



## FEDERAL SCOUT READINESS CENTERS:

### Their Role in Rural Alaska Communities and the World

During World War II, members of the Alaska Territorial Guard, or ATG, patrolled the shorelines of the Bering and Chukchi seas on Alaska's west coast for military threats from Asia. After the war, alliances changed and resulted in a globally waged political "Cold War" between forces aligned with the United States and those aligned with the Soviet Union. The greatest fear worldwide was the threat of an all-out nuclear attack that would destroy all life on the planet. The United States and the Soviet Union responded by testing national defenses and national boundaries.

During the Cold War, the Alaska Army National Guard formed highly specialized units called Scout Battalions in the remote villages of Alaska. Many men and women in the villages joined the battalions and used the same arctic survival skills practiced by their ancestors. These skills were so highly respected by the military that the Scouts often trained the Army's elite Special Operations forces.



Scout Battalion membership increased after the war, requiring more space for the Scouts to assemble and train. Between 1959 and 1961, the Army National Guard constructed Federal Scout Readiness Centers, 1,200 square-foot metal *Garco* buildings, in 45 Alaska villages. In the 1970s, as Scout membership continued to grow, the military constructed additional buildings.

The Readiness Center Armories became known as "armory-kashims," the term for a village assembly house, because people used the armories for both military training and village gatherings. These armories connected the most remote places of Alaska to the ongoing drama of the global Cold War. The United States government has recognized the historic significance of these buildings by making them eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

