

BLOOD ON THE SNOW

An Assignment for *Millennium's End*

What the hell does the Ukraine want with an Antarctic research station? They didn't say—and they didn't say dying was part of the contract...

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The Assignment

The operatives have just lifted off the flight deck of the Ukrainian amphibious assault ship *Azovskoje* churning through the coarse grey waters off Antarctica. The Ukrainian government has hired the cell to infiltrate Adelie 14, a AgraTech Corporation facility on Antarctica. Although the facility is ostensibly doing benevolent civilian environmental and biological research, the Ukrainians have come across evidence that there is biological weapons research being carried out there by AgraTech on behalf of the Russian government. They want proof—and that’s what the operatives are going to provide.

The client is Leonid Kuchma, a representative of the Ukrainian Secret Service. A few moments before, the operatives were in the ward room of the assault ship, being briefed and equipped by Kuchma. In his gravelly, heavily-accented voice and laid-back, almost bored manner, Kuchma explained the situation:

“We could, of course, just turn this whole situation over to the media or UN, but where would that get us, eh? The world tire of bickering between Russia and Ukraine—by the time anybody took us seriously, the Russians would clear out of Adelie 14 and this would be just another unsubstantiated rumor. No, no, we need proof—undeniable proof.

“This man,” at this point Kuchma showed the operatives a photo, “his name is Vitaliy Prytyka. He’s a Russian, but he works for AgraTech for long time, many years. His laboratory and quarters are marked on the map, there. He is head of this project—he will be our proof. Find him and question him. We have video camera here for you, and satellite link. Call me when you find him, and broadcast interview back to us. That way, no matter what happens, we have the evidence. You get out of this O.K. I think, but why tempt fates, eh? After you question him, you let him go, and meet the helicopter for extraction. In and out, six hours tops. Nobody

gets hurt. Oh, and you keep your faces covered on video broadcast—this is encrypted digital system, but why take chance?

“Vitaliy Prytyka and AgraTech, they are making new RDHA—how to say it—Rapid Decay Hemorrhagic fever Agent. Is make from Streptococcus Pneumonia, a bacteria. You ask Prytyka about Streptococcus when you question him, look for signs of it in lab.

“And another thing. This situation in Antarctica is delicate. Many countries have claim parts of Antarctica, but nobody recognizes claims. Is illegal to mine or exploit, but still there are over 100 stations. What do all those countries and companies do, eh, if they do not mine or exploit? Making biological weapons here is very, very illegal. But, so is military operations. That’s why we have you, eh, keep us honest. Still, is wise that no word get out about you there before we tell the world what you find. You disable the communications, eh, and the helicopter before you move in. So the Russians don’t make up their own story before we tell ours.”

After the briefing, the operatives were given the necessary arctic gear—undergarments, boots, parkas, snow goggles, gloves and mittens, etc. to survive in the sub-zero temperatures. They were also equipped with communications gear capable of withstanding the extreme weather, and with the satellite uplink and video gear to capture and broadcast the questioning of Prytyka. All of the equipment appears to be military gear, but is unmarked. The operatives are also offered AKSU-74 submachine guns, accompanied by the warning that few other weapons hold up in the extreme cold.

The plan is to insert the cell about two kilometers from the camp, just beyond a rocky ridge, about an hour before dusk. They’ll be extracted from the same site just after dawn—or they can call for an extraction closer to the camp and at a different time (after daybreak) if they want. Weather this time of year (late March—autumn in Antarctica) is very unpredictable, and though it should cooperate for the next twenty-four hours or so, this window may not be open for long.

Most of the operatives should be aware that the Russians and Ukrainians have not been getting along for the past couple of years—the two countries have been feuding over issues as diverse as fishing rights, compensation for the damage caused by Chernobl, conflicts in neighboring ex-Soviet states, oil, and even, a decade after the Soviet breakup, control of the Black Sea naval fleet. Kuchma’s apparent belief—that only the hardest of evidence, delivered before Russian spin-doctors get a shot at it, will be taken seriously in yet another grievance between the two countries—seems credible.

Payment for the operation is generous—\$150,000 plus expenses for an operation that should take less than 24 hours.

The Real Scoop

Although AgraTech is working with Russia, the facility is not a biological weapons lab. It's not strictly an environmental research station, either. In addition to its ostensible activities, personnel at the lab have also been conducting mineral surveys, and they've made a remarkable discovery—oil, and lots of it.

The mineral exploitation of Antarctica has been banned by treaty since 1961. As Kuchma mentioned, that ban has been disintegrating somewhat over the past few years—but it's still supposedly in place, and any large-scale violation will not only cause controversy, but would almost certainly open a floodgate of nations and corporations eager to get a hold of an entire continent's worth of natural resources. A number of countries (Argentina, Australia, Chile, France, New Zealand, Norway, and the UK) have claimed areas of Antarctica, although those claims are generally not recognized by other nations and no-one's bothered to fight over the overlaps in the claimed borders. Not yet, anyway.

Russia has made no claims to Antarctica, but the deal they've made with AgraTech is that they'll claim and defend any regions in which oil (or other exploitable mineral deposits) are found in exchange for a piece of the action. Furthermore, Russia is getting ready to grab the lead once the rush that will inevitably follow their actions occurs—though that's still thought to be a year or so off, and there are presently no sizeable Russian military forces in the region.

The Ukraine has learned about these plans. However, they're not interested solely in stopping Russia—they want the oil for themselves. Russia, the Ukraine's primary source of oil, has been cutting off supplies recently. The Ukraine is under intense international pressure to shut down its several aging Soviet nuclear plants, and cannot afford to rely on high-priced oil on the international market. So instead of just exposing the Russian plan, they want an excuse to create an international incident which will allow them to seize and annex the corporate facility, and later, when the world is paying a little less attention, lay claim to the region and the as-yet-unannounced oil reserves.

Prytyka is not an evil corporate researcher bent on biological warfare, of course. In fact, he's one of several researchers on the compound who are Ukrainian by citizenship or descent. The Ukrainians intend on using this fact to provide them with an excuse for their action—the old “our citizens are in danger” line. Prytyka knows a little about the oil discovery, but nothing about the larger machinations of Russia and the Ukraine.

Kuchma's plan is to use the evidence the ops provide not simply to unveil illicit research, but to fabricate a Russian threat to Ukrainian lives that will justify an annexation. The necessary additional evidence of

Adelie 14

Adelie 14 is medium-sized by the standards of Antarctic research stations. Its main structure is a long building (actually, a series of connected buildings) running north-south, with a series of outbuildings mainly to the northeast of it. The main building is the only inhabited structure—the outbuildings are sheds, maintenance shacks, and open vehicle shelters.

The main building itself consists of three wings. The southernmost wing, constructed on a single large prefab building with an attached furnace room and entry way, contains all of the living quarters. The facility's staff live in small bedrooms shared by two or three roommates. A few of the senior staff have private rooms—the tiny cells in the center of the wing. There are both men and women at Adelie 14—for the most part individuals share room with others of the same gender. There are also segregated showers and toilets.

The central wing is another large prefab building, with separate storage and generator shacks attached to its eastern end. It houses the admin, recreation, and support spaces.

The northern wing is dedicated to labs, offices, and associated storage requirements. It consists of two pre-fab buildings linked by an unheated entry hall with doors to the outside.

That unheated entry hall is endemic at Adelie 14—none of the exterior doors lead directly into heated areas. Instead, they lead into “mud-room”-like entry rooms, which act as sort of air locks protecting the heated areas from the elements as people come and go. These areas are cold, though not nearly as cold as the outside, and are used to store parkas, outdoor equipment, and other odds and ends.

biological weapons research will be planted during the annexation. That leaves only one loose end—the operatives. The plan is to kill them during the assault—having been set up as Russian thugs, their bodies will be further evidence of an improper Russian military presence at Adelie 14.

The Action

The action unfolds in three parts: the operatives' infiltration of the compound and the capture of Prytyka; their discovery and subsequent difficulties in escaping the compound, during which time they realize that the Ukrainians have something different in store for the Adelie 14; and their effort to escape, perhaps with evidence of the Ukrainians' duplicity.

Getting In

The operatives fly to the insertion point aboard the Ukrainian Mi-17 HIP in which they left the *Azovskoje*. The flight is nap-of-earth, and takes about an hour and a half. They land behind a rocky, snow-covered ridge 2,000 meters from Adelie 14, at 5:00—about an hour before dusk. On foot, as the crow flies, the 2,000 meter hike to the camp takes about an hour, though the operatives will probably take more time in getting there. Between the ridge and the camp the terrain is almost featureless and offers little cover. Nevertheless, there is no-one looking out for them from Adelie 14, and careful operatives will not be spotted approaching the facility.

The compound has no real security, and the doors are not kept locked. How the operatives approach and enter the Adelie 14 is entirely up to them. So long as they are careful, they should have few problems getting in. Locating Prytyka is a little more problematic (see the sidebar for info on activity in the facility). The operatives might choose to hack the compound's computers for a log of the room assignments, look for such a list in the admin section (or posted alongside an intercom in virtually any room in the building), or grab a random inhabitant and question him or her as to Prytyka's whereabouts. How these efforts unfold depends on the care taken by the operatives as well as their choice of approach—but locating Prytyka without raising a general alarm shouldn't be too hard.

After about 8:00pm, Prytyka is in his quarters reading. If undisturbed by the operatives, he'll go to bed around 11:00 and get up at 6:00.

Interrogation

Prytyka's quarters are small and cramped—too small, and too close to too much activity, to carry out the interrogation there. Moving Prytyka to a more private location (his lab, an outbuilding, whatever) is a real task, and will only fail to alert the compound's other personnel if the

operatives are particularly clever and particularly careful. There are only one or two firearms, however, in the entire compound, and the personnel there are not eager to pick a fight with a well-armed BlackEagle cell. They will, however, try to radio for help, and some may try to escape via the compound's helicopter. Although there is no danger of any help arriving before dawn, the operatives may wish to prevent such actions.

Prytyka can't, of course, tell the operatives anything about biological weapons research, because none of that goes on at the Adelie 14. Any mention of *Streptococcus* will provoke honest answers—Prytyka has plenty of it in his lab, because it is a common research bacteria that has nothing to do with hemorrhagic fever (which is in fact a viral condition). Although his lab is a biology/chemistry lab, perceptive operatives will note that it has little or none of the containment equipment one would imagine necessary for dealing with hazardous biological agents. Kuchma will exacerbate any confusion on this issue, telling the operatives by radio that Prytyka is lying, and generally encouraging the operatives to take harsher and harsher measures to get Prytyka to talk. This will go on until the operatives call it off, or until Kuchma has plenty of footage of them abusing Prytyka. At that point he'll order the end of the broadcast, and tell the operatives to stay at the camp. Weather conditions are forcing them to schedule the extraction a little earlier than planned—right at dawn—and if things grey out it will be easier to find the operatives at the camp than out on the snow.

Once that broadcast is done, Kuchma and the Ukrainians will not answer the radio any more. The operatives' radios do not have sufficient range to reach any other station, and tuning the satellite video uplink system to another station requires an Engineering/Electrical roll—even then, a responding station can probably do little to help. Only the compound's radios and uplinks can reach the outside world, though there is nothing anyone can do to reach the compound earlier than a couple hours after dawn. If the camp's uplinks have not been disabled by the operatives, most of the computers can connect with the GenNet.

What the operatives do from this point is largely up to them. However, they cannot make contact with the Ukrainians, and they cannot leave the compound (or they'll freeze to death within hours). If they wait at the compound, their extraction team will never show. At some point, if they are near anyplace where a TV is playing, they'll see familiar footage on CNN—their interrogation of Prytyka (see the sidebar).

Obviously, the other personnel at Adelie 14 will try to avoid the operatives. If they capture and attempt to question some of them based on the CNN footage and the assumption that the Ukrainian biological weapons story is bogus, they may meet with some success. Most of the personnel know about the oil discovery—some have mixed feelings about

CNN News Coverage of the Ukrainian Annexation

Inhabitants of the corporate compound don't have a lot to keep themselves busy—there's a community room with exercise equipment and a ping-pong table, but watching TV is one of the main leisure activities. The operatives might catch the CNN broadcast at virtually any location where a TV might be running quietly in the background—the common areas, the personnel quarters, even the labs and work areas.

The coverage starts with rough home-video images of Ukrainian naval vessels churning through antarctic seas—including the *Azovskoje*, accompanied by two or three other ships that weren't there when the operatives were. It cuts quickly to the video of the operatives interrogating Prytyka—the most brutal footage Kuchma could splice together. After about thirty seconds of that, a Ukrainian official is seen being interviewed, then it returns to the video of the ships, on the deck of which marines are clearly visible boarding helicopters, some with their rotors already turning. None of this video has any audio, so the nature of the operatives' questions to Prytyka are not clear. Assuming the operatives turn up the volume at some point in the middle, the voice-over runs as follows:

[voice of female correspondent]
...*Azovskoje*, shown here in footage taken by an American tourist on a whale-watching tour just an hour or so ago, happened to have been on routine training operations in the Indian Ocean over

AgraTech's illicit search and plans for illegal exploitation. In addition, the operatives may find records of the mineral surveys on some of the camp's computers, as well as drilling, seismic, and other survey-related equipment in some of the outbuildings. A look at the staff records (or at the staff themselves) will reveal that while the group is multi-national, there are several Russian personnel who are employed not by AgraTech, but by the Russian government.

Getting Out

The operatives have all night to watch CNN if they wish, and throughout the evening the language of the news reports is clear. The operatives are identified by Ukrainian officials as "Russian KGB or Spetznaz hoodlums," and their gear tends to support this allegation. The footage shown on CNN seems to have been carefully edited to prevent the operatives' from being recognized by anything other than their clothing and equipment, and their voices are never heard. New video footage from Antarctica is scarce, but the reports continue to update a situation in which the Ukrainians are planning an all-out assault.

If the operatives don't assume that their lives are in danger, they'll get the idea soon enough when Ukrainian marines arrive and start shooting people. The objective—gather evidence of the Ukrainian atrocities and get the hell out of Dodge—by whatever means necessary. A visit to the communications room—or a discussion with any cooperative compound employee—will direct them to a British compound only 350km away.

Realizing that they have no chance in a fight against the Ukrainian marines, the people in the compound will surrender soon after the assault begins. The Ukrainians's are out to kill the PC's. If they haven't already realized this, they will when they're shot at even after the Ukrainian's have accepted the compound's general surrender.

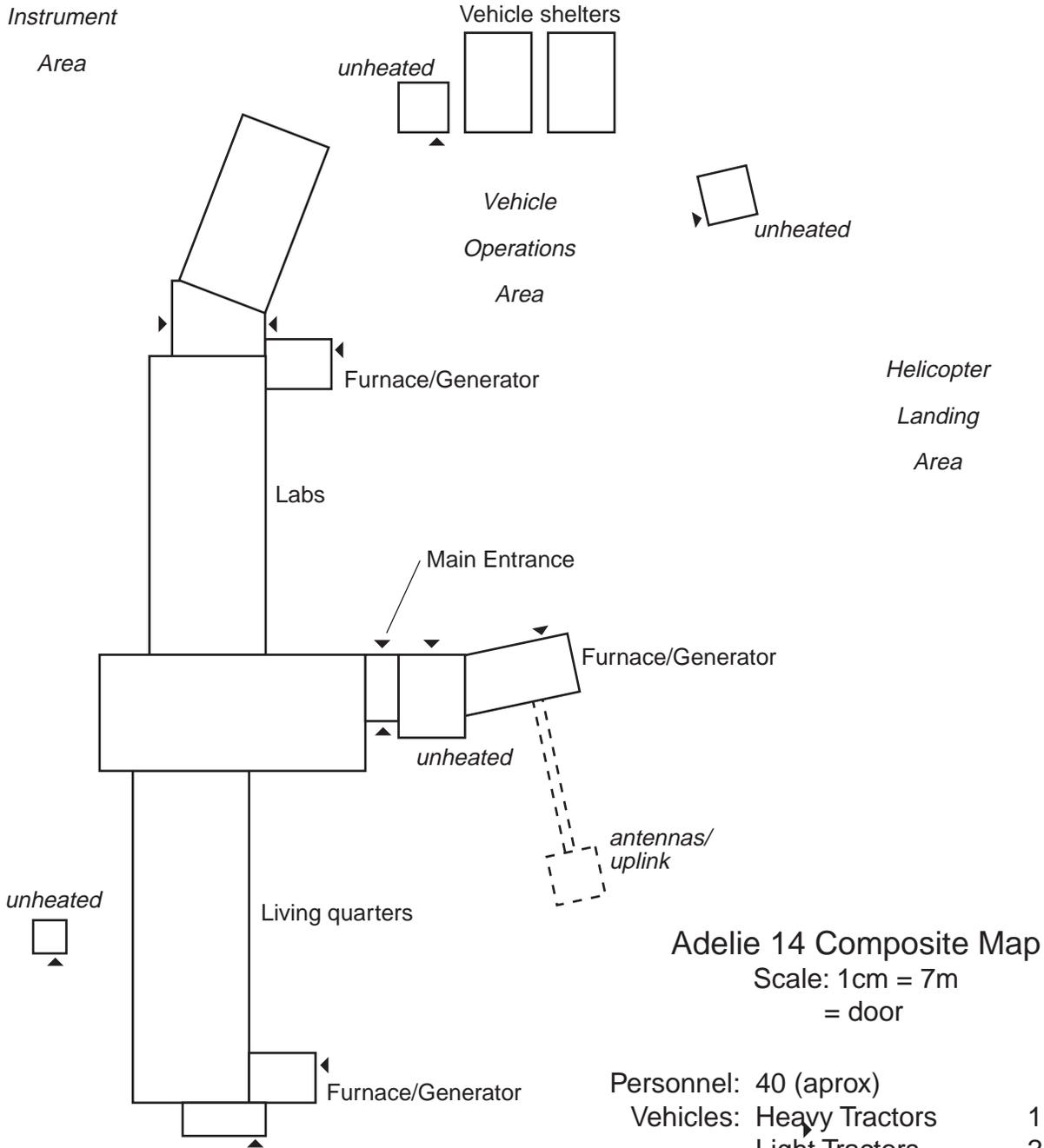
If the PC's make a break for the British compound, a unit of Ukrainians marines will try to intercept them. Use the five High-End Grunts from ME v2.0, pg 157 to represent the marines. The rest of the Ukrainian force will be busy securing the compound. Once having gotten by the marines, the PC's will be able to get to the British compound. From there, depending on what evidence they have collected, they will be able to bring the Ukrainians's plot into the public eye.

the past few days, and was routed to the area when Ukrainian officials first became aware of the situation.

[voice of Ukrainian official] *"The Ukraine of course respects the international ban on military operations on Antarctica, however, this Russian violation of international law and the threat it poses to our citizens puts us in this unfortunate position. Prytyka and the other Ukrainian nationals working for AgraTech were very brave to warn the world of these Russian activities, and as you can see from the video they may have payed the ultimate price. What can we do? Who else will protect our citizens and the world from the likes of these KGB hoodlums?"*

[correspondent again] *From the looks of these Ukrainian naval vessels, the Ukraine is taking the steps it feels are necessary, despite international bans. And while international representatives decry the unfolding situation, it appears that the Ukrainians may be justified in their steps—CNN analysts confirm, based on their equipment and arctic uniforms, that the assaultants in the video do appear to be Russian military personnel. Ukrainian claims of illicit chemical weapons research at the site remain unconfirmed, of course—officials at AgraTech have so far only reiterated their earlier statement that no such research was taking place there. The world will have to watch nervously on before all the facts can be confirmed. From Odessa in the Ukraine, this is Christian Ammanpour reporting.*

Field
Instrument
Area



Adelie 14 Composite Map

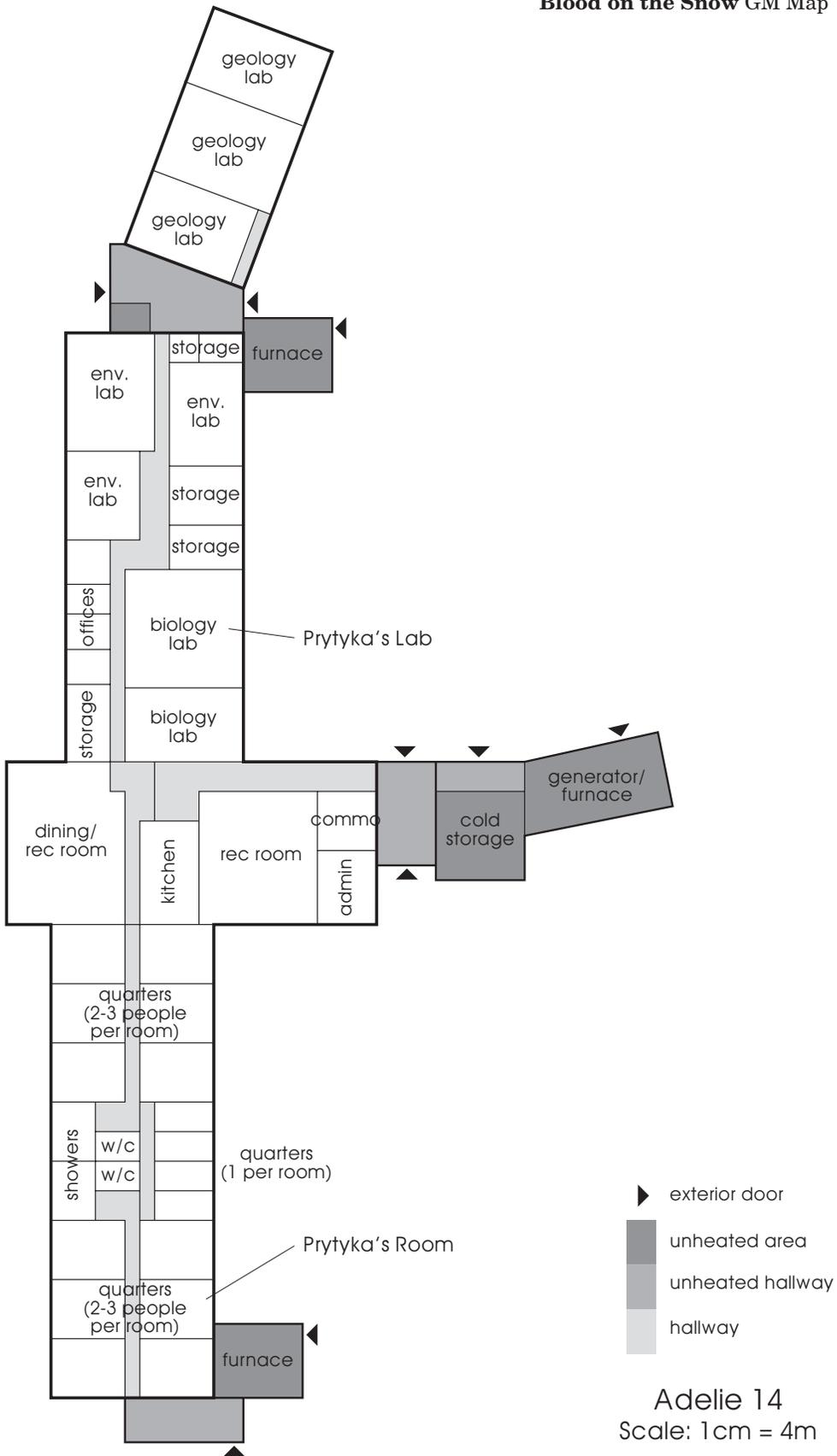
Scale: 1cm = 7m

= door

- Personnel: 40 (aprox)
- Vehicles: Heavy Tractors 1
- Light Tractors 2
- Snowmobiles 4-8
- Helicopters 1

Adelie 14 Composite Use Map 16/3/99

Blood on the Snow GM Map



Adelie 14
Scale: 1 cm = 4m