

# AWARE OF PERIL AT SITKA'S BASE

Fire Sunday Night Was Third of Series, All of Mysterious Origin, Which Threatened Part of Military Establishment.

By ROBERT J. CASEY

Copyright, 1941, by The Indianapolis Times and The Chicago Daily News, Inc. SITKA, Alaska, Dec. 9.—The war, any Alaskan will tell you, started not Sunday morning in the Hawaiian Islands but Saturday night at Sitka. And the Alaskans will give you evidence that the first shot was really touched off a couple of months ago—and they'll make out a convincing case.

A drill barge burned Sunday night. In the channel between the town and the naval base it looked like a simple fire—one of those things you can expect around a busy construction camp.

Except that it constituted a menace to navigation it didn't seem to be worth much attention from anybody save the camp fire department. So, if you gave the matter any thought at all you might have wondered at the tone of dispatches which told about it.

Authorities feared terrible damage.

Mr. Casey

the military base was thought to be in danger . . . and significantly—the populace of Sitka had been warned to leave the town.

You heard the over your radio and maybe you wondered how why should a fire on a drill barge in a wide channel cause the evacuation of a town—particularly when the inhabitants, old and young and well and ill, had no place to run except the snow-filled crevices of the mountains that rise abruptly where the pavement ends?

Third of a Series

Well, through the well-meaning hush-hush that has done nothing to keep such people as our little brown brothers from knowing what has been going on in our defense program in Alaska, you finally get a hint of the reason. Sunday night's fire wasn't anything new to Sitka. It was the third of a series, all mysterious, all big enough to threaten the destruction of a large and important part of the establishment.

The first fire was a little more than two months ago. News of it over established channels to the United States has been significantly scarce.

Sitka base, one violates no military secret in announcing, has been constructed by blowing the tops off a series of small rocky islands in the channel and linking them together. For this job large quantities of dynamite were necessary. As is the custom on the part of this kind, the stick dynamite was stored in one shed. The detonating caps were stored in another. Both, theoretically, were under military guard.

Sentry Discovers Smoke

One fine night a sentry discovered smoke coming out of the cracks in the dynamite shed. He turned in an alarm. The soldiers and Marines responded and volun-

## LORING TO ADDRESS WARREN G. O. P. CLUB

Deputy Secretary of State Robert H. Loring will speak at a meeting of the Warren Township Republican Club at 8 p.m. tomorrow in the home of Mr. and Mrs. B. L. Curry, 6797 E. 10th St.

Officers will be elected and Miss Betty Jane Hurt will give readings.

## THE INDIANAPOLIS TIMES

Fred Dickerman, program chairman, will introduce Mr. Loring and Bernard L. Curry, president, will preside.

Committee chairmen are Mrs. Forrest L. Hackley, entertainment; Mrs. A. G. Miskell, hostess, assisted by Miss Ruby Lehman, Mrs. Ray O. S. Manlove, Mrs. Florine Beckman and Mrs. Robert Hamilton and Mrs. Essie Perry, refreshments, assisted by Mrs. Glen White.

## LOSES RACE TO CAST WAR VOTE IN HOUSE

WASHINGTON, Dec. 9 (U. P.)—Rep. John M. Costello (D. Ga.) raced from Los Angeles to Washington by plane yesterday but arrived a few minutes after the war vote was taken.

Rep. Costello, who had been visit-

ing his ill mother, said he caught a TWA statoliner out of Los Angeles at 6 p.m. Sunday. At Indianapolis he transferred to an American Airlines plane, which arrived in Washington at 1:25 p.m., five minutes ahead of schedule.

A police escort, sirens screaming, raced Mr. Costello and Reps. Joseph A. McAdoo (D. Pa.) and Beverly M. Vincent (D. Ky.) who caught

the plane at Cincinnati to the Capitol.

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