



"From October 1956 to July 1958, I was part of the Nike guided missile sites that were set-up across America during the Cold War... I was stationed at Battery B of the 516th AAA Missile Battalion

Our main duty was to keep the missile site operationally ready. Much of the rest of our time was spent in housekeeping chores.

The launching site covered about 20 acres of ground...

In 1958, the Nike base set up a white colored replica Nike missile and launcher in a grass covered area in downtown Utica by the Baptist Church ... to provide information to the public about Nike guided missiles."

I will never forget my two years at the Nike site.. 'Thank you' to all of my Army friends that I served with and 'thank you' to all the kind people of Utica and Shelby Township."

- Reverend Ronald C. Purkey
(to Shelby Historical Committee) -

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS OF NIKE HERCULES

- ❑ **Length: 41 feet**
- ❑ **Diameter: 31.5 inches**
- ❑ **Wingspan: 6 ft. 2 in.**
- ❑ **Booster Fuel: Solid propellant**
- ❑ **Range: over 75 miles**
- ❑ **Speed: Mach 3.65 (2,707 mph)**
- ❑ **Altitude: Up to 150,000 feet**
- ❑ **Guidance: Command by electronic computer and radar**
- ❑ **Missile fuel: solid propellant.**

NIKE GUIDED MISSILES

In the early 1950's, the U.S. Army deployed Nike - the world's first operational, guided, surface-to-air missiles (right). By the late 50's the U.S. Army began replacing the original Nike Ajax batteries with the longer-range nuclear-capable Nike Hercules.



UTICA NIKE BASE

Nike Batteries included three separate areas. The administrative and Integrated Fire Control (IFC) areas were usually co-located. Launch areas were separated by at least 1,000 yards but within visual sight of each other.

Photos of Utica Base: bases for the radar towers (right); barracks for maintenance area (bottom right).



The Nike guided missile system was placed in the field of defense of the major areas of the U.S. in 1953. It was the first guided missile to be deployed in defense of the United States. The Nike Ajax system was designed to supplement and then replace gun batteries deployed around the nation's major urban areas and vital military installations.

The administrative areas included barracks, a mess hall, and a recreation/administration supply building. These buildings were typically one-story cinder block structures with flat roofs. The original Nike barracks at River Bends Park have been converted to the Shadbrush Environmental Center for Utica Community Schools.

The Utica site was dedicated in October 1957 and was manned until 1964 by members of Battery B-516th AAA Missile Battalion.



Adapted from materials collected by the Shelby Township Historical Committee.



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