



# Cold War Times

The Internet Newsletter for the Cold War Museum &  
Cold War Veterans Association

**July / August 2003**

**The End of Nuclear Atmospheric Testing - 1963**



## Volume 3, Issue 4: July / August 2003

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The opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of *Cold War Times*, the Cold War Museum, the Cold War Veterans Association, and/or their respective Board of Directors. As is the case with all history, the history of the Cold War is subject to some degree of interpretation.

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***On the Cover: An atomic bomb detonates at the Nevada Test Site in early 1951. See story on page . Photo courtesy of the U.S. Department of Energy. For more photos of historic atomic/nuclear testing, visit [www.nv.doe.gov](http://www.nv.doe.gov)***

#### **About the Cold War Museum**

Founded in 1996 by Francis Gary Powers, Jr. and John C. Welch, the Cold War Museum is dedicated to preserving Cold War history and honoring Cold War Veterans.

For more information: Cold War Museum, P.O. Box 178, Fairfax, VA 22030 Ph: 703-273-2381

***A Few Words From The Editor...*****Bryan J. Dickerson**

When Soviet Army tanks rolled into Poland, Czechoslovakia, the Baltic States and other nations of Eastern Europe during World War II, they came not as liberators but as conquerors. For the people of Eastern Europe, the arrival of the Soviet Army meant trading one brutally repressive system of government (Nazism) for another (Communism). The same basic human rights denied them by the Nazis were the same rights denied them by the Communists. Instead of the Gestapo, there was the East German Stasi, the Hungarian Allamvedelmi Osztaly (AVO). Instead of Hitler and Goebbels, there was Stalin and Ceausescu. For forty-plus years following World War II, Eastern Europe was held captive to Soviet Communism.

Yet despite the oppression, brutality and injustices of the Soviet Communist system, the people of Eastern Europe still yearned and hoped for freedom. The iron fist of communism could suppress those yearnings but could never totally crush them. And at times when the Iron Fist relaxed even just a little, people of Eastern European countries took action to try and win back their freedom: Poland in 1980, Hungary in 1956, and Czechoslovakia in 1968. And fifty years ago this past June, East Germans staged their own, albeit unsuccessful, attempt to win freedom.

Nearly every attempt by the people of Eastern Europe to win their freedom met with defeat, oftentimes bloody and disastrous. Nevertheless, the spirit of freedom still lived and ultimately when the historical conditions were favorable in 1989, the spirit of freedom shattered its Communist fetters and gave birth to new democracies.

## News from Cold War Veterans Association

### **CWVA Becomes an Official Partner of Veterans History Project**

The CWVA has been selected to become an Official Partner of the Veterans History Project. The Veterans History Project is run by the American Folklife Center of the Library of Congress. Its mission is to collect and preserve oral histories, documents, letters, diaries and other documents, maps, photographs and home movies of American war veterans and civilians who participated in war efforts from both World Wars, Korea, Vietnam, the Cold War and the Gulf War. As an Official Partner, the CWVA will assist the Veterans History Project in its mission of preserving America's military past and of collecting oral history interviews and historical artifacts.



### **CWVA Lays Wreath at Arlington**

CWVA Members Richard Isaac (pictured in the center of the photo to the left) and Nils Parr presented a wreath in honor of those Americans who have given their lives for freedom during the Cold War and America's other wars and military engagements at the annual Memorial Day ceremonies held at Arlington National Cemetery.

## Cold War News & Notes

### **NEW MEANING FOR 'MAY DAY' THIS YEAR IN MILWAUKEE**

**Bill Craig, Contributing Editor**

MILWAUKEE, WI “May Day” had a new meaning this year in Milwaukee when the Cold War Museum-Midwest and the Cold War Veterans’ Association declared “Cold War Victory Day” in a presentation at the Safehouse Newsroom, home of the Milwaukee Press Club.

The 43<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the U2 spy plane incident was also recognized, with a presentation by Francis Gary Powers, Jr., son of the pilot shot down over the Soviet Union on May 1, 1960. Powers is a co-founder of the Cold War Museum now being developed in Fairfax County, Virginia. An authentic East German Stasi/KGB prison cell door was displayed.

Preceding the ceremony, at 2 p.m., the group toured St. John’s Military Academy in Delafield. One of the academy’s graduates was George Kennan, author of the containment policy that became in 1947 the cornerstone for U.S. relations with the Soviet Union. Reservations and a small fee are required for the visit.

May Day, in addition to its historical meaning as a day to celebrate the coming of Spring, has a more serious connotation. Its ties to the radical American labor movement in the 1880s led to its adoption as a special day by the Communists, celebrated by massive military and workers’ parades staged in Moscow and other cities of the Communist world.

## **Cold War Memory:**

### **Interpreting the Physical Legacy of the Cold War**

By Christian Ostermann

On September 8 and 9, 2003, the Woodrow Wilson Center's Cold War International History Project will host a pioneering international conference on Cold War commemoration. As personal memory of the long ideological struggle begins to fade, creating a network among leading scholars of the Cold War and those charged with its preservation and interpretation is becoming critically important.

The principle objective of the conference is to foster a longer-term dialogue among scholars and those charged and involved with interpreting the physical legacy of the Cold War in the United States and abroad. As a neutral meeting ground, CWIHP does not endorse any one historical interpretation but seeks to provide those involved with new and enriching resources and contacts, much as it has successfully done over the past decade in groundbreaking access to archives. The conference will bring together about one hundred cultural resource specialists, leading international scholars, Cold War veterans, media and foundation representatives, government officials, and other professionals from the U.S and abroad.

For further information on the conference, contact Keith R. Allen, CWIHP Public Policy Scholar (allenkeith@wwic.si.edu) or CWIHP director Christian Ostermann (ostermac@wwic.si.edu). Further information will become available on the CWIHP website at <http://cwihip.si.edu>.

**SPIES IN THE SKIES:  
FROM THE COLD WAR TO THE WAR IN IRAQ**

**International Spy Museum, Washington, D.C.**

**Wednesday, 6 August; 7 pm**

**Tickets: \$13; Advance Registration required.**

Three experts trace the history of overhead-surveillance technology and share personal insights and experiences on what limitations exist, if any, within such technology and how it is actually used - from locating a terrorist camp and analyzing enemy terrain to counting missile sites. The event features Eugene Poteat, former CIA Scientific Intelligence Officer and Program Manager for development and operation of special reconnaissance systems, current President of the Association of Former Intelligence Officers and member of the International Spy Museum's Advisory Board of Directors; Francis Gary Powers, Jr., founder of the Cold War Museum and son of Francis Gary Powers, the U-2 pilot shot down over the Soviet Union in 1960; and John E. Pike, Director of Globalsecurity.org and one of the world's leading experts on defense, space and intelligence policy.

## **1st Annual Cold War Museum-Midwest Chapter Golf Outing Fundraiser**

**Saturday August 30, 2003 at 8 am at Deer Haven Golf Course, Wisconsin**

The 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Golf Outing Fundraiser is being held to establish a local Cold War Museum at the former Nike missile radar base in Waukesha, WI, now known as Hillcrest Park. The park site continues to boast historic buildings and radar towers and is the focus of an indoor/outdoor museum concept that captures the local, national, and international aspects of the Cold War. Our host is Deer Haven Golf Course, located at 19180 W. Cleveland Ave in New Berlin, WI. Cost for 18 holes of golf is a reasonable \$65 with shared electric cart or \$55 with hand cart and includes lunch. Although the golf outing is a public event the activity is also part of a 40th reunion gathering of Nike Missile Veterans who were stationed at the Waukesha Nike Missile base from 1956- 1964. The Wisconsin National Guard operated the site from 1964 until it closed in 1970. Attached please find a registration form and an informational flyer on the golf outing.

About us: The Cold War Museum is a Washington, DC based 501c(3) non-profit organization dedicated to preserving Cold War history, honoring Cold War veterans, and educating current and future generations about the perils of America's longest and costliest conflict. It is headed by Francis Gary Powers, Jr., son of the famed U2 spy plane pilot shot down over Soviet airspace and captured in 1960. A national museum effort is being pursued in Lorton, VA in Fairfax County near Washington, DC. The Midwest Chapter is dedicated to preserving Cold War history in the Great Lakes region.

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<http://www.coldwar.org> (National)

## **CWM – Midwest Chapter Update**

Chris Sturdevant, Chairman and  
Werner Juretzko, Executive Director

### **Memorial Day**

Chapter representatives were busy on Memorial Day weekend participating in the local parade and hosting a picnic at the radar base. About 25 people came out periodically throughout the day as we grilled out, played badminton, and toured the base with two Wisconsin National Guard Nike veterans. The local press ran a small story on our event.

### **Local Museum Update**

We are continuing talks with the city in order to lease the Nike radar site property. We met with the Mayor and Park's director on Wednesday, June 25 to discuss future plans and possible obstacles to overcome. Their main issue has been to what extent the City can allow an organization in to lease the property. The federal government- notably the National Park Service- has some say over whether or not the Museum concept would constitute recreational activity or not. *(Personal Note: The city has allowed a local gun club to operate the former mess hall building as an indoor shooting range and for gun safety courses since the 1970's. SF-88 has also been allowed to operate as a re-creation of the Nike base in California under the authority of the NPS. In other words, there is precedent to follow).*

### **Korean War Commemoration Event**

The Waukesha County Veterans Service organization is hosting a Korean War Commemoration on July 20 at the local fairgrounds. The Chapter's participation has not been determined yet. We had a commemoration event last November when we invited a potential Congressional Medal of Honor winner to speak to our group (DOD is looking into his case as we speak).

### **Golf Outing Planned**

The 1st Annual Cold War Museum- Midwest Chapter golf outing fundraiser will take place on Saturday August 30 near Waukesha. The fundraiser is being held to establish a local Cold War Museum at the former Nike missile radar base in Waukesha, WI, now known as Hillcrest Park. Although the golf outing is a public event the activity is also part of a 40th reunion gathering of Nike Missile Veterans who were stationed at the Waukesha Nike Missile base from 1956- 1964. The Wisconsin National Guard operated the site from 1964 until it closed in 1970.

As mentioned the Nike Veterans are coming back Labor Day weekend. We are going to exploit the situation by borrowing a Nike Ajax missile from a local American Legion post, complete with launcher, to display at the site for a short time. Details need to be worked out with some issues, however, such as security and transportation. We would like to have it as a permanent display for the Museum but for a variety of reasons we cannot at this time.

### **Fall Speaker Schedule**

We are hammering out a speaking schedule with first hand accounts from individuals this fall already, with topics including:

- ❖ The Polish Odyssey: Stalin's deportation order of the Poles in 1940
- ❖ The NR-1 secret submersible program of the Navy
- ❖ The Pershing missile system in Europe during the Cold War

## **The Atomic Age Comes to Nevada – The Early Years of the Nevada Test Site**

**Bryan J. Dickerson, CWT Editor**

One of the most enduring symbols of the Cold War has been the photos of atomic weapons testing performed in the Nevada desert during the 1950s and early 1960s. Over the course of eleven years, the United States conducted 100 tests of atomic devices at the Nevada Test Site to develop more lethal weapons and evaluate the effects of atomic detonations. Then on 5 August 1963, atmospheric testing of nuclear weapons at the Nevada Test Site came to an end with the signing of the Limited Test Ban Treaty by the United States and the Soviet Union.

The United States and the world entered the Atomic Age on 16 July 1945 when the first atomic bomb was detonated in the New Mexico desert near Alamogordo. Three weeks later, atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan. In doing so, the bombs forced a Japanese surrender, averted a massive and costly U.S. invasion

of the Japanese Home Islands and ended World War Two. Fortunately, these were the only two occasions that atomic weapons were used in anger and hopefully that will never happen again.

In the years following World War II, the United States conducted its testing of atomic weapons at Bikini and Eniwetok Atolls in the South Pacific. Two of the most dramatic tests occurred at Bikini when atomic devices were detonated amidst surplus U.S. Navy warships and captured Japanese Navy ships. The first test --- Able --- was an anticlimactic air-burst. Detonated underwater, the second test -- Baker -- produced a tremendous tidal wave and devastated the target ships. Then in April and May of 1948, three more devices were detonated including a 49 kiloton bomb.

With the Cold War intensifying, serious concerns were raised about the security of the Pacific testing sites. In addition, conducting tests thousands of miles from the U.S. mainland created enormous logistical difficulties. So in 1947 a search was begun to find a testing location within the Continental United States. Several sites were considered, most notably the Almagordo/White Sands, New Mexico; Dugway Proving Ground in Utah; a 50-mile wide area between Fallon and Eureka, Nevada; the North Carolina coast; the Texas Gulf Coast; and the Las Vegas Air Force Range (Nellis Air Force Base after 1950) in southern Nevada. A Continental site would be easier to access, reduce logistical costs and be more secure than the Pacific sites being utilized.

The decision-making process dragged on over the course of the next couple years. The military was initially against a Continental site largely because of its potential effects upon Americans living near the candidate sites. The goal was to find a site located far enough away from population centers to spare them both the blast effects and fall-out carried by weather patterns.

The outbreak of the Korean War had a major impact upon the search for a Continental test site. There were enhanced concerns about the security of the Pacific sites. These sites would also be competing logistically against the wartime needs of American forces fighting in Korea. The latter had to take precedence.

On 18 December 1950, the Nellis site was selected to become the Nevada Proving Grounds (later Nevada Test Site) and approved by President Harry S. Truman. The site was chosen for several important reasons including 1) its distance from population centers, 2) its existing ownership by the U.S. Air Force, and 3) the existence of a government-owned airfield and facilities nearby. A 680-square mile area was carved out of the Air Force range and construction begun for the new test site. The testing facility was to be operated by the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC).

Preparations for the first tests to be conducted at the Nevada Proving Grounds were already underway prior to Truman's approval of the site. At the site, experiment and photography stations, and buildings for administration, first aid/decontamination and test control were constructed. Foxholes were dug and equipped with radiation badges to collect data on the amount of radiation that troops in the field would be exposed to during an atomic attack. Five automobiles were placed at varying distances from Ground Zero to determine their effectiveness in withstanding the blasts.

By the middle of January, the AEC informed Nevada government officials and the public about the upcoming tests scheduled for the end of the month at the Nevada Proving Grounds. Public reaction was mixed. Some in California feared radiation contamination of the drinking water supplies in their state by the testing. Many in southern Nevada actually welcomed the tests for patriotic reasons and expectations of economic benefits provided to the local economy by the facility.

On 25 January 1951, the AEC conducted a dry-run at the Proving Grounds using a conventional bomb to test procedures and equipment. Two days later, the first atomic test was conducted there when a 1 kiloton device was dropped from a B-50 Superfortress bomber over Frenchman Flat. The low-yield test 'Able' was hardly noticed by most Las Vegans who slept through the early morning detonation. The following day's test 'Baker' of a larger 8 kiloton device got much more attention. People in Los Angeles reported seeing the bomb's flash and tourists began descending upon the area to witness the remaining tests.

In the first week of February, three more tests were conducted culminating with Test 'Fox' of a 22 kiloton device that shook buildings and broke some windows in Las Vegas. However at Indian Springs, located just 25 miles from Ground Zero, damage was significant. Numerous homes and buildings suffered broken windows and damage to plumbing, roofs and doors from the shock wave.

Nevertheless, the first series of tests at the Nevada Proving Grounds proved to be successful. Their approximate cost of \$2 million was far more economical than had the tests been conducted in the Pacific. Afterwards, the AEC decided to move the detonation sites northward to Yucca Flat to reduce the effects upon Las Vegas.

Numerous weapons tests were conducted at the Proving Ground which was later renamed the Nevada Test Site. Nuclear devices were dropped from aircraft, and detonated from balloons, on the ground, and atop towers. An atomic shell was even once fired from a large artillery piece. Several tests involved U.S. Army ground troops operating under battlefield conditions. In March 1953, a nuclear device was detonated near a mock-up town which included residential and commercial buildings, automobiles, utilities and mannequins.

Then in October 1958, President Dwight Eisenhower ceased all nuclear testing and soon after the Soviets did so as well. This moratorium on testing lasted until September 1961 when the Soviets resumed testing with a series of fifty tests. In response, nuclear testing resumed at the Nevada Test Site.

Since the early 1950s, serious concerns had been raised about the health effects of radioactive fall-out from nuclear atmospheric testing. Various negotiations were undertaken to affect a ban on atmospheric testing but languished in arguments over on-site inspections and treaty compliance verification. Finally on 5 August 1963, U.S. Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko and British Foreign Minister Sir Douglas Home signed the Limited Test Ban Treaty. This treaty banned the detonation of any nuclear device "in the atmosphere; beyond its limits,

including outer space; or under water, including territorial waters or high seas;” or in any other environment that would allow radioactive fallout to spread beyond the testing nation’s borders. The treaty went into effect on 10 October 1963 and has remained so ever since with over 120 nations as signatories or agreeing to abide by it. The treaty may be found online at <http://www.state.gov/t/ac/trt/4797pf.htm>

The Limited Test Ban Treaty ended atmospheric testing at the Nevada Test Site. The 100<sup>th</sup> and final atmospheric test was conducted on 17 July 1962. Testing went underground and continued until 1992. By 1965, the facility had grown to 1,375 square miles or larger than the state of Rhode Island. A total of 928 tests were performed there including 24 done jointly with Great Britain.

Throughout the Cold War, the Nevada Test Site performed a vital role in the development and testing of America’s nuclear arsenal. The site enabled scientists to better understand the nature of the nuclear reaction and its effects.

[Sources: U.S. Department of Energy. History Division. Executive Secretariat Management and Administration. Terrence R. Fehner and F. G. Gosling. *Origins of the Nevada Test Site*. December 2000; U.S. Department of Energy. Nevada Operations Office. Office of Public Affairs and Information. *Atmospheric Tests at the Nevada Test Site 1951-1962*. March 2001.; Keith Rogers, “We Were in Awe.” *Las Vegas Review-Journal*. 17 December 2000.; John Newhouse, *War and Peace in the Nuclear Age*. NY: Knopf, 1989.; Mary Manning, “Atomic Legacy: Test Site Museum will preserve history of nuclear experiments.” *Las Vegas Sun*. 5 July 2002.]

***“And on Memorial Day, we must remember  
a special group of veterans, Americans still missing  
and unaccounted for from Vietnam, Korea, the Cold War  
and World War II. We honor them today. They deserve  
and will have our best efforts to achieve the  
fullest possible accounting and, alive or dead,  
to return them home to America. “***

***---- President George W. Bush, Memorial Day 2001***