PREFACE

As the United States military began the transition from full war-time mobilization to a peacetime mode in 1945, the questions of how to deal with the strategic and tactical requirements of its growing nuclear arsenal became vital. The necessity to establish and maintain civilian control over these new weapons was seen by many as the only logical way to ensure safety and control while still retaining the military flexibility to respond to threats and changing world conditions. The initial phases of the emerging Cold War provided a powerful incentive to establish the optimal organization for command, control and custody of nuclear weapons.

The military was advocating more control and custody of these weapons, and that such control must be direct, flexible and timely. It was also argued that since the U.S. Army had led the Manhattan Project to its successful conclusions in July and August of 1945, that it should retain that responsibility. The military further argued that it had to have direct access to these new weapons in its arsenal in order to fulfill its responsibilities to protect the country. They insisted that having to obtain consent from civilian authority for the transfer of weapons to military custody in times of crisis would unnecessarily endanger the country's security.

In the first five years after the end of World War II, the nuclear arsenal grew from about 2 at the end of 1945 to approximately 300 complete weapon systems in 1950 as the full-scale production of the systems gathered momentum. The weapons systems, at first, were crude and complex, requiring extensive training of personnel, both civilian and military, to provide the necessary maintenance and reliability. The time required to make ready a weapon for use by the military was a definite handicap to their efficient utilization.

As the battle continued over the custody and control of nuclear weapons between the newly-established Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) and the Department of Defense, the establishment of the National Stockpile Sites commenced. These were all constructed within the boundaries of existing military facilities.

Killeen Base	Site Baker	Fort Hood, TX	1948
Manzano Base	Site Able	Kirtland AFB, NM	1949
Clarksville Base	Site Charlie	Fort Campbell, KY	1949

As the 1950s began, further National Stockpile Sites were added.

Bossier Base	Site Dog	Barksdale AFB, LA	1951
Lake Mead Base	Site Love	Nellis AFB, NV	1954
Medina Base	Site King	Lackland AFB, Texas	1955

These sites were all assigned to the Armed Forces Special Weapons Project (AFSWP) and were under the control of the AEC. By the end of 1955 the stockpile had increased to about 2,200 complete weapons, all under the control of the AEC.

As the struggle for the optimal mix of control and custody of nuclear weapons between the military and the AEC began to shift in the military's favor, the concept of Operational Storage Sites was instituted. These sites were to be located on or near existing Strategic Air Command bases and would therefore be physically closer to the delivery systems than the National Stockpile Sites. This would obviously decrease the reaction times in crisis situations and would provide more flexibility for the military. Prior to this, B-36s of the Strategic Air Command had to fly to one of the National Stockpile Sites, have weapons loaded, then continue on with their missions. That was unacceptable.

The following Operational Storage Sites were constructed in the 1950s for the United States Air Force, Air Materiel Command. Others were constructed for the Navy and Army.

Caribou AFS	Site Easy	Loring AFB, ME	1952
Rushmore AFS	Site Fox	Ellsworth AFB, SD	1952
Deep Creek AFS	Site George	Fairchild AFB, WA	1952
Fairfield AFS	Site How	Travis AFB, CA	1953
Stony Brook AFS	Site Item	Westover AFB, MA	1954

It was not until 1962 that the AEC surrendered the full custody and control of nuclear weapons to the military. This was the same year that the Operational Storage Site responsibilities were transferred from the Air Materiel Command to the Strategic Air Command. This had resulted from SAC's insistence that the weapons must be directly under their control. As the Operational Storage Sites were phased out, the nuclear weapons were eventually stored and maintained at areas much closer to the delivery units of all branches of the military.

The primary purpose of this book is to outline the history of one of these Operational Storage Sites - Stony Brook Air Force Station, located adjacent to Westover Air Force Base, a Strategic Air Command base in southwestern Massachusetts, and to present the experiences of the veterans that served there. The story of the veterans that operated these facilities during the Cold War is one of dedication, loyalty and a deep sense of the importance of their mission, which was vital to the national security during those perilous years.

"America's Strategic Air Command was the talisman of the Cold War. SAC was born at the time of Churchill's 'Iron Curtain' speech. During the Cuban missile crisis and others to follow it was the B-47s and B-52s on alert that represented American nuclear muscle. *Those alert facilities were the kennels where the dogs of nuclear war were fed and housed, chained but ever ready.* (italics added) The Cold War could not really be over until these kennels were closed down. That is what happened at Offutt Air Force Base on May 31, 1992."[1]

[1] Thomas C. Reed, *At the Abyss, An Insider's History of the Cold War*, (New York: Ballantine Books, 2004), 339