## SAC's Looking Glass deters war

By Toni Trujillo

Fifty-four Titan IIs, 1,000 Minuteman missiles, 400 ong-range bombers and aerial refueling tankers, reconnaissance and command control aircraft—Strategic Air Command's forces await an enemy attack at any moment.

"SAC is never totally at peace," John Lupton, a SAC officer at Offutt Air Force Base, explained. We operate under the assumption that an attack can occur at any minute."

It is because of this 24-hour readiness that Operation Looking Glass was created. The operation keeps a command control post in the air 24 hours a day that would take over missile and bomber control if the underground command post at Offutt and alternate command posts

Were lost.

Each Looking Glass plane has an airborne launch control system that can launch the entire Minuteman missile force—SAC's solid-fueled intercontinental ballistic missile.

Together with radio relay and launch control aircraft and another airborne command control squadron in Fort Elsworth, S.D., Operation Looking Glass makes up the Post Attack Command Control System.

"Looking Glass provides us with a survivable means of command control and retaliation," Col Ronald Clapsaddle said, "because if an enemy were to attack we would still have control of our missiles." Clapsaddle is head of the Looking Glass operation.

"The enemy isn't as likely to attack if they knew we would still have some missile control for retaliation,"

Operation Looking Glass has been continuously airborne since 1961 and has logged 200,000 miles.

A Looking Glass plane is self-supporting because it can give or receive fuel while airborne.

"It's one of the few independent systems," Lupton explained. "It works under the idea that if we can't be eliminated in the air (and can maintain a command post capable of missile launch) then maybe they (an enemy) won't attack."

Ann Smitherst, an Operation Looking Glass pilot and the only woman SAC pilot at Offutt, described three types of crew on each Looking Glass plane—drivers, providers and deciders. Drivers, Smitherst explained, include the two pilots, a navigator and a boom operator. The providers are radio, telegraph and teletype operators—

and radio maintenance crews. The deciders are the actual battle staff of the airborne command control. Battle staff members include personnel in commands control, operations, plans, intelligence, logistics, communications and a general officer in charge.

LOOKING GLASS PLANES have sophisticated radio operations that can monitor 54 telephone conversations at one time.

Each plane has ultra high frequency, very low frequency, high frequency single sideband, satellite communication and, with radio relay aircraft, air to air ultra high frequency, according to Harkavey. Looking Glass planes have a five-mile-long antenna that can be let out for very low frequency and are capable of long range command communications.

If the underground command post at SAC was destroyed, as many bombers and tankers as possible would be launched to ensure their survival, Clapsaddle said.

This airborne force would await a "go code," at the president's direction, that with the Primary Alerting System would reach each SAC unit simultaneously through two widely scattered routes, Clapsaddle explained.

"IT WOULD TAKE a coordinated effort after the 'go code' to arm our nuclear weapons," he said. At least four officers must authenticate the orders from sealed translators in what Clapsaddle calls the "clackerbox." The box makes a clacking sound when opened so that everyone on board knows someone is getting in.

After the orders are authenticated, two keys must be turned simultaneously from separate consoles to activate the launch system.

"The final switch, though, is up front with the pilot," Ann Smitherst said.

"We would take over control," Lupton explained, "until a ground base officer was located. In a sense, we would monitor at the onset of war until it was over and then we'd put the pieces back together—assuming there's anything left to put back together."

SAC is well prepared for enemy attack, according to Clapsaddle. SAC's intercontinental ballistic missiles maintain 24-hour alert posture, he said, and can react on a moment's notice as can the SAC bomber and tanker force.

"I think we're very well prepared and the Looking Glass set-up is part of this," Clapsaddle said.









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