

EXCLUSIVE!

Inside A Titan Missile Base

First picture tour of a new ICBM fort—armed, manned and ready. Meet the modern GI who keeps America's "power for peace" on the alert 160 feet underground . . . **Page 4**

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Window Dummies**
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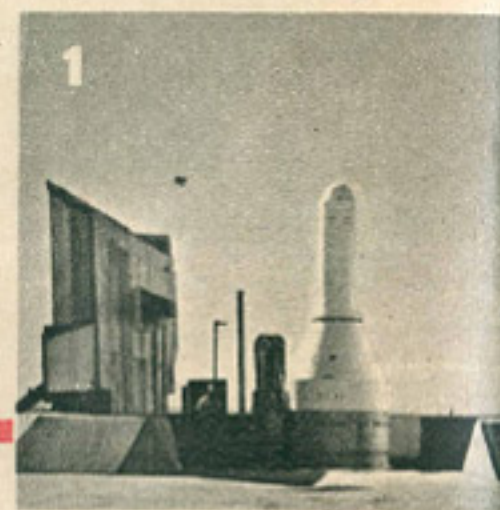
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EXCLUSIVE! Underground with the

Men Who Man



PHOTOGRAPHS BY MAXWELL COPLAN

"Man launch positions!" The command sends GIs to subterranean battle stations. The first magazine writers inside a fully-armed Titan base tell how awesome U.S. "power for peace" is kept at the ready

By JAMES BAAR and WILLIAM E. HOWARD

BEHIND THIS STORY: America's power to hit back is the Free World's guarantee against aggression. This "Power For Peace," the theme of Armed Forces Week (May 12-20), lies today with the Titan intercontinental missile bases, armed, manned and ready.

The first magazine writers given access to a combat-ready Titan site are James Baar and William E. Howard, experts in the field of modern weapons and spacecraft, authors of the THIS WEEK article, "First Polaris Peace Patrol" [March 12, 1961] and the books "Polaris!", "Combat Missileman" and recently published "Spacecraft and Missiles of the World, 1962."

Maxwell Coplan, first magazine photographer admitted to many top-secret defense installations, on assignment from THIS WEEK, was the first allowed to photograph the combat-ready Titan base.

LOWRY AIR FORCE BASE, COLO.

A PRAIRIE DOG scoots across the asphalt road as the bus stops near a domed manhole lying inconspicuously in the dry grass. A major named Bruce

Fox, who looks like a young Clark Gable, steps out and flicks a switch on a metal post. The steel cover opens noiselessly. A flight of circular steps barely wide enough for a man, leads straight down.

This is the front door to Site 4A of the 724th Strategic Missile Squadron — the home of the first underground force of the Strategic Air Command's new Titan ICBM.

One by one 10 more men emerge from the bus and follow Fox down the stairway in the prairie. A certain distance down, they come to a massive steel door. Fox presses a button on the wall and stands in front of a TV camera, an electronic sentry. Then he squeezes a handle on the circular door, gives a shove, and the door slowly revolves, carrying him inside. One by one, his men follow.

Now they stand on a platform rimming an elevator shaft. Wider stairs lead downward. They descend, more quickly now, heels clattering on steel steps. The air is warm and slightly scented with fresh paint and machine oil, the way brightly lighted.

Far below, a bell clangs and elevator cables hum.

"What a way to go to work," Fox says, smiling. "You get in this hole and you never know whether it's day or night."

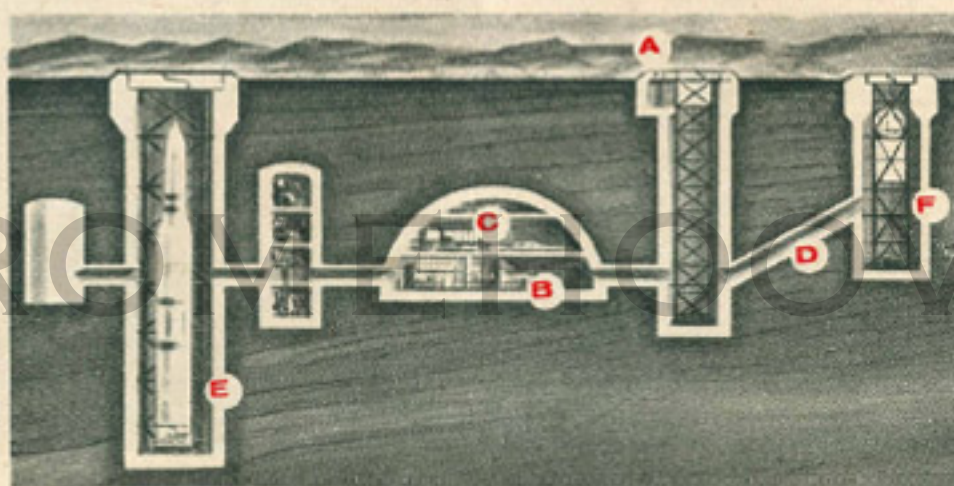
Forty-two feet beneath the surface the men pass through another steel door into a long tunnel painted yellow and ribbed on either wall with pipes and cable conduits.

They emerge on the second floor of a domed two-story building and file into a steel-walled room where they take seats before a blackboard. An officer promptly begins a briefing. Site 4A is about to be taken over by a fresh crew. . .

The mighty Titan rocket, a 98-foot pillar of aluminum topped by a nuclear warhead of tremendous power, is the latest addition to America's growing arsenal of ICBMs. It is the first to go completely underground — protected by a virtually impregnable shield of earth, concrete and steel so that it can, if necessary, ride out a nuclear attack and still retaliate. Only a — *continued on page 6*



A At 6 a.m., manhole opens, crew goes down



THE TITAN COMPLEX: A: Entrance. B: Briefing room. C: Control room. D: Connecting tunnel. E: Missile silo. F: Antennae silo. On this and following pages photographs show sequence of activity as crew mans launch operation



B In briefing room officer gives day's orders

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The

Titans



C CONTROL CENTER keeps electronic watch as Titan noses up, ready to go (see top of page). Some of instrument panels have been blanked out for security reasons

Continued from page 4

Clocks start, men race, as the mighty gun is cocked

direct hit by an enemy H-bomb can destroy it.

Site 4A, 30 miles east of Denver, is one of six Titan underground complexes scattered in a 200-mile arc around Lowry Air Force Base. Each site cradles three Titans in 160-foot deep silos — 18 missiles in all, ready to be launched on 15 minutes' notice across the Arctic at targets in Soviet Russia. The nipple-shaped warhead measuring about eight feet in length on each missile is hundreds of times more powerful than the A-bombs which obliterated Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

This is the first step in the Strategic Air Com-



D 400-foot tunnel is main artery of whole underground complex. See diagram on Page 4

mand's great transition from the sky to underground. Over the next five years hundreds of other ICBM's — an advanced Atlas, a new model Titan and the sleek, solid-fueled Minuteman, will move underground at bases across the country.

Twelve hours underground

The clock on the wall says 5:55. The briefing breaks up. Fox and his ground electronics officer, Captain Don Smith, head up the stairs to the control room. The other members of the crew, operating as two-man "buddy" teams, fan out to their posts to relieve their opposite numbers on duty.

No man moves through the underground complex by himself. This is a safety precaution. In the propellant terminal, alone, liquid nitrogen is stored under a pressure of 6,000 pounds per square inch. There are thousands of gallons of highly inflammable liquid oxygen. There are other dangers: the complex's high voltage system and the deep concrete silos that house the missiles and radio guidance antennae. More prosaically, he could crack his skull on hundreds of sharp corners and jutting pipes in the jammed underground "battleship."

Safety is the Air Force watchword in missile operations. A series of actions must be taken before a Titan can be fired, and no one man can activate the many controls which send the big bird on its way. Other safeguards assure that its powerful warhead will never accidentally detonate.

In the control room, Fox and Smith sit strapped to their chairs before their button-lined command consoles. Over their heads are three 15-minute

countdown clocks, one for each missile. To the left over a safe in which secret target punch cards are stored is a fourth clock. It would be set in motion at the moment SAC goes to war.

Elsewhere in the complex sprawling under 70 acres of prairie, Sergeant Abraham McMillan begins reading dials on the propellant tanks of No. 3 missile. . . Sergeant Frank Wood, a balding ex-sailor turned bomber maintenance man, runs a test on one of the four giant diesel generators in the power house. . . Sergeant Raymond Meadows, a husky young volunteer, rides down the elevator in No. 1 silo within touching distance of its huge missile. . .

"Could be the real thing"

All of these officers and men are hardened SAC veterans, most of them volunteer transfers from the nuclear bomber forces. Some came from ground crews and others, like the 40-year-old Major Fox, have flown hundreds of missions.

Fox hangs up a phone and cuts in on the P.A. "This is the commander," he says. "Our principal mission today is expected to be a launch exercise. We also definitely will have a full maintenance check on the power house."

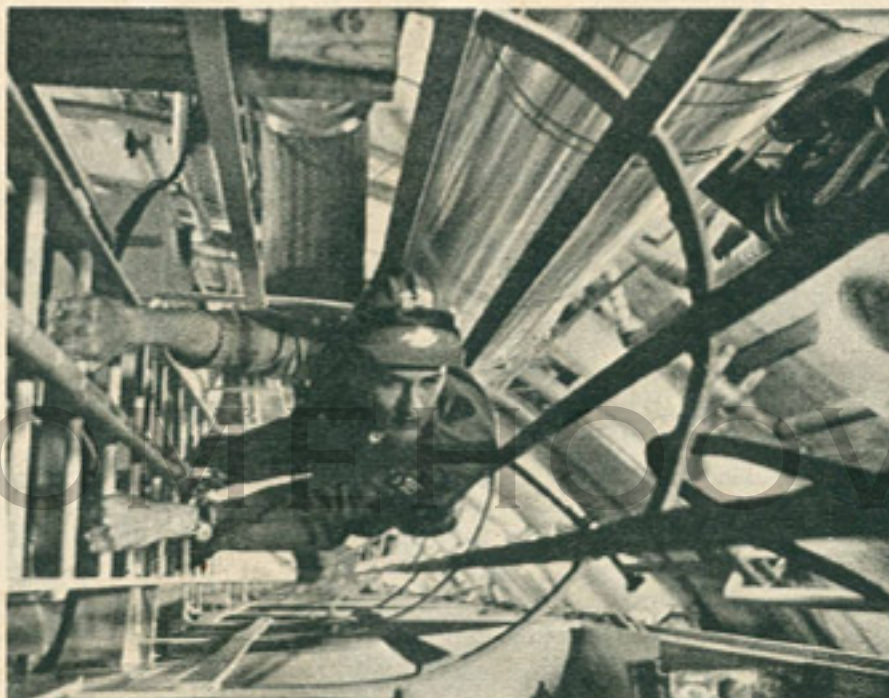
The major clicks off the microphone and turns to Smith. "For all we know, when the code comes in, it could be the real thing."

The clock in the mess hall under the control center reads 4:10 p.m. McMillan, Wood and two other missilemen are eating their second meal of the shift.

"I don't know about working a shift longer than the twelve hours we're doing now," Wood says to McMillan. "Twelve hours, maybe eighteen or so, but twenty-four to thirty-six, I don't know."

"It wouldn't be bad," McMillan says, helping himself to another piece of corn bread. "You go on duty for twelve hours; grab some sleep; then back to duty and before you know it you have a nice thirty-six hours off at home."

"Yeah," Wood says, "that's all right up here in control center or maybe working in the silos but not in that power house. Even with ear plugs and muffs, after thirteen hours in that place you begin to



E Missile silo. It's 8 floors deep. In case of trouble, soldier has 40 seconds to get out before flooding

feel the screws in your head start to tighten. It's like being in the engine room aboard a battleship. First time I saw this place, that's what I said. I told my wife I'm back in the Navy."

"Dry lake . . . vacuum . . . high hill . . . drug store . . ."

The words crackle over the loudspeaker in the Control Center. Fox and Smith decode the message as it comes over and confirm it. Fox's voice now cuts through the complex: "Man launch positions." Smith unlocks the target cards. The big hands on the countdown clocks and war clock begin to jump from second to second. Fox punches the first buttons in the launch series.

Meantime, men are in motion throughout the complex. McMillan has already reached the Control Center from the mess hall. Wood has raced to the power house. But the men who move fastest are those on the silo side of blast doors in the connecting tunnels.

When the launch order came and jangling warning bells began to ring, Sergeant Meadows was at the very bottom of No. 1. There was no time to wait for the elevator. He scrambled up the silo wall on a straight ladder beside the great, purring missile; ran down the long yellow tunnel, and clanged shut the second blast door in under 80 seconds.

Set for the countdown

Back in the Control Center, the room is hushed. Fox has already pushed the buttons labeled: LOAD PROPELLANT. Now he pushes the buttons labeled: RAISE LAUNCHER. The sound of machinery and power rumbles through the entire complex. On the surface, the great silo doors open and the deadly white noses of three Titans glide upward from the earth one by one. Several hundred feet away, the smaller doors of one guidance silo also slowly open and a disc-shaped antenna emerges.

Now the mighty gun is cocked. Inside the complex, the countdown clocks have stopped within seconds of launching. Only the war clock's hands continue to move in the silent room. Fox, Smith, McMillan, all sit frozen and wait for the ultimate order in the cool artificial light of the buried fortress. Above ground, the Titans tower over the prairie.

Suddenly, the three silvery missiles shudder slightly. Then they begin to slip back into their underground lairs. Within minutes they have again disappeared beneath the surface of the earth and the concrete doors have silently closed.

EARLY EVENING. Fox and his crew gather in the command center briefing room. The relief crew has arrived. Fox leads his men past the circular access lock and up to the surface to the waiting bus.

A few miles from the complex it stops briefly at a farmer's house. Several of the missilemen buy some fresh eggs. The bus moves on toward the base and home.

Out beneath the prairie, the mighty Titans remain on guard.

—THE END

