field Manual Basic Engineers’ Handbook*, omitted BCT duties although the Corps of Engineers’ Pacific campaign history proclaimed that “shore party engineers” organised beaches and carried cargo inland.⁴⁸ Despite their vital tasks, shore parties enjoyed less status than combat engineers and infantry. Fighting on Guadalcanal in 1942, combat marines shunned shore parties, yelling “Hell, Mac, we’re combat troops. You unload the goddamn stuff.” When compelled to take black recruits, the marine corps put 40 percent of black marines (8,000 men) in depots, dumps, and shore parties.⁴⁹ Black men comprised 5 percent of army infantry in 1941–1942 but 42 percent of engineers, often assigned to beach support in engineer separate (labour) units.⁵⁰

Arriving at Pacific Command by 17 June, Foster told Bostock on 21 June about problems finding suitable Francophone officers and asked to confer with Stuart about dropping LRH. Although Foster’s son labeled his father “an arch imperialist, brought up in the rich Edwardian traditions of King, Empire and Country” who disliked “Americans, French-Canadians, Jews and discrimination—and in that order,” Foster’s diary lacked anti-French slurs. On 21 June, Stuart promised to replace “the useless French officers in Le Regiment de Hull.” While Foster judged the men as “pretty good,”

⁴⁸ Roy, *For Most Conspicuous Bravery*, 187; DeWitt-Hull transcript, 30 May 1943, RG165, OPD, Exec file 8, item 10, NARA; Pearkes to Stuart, 15 June 1943, RG24, vol. 13831, file May 11 to June 30 1943, LAC; War Department, *FM21-105, Basic Field Manual, Engineer Soldier’s Handbook* (Washington DC: Department of the Army, June 1943); Karl C. Dod, *The Corps of Engineers: The War Against Japan* (Washington DC: Department of the Army, 1987), 685–690 and 328–332.

⁴⁹ Robert Leckie, *Challenge for the Pacific: Guadalcanal, the Turning Point of the War* (New York: Doubleday, 1965), 52; Allan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps* (New York: Free Press, 1991), 375; Morris J. MacGregor, Jr., *Integration of the Armed Forces 1940–1965* (Washington DC: Center for Army History, 1989), 108.

⁵⁰ MacGregor, 24; Ulysses Lee, *The Employment of Negro Troops* (Washington DC: Center of Military History, 2001), 128 and 94; Gordon L. Rottman, *US World War Two Amphibious Tactics: Army & Marine Corps, Pacific Theater* (Long Island City: Osprey, 2004), 21.



Col. Menard. [Library and Archives Canada LAC 30444]

there were “too many old soft officers.” The artillery regiment needed “younger and more adaptable officers,” but time constraints prevented any changes there. When Stuart authorised Foster “to fire anyone I saw fit to and to ask for anyone in Canada I wanted,” Foster canned Sargent.⁵¹ Deeming Grison “most unsatisfactory,” Pearkes queried “urgently” on 14 June if Lieutenant-Colonel Dollard Ménard, wounded at Dieppe, could lead LRH. Willing initially to let Ménard assist training temporarily, Stuart said on 16 June that Ménard would take over LRH on 18 June. Grison received the news on 16 June in Nanaimo where LRH had moved four days before.⁵² LRH lacked twelve officers, and RMR, CDE, and WPG needed sixteen,

⁵¹ Diary, 9 June 1943, Harry Foster Papers, privately held. I am grateful to J.L. Granatstein for access; Bostock memorandum, 21 June 1943, file 322.009 (D480), DHH; Tony Foster, *Meeting of Generals* (Toronto: Methuen, 1986), 265; diary, 2 23 June 1943, Foster Papers.

⁵² Pearkes to Brigadier H.F.G. Letson, 14 June 1943, file 322.009 (D496), DHH; Stuart to Pearkes, 14 June 1943, RG24, vol. 2919, file HQS9055(1), LAC; Pearkes to Stuart, 14 June 1943, *ibid.*; military members minutes, 16 June 1943, file 114.1009 (D14), DHH; LRH War Diary, 12 and 16 June 1943, RG24, vol. 15182, LAC. Ménard, a graduate from Royal Military College of Canada in 1932, served in Asia with British units from 1938 to 1940; Nicholson, “Amendments to narrative, the Canadian participation in the Kiska operation,” 29 November 1945, RG24, vol. 31916, file 1453-7, LAC.

eight, and six officers respectively.⁵³ LRH lost twenty-one of thirty-nine officers, including second in command Major L.P. Brunet. Major L.J. St. Laurent, a highly regarded former LRH member, returned on 12 June to replace Brunet and then was plucked by Foster on 23 June to serve in his brigade HQ. Despite promises that Grison and Brunet would aid the transition, Macklin removed them on 24 June. By 5 July, Ménard was satisfied with LRH's officers, though it had not been easy as Ménard "ai décidé que la langue de travail du régiment de Hull serait le français." Ménard, Caroline D'Amours has said, the youngest Lieutenant-Colonel in the Commonwealth (age twenty-nine), was a meticulous trainer who did not tolerate poor officers.⁵⁴

Macklin cited three reasons for slashing Greenlight unit rosters by one-third: an army tendency to treat HD units as reinforcement pools rather than operational bodies; an inadequate medical boarding system; and too many overage officers.⁵⁵ Over 200 men were scratched for mental instability or low intelligence, a figure that 6th Division's Examiner called "rather large." WPG lacked eleven officers and 270 OR. It lost fifty-two more men in June but added 100 Midland Regiment personnel. RMR, short 180 men, shed another 106 troops and absorbed

⁵³ Pearkes to Brigadier F. Harvey, 9 June 1943, file 322.009 (D496), DHH; Macklin to Colonel "A," 10 June 1943, file 322.009 (D491), DHH.

⁵⁴ LRH War Diary, 12-27 June 1943, RG24, vol. 15182, LAC; Brigadier Sherwood Lett to Stuart, "Liaison Report No. 8," 23 June 1943, file 322.009 (D481), DHH; Macklin to Colonel "A," 24 June 1943, file 322.009 (D496), DHH; Ménard cited in Lett to Stuart, "Liaison Report no. 19," 5 July 1943, RG24, reel C8428, file 9055-12, LAC; Bois to Director Special Services, 15 June 1943, RG24, vol. 6543, file HQ650-99-12-3, LAC; Ménard cited in Vennat, *Les Héros Oubliés*, 219; Caroline D'Amours, "Training for Operation Jubilee: Tactics and Training in the Fusiliers Mont-Royal and the Dieppe Raid, 1939-1942," *Canadian Military History* 22 (Autumn, 2013), 26. The Army's School of Administration said St. Laurent had "youth, a broad vision, and an engaging personality"; Lieutenant-Colonel E.L. Caldwell to HQ Military District No. 4, 27 October 1941, file 324.009 (D195), DHH. Despite Ménard's claim, LRH's War Diary was not written in French until September 1944; LRH War Diary, September 1944, RG24, vol. 15183, LAC. On 1 January 1944, LRH listed 35 officers, including two captains and 12 lieutenants taken on strength after 31 May 1943; "Seniority List," 1 January 1944, LRH War Diary, RG24, vol. 15183, LAC.

⁵⁵ Macklin, "Administrative report on Greenlight Force covering period from inception of project to despatch of force to Adak," 22 July 1943, RG24, vol. 13181, file July 1943, LAC.

an Edmonton Fusiliers company.⁵⁶ Medical boards cut seventy-five LRH men by 15 June, prompting Pearkes to ask NDHQ for seventy-five French-speaking or bilingual men. A day later, for Greenlight units were not “fighting fit” given “constant taking of drafts and replacements of these at irregular and uncertain intervals,” Pearkes sought more men. Stuart opted on 16 June to draw troops from “the Trained Soldier Companies of Advanced Training Centres” while NDHQ said 15th Brigade would send seventy-five men from Quebec. On 27 June, NDHQ ordered 7th Division in the Maritimes to send “140 French speaking or bilingual full trained HD” OR to LRH.⁵⁷ By 24 June, LRH had removed fifty-seven unfit OR, seventy-five OR arrived on 26 June, another 179 OR were cut by 5 July, and 138 arrived on 5 July. LRH reached full establishment, thirty-six officers and 721 OR, on 6 July despite NDHQ’s admission on 28 June that it could not send 130 Francophone soldiers before Greenlight’s departure. Pacific Command had to find those men despite Stuart’s promise on 30 June that NDHQ “would find any replacements that were not available in Pacific Command” if Foster deleted more unfit personnel.⁵⁸ LRH got a new Regimental Sergeant-Major on 24 June, Albert Cadotte, a volunteer lauded for being a twenty-one-year old RSM and his superior hockey skills.⁵⁹

Greenlight began boarding ships on 9 July for move to the main Aleutian base at Adak Island on 12 July. Not all went well. Disgruntled men in one WPG company, refusing to embark, tossed rifles into the sea. Moreover, CDF and RMR had “alarming proportions” of AWLs as men feared “being railroaded into the U.S. Army for employment in

⁵⁶ Captain W.A. Wilander to Major D.E. Smith, 23 June 1943, file 322.009 (D481), DHH; Winnipeg Grenadiers (WPG) War Diary, 1–30 June 1943, RG24, vol. 15292, LAC; Macklin to Colonel “A,” 10 June 1943, file 322.009 (D491), DHH; Lieutenant-Colonel M.L. de Rome, “TL Report No. 33,” 12 April 1943, RG24, reel C5491, file HQS20-3-1-11, LAC; RMR War Diary, 12 June 1943, vol. 15204, LAC.

⁵⁷ Pearkes to NDHQ, 15 and 16 June 1943, file 322.009 (D491), DHH; minutes of military members, 16 June 1943, file 114.1009 (D14), DHH; Adjutant General Army (AG) to Pearkes, 16 June 1943, file 322.009 (D491), DHH; AG to 7th Division, 27 June 1943, *ibid.*

⁵⁸ LRH War Diary, 21, 24, and 26 June 1943, RG24, vol. 15182, LAC; LRH War Diary, 3–6 July 1943, *ibid.*, LAC; Greenlight conference minutes, 28 June 1943, file 322.009 (D481), DHH; Stuart to Ralston, 30 June 1943, RG24, vol. 2919, file HQS9055(1), LAC.

⁵⁹ LRH War Diary, 1 December 1943, RG24, vol. 15183, LAC; District Militaire No. 4, communiqué de presse, 15 Janvier 1944, Albert Cadotte Papers, Series 58A-1, file 262.9, CWMA.

the South Pacific.” Foster also discovered that one officer rashly had promised leave. Firing that “damn fool,” the “tension eased, absentees dropped and everyone got down to work” when Foster spoke to the men about security needs and England’s tough conditions.⁶⁰ Bostock disqualified twenty-six ill-trained men at the docks on 12 July, and NDHQ’s liaison officer to Pacific Command, Dieppe veteran Brigadier Sherwood Lett, listed 165 Greenlight members as AWL; another ninety-one AWL were apprehended before 12 July.⁶¹ WPG, CDF, RMR, and 24th Regiment RCA lost forty-seven, forty-two, thirty-one, and twenty-nine men respectively. LRH had just six AWL (its diary said three). Exactly 4,800 men left BC on 12 July, rising to 4,887 by 23 July as detached personnel arrived. But Greenlight’s establishment was 5,254.⁶² Macklin and Captain G.W.L. Nicholson’s AHS Greenlight narrative blamed the indiscipline on Greenlight’s rapid assembly as “men object to being tossed from unit to unit” without chances to know their leaders or to develop unit spirit. As for LRH, it “had suffered far less disruption of its other ranks than any other unit.” In 1945, saying that LRH had absorbed just 175 new men, Pacific Command emphasised the pride LRH felt in having “NO AWL or deserters at the last minute.” LRH was an anomaly. While 499 draftees were AWL in Canada in 1941, 3,986 deserted in 1942–1943 respectively. Losing just 503 AWL by 31 May 1943, the army suffered 1,533 AWL from June 1943 to January 1944, one-third of wartime desertions to date.⁶³

On the dock, Deputy Defence Minister G.S. Currie informed LRH men to expect a six month mission and promised “to supply our

⁶⁰ WPG War Diary, 8 July 1943, RG24, vol. 15292, LAC; diary, 9 July 1943, Foster Papers; Foster, 265–266.

⁶¹ Bostock to Macklin, 10 July 1943, file 322.009 (D486), DHH; Lt. Colonel J.J.P. de Salaberry, “Reconciliation,” 12 July 1943, file 322.009 (D530), DHH; Lett to Stuart, “Liaison Report No. 27,” 13 July 1943. Ibid.; Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 500.

⁶² Salaberry, “Reconciliation,” 12 July 1943, file 322.009 (D530), DHH; Pearkes to Colonel Harrington, 12 July 1943, file 322.009 (D483), DHH; Lett to NDHQ, “Strength return Greenlight units as of 1700 hours on 23 July 1943,” 25 July 1943, RG24, vol. 2919, file HQS9055(1), LAC; “Establishment 13th Cdn Inf Bde Gp,” 6 July 1943, RG24, vol. 13181, file July 1943, LAC. LRH claims about AWL are found in LRH War Diary, 10–12 July 1943, RG24, vol. 15182, LAC.

⁶³ Macklin, “Administrative arrangements for Greenlight training force,” 23 June 1943, George Pearkes Papers, box 11, file 11.14, University of Victoria Archives (UVIC); Nicholson Report, paragraph 72, file 595.013 (D2), DHH; Nicholson, “Amendments to Narrative,” 29 November 1945, RG24, vol. 31916, file 1453-7, LAC; “NRMA personnel deserters—by months Jan. 1941 to date,” February 1944, RG24, vol. 18824, file 133.065 (D619), DHH.

unit with French newspapers.” Selecting Ménard as his second in command, Foster “lifted the veil of secrecy” about the mission on 13 July and briefed LRH officers on 14 July. When ORs got the news on 16 July, their reaction, LRH’s diarist bragged, “was most satisfactory and favourable. They realize a job has to be done and are willing to get it over as soon as possible.” Ménard martially asserted that LRH sailed “without a kindly thought or intent aboard towards the little yellow cut-throat ‘sons of heaven.’” With LRH’s diary describing the troops as “happy and well fed,” Foster, fearful the men “won’t be able to move on reaching Adak,” reduced food service. Meals remained so generous that Foster saw a “little French lad from Gaspé coming from the mess room crossing himself as he staggered to his bunk.”⁶⁴ Keeping their side-arms, boots, and battle dress, Greenlight men wore US army outerwear boasting Canadian insignia. Jacques complained that “American gear began to roll in a bewildering flood with no respect for the average stature of our men.” LRH’s diarist rued that “precious time was lost” finding proper equipment as “the average stature of the French Canadian is rather medium.” Canadian boots were no better as “an extraordinary proportion” of LRH men “had very small feet demanding an unusual number of small sizes of boots.” The list of personal gear each soldier took to Kiska was three pages long.⁶⁵

Greenlight remade CDF, WPG, and RMR into the 14th, 15th, and 16th US-style BLGs. Each BLG, 1,167 men strong, were subdivided into British-style forward combat teams (FCTS) that were constructed around one LRH company plus support units (16 officers and 353 OR). BCTS unloaded boats, formed supply dumps, defended beaches, evacuated casualties, acted as a fighting reserve, and supplied FCTS. The latter task, Bostock claimed, was vital as FCT success depended “upon the energy of the Beach Combat Team in pushing forward

⁶⁴ LRH War Diary, 10 July 1943, RG24, vol. 15182, LAC; Pearkes to DeWitt, 12 July 1943, file 322.009 (D486), DHH; 13th Brigade HQ diary, 13 July 1943, RG24, vol. 14165, file 1030, LAC; LRH War Diary, 12–16 and 21 July 1943, RG24, vol. 15182, LAC; Lieutenant-Colonel Dollard Ménard, “Reports on Kiska operations, *Le Régiment de Hull*,” 1944, LRH War Diary, RG24, vol. 15183, LAC; diary, 14 and 18 July 1943, Foster Papers.

⁶⁵ Macklin, “Administrative arrangements for Greenlight training force,” 23 June 1943, Pearkes Papers, box 11, file 11.14, UVIC; Ménard, “Reports on Kiska operations,” January 1944, LRH War Diary, RG24, vol. 15183, LAC; LRH War Diary, 7 July 1943, RG24, vol. 15182, LAC; Nicholson Report, paragraph 43, file 595.013 (D2), DHH; Lt. Colonel W.S. Murdoch, “Officers and OR’s clothing and equipment,” July 1943, Cadotte Papers, file 262.9, CWMA.

supply.⁶⁶ US experts came to BC while Canadians went to Seattle and Fort Ord, California, ATF9's training centre, to study amphibious warfare, US weapons, and lessons learned at Attu where fighting had killed 549 Americans and injured 2,350 (a 19 percent loss rate). On 23 June, LRH personnel attended a ship loading course in Nanaimo. Five days later, a senior US army officer schooled Ménard in amphibious warfare while a Canadian observer sent to Attu lectured LRH officers about that bitter campaign.⁶⁷ On 19 June, Pacific Command ordered four LRH officers to San Diego "for a period of instruction" at Amphibious Corps Pacific Force. But they arrived instead at Fort Ord. Major J.L. Black, a Pacific Command liaison officer, encountered the LRH officers at Fort Ord on 21 July. As they had not been paid since 23 June, Black told this "very discouraged group of boys" to get loans from the post welfare officer and then ensured their transfer to Adak with the US army's 87th Mountain Regiment.⁶⁸

Training at Adak, already intense in BC (Pacific Command listed twenty-nine tasks to master), heightened. As Attu's campaign had revealed that troops must be in superb condition and habituated to harsh weather plus steep terrain, the emphasis was on platoon level battle drill, understanding Japanese tactics, and physical conditioning.⁶⁹ Over 150 marines put ATF9 through its amphibious warfare paces as the corps was required to train all troops going to the Pacific. On 27 July, marines lectured Greenlight about blending

⁶⁶ Nicholson Report, paragraphs 16–17, file 595.013 (D2), DHH; and Bostock, "Training instruction 'Green Light' directive no. 2," 14 June 1943, file 114.1009 (D14), DHH. Lieutenant-Colonel J.A. Wilson, commanding WPG, said that US officers dropped "combat group" and "shore party" for the British terms FCT and BCT; J.A. Wilson, "Kiska Ops," 1943, John Anderson Wilson Papers, file Kiska Operation, Glenbow Museum Archives. Ménard listed 27 BCT duties; Ménard to Stacey, 10 January 1946, RG24, vol. 31916, file 1453-7, LAC.

⁶⁷ Nicholson Report, paragraph 94, file 595.013 (D2), DHH; Galen Roger Perras, *Stepping Stones to Nowhere: The Aleutian Islands, Alaska, and American Military Strategy, 1867–1945* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2003), 133; LRH War Diary, 23 and 28 June and 5 July 1943, RG24, vol. 15182, LAC.

⁶⁸ Major G.S. Oldfield to Foster, 19 June 1943, file 322.009 (D500), DHH; LRH War Diary, 23 June 1943, RG24, vol. 15182, LAC; diary, 21 July 1943, in Larry Black and Galen Roger Perras, ed., *Black's War: From New Brunswick's 8th Hussars to California's Corlett's 'Long Knives,' 1941–44* (Waterloo: LCMSDS Press of Wilfrid Laurier University, 2013), 152–153.

⁶⁹ Pacific Command, "Memo of some points to be covered in training," 27 June 1943, RG24, vol. 2920, file HQS9055-1, LAC; Perras, *Stepping Stones* (book), 133 and 252–253; 13th Brigade HQ, "Training directive no. 1," 7 July 1943, file 148.9009 (D6), DHH.

artillery, air support, communications, and engineers in an assault landing. Marine Major W.R. Lytz schooled LRH in shore party doctrine from 28–30 July.⁷⁰ Foster got on well with Alaska's crusty senior marine, General Holland Smith. When Smith queried why Canadians shaved daily, Foster said "I tell them I don't want them looking like a bunch of bloody Americans." US army officers, taking "a rather dim view of a bunch of Marines coming up there to tell them what to do," denied Smith's aide, Colonel Graves Erskine, access to ATF9's battle plan. Having complained to Pearkes about Sargent's anti-Americanism, Erskine found Foster to be "a hard charger in every way." When Erskine complained that Canadian practice artillery fire on Adak nearly had struck US troops, Foster responded that the "goddamn Americans" would "never learn how to win a battle" with such precautions. Though Erskine said Greenlight "would have been wonderful in battle" had the Japanese stayed, there had been "quite a go-around" with French-speaking shore parties. Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Hogaboom was less impressed. While US soldiers "reacted very well to [marine] supervision," Canadians—Hogaboom worked with LRH, RMR, and "Winnipeg Fusiliers [sic]"—were "completely indifferent"; when Hogaboom spoke, Canadians "would deliberately prop their feet up on the benches and rock their heads back and go sound asleep."⁷¹

After Smith convinced Corlett to mount a practice drill, ATF9 units landed on Great Sitkin Island on 3 August before returning to Adak on 7 August. LRH's "A" Company moved supplies 600 yards inland without delay, a job that WPG's diarist called "difficult and important." Jeeps had to move material cross-country, machinery noise drowned out a public address system on the beach, and a paucity of wireless sets compelled the use of runners. The return to Adak

⁷⁰ Joint Planning Committee to Joint Board, "Joint plan for Army and Navy amphibious combat training," 9 September 1941, RG127, Entry A1 1011, box 2, file 6, NARA; "Summary of amphibious training" 1952, *ibid.*, box 2, file 6, NARA; Fifth Amphibious Corps HQ, "War journal of forward echelon, Amphibious Corps, Pacific Fleet; operations for occupation of Kiska," 24 October 1943, RG127, Entry A1 1051, Geographic Area Files, box 1, file A3-1, NARA; Captain R.F. Benjamin to Commander North Pacific Force, "Personnel for forward echelon, headquarters Amphibious Corps Pacific Fleet," 12 August 1943, RG127, Entry A1 1010, History & Museums Division, Records Amphibious Corps 1940–46, box 16, file 2385 Strength & Distribution, NARA; LRH War Diary, 28–30 July 1943, RG24, vol. 15182, LAC.

⁷¹ Foster, 273; *General Graves B. Erskine Oral History Transcript* (Washington DC: Marine Corps History and Museums Division, 1975), 298–312; *Lieutenant General Robert E. Hogaboom Oral History Transcript* (Washington DC: Marine Corps History and Museums Division, 1972), 169–171.

went better as USN “coxswains were far more on their toes.”⁷² Marine Captain J.B. O’Neill, attached to LRH, said that as USN crews “did not understand their work,” many troops had been submerged. LRH “worked practically continuously up to 0400, 8 August,” shore party morale “was very high, though they were practically all drenched and cold,” and shore parties were “well organized and very efficient.” By contrast, Erskine called US army’s 17th Regiment beach party, a formation that had served at Attu, “a disorganized mob.”⁷³

On 11 August, 35,000 ATF9 soldiers left Adak. Once a naval diversion drew attention to Kiska’s southeast coast on 15 August, the Canada-US First Special Service Force (SSF) would spearhead landings on Kiska’s northwest. On 16 August, Greenlight would splash ashore on Kiska’s northern reaches, with LRH providing the beach parties in Greenlight’s sector.⁷⁴ According to Jacques, LRH men, crammed with other troops and supplies on USS *David Branch*, had their “morale and fighting spirit ... whipped up to a keen edge,” all being “imbued with the urge to get this over with and go home to a liveable climate.” Foster’s brigade HQ, also on *David Branch*, prompted by Ménard, sang “Alouette.” Disaster nearly ensued when a fire erupted on *David Branch*. Sergeant J. Iannuccilli of LRH entered the stricken hold with a winch line so that the burning cargo box could be extracted before it ignited gasoline and ammunition. Origène Poulin, an NRMA OR sent to LRH in June, said that Ménard had told him “I am certain that

⁷² H.M. Smith to Commandant Marine Corps, “War diary, Forward Echelon, Amphibious Corps, Pacific Fleet: Operations against Kiska,” 27 October 1943, Marine Corps Records, Reference Section, file Alaska, Marine Corps Historical Center (MCHC); WPG War Diary, 3 August 1943, RG24, vol. 15292, LAC; Lieutenant-Colonel W.S. Murdoch, “Operation order no. 2,” 5 August 1943, file 595.013 (D4), DHH; LRH War Diary, 3–7 August 1943, RG24, vol. 15182, LAC; 13th Brigade HQ diary, 3–7 August 1943, RG24, vol. 14165, file 1030, LAC.

⁷³ Captain J.B. O’Neill, “Medical activities of 13th Canadian Infantry Brigade during period 3 Aug–7Aug 1943,” 8 August 1943, RG127, Entry A1 1010, box 14, file 2295-5 Reports-Observers #1, NARA; Colonel G.B. Erskine to Commanding General Alaskan Command Pacific Force, “Landing exercises executed by 1st Battalion 17th Infantry on Beach Red-2, 4 August 1943,” 6 August 1943, *ibid.*, box 15, file 2295-5-15 Report Observers Kiska, NARA.

⁷⁴ Task Force 16, “Operation Plan No. 6-43,” 6 August 1943, Adjutant General’s Records, World War II Operations Reports 1940–48, American Theater, RG407, file 91-TF2-0.3, NARA; 13th Cdn Inf Bde, “Operation Order No. 1,” 9 August 1943, file 595.023 (D2), DHH.

I am going to die” on Kiska, convincing Poulin “we were going to a nasty place.”⁷⁵

By nightfall on 15 August, 7,000 Allied troops were on Kiska. On 16 August, as a beach assigned to US forces was too rocky, landing craft switched to Greenlight’s congested Green Beach. CDF’s displeased diarist called USN crews undisciplined liars, while Colonel N.C. Sherman, a Pacific Command observer, alleged the USN “managed to botch the works thoroughly whenever they have touched land affairs.” ATF9’s US assistant chief of staff was blunter. USN refusals to shift boats from congested beaches would have wiped out ATF9’s first wave, “not due to the enemy contact, but primarily due to the fact that additional troops could not have been landed in sufficient quantities with proper supplies to reinforce the beachhead.”⁷⁶ The 14th FCT hit Green Beach at 9:10 a.m. on 16 August, followed by 15th FCT and 16th FCT by noon, pushed by Foster “with all haste” to grab high ground before enemy counter attacks came. Jittery men beset by thick fog shot recklessly. One CDF soldier’s spine was severed by friendly fire on 16 August. SSF disseminated so much friendly fire that Canadian soldiers, Nicholson claimed, found that “a brisk return of machine gun fire was the most effective method” to curtail it. Thirty Canadians were wounded or fell ill.⁷⁷ Twenty-eight Americans died, most from friendly fire. Seventy USN sailors died when their ship struck a mine on 17 August.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Ménard, “Reports on Kiska operations,” 1944, LRH War Diary, RG24, vol. 15183, LAC; Bde HQ diary, 11 August 1943, RG24, vol. 14165, file 1030, LAC; LRH War Diary, 11 August 1943, RG24, vol. 15182, LAC; Foster, “Reports on acts of courage,” 20 August 1943, RG24, vol. 31916, file 1453-7, LAC; Origène Poulin transcript, available at www.thememoryproject.com/stories/2193:origene-poulin/.

⁷⁶ Transport Quarter Master 14th FCT report, December 1943, RG24, vol. 15032, file CDF War Diary December 1943, LAC; Colonel N.C. Sherman, “Alaska trip,” 22 September 1943, file 322.009 (D711), DHH; Kenneth A. Ward report, 1943, RG407, file 91-RF2-0.3, NARA.

⁷⁷ Diary, 16 August 1943, Foster Papers; CDF War Diary, 16 August 1943, RG24, vol. 15032, LAC; Lieutenant-Colonel R.H. Beattie to 13th Bde HQ, 4 October 1943, in Nicholson Report, Appendix 37, file 595.013 (D2); DHH; Nicholson Report, paragraphs 123–125, 129, 131, and 195, file 595.013 (D2), DHH.

⁷⁸ Charles R. Shrader, *Amicide: The Problem of Friendly Fire in Modern War* (Fort Leavenworth: United States Army Command and General Staff College, 1982), 91. Four of twenty-one Americans killed by 21 August died in Greenlight’s sector; assistant chief of staff ATF9 to Alaska Defense Command Advanced HQ, “Narrative of events of Landing Force 16.8,” 13 October 1943, James V. Forrestal Papers, box 153, item 87, Mudd Library, Princeton University.

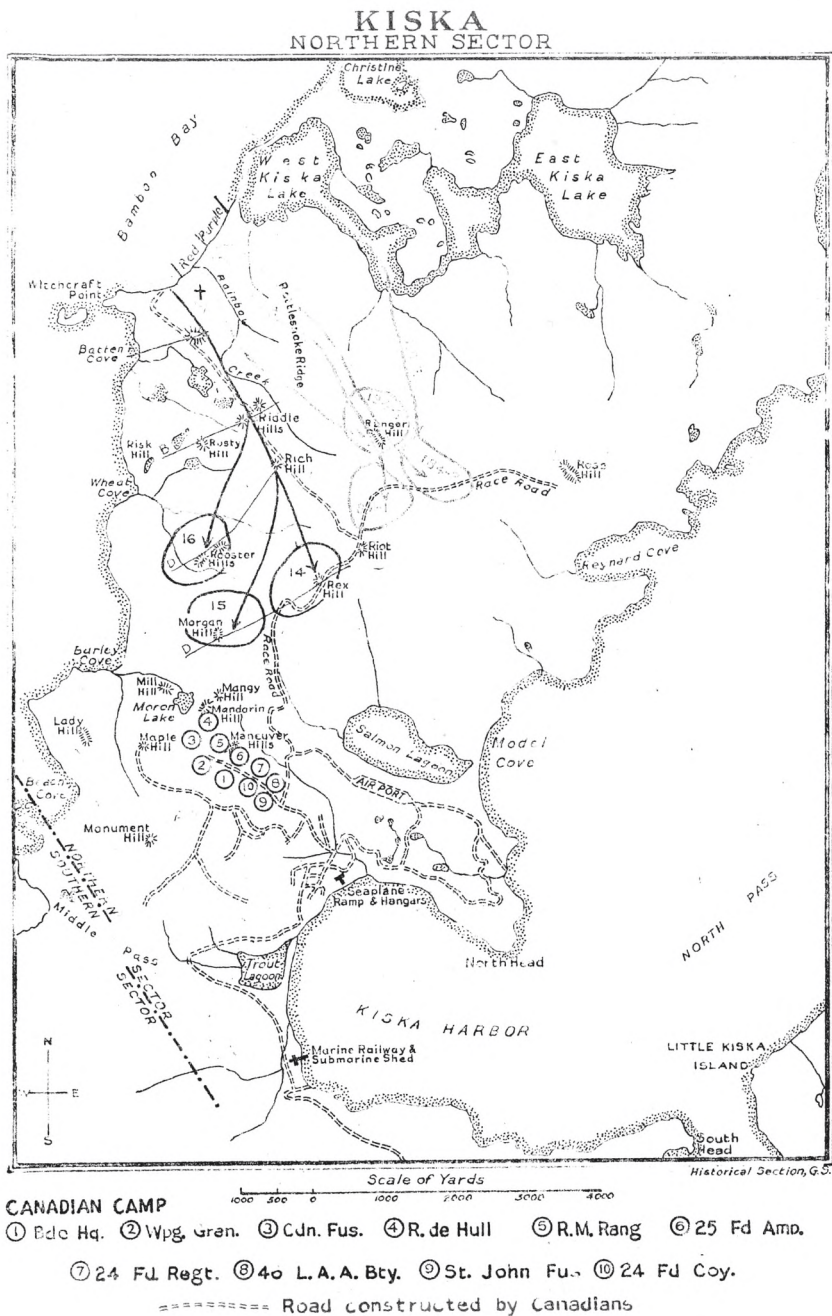


Canadian and US forces landing at Kiska, August 1943. [United States Navy USN 42784]

Kiska's invasion was uncontested as Japan's untenable garrison had withdrawn covertly on 29 July. Though US intelligence assumed the enemy was holed up on Kiska's high ground or on nearby islands, certain the Japanese had left, Smith had demanded a reconnaissance in force. US commanders rejected that option as it would telegraph the attack. Smith, possessing contempt for "Generals who were Admirals and Admirals who wanted to be Generals," became "the object of ridicule."⁷⁹ Greenlight HQ's diarist thought the Japanese had gone to ground and "ours will be the long hard job of digging them out." Pearkes had expected Greenlight to suffer 20 percent casualties. After inspecting Kiska's formidable defences, DeWitt put potential ATFg losses at 5,000 dead.⁸⁰ Booby-traps killed RMR Lieutenant S. Vessey on 17 August and WPG's Private P. Poshtar on 22 August, and LRH lost two men given what Pacific Command observer Major G. Sivertz called a "child-like desire to fire Japanese grenades and mortars." After four LRH men left camp on 28 August to examine a

⁷⁹ Perras, *Stepping Stones* (book), 154–155; Holland M. Smith and Percy Finch, *Coral and Brass* (Washington DC: Zenger Publishing, 1948), 21 and 106.

⁸⁰ 13th Cdn Bde HQ diary, 9 August 1943, RG24, vol. 14165, file 1030, LAC; Pearkes to Letson, 10 July 1943, file 322.009 (D497), DHH; DeWitt cited in *The ONI Weekly*, 25 August 1943, file 112.3M1013 (D6), DHH.



[GWL Nicholson "The Canadian Participation in the Kiska Operation," AHQ Report No. 6, DHH.]

Japanese ammunition cache, Private G. Boisclair fatally mishandled a grenade. On 29 August, Private G. Desjardin struck a bomb with a shovel. Foster, witnessing the incident, said a dismembered Desjardins was “blown over a cliff.”⁸¹

Ménard had divided LRH into functional groups: an HQ; a beach section subdivided into ammunition, labour, general duty, and evacuation parties; a defence group; traffic controllers; a medical unit; and a supply dump. Aided by extra men that enlarged Ménard’s command to 1,600 personnel, LRH so impressed Corlett that he gave it control over supplies meant for two US beaches.⁸² Nicholson said that LRH’s “magnificent” work kept Green Beach clear as men battled icy surf to unload boats and removed eighty land-mines on the beach after an explosion catapulted a US jeep. When Corlett froze USN deliveries on 19 August to allow BCTs to segregate stores by units, LRH personnel hiked five times daily inland to deliver 150 tons of material. While BCTs were dismantled on 23 August, LRH remained on Green Beach until 11 September when it moved to Greenlight’s encampment at Kiska’s harbor and began building roads.⁸³

On 18 August, Greenlight’s HQ war diary wrote that “massed beach teams of the three BLGS (under Lieutenant-Colonel Ménard) have worked long and hard judging by reports reaching us.” Finding it “very unpleasant to land from an LST [landing ship tank] and have a green roller sweep up over your head,” Sherman said Ménard “had things well under control and well organized.” While Sivertz complained that medical officers had not inspected Green Beach and that “human excreta littered the camp,” LRH deserved “special praise” as Green Beach “was clear of all material long before the American beach was organized” despite “mud and wet ... comparable

⁸¹ RMR War Diary, 17 August 1943, RG24, vol. 15204, LAC; WPG War Diary, 22 August 1943, RG24, vol. 15292, LAC; Major G. Sivertz, “Kiska operations observations,” 22 August 1943, file 322.009 (D878), DHH; LRH War Diary, 29 August 1943, plus statements of Lt. G.A. Chagon and three witnesses, 31 August 1943, RG24, vol. 15182, LAC; LRH War Diary, 28 September 1943, RG24, vol. 15183, 1943, LAC; Foster cited in 13th Bde HQ diary, 29 August 1943, RG24, vol. 14165, file 1030, LAC.

⁸² Ménard to Stacey, 10 January 1946, RG24, vol. 31916, file 1453-7, LAC; Nicholson Report, paragraphs 135–136, file 595.013 (D2), DHH; Nicholson, “Amendments to narrative,” 29 November 1945, RG24, vol. 31916, file 1453-7, LAC.

⁸³ Nicholson Report, paragraphs 138–145, file 595.013 (D2), DHH; 13th Bde HQ diary, 23 August 1943, RG24, vol. 14165, file 1030, LAC; 24th Field Company RCE diary, 31 August 1943, RG24, vol. 14751, LAC.

to conditions at Paaschendaale [sic].” But though Foster acknowledged on 4 September that LRH “crested an all time record by unloading 90,000 tons of stores by hand in two weeks,” he also had commented on 22 August that “an improvised beach organization” by definition was untrustworthy. RMR commander Lt. Colonel D.B. Holman wanted BCTs to be battalion-sized as Greenlight’s BCT was so small that front-line units would have had to retrieve supplies had the invasion met opposition.⁸⁴

Unfortunately, personal gear piled on beaches was looted. Though some Canadians were implicated, the Brigade HQ diarist alleged that US troops perpetrated most thefts. RCE’s commander, calling discipline on Green Beach “deplorable,” said stores “were openly looted and rifled.” Lieutenant-Colonel R.H. Beattie of CDF backed “strong action” against looters. WPG commander, Lieutenant-Colonel J.A. Wilson, complaining that “Canadian and American” personnel had freely looted, wanted looters “shot.” Even 19th Field Security Section was victimised, compelling its diarist to state “what with watching Le Regiment de Hull and the Americans we have quite a time.” Only RMR castigated its own men as “a cheerful, if somewhat light fingered crowd.” While Jacques did not blame LRH personnel, “inveterate souvenir hunters” had neglected the “fearful consequences that might occur from their ‘scrounging’ should the enemy counter-attack and essential supplies and rations be found missing.”⁸⁵

Prime Minister King took to the radio on 21 August to display his commitment to the Pacific war despite Pope’s report that a chagrined USN would not publicise an unopposed invasion. Eager to show that Canada had “joined with the Americans in protecting the Alaskan and Aleutian areas,” King, backed by Power who thought

⁸⁴ 13th Bde HQ diary, 17 August 1943, RG24, vol. 14165, file 1030, LAC; Sherman, “Alaska Trip,” 22 September 1943, file 322.009 (D711), DHH; Sivertz, “Kiska operations observations,” 22 August 1943, file 322.009 (D878), DHH; diary, 4 September and 22 August 1943, Foster Papers; Lieutenant-Colonel D.B. Holman, “Report on Kiska operation 1st Bn Rocky Mountain Rangers,” 3 September 1943, RMR War Diary, RG24, vol. 15205, LAC.

⁸⁵ 13th Bde HQ diary, 21 August 1943, RG24, vol. 14165, file 1030, LAC; Major D.H. Rochester to Foster, “Report on Kiska operations,” 5 September 1943, 24th Fd Coy RCE War Diary, RG24, vol. 14751, LAC; Beattie, “14th Combat Team Memorandum Report on Greenlight Training,” December 1943, CDF War Diary, RG24, vol. 15032, LAC; Wilson to Foster, 28 August 1943, WPG War Diary, RG24, vol. 15292, LAC; FSS War Diary, 7 September 1943, RG24, vol. 6398, LAC; RMR War Diary, 22 August 1943, RG24, vol. 15204, LAC; Ménard, “Reports on Kiska operations,” 1944, LRH War Diary, RG24, vol. 15183, LAC.



Canadian Army camp at Kiska in the Aleutian Islands, August 1943. [Library and Archives Canada C-008021]

that BC, “the Liberal Party’s blackest spot,” would be grateful “the Japanese menace” was vanquished, outlined Greenlight’s rationale and named units and commanders.⁸⁶ King’s gambit worked. *Winnipeg Free Press* and *New York Times* played up revenge for Hong Kong’s defeat, *Toronto Daily Star* noted Canada’s Pacific role, and *New York Times* and *Washington Post* carried King’s statement. *Vancouver Province*, posting nine articles about Kiska on 21 August, crowed that Kiska marked the “first time that 10,000 Japs sneaked home.” *New York Times* said Greenlight’s men had shown “real delight” at Kiska, while *Toronto Globe and Mail* quoted RCA Major George Edwards as feeling “cheated” by the absence of combat. Though “nobody could ever say truthfully that he regrets there was no battle,” Foster added “we’re extremely lucky to get

⁸⁶ King, “Memorandum re participation of Canadian forces in operations in Alaskan and Aleutian areas,” 21 August 1943, King Papers, Memoranda & Notes, vol. 361, file 3853, LAC; Pope to Stuart, 20 August 1943, RG24, vol. 2921, file HQS9055-1, LAC; Power, “Federal general elections in 1943,” 21 July 1943, Power Papers, box 1, file I Correspondence (a) Political Jottings, QUA; King, “Canadian forces in the North Pacific: Alaska and the Aleutians,” 21 August 1943, King Papers, Memoranda & Notes, vol. 361, file 3853, LAC.



An unidentified infantryman of Le Régiment de Hull getting a haircut, Kiska, Aleutian Islands, August 1943. [Library and Archives Canada PA-168353]

anything as valuable as Kiska without having to fight for it.”⁸⁷ *Le Devoir* played up the bilingual statement that Roosevelt and King, in Quebec City to meet Churchill, made about Kiska. Montreal’s *La Presse*, announcing “Kiska pris sans coup férir,” cited Ménard and Lieutenant-Colonel T.M. Brown, the Montrealer commanding 25th Field Ambulance. *Montreal Gazette*, having called on 7 August for Zombies to fight in the Aleutians, dedicated eight articles to Kiska on 23 August.⁸⁸ Ottawa-Hull’s *Le Droit*, stating on 23 August “que les gars de Hull ferent rejailler beaucoup de gloire sur toute la ville” and “les kakis de Hull ne sont plus qu’a mi-chemin de Tokio,” noted

⁸⁷ “Kiska Is Grenadiers’ First Step on Road to Hong Kong,” *Winnipeg Free Press* 23 August 1943; “Canadians Have 2nd Pacific Show,” *New York Times*, 22 August 1943; “Canada in the Aleutians,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 23 August 1943; “Joint Statement on Kiska is Issued,” *New York Times*, 22 August 1943; “Quebec Hails US-Canada Kiska Action,” *Washington Post*, 22 August 1943; “First Time 10,000 Japs Sneaked Home,” *Vancouver Sun*, 21 August 1943; “Canadians in Kiska Force Adopt US Army Insignia to Link Units,” *New York Times*, 30 August 1943; “Kiska Canucks ‘Let Down’ Guelph Officer Reveals,” *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 26 August 1943.

⁸⁸ “L’occupation de l’île de Kiska par les troupes étatsiniennes et Canadiennes,” *Le Devoir*, 23 août 1943; “Kiska pris sans coup férir,” *La Presse*, 23 August 1943; “Are the Zombies Going to Kiska?” *Montreal Gazette*, 7 August 1943; “King Gives Names,” *Montreal Gazette*, 23 August 1943.

LRH's "role très important à Kiska" on 30 August and dedicated an entire page on 1 September to LRH photos.⁸⁹

When Nicholson visited Kiska in November 1943, Anglophone troops grouched that LRH "had received an undue share of the publicity over its part in the Kiska operations, and this suspicion may have led to a touch of jealousy in minds that were none too occupied by the distraction that Kiska had to offer." Evidence disputes this claim. While *Toronto Daily Star* noted Quebec's representation in Greenlight, declining to name LRH, said that "a verse or two of a French-Canadian song" was heard as men embarked in BC. *Toronto Telegram* charged that it was inconsistent to use draftees at Kiska but not in Europe. *Toronto Globe and Mail* cited LRH on 23 August without explaining LRH's actual role and discussed BCT duties without mentioning LRH on 27 August.⁹⁰ Journalist James Maclean of *Maclean's Magazine* heard "strains of 'Alouette,' deep-throated from the men of the Regiment de Hull in a transport ahead of ours" as ATF9 neared Kiska. Only *Hamilton Spectator* played up LRH; "the Mikado's men, Canada may rest assured, will find little to their liking the cold steel of French-Canadian bayonets. They are wielded by men whose powerful biceps are a heritage from forbears who from dusk to dawn made the woods of the Ottawa valley ring to the sound of their axes."⁹¹

Major A.R. Armitage, an ordnance specialist sent by NDHQ, thought LRH had done well given that Ménard lacked BCT organisational plans until 28 July. Armitage had sought more landing exercises as Great Sitkin had been "confusing" as some beach teams were poorly trained. As language difficulties were most acute when Francophones worked "with us personnel both aboard ships, in landing craft, and even on the beach" and interpreters were not always available,

⁸⁹ "Le Régiment de Hull est débarqué à Kiska," *Le Droit*, 23 August 1943; "Le Régiment de Hull a joué un rôle très important à Kiska," *Le Droit*, 30 August 1943; "Militaires du Régiment de Hull à Kiska," *Le Droit*, 1 September 1943.

⁹⁰ Nicholson Report, "Appendix 54: Note on Le Régiment de Hull," 11 December 1943, file 595.013 (D2) DHH; "All Parts of Canada Represented in Force which Captured Kiska," *Toronto Daily Star*, 21 August 1943; "Kiska Operation Reveals Government's Inconsistent Policy," *Toronto Telegram*, 24 August 1943; "Famous Canadian Units Represented at Kiska," *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 23 August 1943; "Planned Drive on Kiska Said 'Home Defence,'" *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 27 August 1943.

⁹¹ James A. Maclean, "Kiska Canucks," *Maclean's Magazine*, 1 October 1943; "French-Canadian Regiment Adding to Proud Record," *Hamilton Spectator*, 27 August 1943.

Armitage recommended using only Anglophone units in beach and ship work. As Armitage's views must inform use of Francophone troops for "we must employ them ... as they are valuable troops in any event," Macklin asked on 31 August for Foster's opinion. Describing LRH's performance as excellent, Foster admitted "some difficulty was experienced" given "the large number of personnel who did not speak or understand English." However, such "difficulty was more apparent in a unit called upon to work on close co-operation with others than in circumstances where the unit could work intact under its own Offrs & NCO's."⁹²

Lieutenant-Colonel R.P. Drummond of 24th Field Regiment RCA presented "an Artillery viewpoint." Attributing "rampant" looting to poor unit discipline, he thought a military police "cordon" should have secured the beaches and work parties "should have been under command of a competent officer." Further, an Anglophone unit should "be used as a Beach Combat Team owing to difficulty experienced in understanding each language by various people." Ménard vehemently disagreed. Averring that the beach ran "smoothly at all times," whenever trouble ensued, its source "was always 24th Fld Regt RCA." Drummond and his adjutant instructed RCA men to disregard all but their orders, while a Captain Edgar, a self-proclaimed "westerner," expressed distaste for French-Canadians and told his men "NOT to obey orders from a French-Canadian officer—unless he was there." Denouncing Edgar's "lack of intelligence and breeding" and claiming that he never "seen such a non-cooperative unit," if the invasion had met resistance, Ménard was sure "quite a few" RCA men would have died "had they refused to take orders except those from one officer of 24th Fld RCA."⁹³ In a postwar memoir, RCA officer Captain James Munro claimed there had been trouble on *David Branch*. With too few bunks available in a hold already occupied by LRH soldiers, Munro boasted that "our fellows bedded down, only six of the Frenchmen being killed in the ensuing conflict." If Munro's claim was a jest, Beattie's report was no joke. While "the happiest of relations existed

⁹² Major A.R. Armitage, "Report on the loading and unloading of the 13th Cdn Inf Bde's stores and equipment during operations with ATF9," 30 August 1943, file 322.009 (D878), DHH; Macklin to Bostock, 31 August 1943, file 322.009 (D521), DHH; Foster to Pearkes, "Report on Kiska operation 13th Cdn Inf Bde," 3 September 1943, Ralston Papers, vol. 37, file Aleutian Islands General (Secret), LAC.

⁹³ Major R.P. Drummond to Foster, 25 August 1943, 24th Fd Regt War Diary, RG24, vol. 14358, LAC; LRH War Diary, 4 September 1943, RG24, vol. 15183, LAC.



Infantrymen of Le Régiment de Hull waiting to board ships taking part in Operation COTTAGE, the invasion of Kiska, Aleutian Islands. Nanaimo or Chemainus, British Columbia, Canada, 12 July 194. [Library and Archives Canada PA-168356]

between all officers” in 14th FCT regardless of language, as it had been “sometimes difficult to keep racial and language friction under control” among ORs, “teams should be made up as far as possible from either all English speaking or all French speaking personnel.”⁹⁴

Greenlight produced short-term improvements in the HD army. On Kiska, a spirited and morale-boosting intra-Brigade softball league culminated in an LRH championship on 8 November.⁹⁵ In Canada, as Special Service Directorate (SSD) reported in November 1943, for 104 HD units with French minorities, “the proportion reporting good adaptation has increased since the last check-up from 50 [percent] (February 1943) to 78 [percent] (September 1943).” However, English minority adaptation in Francophone units was 100 percent and 88 percent for other minorities serving in Anglophone or Francophone formations. When 203 HD units submitted morale reports in August, 12 percent indicated that HD men had noted Kiska’s invasion as

⁹⁴ Captain James Munro, “We Take Kiska,” undated, James Munro Papers, Series 58A-1, file 247.9, CWMA; Beattie, “14th Combat Team memorandum report on Greenlight training,” December 1943, CDF War Diary, RG24, vol. 15032, LAC.

⁹⁵ Nicholson, “Amendments to narrative,” 29 November 1945, RG24, vol. 31916, file 1453-7, LAC; CDF War Diary, 17 October 1943, RG24, vol. 15032, LAC; CDF War Diary, 8 November 1943, RG24, vol. 15032, LAC.

opposed to five percent for the Russian front, general news at 34 percent, and the Sicilian campaign at 27 percent (15 percent had “little or no interest” in news). Awareness of Kiska plummeted to three percent in September as interest in Italy’s invasion surged.⁹⁶

Stuck on Kiska, Greenlight HQ also investigated “personnel racial extraction.” The largest group, 2,066 men, 42.5 percent, had British origins. Troops with Slavic roots amounted to 720 men, 14.9 percent, and there were 990 “others,” 20.4 percent. Greenlight had 1,079 French soldiers, 22.2 percent, with 710 in LRH (LRH had thirty-seven non-French soldiers), sixty-eight each in CDF and WPG, thirty-two in RMR2, and fifty-six in SJF, 39 percent of its strength. Brigade HQ boasted forty British (66 percent) and seven French personnel (11.5 percent); 24th RCA had forty-six French troops (seven percent). Using Canada’s 1941 Census, British and French personnel were under-represented, below 47 and 30.2 percent respectively, Greenlight’s “others” should have hit 15.2 percent, while Slavs constituted just 4.8 percent of Canadian residents in 1941. But as units with the most AWL—WPG, CDF, RMR, and 24th RCA—boasted the most non-British and non-French men—58, 33, 55, and 40 percent respectively—Greenlight’s problems went beyond the divide of Canada’s “two solitudes.”⁹⁷

The linguistic rift was present as AHS recorded Greenlight’s history. On 1 May 1943, Pacific Command had asked AHS for an historical officer “to produce a connected narrative of the Pacific Command including Alaska.” Nicholson, an officer in the Prince Albert and Battleford Volunteers, was assigned the Greenlight narrative, ordered by NDHQ on 29 September, by AHS Director A.F. Duguid based on a recommendation from Canada’s Army School of

⁹⁶ Director SSD, “Morale in the Canadian Army (September 1943),” 9 November 1943, file 113.3R4003 (D1), DHH.

⁹⁷ Diary, 7 December 1943, RG24, vol. 14751, 24th RCE War Diary, LAC; 13th Bde HQ, “Racial Origins 13 Cdn Inf Bde,” 11 December 1943, RG24, vol. 14165, file 1030, LAC; Statistics Canada, *Historical Statistics of Canada* (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1983), Section A: Population and Migration.

Administration (CASA).⁹⁸ Present on the west coast by 11 October, Nicholson spent three weeks in Alaska, interviewing Canadian and American personnel on Kiska, including Drummond and Ménard, the latter being acting Brigade chief as of 21 October as Foster and Beattie had left the island. Arriving at Kiska on 1 November, Nicholson found “a strained atmosphere—a feeling of being on edge” at Brigade HQ. RMR officers said they “suffered from being last on the list,” while all units claimed to be “tremendously understaffed.” Colonel Wilson pulled “no punches” about war policy, Ménard averred that “I drew up all this [BCT plan] myself,” and Nicholson found that “walking on Bank Street [in Ottawa] is not sufficient training” to negotiate Aleutian tundra.⁹⁹

Duguid told Deputy Chief of General Staff (DCGS) Training, Brigadier M.H.S. Penhale, on 8 November about Nicholson’s activities and promised a finished narrative a week after Nicholson’s return to Ottawa. When Earnshaw and Murchie requested a progress report in 6 weeks, proving CASA’s opinion that “he was a hard and conscientious worker,” Nicholson sent an update from Adak on 8 November. After interviewing forty-six officers (including Foster), Nicholson asserted that “no material pertinent to the operation has been withheld from the narrator at any Headquarters that he has visited.” Nicholson submitted a draft on 11 December.¹⁰⁰ Its 226 paragraphs, 295 endnotes, and 105 pages of text (excluding appendices) met Stacey’s 1942 directive that narratives be “businesslike” and that narrators should not express opinions but “provide the Official Historian with the means to forming opinions.” Greenlight’s withdrawal from Kiska compelled Nicholson’s return to BC on 17 January to gather records and conduct more interviews, keeping Nicholson there until

⁹⁸ Pacific Command, “Historical Section (GS),” 1 May 1943, G.W.L. Nicholson Papers, vol. 6, file Personal Memoranda re Nicholson’s Army Career, LAC; Lt. Colonel J.C. Hodson, “Confidential report Captain G.W.L. Nicholson,” 29 January 1943, *ibid.*; Tim Cook, *Clio’s War: Canadian Historians and the Writing of the World Wars* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 2006), 179; Colonel A.F. Duguid to Brigadier P. Earnshaw, “Historical narrative—Greenlight Force,” 8 November 1943, RG24, vol. 31916, file 1453-7, LAC.

⁹⁹ LRH War Diary, 21 October 1943, RG24, vol. 15183, LAC; Nicholson, “Daily Log,” 20 October to 12 November 1943, file 322.009 (D395), DHH.

¹⁰⁰ Duguid to Brigadier M.H.S. Penhale plus Earnshaw and Murchie annotations, 8 November 1943, RG24, vol. 31916, file 1453-7, LAC; Hodson memo, 29 January 1943, Nicholson Papers, vol. 6, file Personal Memoranda re Nicholson’s Army Career, LAC; Nicholson to Duguid, “Report of preparation of Kiska narrative,” 8 November 1943, RG24, vol. 31916, file 1453-7, LAC; Nicholson to Duguid, 11 December 1943, *ibid.*

late February. Macklin requested minor corrections, sought better explanations of some issues, and rejected firmly Nicholson's "false logic" that airpower had driven Japan from Kiska.¹⁰¹

Macklin did not censor Nicholson's narrative. That task fell to Duguid whose aborted attempts to write a CEF history since 1921, Stacey charged, was "a quarter-century fiasco." Duguid opposed disseminating draft narratives as "nobody then knows where copies will get to, who will see them, or to what bad use they may be put to." He lost that fight as generals saw historical narratives as utile training tools and expected to be consulted (Stacey did not distribute second drafts).¹⁰² On 14 October 1944, citing a November 1943 request by the US army's Alaskan Department for Greenlight's narrative in return for its report, "The Enemy on Kiska," a request that Pacific Command ratified only in September 1944, Duguid told Penhale that Nicholson's report, "although veracious and appropriate in such a historical document prepared for Canadian military authority, may not be considered suitable for foreign consumption." Duguid selected five passages and five appendices for deletion, including criticism of USN crews, SSF trigger-happiness, and charges of SSF and USN looting (Nicholson said that "Canadians were not altogether blameless"). Duguid also listed matters reflecting badly upon Canada, including desertions, Pearkes' criticism of training in BC, and LRH's role.¹⁰³

Nicholson's "Note on Le Regiment de Hull" included Foster's comments about language difficulties, Beattie's wish for Anglophone BCTS, 19th Field Section's assertion about LRH, plus LRH complaints against Drummond. Nicholson concluded that Ménard's suggestion that LRH act as an FCT in future operations might "offer a partial solution" to problems faced at Kiska even though Nicholson said that "nothing approaching a serious condition characterized the relationship between French- and English-speaking units."¹⁰⁴ Seeing "no point in causing irritation by this type of comment unless for

¹⁰¹ Cook, 98 and 136; Nicholson to Duguid, 22 January, 7 and 21 February 1944, RG24, vol. 31916, file 1453-7, LAC; Macklin, "Comments on narrative of the Canadian participation in the Kiska narrative," 3 April 1944, *ibid*.

¹⁰² Stacey to Lieutenant General Charles Foulkes, 7 September 1946, Stacey Papers, B91-0013, box 1, file Canadian Official History (General) 1945-49, UTA; Cook, 105; Stacey note, 12 February 1944, Stacey Papers, B90-0020, box 16, Notebook 29, UTA.

¹⁰³ Duguid to Earnshaw, "Greenlight Force preliminary narrative," 14 October 1944, RG24, vol. 31916, file 1453-7, LAC; Nicholson Report, paragraph 210, file 595.013 (D2), DHH.

¹⁰⁴ Nicholson Report, Appendix 54, file 595.013 (D2), DHH.

some historical purpose,” Penhale offered two recommendations; “all passages to which you refer to should be obliterated from the copy sent to the USA”; and, “historians should refrain, whenever possible, from drawing invidious comparisons, particularly in describing operations in which the forces of other nations participate.” Asked if he objected to his May 1943 meetings being cited, after consulting us officials, Pope saw no reason why they “should not stand.” Duguid sent a narrative to Penhale on 1 November to transmit to Alaska, relaying that “deletions have been made from the narrative and appendices of material considered unsuitable for us consumption.”¹⁰⁵

Nicholson composed a second version which included seven new paragraphs about Greenlight’s return to Canada in 1944. Though this iteration cut appendices, as its body remained unchanged, Nicholson reminded Pacific Command in October 1944 not to forward the wrong version to Alaska. Ménard had objections. Paragraph 138, describing the shift of us troops and supplies to Green Beach, failed to say that Corlett had handed greater responsibilities to LRH. Further, Nicholson did not say state LRH led Greenlight in donations to the Victory Loan campaign.¹⁰⁶ None of Greenlight’s narratives—the 1943 draft, the 1944 version, and AHQ Report No. 6—included Ménard’s suggestions despite Stacey’s October 1945 promise that “amended copies, incorporating the substance of comments received by participants, will be forwarded in due course.”¹⁰⁷

Traces of Nicholson’s narrative were in Stacey’s 1955 thirteen-page account of Kiska. Such brevity reflected Stacey’s admissions in 1945 that “the scale of the proposed History is limited” even if said History required “exhaustive examination of the source materials and the preparation of detailed Preliminary Narratives.” Stating that “in many cases in the past our work has erred, in practice, on the side of too much detail,” Stacey thought it “a pity” that Smith’s reconnaissance mission had been rejected as “it gave the enemy the satisfaction of

¹⁰⁵ Penhale to Duguid, 16 October 1944, file 322.009 (D397), DHH; Duguid to Pope, 19 October 1944, *ibid.*; Pope to Duguid, 31 October 1944, *ibid.*; and Duguid to Penhale, 1 November 1944, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Nicholson, “The Canadian Participation in the Kiska Operation,” [Nicholson Report Two], 1944, RG24, vol. 31916, file 1453-7, LAC; Nicholson to Bois, 15 October 1945, *ibid.*; Ménard to Stacey, “Kiska operation preliminary narrative,” 10 January 1946, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Stacey to CMHQ, 24 October 1945, RG24, vol. 12759, file 24/SOURCES/1/9, LAC. See also AHQ Report No. 6, “The Canadian Participation in the Kiska Operation,” DHH.

laughing at us.” Stacey also omitted Nicholson’s deleted topics. That choice did not reflect badly on Nicholson. Retained by AHS after 1945 despite not being “a Stacey man,” Nicholson, judged by Stacey to have “a distinct flair for military history,” composed the history of the Canadian army’s campaign in Italy, the only army volume Stacey did not complete. Canada’s cabinet debated the 1955 volume after Minister of National Defence Ralph Campney complained that it “contained some mild criticism of government action, particularly in the period immediately and following the outbreak of war in 1939.” As cabinet demanded a disclaimer—“opinions expressed were those of the historian”—and forbade Stacey to cite comments made by foreign visitors or to refer to disagreements between a minister and his advisers, Stacey likely opted to avoid other controversial matters too.¹⁰⁸

As for Greenlight’s Kiska sojourn, Stacey said the men, plagued by a dismal climate that “made the island an acutely unpleasant residence,” constructed infrastructure, manned defences, and trained “as conditions permitted.”¹⁰⁹ In a poem that Nicholson put in an appendix, Private McQuatty of 25th Field Ambulance put matters more vividly: “Maybe God was tired, when he made this little isle ... I shall call it Kiska, the Earth shall have a Hell.” Foster, who left Kiska in September to attend his dying wife, depicted Kiska as “a morale destroying country and no place for soldiers with any sort of fighting spirit—too much muck, murk and working parties and no women to make them take pride in being men. The Americans go in for construction, gang dress and mannerisms. I won’t tolerate it.”¹¹⁰ French newspapers arrived on 15 September and 5 October. If mail was late, as LRH’s diarist noted on 27 September, morale “is rather low.” Every month LRH troops undertook a week of field firing.¹¹¹ When LRH had left BC, eighty-six of 757 men were “unqualified” with the rifle, 451 were unqualified with grenades, 190 had not qualified with Bren guns, and 267 lacked tactical training. By 27 October,

¹⁰⁸ Stacey, “General instructions on preparation of historical material,” 13 September 1945, RG24, vol. 12747, file 916.016 (D3), LAC; Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 493–505; Cook, 179; Cabinet conclusion, 8 August 1955, Privy Council Office Records, RG2, Series A-5-A, Cabinet Conclusions, vol. 2658, LAC.

¹⁰⁹ Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 505.

¹¹⁰ Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 505; Private McQuatty, “Kiska,” Nicholson Report, Appendix 46, file 595.013 (D2), DHH; diary, 19 and 24 August 1943, Foster Diary.

¹¹¹ LRH War Diary, 15 & 27 September 1943, RG24, vol. 15183, LAC; LRH War Diary, 5 October 1943, *ibid.*, LAC; Ménard, “Reports on Kiska operation,” 1944, LRH War Diary, RG24, vol. 15183, LAC.

matters were better but 22 and 34 percent remained unqualified in grenade use and tactical training. Singing continued. When Pearkes visited Kiska in November, he “rejoiced in our sing songs French and English” and an LRH choir serenaded troops at Christmas mass.¹¹²

As Origène Poulin recalled, with some hyperbole, “the first month we were there, I would say it rained twenty-four hours a day. We were wet. No part of our bodies was untouched by water.” Snow came on 1 November, prompting LRH’s diarist to seek greater coal rations and wooden floors for tents as “it is very cold in living quarters.” Powerful williwaw winds caused havoc; a gale of 110 miles per hour ruined 128 WPG tents on 6 November. Summing up on 31 October, Brigade HQ’s diarist said the average daily wind velocity was twenty-two miles per hour, fog was present thirteen days in October, and overcast dominated 65 percent of the time. The maximum temperature was fifty degrees Fahrenheit, the minimum twenty-nine, the overall average forty-two. Omnipresent mud was “unrecordable.”¹¹³

While the US Army Transportation Corps relayed on 27 October that Greenlight would leave in six stages starting on 16 November, an advance party did not depart Kiska until 21 November. WPG, CDF, SJF, plus small units left on 24 December, 24th RCA went on 1 January, and the last Canadian troops, RMR plus support troops, sailed on 12 January. LRH sailed from Kiska on 6 January, arrived at Vancouver twelve days later, and moved to Vernon on 19 January. Many men went into “town during the evening.”¹¹⁴ Iannuccilli’s courage on *David Branch* was lauded by *Vancouver Province*, the paper adding that LRH men mocked the hardships on an island that Company Sergeant Major (CSM) Wilfred Desormeaux called “a hell of a hole.” Desormeaux’s major complaint was a lack of “cokes” on Kiska.¹¹⁵

¹¹² Ménard, “Training report,” 27 September 1943, LRH War Diary, RG24, vol. 15183, LAC; Ménard, “Training report,” 27 October 1943, LRH War Diary, *Ibid.*, LAC; LRH War Diary, 7 November 1943, *ibid.*, LAC; 13th Bde HQ diary, 25 December 1943, RG24, vol. 14165, file 1030, LAC.

¹¹³ Poulin transcript, online at www.thememoryproject.com/stories/2193:origene-poulin/ downloaded 4 December 2013; LHR War Diary, 2 November 1943, RG24 vol. 15183, LAC; diary, 6 November 1943, 24th RCE War Diary, RG24, vol. 14751, LAC; Nicholson Report, paragraph 180, file 595.013 (D2), DHH; 13th Bde HQ diary, 25 December 1943, RG24, vol. 14165, file 1030, LAC.

¹¹⁴ Lt. Colonel J.A. Barthrop memorandum, 27 October 1943, file 322.009 (D878), DHH; Nicholson Report Two, 1944, paragraphs 228–232, RG24, vol. 31916, file 1453-7, LAC; LRH War Diary, 6–19 January 1944, RG24, vol. 15183, LAC.

¹¹⁵ “Munitions Ship Saved by Alert French-Canadian,” and “Troops ‘Dig-In’ at Vernon Laugh at Kiska Hardships,” *Vancouver Province*, 27 January 1944.

Greenlight was implicated in US plans to invade the Kurile Islands. After discussing the possibility with DeWitt on 5 July 1943, Pearkes told Currie that Kiska was the “first step to Tokyo and that Canada should be prepared to follow it up and stay with it to the end.” On 9 August, Pearkes wanted three Canadian brigade groups to assault the Kuriles and saw “great political value” in employing a Francophone brigade. Having directed NDHQ on 31 May to study division-level operations for the Aleutians, the Southwest Pacific, and Asia’s mainland, Stuart asked Ralston on 31 August to retain three battle-ready brigades for Pacific operations. Ralston agreed, but such hopes died on 12 October when CWC decided to bring Greenlight home.¹¹⁶

Given France’s imminent invasion, pressure was mounting to convert HD men to GS volunteers. Of the 150,000 conscripts (15 percent of Canada’s military), just 64,297 volunteered for overseas service. Ménard, however, did not spur LRH recruiting. Instead, when LRH got “a long awaited furlough” from 23 January to 22 February, Ménard traveled to Britain to lobby Stuart for a combat command. Uncertain if Ménard had recovered from his Dieppe wounds, the army gave him command of an advanced infantry training centre and later made him director of infantry at NDHQ.¹¹⁷ Led by St. Laurent, LRH settled in to “route marches, bayonet fighting, lectures, etc., the old routine rolling again” and appreciated frequent movies with “so little to do in” Vernon. LRH underwent more changes as St. Laurent took special leave on 3 March and personnel left for a jungle warfare course. Ten lieutenants arrived on 13 March, and Jacques left on 15 March for Marine training in Virginia. LRH also underwent a unit inspection. St. Laurent received plaudits for knowing his officers “very well” and his efforts to create “an efficient fighting unit.” Short twelve officers, St. Laurent opined that five new lieutenants were unsuitable for overseas service while Cadotte’s RSM successor, “not outstanding,” could go to Europe. Few NCOs, just “fair” as a group,

¹¹⁶ Galen Roger Perras, “Eyes on the Northern Route to Japan: Plans for Canadian Participation in an Invasion of the Kurile Islands—A Study in Coalition Warfare and Civil-Military Relationships,” *War & Society* 8 (May, 1990), 106–113.

¹¹⁷ Daniel Byers, “Canada’s Zombies: A Portrait of Canadian Conscripts and Their Experiences During the Second World War,” in Bernd Horn, ed., *Forging A Nation: Perspectives on the Canadian Military Experience* (St. Catharines: Vanwell, 2002), 155 and 163; LRH War Diary, 23 January 1944, RG24, vol. 15183, LAC; Vennat, *Général Dollard Ménard*, 164–172; “Name Dieppe Hero Military Attaché,” *Hamilton Spectator*, 13 September 1947.

wished to be GS but that situation could improve. However, sixty-five ORS were absent when furlough ended on 22 February, LRH's Diary saying only that "some men are still on leave without permission." The Inspector-General noted—confirmed by St. Laurent—a feeling among "all personnel" that LRH lacked proper "recognition" for its Greenlight role.¹¹⁸

On 3 April, LRH heard that it would go overseas "if sufficient NRMA personnel" went GS. This "campaign of enlightenment," LRH's diarist said, would begin immediately, adding ominously on 5 April "it looks like a hard nut to crack, this home defensive mentality." While Pearkes commended WPG in Victoria on 5 April for its "magnificent job" on Kiska, he sent Victoria Cross winner Major Paul Triquet of Royal 22e Régiment to Vernon. Participating grudgingly, Triquet told LRH that "their blood brothers overseas were looking to them for help relief and encouragement"; twenty-five men signed up.¹¹⁹ While Macklin was disappointed, thirty to fifty brigade men went GS daily until 15 April when recruiting "slumped badly." When Pearkes came to Vernon on 29 April, Macklin reported that padres, including LRH's Father A.M. Tessier, had obtained few volunteers as "resistance of NRMA soldiers to enlistment was amazingly strong." With battalion commanders demanding court-martials for hard core resisters, Macklin instead shifted 200 men to a camp boasting stricter training and discipline. He also transferred two LRH CSMS, demoted "several sergeants and corporals," while others voluntarily reverted in rank. While all units had problems, 95 percent of LRH's ORS were NRMA (other units ranged from 85 to 90 percent); LRH had the most AWL men, sixty-five (RMR had eight, CDF twenty; and LRH morale plummeted as NRMA men, certain that Ottawa would not shift them overseas, wanted farm and factory work. By 19 April, 1,973 of 13th Brigade troops were active, but LRH, with 295 GS men, was behind CDF (477), WPG (484), and

¹¹⁸ LRH War Diary, 1–15 March 1944, 24 February 1944, RG24, vol. 15183, LAC; Major General J.P. Mackenzie, "Abridged report of the inspection 1st Bn Le Régiment de Hull," 6 April 1944, file 322.009 (D485), DHH.

¹¹⁹ LRH War Diary, 3–4 and 11 April 1944, RG24, vol. 15183, LAC; "Pearkes Tells Kiska Men of Other Tasks Ahead," *Victoria Times*, 6 April 1944; John MacFarlane, *Triquet's Cross: A Story of Military Heroism* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), 96–97.

RMR (579). After subtracting 1,649 volunteers who reported to 13th Brigade after 1 April, just 370 Greenlight men had gone active.¹²⁰

Pearkes, “closer to the men” than Macklin according to Reginald Roy, told LRH on 20 April that he saw “a great opportunity for his Kiska boys to do a further job for their country and show the world their eagerness to speed victory.” Although GS men rose to 2,432—LRH’s share was 473—Greenlight’s volunteer level remained stuck at 370 and LRH’s improvement reflected its absorption of two GS companies from Les Fusiliers de Sherbrooke and Les Fusiliers St-Laurent (FSL) by 25 April, the same day that 100 LRH men went to Macklin’s camp. According to Macklin, LRH recruited only 150 of its men though “not for any lack of effort” by St. Laurent, Tessier, and Triquet (Major Black counted eighty-seven LRH Kiska men as going GS). As WPG, the most successful unit, had just 38 percent of its original men volunteer, Macklin saw little chance to alter anti-army feelings among draftees.¹²¹ St. Laurent agreed. Despite sequestering “vociferous obstructionists,” the “preponderant group ... never trained from childhood to make important decisions or to think for themselves” and “strongly attached to women’s apron strings with a childish simplicity,” would fight if sent but would not volunteer. Some were “a fraternity” who would never sign on, others had an “antiquated ingrained objection” to fighting for England, while LRH lacked “civic or local pride” as repeated transfers meant many men were not from Hull. St. Laurent saw just one solution; instituting compulsory service overseas.¹²²

On 2 May 1944, NDHQ ordered LRH to Britain as a GS unit. Three hundred conscripts were transferred out and GS men got embarkation leave until 16 May when LRH would shift to Halifax. Thirty men missed the train, seven deserted on 25 May, and 474 LRH men arrived in Britain on 2 June. LRH men went to depleted front-line units in Normandy, leaving just 191 personnel by 31 July. On 12 November, LRH’s

¹²⁰ Macklin to Pearkes, “Mobilization of the 13th Bde on an Active Basis,” 2 May 1944, file 322.009 (D50), DHH.

¹²¹ Roy, 211; LRH War Diary, 20, 13, & 25 April 1944, RG24, vol. 15183, LAC; Macklin to Pearkes, 2 May 1944, file 322.009 (D50), DHH; diary, 25 June 1944, in Black and Perras, 183.

¹²² St. Laurent, “Enrolling NRMA personnel for active service 1st Bn Le Régiment de Hull CA,” Appendix A attached to Macklin to Pearkes, 2 May 1944, file 322.099 (D50), DHH.

remnants joined Number 4 Canadian Infantry Training Regiment.¹²³ LRH briefly courted controversy in July 1944 when Ralston rebuffed a request by Howard Green, a Progressive Conservative Member of Parliament, to see Pacific Command recruiting reports. Although that political exchange cited no units, *Toronto Globe and Mail* cited charges by 133 former LRH soldiers that they faced discrimination for declining to volunteer.¹²⁴ Firing Ralston, King chose on 22 November to send 16,000 NRMA troops overseas. A day later, 200 FSL troops in BC boycotted parade, removed weapons from storage, and demanded FSL's dissolution plus the rescinding of Ottawa's NRMA decision, a "rebellion" that ended peacefully when Pearkes refused to employ force. While LRH officers told reporters in November 1944 that their unit was now active and that LRH men had risked their lives at Kiska, NRMA desertions, 1,235 in 1944 (393 in November-December) surged to 3,702 in 1945, with 2,252 in January-February.¹²⁵

In 1964, LRH issued a fiftieth anniversary souvenir program. Kiska merited just one paragraph; "Notre Régiment s'est acquis une réputation très enviable parmi les troupes canado-américaine à cet endroit." Rethinking that assertion, LRH's seventy-fifth anniversary program said "le Régiment n'a pas eu à combattre; il n'en a pas moins dû supporter pendant six mois des conditions atmosphériques d'une rigueur extrême." Had Japan not abandoned Kiska, LRH might have lived up to the expansive 1964 claim. But as Ménard rued in January 1944, "when we got there, the cupboard was bare."¹²⁶



¹²³ LRH War Diary, 1–31 May 1944, RG24, vol. 15183, LAC; LRH War Diary, 2 and 18 June 1944, vol. 15183, LAC; LRH War Diary, 31 July 1944, *ibid.*, LAC; LRH War Diary, 12 November 1944, *ibid.*, LAC.

¹²⁴ Questions, 3 July 1944, *House of Commons Debates, 19th Parliament, 5th Session, Volume 5* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1944), 4428; "Refuse Report on Recruiting of Draftees," *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 4 July 1944.

¹²⁵ R.H. Roy, "Mutiny in the Mountains: The Terrace 'Incident,'" in Timothy Travers and Christon Archer, ed., *Men at War: Politics, Technology and Innovation in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: Precedent, 1982), 49–67; No Coercion on Draftees, Says Pearkes," *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 22 November 1944; "Canadian Army statistics war 1939–45, NRMA discharges, deaths and desertions by month and year struck off strength," 1952, RG24, vol. 18824, file 133.065 (D592), LAC.

¹²⁶ *Le Régiment de Hull Mai 1964* (Hull: Le Régiment de Hull, 1964), 19, CWMA; and *Le Régiment de Hull Octobre 1989* (Hull: Le Régiment de Hull, 1989), 6, CWMA. Ménard, "Reports on Kiska operations," January 1944, LRH War Diary, RG24, vol. 15183, LAC.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Galen Roger Perras holds a PHD in History from the University of Waterloo and an MA in War Studies from the Royal Military College of Canada. An Associate Professor of History at the University of Ottawa, he has authored three books and numerous book chapters and journal articles dealing with military and diplomatic history. A participant in two historical documentaries about the Aleutian campaign, he has visited the Aleutian Islands of Adak, Attu, and Kiska.