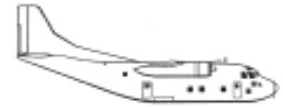




# AIR AMERICA FOUNDATION

## THE Provider Weekly



Greetings and hello from the Air America Foundation. I hope everyone is doing well and enjoying their summer. In Florida it is almost as hot as hot gets.

I have been on other projects for the other organizations I am involved with and once again have been neglecting my "Provider duties".

We will be having our regular workday at the C123 tomorrow. We will be moving a few items around tomorrow, so if you are able to lend a hand, that would be cool.

We had a visit from Craig Landefeld who was taking photos for the US Special Operations Forces Heritage page on facebook. Craig is doing his best to help spread the word on facebook about the Foundation. If you are on facebook look them up and click "Like" on their page.

Speaking of facebook, we are up to 59 permanent "likes" and have 62 monthly active users this month. Our page views are down a bit to 3,448.

We have visitors from...

48	United States
2	Spain
1	Switzerland
1	Ireland
1	Brazil
1	Germany
1	Thailand

This is really cool. People are starting to become interested in our little organization. That is all over the US and six confirmed countries that we are being followed in.

The board will be meeting at the end of the month and will be talking about the membership program. We are hoping that people will support the organization by purchasing a membership. This will help the organization to develop an annual budget.

We will be deciding on the various membership levels and the benefits that are received with each level. We will honor previous lifetime memberships. It has been over two years since the last membership program was in effect, so we need to get this up and running.

I would like to offer the ability to purchase memberships and Air America Foundation merchandise through our new website also.

Last Saturday, we had a visit from Linn and his Piper Tomahawk. We always have a good time when Linn shows up. For some reason we always seem to take longer for lunch when he is around - lol!

*Continued...*

July 30, 2011



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What's

**NEW** This

**Week**

- ◆ Message from the editor
- ◆ Website link
- ◆ Saturday work update
- ◆ Tower communications
- ◆ New airport admin building
- ◆ Operation Cold Feet
- ◆ Facebook stats

*The Air America Foundation  
is a 501 (c) 3 organization.*

# THE Provider Weekly



We also got John P. up to speed since his last appearance in town. It is good to have you back for a while John!

We are pretty sure that Cal got the hydraulic leak stopped. We by passed a valve near the reservoir with a tube and caps and so now we have to get a new valve or have this one rebuilt. At least we stopped the flood. (Well, Cal did anyway.)

I forget what else we did. I think we ran the buda and the forklift. Worked on filling a hole in the tarmac by the aircraft and cut some weeds. Did I mention how hot it is at the airport in Florida?



The Air America Foundation would also like to congratulate the Airport Authority on the opening of the new Ralph Poppell Airport Administration Building. It is a beautiful building and long overdue. It was also named after a well deserving gentleman who has long been a supporter of the airport and aviation in general. (photos at right)

Well I guess that is all for now. Tomorrow I will have more to write about and I hope I find my muse sooner than with this issue.

I have included some pages and history on the Fulton Skyhook. I think the last place I saw this was in the Batman movie "The Dark Knight". I remember telling my wife "They really did that!".

By the way, I clicked on the link to buy the piece of the system that was supposedly for sale. That ship must have faded a long time ago. Until next time...

Historically Yours,



**Got an idea?  
Let us know!**

**Got a question?  
Ask us!**



[www.airamfoundation.org](http://www.airamfoundation.org)

## Sunday Ship History: Operation Cold Feet



Way up north , on the Arctic Ocean, in the midst of the cold war, the Soviets put "drift stations" on the ice pack. These are best explained [here](#):

It was the 1950s and the Cold War was on. The Soviet Union deployed numerous drift-ice stations in the Arctic, ostensibly for scientific research. Drift-ice stations moved continuously across the Arctic, even entering into waters claimed by Canada. This was a sovereignty challenge, but there was concern these stations could be used to gather intelligence about NATO forces' activities and support an attack against North America.

More specifically, it was believed the Soviets were using the drift station to collect acoustic information about U.S. nuclear submarines that were transiting under the ice pack. Another possibility seems to also exist:

The most dramatic find occurred in 1958. Canadian signals intelligence determined that the Russians had a serious problem on one drift station, North Pole 6. A Lancaster was dispatched to take a look -- and was authorized to land if necessary. After a harrowing flight, the plane broke through the clouds over North Pole 6, now drifting in Canadian waters, to find a Soviet Tu-16 Badger nuclear bomber on an ice runway. The aircraft had suffered a mishap and was stranded. Low-level pass after low-level pass gave NATO the first detailed pictures of the TU-16, a state-of-the-art Soviet model not seen up close before, and not possessing



intercontinental range. The Canadians believed

it was a test to see whether the Badger could refuel on a drift station before an attack on North America. In theory, the Soviets could now take off from a drift station, fly under DEW Line radar and strike targets in the south. RCAF aircraft kept an eye on the station as the Soviets recovered the aircraft and dismantled the station's intelligence-gathering equipment that wasn't supposed to be there in the first place.

Of course, these ice stations were of great interest to the west, so much so that the abandonment of one by the Soviets gave the CIA a new mission - try to gain access to the abandoned station and gather useful intelligence:

In 1962, ice reconnaissance found another drift station, North Pole 11, which appeared to be abandoned in Canadian-claimed waters. The U.S. Navy was operating nuclear submarines under the pole, and intelligence assessors believed the Soviets had an underwater listening system at that station. Canada and the U.S. planned a joint operation, and two U.S. intelligence officers parachuted onto NP 11 to assess it. They were extracted by a special CIA aircraft.

There's more to the story.

It begins with an inventor with the very inventor-like name of Robert Edison Fulton, Jr. Mr. Fulton decided to improve on an existing system by which personnel could be plucked from the ground by low flying aircraft and wires. As set out

by William M. Leary [here](#)

Experiments began in 1950. Using a weather balloon, nylon line, and 10- to 15-pound weights, Fulton made numerous pickup attempts as he sought to develop a reliable procedure. Successful at last, he had his son photograph the operation. Fulton then took the film to Admiral de Florez, who had become the first director of technical research at the CIA.(7)Believing that the program could best be handled by the military, de Florez put Fulton in touch with the Office of Naval Research (ONR). Thanks to de Florez's interest, Fulton received a development contract from ONR's Air Programs Division.

Over the next few years, Fulton refined the air and ground equipment for the pickup system. Based at El Centro, California, he conducted numerous flights over the desert, using a Navy P2V for the pickups. He gradually increased the weight of the pickup until the line began to break. A braided nylon line with a test strength of 4,000 pounds solved the problem. More vexing were the difficulties that were experienced with the locking device, or sky anchor, that secured the line to the aircraft. Fulton eventually resolved this problem, which he considered the most demanding part of the entire developmental process.(8)

By 1958, the Fulton aerial retrieval system, or Skyhook, had taken its final shape. A package that easily could be dropped from an aircraft contained the necessary ground equipment for a pickup. It featured a harness, for cargo or person, that was attached to a 500-foot, high-strength, braided nylon line. A portable helium bottle inflated a dirigible-shaped balloon, raising the line to its full height.



The pickup aircraft sported two tubular steel "horns" protruding from its nose, 30 feet long and spread at a 70-degree angle. The aircraft would fly into the line, aiming at a bright mylar marker placed at the 425-foot level. As the line was caught between the forks on the nose of the aircraft, the balloon was released at the same time the spring-loaded trigger mechanism (sky anchor) secured the line to the aircraft. As the line streamlined under the fuselage, it was snared by the pickup crew, using a J-hook. It was then attached to a powered winch and pulled on board. Some of you may recall seeing Mr. Fulton's invention used in the movies *Thunderball* and . It has also been used by [forest fire fighting teams](#):

Intermountain Aviation used the bomber for firefighting and to develop the Fulton "Skyhook." The Skyhook was used to retrieve a man or equipment from the ground without landing! As the B-17 swooped down, it snagged a rope raised aloft by a gas-filled balloon. Attached to the rope was a harness holding the person or object to be retrieved. A powered winch then reeled the dangling person or package into the plane. Evergreen's B-17 demonstrated this technique in the 1964 James Bond movie *Thunderball*.

And, well, it was used in "Operation Coldfeet," that CIA effort to grab intel from the Soviet drift station, as Mr. Leary continues:

The stage was now set for the first operational use of Skyhook. What became known as Operation Coldfeet began in May 1961, when a naval aircraft flying an aeromagnetic survey over the Arctic Ocean reported sighting an abandoned Soviet drift station. A few days later, the Soviets announced that had been forced to leave Station NP 9 when the ice runway used to supply it had cracked.

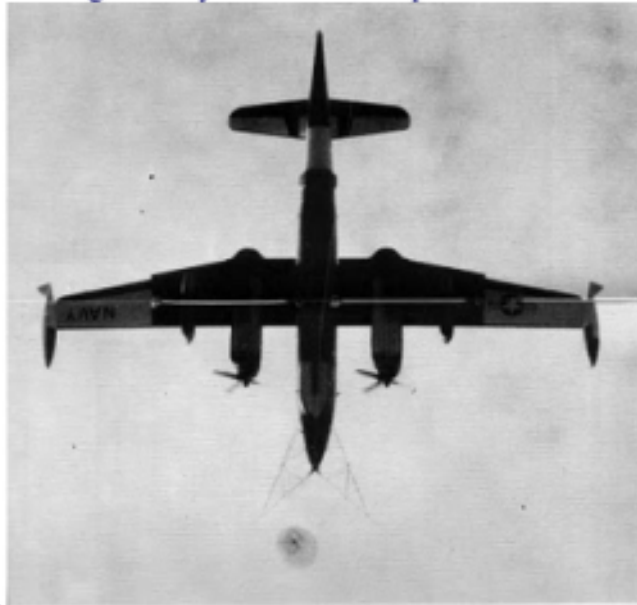
The prospect of examining an abandoned Soviet ice station attracted ONR's interest. The

previous year, ONR had set an acoustical surveillance network on a US drift station used to monitor Soviet submarines. ONR assumed that the Soviets would have a similar system to keep track of American submarines as they transited the polar ice pack, but there was no direct evidence to support this. Also, ONR wanted to compare Soviet efforts on drift stations with US operations.

seemed to provide the answer. To Capt. John The problem was how to get to NP 9. It was far too deep into the ice pack to be reached by an icebreaker, and it was out of helicopter range. Fulton's Skyhook Cadwalader, who would command Operation Coldfeet, it looked like "a wonderful opportunity" to make use of the pickup system.(11)

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ONR selected two highly qualified investigators for the ground assignment. Maj. James Smith, USAF, was an experienced paratrooper and Russian linguist who had served on US Drift Stations Alpha and Charlie. Lt. Leonard A. LeSchack, USNR, a former Antarctic geophysicist, had set up the surveillance system on T-3 in 1960. Although not jump qualified, he quickly went through the course at Lakehurst Naval Air Station. During the summer, the two men trained on the Fulton retrieval system, working in Maryland with an experienced P2V crew at the Naval Air



Test Center, Patuxent River.

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In March 1962, the mission planners received the unexpected news that the Soviets had abandoned ice station NP 8 in haste after a pressure ridge destroyed its ice runway. A more up-to-date facility than NP 9, it also was in a more accessible position at 83°N 135°W. "With the operation finally about ready to take off," Cadwalader reported, "the target was shifted to this new and tempting target." After the Canadian Government readily agreed to the use of the Royal Canadian Air Force base at Resolute Bay, 600 miles from NP 8, Project Coldfeet got under way.

In mid-April, the P2V and a C-130 support aircraft from Squadron VX-6 departed Patuxent River for Resolute Bay via Fort Churchill. Captain Cadwalader, the project's commander, had hoped that the Hydrographic Office's monthly ice reconnaissance flight that flew between Thule and Point Barrow would provide an up-to-date position on NP 8; bad weather and a navigational error, however, prevented a sighting. Still, with the last known position only a month old and

given the general dependability of the Hydrographic Office's drift predictions, he expected no difficulty in finding the target. The C-130 carrying the drop party would locate NP 8, while the P2V would be standing by in case an immediate extraction was necessary.

The hunt for NP 8 began in perfect weather. The C-130 flew to the station's last known position, then began a box search at 10-mile intervals. Hours went by, but nothing could be seen except ice. The next day, the C-130 started searching at five-mile intervals. It spotted the abandoned US Ice Station Charlie but not NP 8. Four more searches failed to reveal the elusive Soviet drift station. With the flight time available for the C-130 running out and the weather deteriorating, Cadwalader called off the operation.

\*\*\*

The expedition had no sooner returned to the US when the monthly ice reconnaissance flight on 4 May spotted NP 8 well to the east of its predicted position. ONR remained convinced that Coldfeet could work, but its funding for the project had run out. Perhaps the Intelligence Community, which had displayed interest in the scheme, might be persuaded to support the operation.

since the fall of 1961. As it happened, Fulton had been working with CIA on the development of Skyhook Intermountain Aviation, an Agency proprietary at Marana, Arizona, that specialized in aerial delivery techniques, had equipped a B-17 with the Fulton gear in October. Over the next six months, Intermountain's veteran CIA-contract pilots Connie W. Seigrist and Douglas Price flew numerous practice missions to perfect the equipment needed to infiltrate and extract agents. (They later conducted demonstrations for the Forest Service and Air Force while training for a covert operation to extract fellow CIA-contract pilot Allen L. Pope from an Indonesian prison.)<sup>(13)</sup>



Fulton then approached Intermountain about participating in Coldfeet. Garfield M. Thorsrud, head of the proprietary, liked the idea. After \$30,000 was made available by the Defense Intelligence Agency, Coldfeet was ready to resume, with Intermountain furnishing the Skyhook-equipped B-17 and a C-46 support aircraft for the project.<sup>(14)</sup>

Then it got fun:

On 28 May, assisted by a P2V from Patrol Squadron One at Kodiak, the B-17 located NP 8. Seigrist circled the station while Major Smith and pickup coordinator John D. Wall selected a drop point. Drift streamers determined the wind, then Smith left the aircraft through a "Joe hole," followed by LeSchack. After dropping supplies to the men and receiving a favorable report from Smith over his UHF hand-held radio, the B-17 departed.

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The plan called for Smith and LeSchack to have 72 hours to explore the Soviet base. While they conducted their explorations, Intermountain mechanics Leo Turk and Carson Gerken installed the pickup booms on the nose of the B-17. Seigrist and Price tested the equipment on 30 May by making a practice pickup in front of the Arctic Research Laboratory at Point Barrow.

The next day the mission to retrieve Smith and LeSchack got under way. In addition to pilots Seigrist and Price, the B-17 carried navigator Jordan, coordinator Wall, jumpmaster Miles L. Johnson, winch operator Jerrold B. Daniels, nose-trigger operator Randolph Scott, and tail-position operator Robert H. Nicol. Cadwalader, Fulton, and Thorsrud also climbed aboard to observe the operation.

The weather, Seigrist and Price soon learned, had deteriorated since their last trip over the frozen sea. Warmer temperatures had heated the ice mass, causing dense fog to form. The target eluded the B-17, and it returned to Point Barrow.

After a second fruitless search on 1 June, Thorsrud asked Cadwalader to call out the P2V. The next morning, the P2V took off from Point Barrow two hours and 30 minutes before the B-17. Using its more sophisticated navigational equipment, it quickly located NP 8, then guided the trailing aircraft by UHF/DF steers to the location.

Then there are those lovely words: "Conditions for the pickup were marginal at best."

Things did work out:

As Seigrist lined up for the pickup, the horizon disappeared. "I was instantly in a situation," he recalled, "what could be imagined as flying in a void." The pickup line and its bright orange mylar marker, however, provided sufficient visual clues to enable Seigrist to keep his wings level. He flew into the line, made a good contact, then immediately went over to instrument flying to avoid vertigo. Winch-operator Daniels brought the cargo on board without difficulty.

As prearranged, Price, a former Navy pilot, now took over the left seat to make the pickup of LeSchack. The wind was blowing stronger, and Smith had to struggle to hold LeSchack from being blown away. As the rising balloon caught the wind, LeSchack tore away from Smith's grasp, pitched forward on his stomach, and began to drag across the ice. After 300 feet, his progress was stopped by an ice block. As he lay on the ice and tried to catch his breath, Price hooked into the line.

Smith watched as LeSchack rose slowly into the air, then disappeared throughout the overcast. Although LeSchack rode through the air facing forward, he managed to turn around and assume the correct position before being hauled on board the B-17.

Price and Seigrist again changed seats so that Seigrist could make the final pickup. Smith held

tightly to a tractor as he inflated his balloon. Still, he started to drag across the ice until he managed to catch a crack with his heels. He lay on his back as Seigrist approached the line. "The line made contact on the outer portion of the left horn," Seigrist remembers. "It just hung there for what to me was an eternity."

Slowly, the line slid down the horn and into the catching mechanism. As the line streamed along the bottom of fuselage, assistant jumpmaster Johnson reached down through the "Joe hole" and placed a clamp on it. He then signaled nose-trigger operator Scott to release the line. Next, tail-position operator Nicol secured the line, Johnson released his clamp, and winch-operator Daniels



Major Frank Sargent, "medicinal" Scotch after being washed on board  
Intercontinental B-7, 2 June 1962. Lieutenant LaRack is in the lower  
right corner. ©Credit: Robert K. Fisher

quickly brought Smith on board.

He received a

warm welcome from Fulton, Cadwalader, and Thorsrud--and a drink of "medicinal" Scotch.

And the haul?

Operation Coldfeet, Cadwalader reported, produced intelligence "of very great value." ONR learned that the Soviet station was configured to permit extended periods of silent operation,



confirming the importance that the

Soviets

attached to acoustical work. In addition, equipment and documents obtained from NP 8 showed that Soviet research in polar meteorology and oceanography was superior to US efforts. "In general," Cadwalader summarized, "the remarkable Soviet accomplishments in their drift stations reflect their long experience in this field and the great importance that their government attaches to it."

I guess one could add that the proof of concept for the Fulton Skyhook was complete. (By the

way, the B-17 photo, "scotch welcome" and the B-17 route map are all products of Robert E. Fulton, Jr)



The system is still around today.

Oh, if you are interested in owning a piece of the Fulton system , here's a [link](#) to a guy who will sell you that piece for a mere \$250.



A little background on the Russian polar drift stations [here](#) including this photo of the 1937 "first" drift station:



Offer up a little salute to the brave men of Operation Coldfeet

# Tower Communications

Tower: "TWA 2341, for noise abatement turn right 45 Degrees."

TWA 2341: "Centre, we are at 35,000 feet. How much noise can we make up here?"

Tower: "Sir, have you ever heard the noise a 747 makes when it hits a 727?"

From an unknown aircraft waiting in a very long takeoff queue: "I'm f...ing bored!"

Ground Traffic Control: "Last aircraft transmitting, identify yourself immediately!"

Unknown aircraft: "I said I was f...ing bored, not f...ing stupid!"

O'Hare Approach Control to a 747: "United 329 heavy, your traffic is a Fokker, one o'clock, three miles, Eastbound."

United 329: "Approach, I've always wanted to say this... I've got the little Fokker in sight."

A student became lost during a solo cross-country flight. While attempting to locate the aircraft on radar, ATC asked: "What was your last known position?"

Student: "When I was number one for takeoff."

A DC-10 had come in a little hot and thus had an exceedingly long roll out after touching down.

San Jose Tower noted: "American 751, make a hard right turn at the end of the runway, if you are able. If you are not able, take the Guadeloupe exit off Highway 101, make a right at the lights and return to the airport."

There's a story about the military pilot calling for a priority landing because his single-engine jet fighter was running "a bit peaked". Air Traffic Control told the fighter jock that he was number two, behind a B-52 that had one engine shut down. "Ah," the fighter pilot remarked, "The dreaded seven-engine approach."

A Pan Am 727 flight, waiting for start clearance in Munich, overheard the following:

Lufthansa (in German): "Ground, what is our start clearance time?"

Ground (in English): "If you want an answer you must speak in English."

Lufthansa (in English): "I am a German, flying a German airplane, in Germany. Why must I speak English?"

Unknown voice from another plane (in a beautiful British accent): "Because you lost the bloody war!"

One day the pilot of a Cherokee 180 was told by the tower to hold short of the active runway while a DC-8 landed. The DC-8 landed, rolled out, turned around, and taxied back past the Cherokee.

Some quick-witted comedian in the DC-8 crew got on the radio and said, "What a cute little plane. Did you make it all by yourself?"

The Cherokee pilot, not about to let the insult go by, came back with a real zinger:

"I made it out of DC-8 parts. Another landing like yours and I'll have enough parts for another one."

The German air controllers at Frankfurt Airport are renowned as a short-tempered lot. They not only expect one to know one's gate parking location, but how to get there without any assistance from them. So it was with some amusement that we (a Pan Am 747) listened to the following exchange between Frankfurt ground control and a British Airways 747, call sign Speedbird 206.

Speedbird 206: "Frankfurt, Speedbird 206 clear of active runway."

Ground: "Speedbird 206. Taxi to gate Alpha One-Seven." The BA 747 pulled onto the main taxiway and slowed to a stop.

Ground: "Speedbird, do you not know where you are going?"

Speedbird 206: "Stand by, Ground, I'm looking up our gate location now."

Ground (with quite arrogant impatience): "Speedbird 206, have you not been to Frankfurt before?"

Speedbird 206 (coolly): "Yes, twice in 1944, but it was dark, and I didn't land."