



# To Defend and Deter

The Legacy of the  
United States  
Cold War Missile  
Program

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE LEGACY RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM, COLD WAR PROJECT

## OKLAHOMA

### Air Force

#### Altus Air Force Base

This World War II era base was reactivated by the Air Force in 1952 as a Tactical Air Command facility. In 1953 the base was transferred to SAC to host bombers and support aircraft. In late 1959, Hound Dog and Quail missiles were installed on B-52s assigned to Altus. In addition to these air-to-surface missiles, Altus was destined to host the Atlas F ICBM.

Near the end of January 1960, Senator Kerr, Senator Monroney, and Representative Toby Morris made the first public announcement regarding the installation of an Atlas F missile facility at Altus. In April, the Corps of Engineers, Tulsa District awarded the basic construction contract to Morrison-Knudsen and Hardeman and Associates. The two firms had submitted a combined bid of just over \$20.9 million.

The 12 launcher locations were at or near Lonewolf; Hobart (2); Snyder; Cache; Mantiou; Frederick; Creta; Hollis; Russell; Willow; and Fargo, Texas. To acquire the needed 12,879 acres, in October, the Real Estate Division of the Tulsa District filed condemnation suits against 477 landowners in the 6 counties surrounding Altus.

As at other Atlas construction sites, Tulsa District Engineers were befuddled with the concurrency problem where improvements in the missile required constant modifications to the ongoing launcher construction. However, the Tulsa District managed to keep the project on schedule by using a "Red Ball" system that prioritized Atlas paperwork.

Problems elsewhere forced the Army to centralize construction management. Therefore in November 1960, the responsibility of construction was transferred to the newly formed Corps of Engineers Ballistic Missile Construction Office (CEBMCO). Consequently, approximately 175 Tulsa District employees found themselves working for the Los Angeles-based organization.

There were several "growing pains" associated with this project. Coordination between the Corps of Engineers, contractor, Site Activation Task Force (SATAF), and integrating consultants from Convair Astronautics (later General Dynamics Astronautics) was difficult at times. The Corps blamed the integrating consultants for lacking experience in heavy construction.

Natural difficulties were encountered as some sites had water tables that were higher than expected and at one site workers dug into underground cavities. Labor-

*Oklahoma Sites*

management relations were harmonious. Only eight short work stoppages occurred, causing minimal delays. There were three project-related fatalities. In addition, two major on-site fires set back construction. As with other first generation missile projects, the installation and testing of the propellant loading system proved difficult as contaminants hindered the system's operation.

In August 1962, the first Atlas F was placed on alert status. In October, all 12 missiles were put on alert status as a result of the Cuban missile crisis.

On May 14, 1964, during a propellant loading exercise, an explosion caused the destruction of launch complex 577-6. Two days later, Defense Secretary McNamara ordered the accelerated phaseout of Atlas and Titan I ICBMs. As a result, the 577th Strategic Missile Squadron was deactivated on March 25, 1965.

**References**

U.S. Army Ballistic Missile Construction Office, "History of the Altus Area Office, 14 March 1960-28 April 1962," pp. 1-5, 69-73, 136-151; William A. Settle, Jr., *The Dawning, A New Day for the Southwest: A History of the Tulsa District Corps of Engineers, 1939-1971*, (Tulsa, OK: U.S. Army Engineer District, 1975), pp. 80-83, [HQCE]; *SAC Chronology*, pp. 36, 37, 44, 47.

**Tinker Air Force Base****Oklahoma City Air Materiel Area/Logistics Center**

During the 1950s, this Air Materiel Command facility was responsible for program management of several missile systems. For example, Oklahoma City oversaw support of the BOMARC surface-to-air system. This responsibility changed with an Air Materiel Command realignment initiated on June 4, 1957, whereby BOMARC left Oklahoma City for Ogden, Utah. In return, the Oklahoma City Air Materiel Area (OCAMA) picked up responsibility for guided air-launched missiles such as the GAM-63 Rascal and GAM-72 Green Quail. In 1961, OCAMA became the logistics manager for the GAM-77 "Hound Dog" air-launched missile.

Responsibility for long-range air-launched munitions would continue. For example, in October 1974, the Oklahoma City "Air Logistics Center" became the systems manager for the Air-Launched Cruise Missile (ALCM). By the 1980s this Air Force Logistics Command facility managed support for the Short Range Air Missile (SRAM) SRAM II, ALCM, Ground-Launched Cruise Missile (GLCM) and Harpoon missiles.

**References**

Helen Rice, *History of Ogden Air Materiel Area, Hill Air Force Base, Utah: 1934-1960*, (Hill AFB, UT: Air Force Logistics Center, March 1963), p. 197, 202, [AFHO]; *Tinker Air Force Base—A Pictorial History*, (Tinker AFB, OK: Oklahoma City Air Logistics Center Office of History, 1982), pp. 108, 146, 148, [AFHO].