



Nike Missile Site- Fact Sheet

The following is selected information about the Nike Missile Site located in the Marin Headlands.

How did the United States government justify building Nike Missile sites?

- Defense against a perceived threat from Soviet aerial attack.
- A necessary tool to survive in a nuclear war.
- "Our business at the time was to be ready and we were ready."
-Ron Parshall, US Army veteran

What are the Nike Missile Sites?

- High security nuclear missile storage and launching facilities.
- Designed to protect military installations from attack by nuclear-armed bombers.
- Each Missile Site holds from 12-24 surface to air guided Hercules Missiles.

When were they active?

- Active between 1959 and 1974
- As a consequence of the ABM Treaty of 1972 and the increasing threat of ICBMs, all Nike Missile sites in the continental U.S. were deactivated.

Where were they located?

- Approximately 300 Nike Missile Sites built throughout the country.
- 12 Nike Missile Sites served the Bay Area.

Who operated these systems?

- One hundred thirty five soldiers were stationed at the Nike site twenty-four hours a day.
- Nike soldiers were selected through extensive tests.
- Every soldier was specialized in training so that no one person could singularly know how to launch the missile.
- Every soldier was expected to serve 24 to 72 hours, sometimes at high alert, not knowing if war was imminent.
- The soldiers had to remain secretive about their job so that the general population did not know about the operations.
- Soldiers could be as young as 19 years-old.

How do the Hercules Missiles work?

- High explosive or nuclear warhead that explodes upon computer command.
- Through radar detection, the missile intercepts and destroys enemy targets.
- Radar can target anything within a 150-mile radius; missile can hit anything within ninety miles.
- **A Hercules Missile has 2 1/2 times the power of the first nuclear bomb.**