

Col (USAF Ret) Joe White H-3 57-58

An item from THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH, Friday, March 17, 2006, written by Krista Mahr of the Associated Press may interest you. I admire the effort you are making to continue associating with other individuals who shared in the Iceland Defense. On my arrival at H-3 in June, 1957 my first vision was a lot of brick rubble laying around and there were 'concrete floors' still visible. It seems that when the Germans invaded Poland in 1939, the Brits invaded Iceland. Better for us to have the British there than the Germans. On the H-3 site, the British built a submarine base, which enabled refueling, repair, and crew rest half way across the Atlantic. Later, US troops replaced the British in the "salvation of Iceland" or the "conquerors of Iceland", depending upon your view point. When this occurred, the British blew up all the building, petro sites, etc. I must say that I kind of admire the Brits for this action. They were in tough straits and they were not leaving anything for any other nation, friend or foe. As for me, I spent one year at H-3 June '57 to June '58. The Icelandic's wanted the US to depart. And we began trying to learn what that meant to us. Essentially, we went into "lock down". No one, officer or civilian or non-com went outside the gate as a single. An officer had to accompany anyone with off site duty. This only required duty involved the weekly drive to Hofn, taking a unstable boat across to an island where the Gooney Bird landed, pick up the incoming fresh vegetables, mail, and movies. The officer who did this each week was referred to as the "Official Greeter". This duty went to the officer who had been in Iceland the longest. I became eligible and performed this duty for about the last two months of my tour in Iceland. So that I can keep a bit humor in this e-mail, I will tell you that on one occasion I departed back toward HE-3 before the Gooney Bird was airborne. For whatever reason, my CO was going out on that aircraft. Something went wrong and the aircraft could not get airborne. My CO was a good chap about this, but the rest of the squadron teased me raw. You can be certain that I never again left for the return to H-3 until I could not see the aircraft any more. We stayed in Iceland most likely because in the fall of 1957, the Russians launched their Sputnik. Space became the new frontier! The Mohawks must have allowed themselves to rethink US departure. We are still there, 49 years later for me. I gave a year of my life for Iceland, never learned a word of their language, never enter an Icelandic home or church, never heard or saw any sense of gratitude. In that year the foundation for the height finder radar was completed. Then enough dirt was scratched to cover up the foundation, Pictures I saw at the '50th reunion show that the additional bubble was eventually erected. One of the jobs I was offered, just before retirement was CO of H-3, I retired. Now on to the newspaper article, Lower Headline... NATO DEFENSE ALLIANCE. Larger Headline....U.S. to cut military role in Iceland. By Krista Mahr, Associated Press. Quoting: "Reykjavik Iceland — The United States, which has long provided Iceland with it only military force, has decided to withdraw most of its service members and all of its fighter jets and helicopters from the country later this year, the ambassador said yesterday. "Iceland's government, which recently had offered to pay some of the cost of defense to try to keep US forces here, said it regretted the decision. "U.S. Ambassador Carol van Voorst said she and Nicholas Burns, the U.S. undersecretary of state, had told Prime Minister Haldor Asgrimsson and Foreign Minister Geir Haarde of the unilateral decision on Wednesday. "But Washington also said it would honor its 1951 agreement with Iceland requiring the United States, under the auspices of NATO to provide this country's

defense. U.S. and Icelandic officials were to hold talks about how that will be done, Van Voorst said. "Icelandic authorities regret this decision by the United States government," Haarde said in a statement Wednesday. "In it, he informed Icelanders that the four U.S. jet fighters and several U.S. helicopters used in search-and-rescue missions would leave by the end of September. "Van Voorst said she understood Iceland's disappointment, even though it never has had its own military and is a peaceful country with no known enemies. Given the war on terrorism, she said, all countries face the same risk. "But she said Iceland was encouraged by the U.S. promise to remain committed to its defense agreement. "As we have for half of a century, we will stand with Iceland on any threats that arise, she said. "Neither side was publicly discussing options. But the United States could keep a small number of service members at its U.S. Naval Air Station in Keflavik on a rotating basis and have U.S. fighters stationed in Britain be on call to defend Iceland, NATO warplanes in Europe could play a role. "The air station has about 1,200 U.S. service members. When their families are included, the total is about 3,000 "During the Cold War, the station in Keflavik played a key role for U.S. security, allowing surveillance planes to hunt for Soviet aircraft and submarines. "Without U.S. warplanes, Iceland would be left with a small Coast Guard, which has two unarmed helicopters and an airplane." End quote and article. Make note of "dependants" in Iceland! Not in our day! While you have the clout of a large number of men who served at these sites [15,000?if you could find the all, why not lobby for an Icelandic Service Medal? MAY GOOD FORTUNE AND HEALTH CONTINUE TO WALK WITH YOU. Joseph T. White H-3 '57-58

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