

## 1957-2007 — SMDC/ARSTRAT Celebrates

# Mission begins on Redstone Road

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**REDSTONE ARSENAL, Ala.** — The U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command/Army Forces Strategic Command can trace its lineage back 50 years.

The lineage is not traced through unit name, battles or campaigns, but by its unique mission. Although the name has changed and the organization has grown tremendously through the years, the command can track its heritage back to a humble beginning in a small brick building on Redstone Road.

At the end of World War II, the United States and the rest of the world were introduced to two new threats — ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons. In 1955, the technological challenge posed by this new threat led the Army to begin studying the feasibility of creating a defense against ballistic missiles. The results of this study and the news that the Soviets had launched their first ICBM in August 1957 created an urgent need to develop an effective missile defense system.

On Oct. 3, 1957, the Redstone Anti-Missile Missile Systems Office (RAMMSO) was activated at Redstone Arsenal by the Army Ordnance Corps. The RAMMSO initiated research that led to the NIKE-ZEUS anti-missile system and provided the foundation for the Army's space and missile defense program.

The fledgling RAMMSO office was staffed initially by only five military and 19 civilians who were transferred from various sections of the Army Ordnance Missile Laboratories. RAMMSO was to be a self-contained, integrated office which reported directly to Maj. Gen. E. N. Toftoy, the Redstone Arsenal commander.

The first director of RAMMSO was Col. Mathew R. Collins, the director of the Research and Development Division — Ordnance Missile Laboratories. Collins continued as director of both organizations and later served on several advisory boards that guided NASA's early programs.

RAMMSO's first home was building A-156, now known as building 7156, on Redstone Road. The little brick 5,500-square-foot office building is currently home to the Propulsion Mechanics Laboratory of the Aviation and Missile Research and Development and Engineering Center.

Although a tactical missile propulsion test complex has been built behind it in the intervening years, the little brick building has changed little since it was home to RAMMSO in 1957. The RAMMSO was considered an interim organization



Courtesy of Historical Office

Bldg 7156 — SMDC/ARSTRAT's first home on Redstone Road.

## The Redstone Anti-Missile Missile Systems Office is activated

as Redstone Arsenal organized for its priority mission of developing an effective anti-missile system. A letter from Brig. Gen. J. G. Shinkle to the chief of ordnance at the Pentagon explained the RAMMSO activation: "Redstone Arsenal has taken interim actions responsive to the increasing urgency given the Anti-Missile Missile Program by your office and higher headquarters."

The RAMMSO as an independent organization was short lived. As various missile programs grew, the Army decided to consolidate several Redstone offices under one commander. As the Anti-Missile Missile program grew it was absorbed by the new Army Rocket and Guided Missile Agency (ARGMA) who's first commander was Shinkle, the very man who had conceived and lobbied for the creation of the RAMMSO.

RAMMSO was officially deactivated on April 11, 1958, a scant seven months after it was activated. Its priority mission and all of its personnel became a division of ARGMA. The organization had already outgrown the little brick building, and it was turned over to new occupants in 1958.

The Anti-Missile Missile mission continued at Building 5687 on Hicks Road, currently occupied by the Cargo Helicopter Project Office of PEO Aviation.



Courtesy of Historical Office

Building 5687 — second home to the Army's missile defense effort.

As the growing pains at ARGMA eased and the agency's organization began to gel, the NIKE-ZEUS project (as Anti-Missile Missile mission became known), was assigned to the deputy commander for Ballistic Missile and Space Defense headed by then Col. John G. Zierdt.

Col. Glenn Crane became the first project manager of NIKE-ZEUS in July 1960, and continued with the project when it was broken out of ARGMA as a separate project office on Dec. 5, 1961. Glenn went on to command Kwajalein Test Range when NIKE-ZUES testing began at that installation. By February 1963, the NIKE-ZEUS Project Office had grown to 25 military and 228 civilian employees.

Much has changed since that October 50 years ago. The Army's missile defense mission has been enlarged and refocused several times. We have changed names many times and grown from an office, to a project office to a major Army command.

Two decades ago, the command was given the additional mission of Army Space. From that small 5,500-square-foot building on Redstone Road with 24 employees, the SMDC/ARSTRAT has

grown to 809 active duty military, 279 full-time National Guardsmen, 162 part-time National Guardsmen and Army Reservists, and 893 Department of the Army civilians who work in more than 4.5 million square feet of office and work space in 12 states and five foreign countries.

The sun truly never sets on SMDC!



Courtesy of Historical Office

Maj. Gen. John G. Shinkle



Courtesy of Historical Office

Col. Glen Crane (left) talks with Col. Ivey Drewry, the second NIKE-ZEUS project manager, during a visit to Kwajalein in 1964.



Courtesy of Historical Office

Maj. Gen. John G. Zierdt