



Friends of Nike Site Summit

Our mission is to preserve site summit as a monument to Cold War veterans and to educate present and future generations about the Cold War

July 12, 2007

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Re: Comments on Site Summit Draft Environmental Assessment

The Friends of Nike Site Summit appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Draft Environmental Assessment and offer to continue in our role as one of the consulting parties in the ongoing Environmental Assessment and in the future in the development of the Section 106 process as the details for a programmatic agreement are worked out.

According to 1st. Lieutenant Tom Skonie, Battery Commander Nike Site Summit from 1968 to 1969, Site Summit was visited by many VIPs including NATO Generals to high ranking officials in the Defense Department, as the Army loved to "Show the place off". We believe that the pride and good will that Nike Site Summit provided back then, can be re-born for a new generation today. The website for Fort Richardson proclaims "Rich in History, Proud of our Past, Transforming for the Future!" We appreciate the willingness of the Army to look again and re-evaluate the options that will allow the historic Nike Site Summit to be transformed for its new role as a future centerpiece, proudly showing the world Fort Richardson's rich history during the Cold War.

Primary among our core values is the preservation of Site Summit and we look forward to assisting in working out a joint partnership with the National Park Service through an Affiliated Area status, or a similar joint management agreement. We believe that such an agreement would maintain the vital training role that Fort Richardson plays, while simultaneously protecting human health and the environment. A strong theme runs through the comments that you received during the Scoping Summary Process, and what we hear when we talk to people today.... Don't let this Historic Site fall down from "benign neglect" or be prematurely

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Core Values:

- **Preservation** – preserve site summit
- **Education** – educate present and future generations on the Cold War
- **Support** - support and collaborate with the U.S. Army Alaska

destroyed. Central among those comments is the importance of the Battery Control Building and all of its associated radars towards understanding the human factors that make Nike Site Summit even more historically important. The Battery Control Building is far more than just a barracks, it was the heart, nerve center and even soul of the place. The incredibly harsh winter conditions meant that the buildings at Site Summit were modified from the Army's standard designs in order to facilitate 24/7 operations, including ballast and cables to hold the building down in high winds. Not only was it their home (reportedly at times for 60 days without being able to leave!), it had the generators that powered the facility when they went to full "Hot Status", the mess hall and recreation center, Chapel, laundry facilities, PX, and most importantly, the Integrated Fire Control Vans. Each of the 5 radars performed unique and distinctive roles, and we have heard stories about how they occasionally would give conflicting data. Yes, it might be possible to show photos of the button that quite literally could launch the United States into a nuclear war with Russia, but that pales with the impact of standing in that very room, surrounded with the stark radar screens, alarms and rows of buttons. The Battery / Control Building would be the centerpiece of the site, critical to giving an immediacy and much more complete understanding of the real mission of all of the Nike Sites. As one of our members put it, would people go to Stonehenge if there were only one stone?

We understand that due to budget restrictions, what is decided upon in this Environmental Assessment may not actually come to pass for several more years. If the decision is made in this EA to demolish the Battery Control Building, we urge the Army to not rush into demolition, and at least maintain flexibility in implementing that decision until the full impacts of demolishing the Battery Control Building and other buildings is known, and other options for paying for the costs of stabilizing the site are worked out. We believe that it is important to avoid irreversible steps, such as demolition, until an Affiliated Area Study is done to determine if the site would lose Nationally Significant Status if certain buildings are demolished. The sad truth is that demolition of historic structures is often only regretted 40 or 50 years later. Maintaining more of the historic buildings may be critical to obtaining both grants and yearly operating funds. We urge the Army to formally request that the National Park Service conduct an Affiliated Area Study before any irreversible changes are made to Site Summit, such as demolition.

We would like to point out that one important option may have been overlooked in the DEA, namely that the Army and the US Department of Defense need not be the only contributing agency towards the preservation and revitalization of Site Summit. We believe that Alternate 2, as it presently is proposed, is highly likely to make Site Summit in-eligible to become an Affiliated Area within the National Park Service, and negate the possibility of securing future funds for joint management. While the DEA states that Site Summit may retain its eligibility as a Historic District under both Alternative 2 and 3¹, the DEA is silent on whether or not the proposed demolition under Alternative 2 would make Site Summit ineligible for National Historic Significance status or as a National Historic Landmark.

The National Park System has few available Cold War historic sites available to tell this important part of our history. With the upcoming 100 year anniversary of the National Park Service, it is possible that funding may be available for Site Summit, but demolition of structures

¹ Management of Nike Site Summit DEA, June 2007, Pages 3-18 and 3-20.

that the DEA admits are "critical to understanding the function of Site Summit"² may jeopardize such funding. Similarly, Anchorage will be celebrating its 100 year anniversary in 2015, and Site Summit could be a centerpiece, showing how the Cold War contributed to Anchorage's history. There are a number of grants available if Nike Site Summit maintains national standing. Although site summit is listed on the National Register of Historic Places that is not considered sufficient status for grant monies. To be eligible site summit would have to be elevated to one of the following:

1. National Historic Landmark status – NHL status would give site summit the national standing that it needs to be considered for any National Park Service resources.
2. National Park Affiliated Area status – affiliated area status would create eligibility for Centennial Initiative funds. Affiliated status would probably not happen without first obtaining a NHL designation.
3. National Park Service Centennial Initiative - A ten year, \$2 billion initiative to improve our National Park System for the National Park Service's centennial in 2016. Centennial Initiative projects and programs will use up to \$100 million per year, to match contributions from private partners.
4. Save America's Treasures (SAT) grants – Projects involving National Historic Landmarks. National Historic Landmarks are the only projects eligible for SAT grants, which are matching grants up to \$700,000.
5. Other Possibilities – A relatively small amount of money could be used to leverage grant monies. Smaller grants from organizations such as the Rasmuson Foundation, Getty Foundation, Birch Foundation and Atwood Foundation could provide a pool for stabilization, clean-up and interpretation.

The Friends of Nike Site Summit support maintaining the mission-critical training at Fort Richardson. We also believe that the limitations indicated by the Draft Environmental Assessment by the Range Fan, and by other training activities closer to the actual site can be overcome by creative and mutually beneficial ways that can even enhance the security of the site during the interim period before the decisions of the EA can be put into affect. Those can be worked out during the Section 106 discussions. There is no doubt that vandalism is decreased when more people are present to see and report on illegal activities. We believe that carefully coordinated van tours and guided hikes will both serve to educate and encourage people to assist in the preservation of Site Summit, as well as providing an increased public presence.

We admit that Nike Site Summit has significant environmental issues that can potentially affect human health and the environment, as well as direct safety issues such as trip and fall hazards, as well as electrical hazards. We support the Army's goal to decrease the potential for exposures to hazardous materials, but believe that the Army's stated intent to remove ALL hazardous materials from the site is neither possible nor required to protect human health and the environment. We believe that removal of current health hazards and partial removal and stabilization of the remaining asbestos and lead-based paints will both protect the historic nature of the site, protect the public and staff from the potentially hazardous materials, and will cost significantly less than the abatement that would be required to be completed prior to demolition. Unfortunately, that is not possible to determine at this time because the EA has thus far relied on old, incomplete data. As discussed below in our proposed revisions to Table 3.4-1, we believe

² Management of Nike Site Summit DEA, June 2007, Page 2-2, top.

that it may be more cost effective to retain the buildings and maintain some of the potentially hazardous materials in place, than it would be to abate and demolish them.

Our specific recommendations are as follows:

We support a modified version of Alternative (#2), the Army's preferred alternative that retains more historically significant buildings. Note that Alternatives #3 and #4 would likely preclude the site ever being an Affiliated Park or a National Historic Landmark.

1. Consider leaving more buildings intact, including the Battery / Control Building and all 3 radar towers. (See table below.) Not only will these buildings contribute to the public's understanding of the site, but retaining them could be critical to attaining national significance status.
2. The Army (page 2-12) says "routine public access to a park or other historical interpretive center at Site Summit would be disruptive to Army training." Simply mothballing the site does not promote public education about its Cold War mission and the Soldiers who worked there. We encourage the Army to work with FoNSS and other agencies to find ways to allow some sort of reasonable public access. A combination of controlled van tours and guided hikes could accomplish this objective.
3. Interpretive signs should be placed within the Site Summit Historic District, not elsewhere. Because the battery sites are inaccessible in winter, signs at Alpenglow are appropriate, as would be directional signage at the base of the mountain (Moose Run vicinity). However, interpretive signs at the Upper and Lower sites are also necessary.
4. Ensure that no actions such as the security fences listed on Page 3-5 impact the ability to have the site registered as a National Historic Landmark and ultimate designation as an Affiliated Park under NPS.
5. Ensure that securing of structures does not impact the public's ability to visually appreciate the site.
6. Encourage USAGAK to update the NRHP nomination as discussed in the EA.
7. Attaining National Historic Landmark status, or being listed as having National Historic Significance may open up the possibility of grants to help pay for the necessary abatement and stabilization. Encourage the USAGAK to revisit the list of proposed building demolition to make sure that historically significant structures are not demolished.
8. Encourage USAGAK to formally request that the National Park Service conduct an Affiliated Area Study before any irreversible changes are made to Site Summit, such as demolition.
9. Complete environmental and hazardous materials surveys prior to making the final decisions on demolition, as it likely may be less costly to retain the buildings with the potentially hazardous materials stabilized and maintained in place than it would be to demolish the buildings.

Here are our proposed changes to Table 3.4-1 of the EA where our recommendations are different from the recommendations of Alternative 2, along with an abbreviated justification, followed by more extended discussions of the various buildings: FoNSS believes retaining the buildings indicated would substantially enhance the historic and educational value of the site. We believe that those marked "More cost effective" should be sealed (if necessary), stabilized

and left standing because they add to the historic visual impact of the site, and it would likely be less costly to do so, than to abate, demolish, and remove the structure from the site.

Priority	Property	Action (An * shows different action from EA)	Justification
UPPER SITE (Integrated Fire Control)			
1	Battery Building, #1	Retain *	Critical to achieving National Significance and for Interpretation
2	Target Tracking Radar, #2	Retain *	Critical to achieving National Significance and for Interpretation
3	Missile Tracking Radar, #3	Retain *	Critical to achieving National Significance and for Interpretation
4	Target Ranging Radar, #4	Retain *	Critical to achieving National Significance and for Interpretation
LOWER SITE (Launch Control)			
6	Sentry Station, #15	Retain *	Important for Interpretation/ More cost effective
7	Sentry Station, #16	Retain *	Important for Interpretation/ More cost effective
10	Guided Missile Maintenance Building, #17	Retain *	Important for Interpretation
5	Launch Control Building, #19	Retain *	Important for Interpretation
9	Dog Kennel, #21	Retain *	Important for Interpretation/ More cost effective
8	Sentry Station, #22	Retain *	Important for Interpretation/ More cost effective
11	Electrical Substation D, #24	Retain *	Not critical/More cost effective
12	Electrical Substation, #27	Retain *	Not critical/More cost effective

Battery / Control Building (#1) housed administrative offices, a briefing room for VIPs, the barracks, mess hall, PX, day room, supply room, laundry room, medical clinic, and even a small chapel. Nike missiles were originally mobile, and the concrete wing of the Battery Building had two vans: one van had MTR (Missile Tracking Radar) and TTR (Target Tracking Radar) operators and the other van had the battery control officer and acquisition radar operators. The concrete wing also housed the generator for tactical power.

Target Tracking Radar (#2) and Missile Tracking Radar (#3) as well as the Target Ranging Radar (#4) were key components of the Integrated Fire Control. Unfortunately, the large HIPAR dome has been removed, and, architecturally and historically, it is desirable and important to retain the remaining three radar structures.

Sentry Station (#15) was the main security gate to the site and its log motif is unique. This was the “Check Point Charlie” of the missile site.

Sentry Station (#16) controlled access to the launch area and housed security alarms (The bee hive).

Launch Control Building (#19) was the “ready room” for launch crew and contained temporary living (sleeping and eating) accommodations as well as test and communications equipment.

Dog Kennel (#21) provided shelter for the sentry dogs. The launch area was patrolled from 6 pm until 6 am, nightly, by roving guards with sentry dogs. The shelter protected the dogs from subzero temperatures and strong winds. In winter, frozen water and resultant dehydration was a constant problem for sentry dogs and the kennel was key to the sentry dog program.

Sentry Station (#22) was the innermost security gate and controlled access to the missiles. Being able to see the concentric rings of security is important for understanding the different categories and consequences if you were found in the wrong security area.

Thanks for your consideration of our comments and we look forward to your re-dedication to dialogue with the Alaska State Parks system, the National Parks System, and other interested parties in finding a mutually agreeable solution to preserve and use this historic property.

Yours truly,

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