

Army begins deactivation of ABM

NEKOMA, N.D. — Army officials announced Tuesday that deactivation and termination of Safeguard anti-ballistic missile tactical facilities near here are under way, following the signing of the defense appropriations bill by President Ford.

The bill provided \$104.75 million for operating the ABM system until Sept. 30. However, most of the funds will be spent on deactivation. Only the Perimeter Acquisition Radar (PAR) near Concrete, N.D., will remain in operation.

Related story on Page 2

According to the Army, the ABM operations are to end in a few days and work on deactivation of the complex is to continue into fiscal year 1977. The 100 missiles and the Missile Site Radar (MSR) are to be deactivated first.

The PAR site will continue to operate as a part of the nation's missile attack warning and assessment system under operational control of the Aerospace Defense Command with headquarters at Colorado Springs, Colo.

The Army said Tuesday it planned to remove the missiles by July 1.

Col. John Garcia of the Army's Ballistic Missile Command Program Analysis Office said they were to be shipped to and stored at other installations. He also said plans for filling the silos were indefinite and some of

the missile components are reusable for other defense purposes.

Sen. Milton R. Young, R-N.D. had said earlier the missile silos were to be emptied and remain open for six months, so the Soviet satellites could see they were cleared. Then the silos were to be filled with dirt, Young said.

U.S. officials have said the end of the ABM complex is part of the Strategic Arms Limitation agreement with the Soviets. The North Dakota-based system is the nation's only such installation.

The Army also announced it will eliminate ABM support activities at Glasgow Air Force Base, Mont., and Colorado Springs. There will also be reductions in activities at Huntsville, Ala., and at Kwajalein in the Pacific.

Staff reductions of approximately 1,230 military and civilian personnel at the North Dakota facilities are also planned.

By Oct. 1, 1976, military staffing will be reduced from the current 447 to the 25 needed for PAR operations. Government civilian employees will be reduced from the current 135 to 27. Contractor strength will be reduced from approximately 1,200 to approximately 490.

Support facilities in the vicinity of the MSR site and on the site proper will be shut down at the earliest possible time, according to Brig. Gen. Robert M. Mullens, commander of the U. S. Army

Safeguard Command. He emphasized that every effort will be made to assure that all actions taken would include consideration of potential impact on North Dakota businesses.

As an example, Mullens said, the government-owned mobile homes, currently located in the Hillcrest Manor Mobile Home Park west of Langdon, N. D., will be moved out of the area by the summer of 1976.

Homes at the MSR site will be relocated to other Army posts unless another agency accepts the entire site and retains the housing.

The first facility to be closed will be the post theater located in the Community Center building. That activity will cease to operate not later than April 15. Among the last facilities to close will be the bachelor officer quarters, the industrial building and some office structures.

Some personnel will likely be required beyond Oct. 1, 1976, to secure the hardened facility on the MSR site pending disposition of it under Strategic Arms Limitations agreements. Further reductions in staffing will take place in fiscal year 1977 to reduce the PAR manning by Oct. 1, 1977. By July 1, 1976, all personnel actions which affect PAR activities are to be completed.

The Army will continue to operate the PAR facility for the Aerospace Defense Command. The mission for the PAR will be announced at the time operational command is transferred.

Logistical and administrative support for the PAR will be provided by the Ballistic Missile Defense Command headquartered at Huntsville, Ala., starting not later than Oct. 1, 1976.



Missile Site Radar (MSR) near Nekoma.

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