

HEADQUARTERS  
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF INFORMATION  
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ARMY NEWS SERVICE - SPECIAL RELEASE

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NOTE TO THE EDITOR:

The following statement by the Chief of Staff is provided in order that Army personnel may be informed on the subject. Immediate use of this material will assist in accomplishing this objective.

STATEMENT CONCERNING THE ARMY'S ROLE IN AIR DEFENSE

BY

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Chief of Staff United States Army

A military retaliatory force designed to deter general, thermonuclear war must have a proper balance of offensive and defensive components. Impressed with the need for the offensive component of our air-atomic forces, we Americans have tended heretofore to place our defensive forces on a comparatively low priority, rationalizing that the best defense is a good offense. However, under a national policy of abstention from preventive atomic attack on our enemies, we must have an effective air defense capability as an indispensable defensive component of an integrated general war deterrent force. Otherwise, we cannot absorb the first blow and go on to win such victory as is possible if our general war deterrent fails.

In connection with the Army's contribution to this air defensive component, I should like to make two fundamental points -- the Army has a properly assigned job in air defense and the Army is doing that job well.

The Army came into the air defense field through a natural, historical transition. At the outset, we manned the only weapons which could be fired from the ground at the first hostile aircraft. Thus we have been in the anti-aircraft field since the inception of military airplanes. We then be-

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111 add 111

came the pioneers in surface-to-air missiles. Our experts foresaw in time during World War II the implications of mounting bomber performance and initiated intensive research and development on surface-to-air missiles. Research and development on the NIKE-AJAX missile began in 1945 and it became operational in December 1953, the first operational missile of this kind in the U. S. arsenal.

By the time that bombers had acquired supersonic speeds, the Army had ready the highly lethal second generation of the NIKE family -- the NIKE HERCULES. This weapon is now operational as a timely defense against all aircraft and aircraft launched missiles which can be presently foreseen. The reliability, capability, and extreme accuracy of NIKE HERCULES have been proved against the fastest, highest and most difficult targets which modern technology has been able to devise.

This concentrated effort to meet new threats is an execution of the responsibility of the Army in the air defense field, as set forth in the official statements of service roles and missions, first in the so-called Key West Agreement and recently in the Department of Defense Directive, "Functions of the Department of Defense and its Major Components," dated 31 December 1958. It should be noted that the Army is charged with organizing, training, and equipping air defense units, not only for the defense of the Continental United States, but also for the defense of overseas commands and of military forces in the field. Continental air defense is only one part of our job.

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22 May 1959

222 add 222

Thus, it is evident that the Army has a clearly established responsibility in air defense. It is perhaps more important that it can and does discharge this responsibility well. In passing from tube antiaircraft artillery to surface-to-air missiles, the Army has developed the training, administrative, and logistical organization necessary to support an expanding missile air defense system. Apart from the thirty-nine thousand officers and men actually manning surface-to-air missile batteries, the Army utilizes about twenty thousand soldiers and civilians in the operation of the back-up training and administrative and logistical organization necessary to carry forward the air defense program. This organization and the experience derived from its operation belong uniquely to the Army and are assets not readily transferable to any other agency.

As a final word, I should like to discuss the concept of air defense which guides the Army in the development of its weapons and its tactics. We consider that our immediate problem is to provide an effective defense against current and foreseeable enemy bombers and missiles. In recognition of the great cost of modern air defense weapons and the need to get the most defense from their use, we consider that first priority should be placed upon the defense of our retaliatory capability, our important cities and other installations essential to national survival. While Army missiles are often referred to as being for "point" defense, they can and do defend vital targets of substantial size which in the aggregate constitute extensive urban areas and complexes, any one of which may cover thousands of square miles. The Army surface-to-air missiles are designed to provide a building block type of air defense for these areas. In this concept, the basic building block is the missile battery which is a self contained fire unit capable of fully autonomous operation. It is located well away from the defended installations so that it can destroy hostile bombers or air and submarines launched missiles before they can reach the target. The number of these batteries can

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333 add 333

be increased as desired until the price of penetration for the attacker becomes prohibitively high. This approach is merely a new application of the old military principle that in organizing a defensive position, a commander first meets the needs for an effective defense of the most vital elements of the position. Then he uses his remaining resources to provide reconnaissance and outpost elements in as much depth as possible in the same way, the Army stresses the need for providing a dense missile defense for vital targets, after attaining which our remaining resources may be applied to extending the area defended by use of interceptors and possibly of interceptor type missiles.

The foregoing concept is sound for defense against either bombers or intercontinental ballistic missiles. To counter the latter threat the Army believes that it can and must provide an antimissile defense of vital localities through the deployment of the NIKE ZEUS system. The more we study the problem of destroying the enemy missiles prior to launch the more we are impressed with the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of countering such missiles if they are mobile, concealed, or hardened. We must assume that the Russians will take these passive defensive measures. The resulting invulnerability of the enemy missile system will place increased importance upon the earliest deployment of an anti-ballistic missile defensive capability as an indispensable part of our deterrent forces.

In conclusion, as our ability to strike back adequately after we have been hit provides the only sure deterrent to general war, it is essential that we defend adequately our retaliatory capability. Unless we have in being an effective defense against surprise attack, our retaliatory forces may be destroyed in large measure on the ground. Even if our bombers are able to leave their bases prior to the initial enemy attack, these bases must still be defended to provide the planes with a place to return. Otherwise, the Strategic Air Command will be a one strike force.

The Army's surface-to-air missile units currently furnish a vital element of the protection required. They are operational now and qualitatively are capable of meeting any type of threat from air-breathing type aircraft or missiles. They can become capable of coping with the ballistic missile. They must exist in quantity proportionate to their potential contribution to the security of the United States and its forces in the field.