

RED BANK REGISTER

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REGISTER BUILDING, 40-42 BROAD STREET
RED BANK, NEW JERSEY
TELEPHONE SHadyside 1-0010

⑨

July 1, 1958

Armed Services
Explosives Safety Board,
Department of Defense,
The Pentagon, Washington, D. C.

Gentlemen: Re: NIKE AJAX BASE, Chapel Hill, Middletown, New Jersey

Location of Battery B, 526th Anti-Aircraft Missile Battalion is directly adjacent to a Navy railroad over which extremely large quantities of high explosive ammunition are carried from the Earle Naval Ammunition Depot to the Navy docks at Leonardo.

It was at this base, May 22, that eight of fourteen exposed Nike Ajax missiles chain exploded, killing ten men and injuring three. Metal debris was spread over the civilian area nearby.

From the standpoint of public security, we ask your co-operation in supplying us with details concerning the Board's original consideration of Chapel Hill as a site for this base. We would like to know if it is a fact that the Board did not approve the location and, if so, what were the reasons?

We also would like to know if approval was given for (and the current status of) other Nike bases in Monmouth County, New Jersey -- Batteries C, Fort Hancock, and D, Holmdel.

Thanking you for any enlightenment you may be able at this time to shed upon this matter, I am

Sincerely yours,


James J. Hogan
Editor

RED BANK REGISTER

cc: Rep. James C. Auchincloss
Brig. Gen. Robert A. Hewitt

8724

In reply refer to
ASESB 549-58/1

8 July 1958

AR *[Signature]*

CM *[Signature]*

Countdown
DU LOG

[Handwritten signature]

CINFO - *[Signature]*

Mr. James J. Hogan, Editor
Red Bank Register
48-42 Broad Street
Red Bank, New Jersey

Dear Mr. Hogan:

In response to your query of July 1, 1958, the selection or approval of specific locations for Nike Ajax sites is not made by the Armed Services Explosives Safety Board, but all sites are constructed to meet certain safety requirements.

In regard to the specific inquiries in your letter: A careful review of Board records and informal queries of Staff personnel have confirmed that the Board was not involved in the original consideration, selection or approval of Chapel Hill as a site for a base, nor in the selection of other Nike bases in Monmouth County, N. J., inasmuch as the selection of tactical sites is not a function of the Board.

Additional information of possible interest is that a recent explosives safety survey of the Chapel Hill Nike Ajax Base, made by a representative of this Board, has verified that, based on the maximum quantities of explosives handled, the distances to the Navy railroad, to facilities of the Erie Naval Ammunition Depot, to the Navy docks and to the nearest houses, all comply with the explosives safety distance requirements covering military explosives.

Sincerely yours,

SIGNED

W. T. JENKINS
Captain, USN
Chairman

Copy to:
Rep. James C. Anshin
Brig. Gen. Robert A. Hovatt



file 1