

Quebec 01 missile alert facility dedicated as state historic site

Margaret Austin Wyoming Tribune Eagle Via Wyoming News Exchange
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Wyoming State Senator Brian Boner (R-2) speaks during the Quebec 01 State Historic Site Dedication on Saturday in Chugwater. Wyoming's newest state historic site, the only accessible Peacekeeper Missile Alert Facility left in the world, has been open for tours to the public since Aug. 13. Also pictured are USAF Lt. Col. Justin McMillan, center, and Wyoming Secretary of State Ed Buchanon.

Michael Cummo, Wyoming Tribune Eagle

CHUGWATER — Quebec 01, the only Peacekeeper Missile Alert Facility in the world and a crucial factor in ending the Cold War, sits just 30 miles north of Cheyenne.

Last Saturday, it was dedicated as Wyoming's newest state historic site. Close to 100 people gathered where military personnel used to sit, prepared to take action in the event a nuclear war broke out.

“I think this is a fantastic opportunity for us to educate folks who don’t have that military background about what went on in southeast Wyoming and how unique the Peacekeeper system is to southeast Wyoming,” said Christina Bird of Wyoming State Parks and Cultural Resources.

The F.E. Warren Air Force Base was the only place in the world where the MX, or Peacekeeper missile, was deployed. The 50 missiles activated, maintained and kept on alert by F.E. Warren Air Force Base personnel were the most advanced and most destructive intercontinental ballistic missiles in the world, according to state parks officials.

“It’s a fascinating part of our history,” said Rich Choppa, a program director at Boeing. The guidance systems that sit 60 feet underground, surrounded by concrete that could withstand a nuclear blast, were built by his company.

Now, as a state historic site, the public can walk through the on-site living quarters and take an elevator down to see those systems. The process to get Quebec 01 where it is now took years of collaboration between state representatives, Wyoming State Parks and the State Historic Preservation Office.

“I’m very proud to have had a small role in this effort, and now the public has a lasting opportunity to better understand our political, military and social history through this facility,” said Mary Hopkins of the historic preservation office.

From 1986 to 2005, Quebec 01 was an active missile alert facility. The Peacekeeper arsenal was used as a show of strength and deterrent to war with Russia.

“These are the missiles that brought Russia to the negotiating table,” Choppa said.

Air Force Lt. Col. Justin McMillan said the U.S. uses the same strategy to this day.

“Folks say we never use nuclear weapons,” McMillan said. “We use them every day. That 24/7 combat capability, that nuclear deterrence is that shield that is provided.”

Each Peacekeeper weighed about 195,000 pounds and held 10 warheads, according to the National Park Service.

State Sen. Brian Boner, R-Douglas, said the historic site designation is important in remembering what happened at Quebec 01.

“I couldn’t think of a more opportune time to open this site to the public so we can continue to do important work here — only this time, it’s explaining the history that, frankly, too many have forgotten,” Boner said.

Darin Westby, the director of Wyoming State Parks and Cultural Resources, mentioned that the exhibits were put together by people who actually experienced the Cold War.

“This is some history that a lot of us in this room went through,” Westby said. “People that lived the history get to tell the history.”

He also said the site is important for future generations who weren't alive during that period.

“Like the age-old adage, those that don't learn about history are doomed to repeat it.”
