

## The Cold War (1946-1989)

During the Cold War the United States and Soviet Union were locked in an ideological confrontation. Both nations raced to develop nuclear arms and systems for their delivery. Relations with the Soviet Union were tense, with Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev thundering "We will bury you!" (1956) and the Soviets attempting to base nuclear missiles in Cuba (1962).

## The Nike Hercules Missile

During the early years of the Cold War, U.S. military planners believed the Soviet Union would use strategic bombers to gain a foothold in Alaska to attack other American cities.

To defend major military installa-

tions near Anchorage and Fairbanks, the U.S. Army decided in 1955 to install the Nike Hercules missile system. The missiles, armed with high explosive or nu-



*Live fire at Site Summit ca. 1961.*

clear warheads, were designed to destroy close formations of long range bombers.

Three sites were constructed around Anchorage: Site Bay, across Knik Arm at Goose Bay; Site Point, near Anchorage International Airport; and Site Summit, atop Mt. Gordon Lyon east of Anchorage in the Chugach Mountains. Site Summit was one of only two active Nike Hercules Missile Sites in the nation to hold annual live firing exercises, which continued until 1964 when population growth down range of the site made live firings too dangerous.

Advances in ballistic missile technology led the Army to begin phasing out Nike Missiles in 1965. The sites near Fairbanks were closed in 1970 and 1971, then later demolished. Site Summit was decommissioned in 1979.

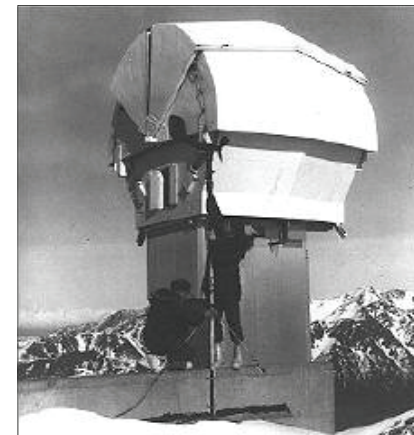
## A Park, A Prison, and an Uncertain Future

After closing, Site Point was transferred to the Municipality of Anchorage and incorporated into the popular Kincaid Park. Site Bay was transferred to the State of Alaska and served as a prison until 1988. It sat abandoned until 2006 when it was demolished. Site Summit has been abandoned since 1979, suffering from neglect, vandalism, and the elements. It was listed on the National Register of His-

toric Places in 1996 as a nationally significant site.

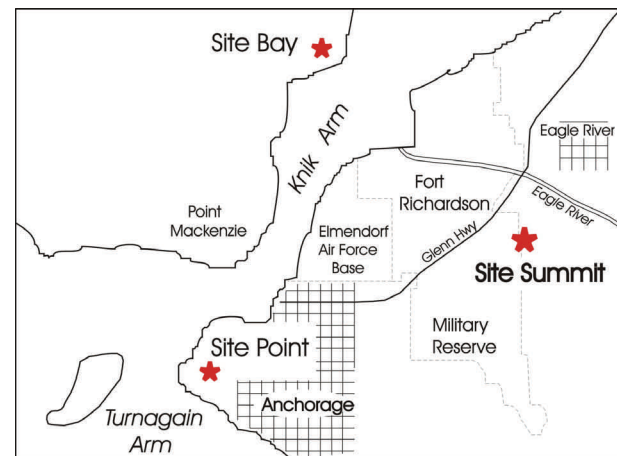
## About Site Summit

Site Summit stood guard over Anchorage from 1959 to 1979. It consists of two separate sites: a Battery Control Area and a Missile Launch and Storage Area.



*One of the "clamshell" radars at Site Summit ca. 1960.*

The Battery Control Area sits at the 3,900 foot elevation with a clear view of the Missile Launch and Storage Area. It housed the site's radar, command and control, and personnel facilities.





*An Anchorage icon, the Christmas Star below the Site Summit launch area has been there since Site Summit soldiers built it in 1960.*

The Missile Launch and Storage Area sits at the 3,000 foot elevation, approximately 5,000 feet from the Battery Control Area. It comprised the missile launch and storage bunkers, the warhead magazine, and the launch control building.

Of the 145 Nike Hercules Missile sites constructed across the nation, Site Summit is the only one to survive as a nearly complete site. The site provides a unique opportunity to educate the public about Alaska's frontline role in the Cold War and tell the story of those who served.

### **Preservation**

FONSS and other interested parties are in consultation with the Army about the future of Site Summit.

We are advocating preservation of the site, proposing an interpretive program that includes hiking and van tours conducted in cooperation with the Army. As the popularity of Chugach State Park continues to grow, Site Summit will increase the appeal of Arctic Valley and add to the historic education and outdoor recreation opportunities for Anchorage residents and visitors.

### **What Can You Do?**

Join Friends of Nike Site Summit! We meet monthly at the offices of the Alaska Association for Historic Preservation (AAHP) at the address below. For more information, go to our website,

**<http://www.nikesitesummit.org>**

or contact us at:

Friends of Nike Site Summit  
c/o AAHP  
645 W. 3rd Avenue  
Anchorage, AK 99501  
(907) 929-9870

Tax-deductible contributions may be made to AAHP. Write "Nike Site Summit" in the memo field to direct your contribution to the Friends of Nike Site Summit.

# **Friends of Nike Site Summit**



### **Preserving a Vital Part of Alaska's Cold War History**

Friends of Nike Site Summit (FONSS) is a citizens' group dedicated to the preservation of Site Summit, a Cold War-era Nike Hercules Missile site adjacent to the Municipality of Anchorage and Chugach State Park. Members include veterans, historians, retired National Park Service and Alaska State Parks employees, and other interested individuals.

**<http://www.nikesitesummit.org>**