



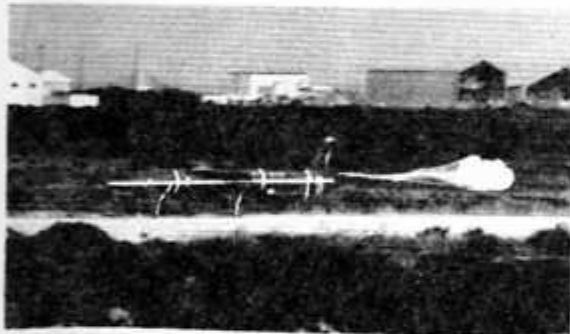
MTP News

SEPTEMBER 1988
NEWS OF THE MISSILE TEST PROJECT

FINAL EDITION

EDITOR: VIC CRAFT

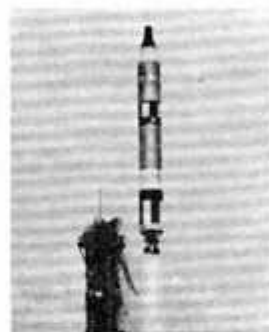
The RCA Missile Test Project 1953-1988



SNARK



MERCURY/REDSTONE



GEMINI/TITAN



APOLLO/SATURN



BOMARC



PERSHING



THOR



ATLAS



POLARIS



MATADOR



DELTA



TRIDENT

The Making Of A Missile Range!

Cape Canaveral was unanimously recommended. The proximity of the old Banana River NAS for supporting technical and administrative facilities, the sparsely settled land in the Canaveral area and the suitable year-round climate where major considerations in selection of the site.

Originally conceived as a joint operation administered by the Army Air Forces, responsibility for administration was transferred to the Air Force after its establishment in 1947.

Later, full responsibility for operation and administration was assigned to the Air Force and on May 16, 1950, the designation was changed to Long Range Proving Ground Division and given major air command status. The base was then renamed Patrick Air Force Base in honor of the late Major General Mason M. Patrick, a pioneer in military aviation development.

First missile launch was on July 24, 1950. It was a two-stage rocket, actually a German V-2 with a WAC Corporal missile inserted in the nose, timed to fire when the V-2 had reached its maximum speed.

Named "Bumper" the missile was developed by General Electric for experimental purposes. Previously it had been fired vertically, but the opening of the Florida Long Range Proving Ground offered the first opportunity to fire the missile horizontally.

After "Bumper" came "Lark" another experimental missile, then an operational weapons system the Martin B -61 "Matador" - and "Bomarc".

In 1952, RCA Government Services was awarded a contract by the Air Force to provide technical and training services of limited scope to the Air Force Missile Center. Twenty-six RCA field representatives, headed by S. D. Heller, were assigned here as part of the contract. It was a forerunner of the RCA Missile Test Project.

Meanwhile, to assure a continuous supply of personnel for the Missile Test Program the Air Force made its decision to put portions of the range activity under contractor operation. In May 1952, invitations for proposals were sent to some 30 firms. Among the companies responding to the invitation was RCA which viewed with lively interest the space activities under way here.

A significant event happened on June 30, 1953, when the Air Force awarded to Pan American World Airways, a company with long experience in aviation and a record of highly successful operations in the Caribbean sea area, a letter of intent for negotiations of a definitive contract.

To provide engineering and technical aspects of the testing operation, the Air Force and Pan American Airways contracted with Radio Corporation of America, world leaders in electronic research and development.

With PAA organizing its guided Missile Range Division and the Government Service Department of RCA Service Company, Inc., establishing the Missile Test Project, the two contractors started preliminary work at the Air Force Missile Test Center in July, 1953. Upon signing of formal contracts on December 31, 1953, the PAA/RCA status became official.

A. L. Conrad, who had been actively involved in the negotiations, was named the first Project Manager for MTP.

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The missile tracking business was in a primitive state when RCA began the task of phasing in personnel in late 1953.

The nucleus of the original organization consisted of Pan Am GE operations, accounting and contracts, purchasing and personnel.

Starting in November, 1953 as PAA/RCA personnel became familiar with the operation, they commenced assuming responsibility for some phases of testing operations.

While RCA was assuming its assigned technical role at Cape Canaveral, it was also preparing for what was to be an important milestone. On February 15, 1954, a static test of the Snark was conducted, the first test involving MTP technical support. Three days later, it was launched. At the time, there were only four launch pads at the Cape and just one downrange station at Grand Bahama Island operational at the time.

Cape Canaveral operations were taken over on March 1, 1954, and by July 1, 1954, full responsibility was in the hands of PAA GMRD and RCA MTP.

At the time, there were only four launch pads at the Cape and just one operational downrange station at GBI.



Taken in late 1953, this photo shows some members of the contractor military team who were actively involved in planning and organizing range activities. They are front row: C. M. Odorizzi, General W. L. Richardson, and Robert Seidel. Second row: Admiral Dorsey Foster, Pickney Reed, E. C. Cahill, R. S. Mitchell. Third row: W. T. A. Baxter, RCA pilot, J. F. Thompson, S. D. Heller, A. L. Conrad and Major Simmons.

Mayaguez, Puerto Rico



Assigned to Jupiter back in 1953 were Al Menard, Gene Kociuba, Ken Aitken and Joe Soich.



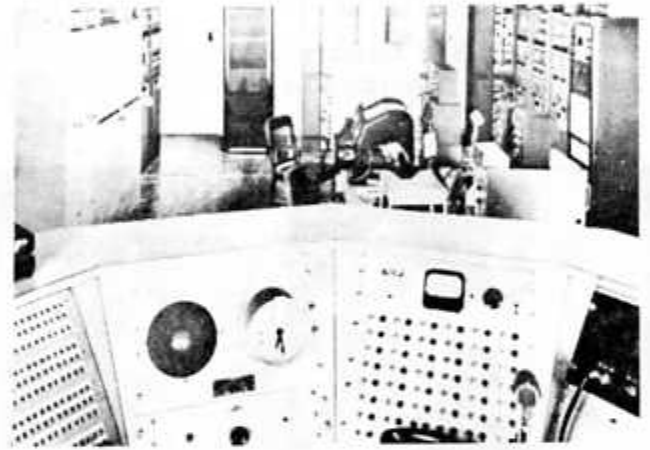
Entrance to Cape Canaveral AFS - 1954



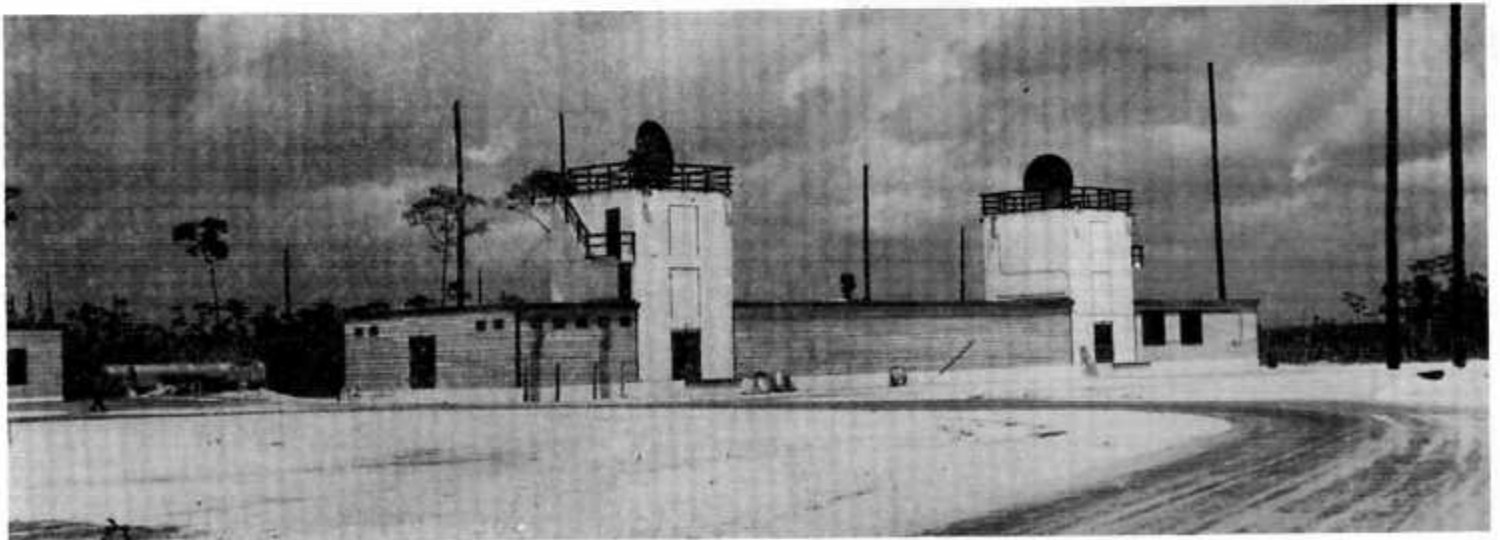
Central Control Construction



Unloading Electronic Equipment Downrange



Transmitter Room Downrange



Grand Bahama AAFB - 1954

Meanwhile, the RCA organization was expanding under Conrad's direction. New sections were formed to cope with the new and special requirements that developed. It was a new technology and there was a great deal of pioneering work to be done by RCA. Systems Engineering and Planning and Analysis Sections were formed. It was the job of the RCA engineers, specialists and technicians to provide technical guidance and expertise in solving the complexities of these requirements.

Research and Development was also getting underway on the Army Redstone Rocket. The Army required its own instrumentation system and the changeover from an Aerodynamic to a ballistic missile range, requiring new tracking stations and equipment created a significant challenge for the RCA Engineering force.

The first Army Redstone rocket was launched August 20, 1954. The first of 37 to be launched from the Cape.

With RCA specialists providing guidance, the Range was lengthened to Eleuthera, San Salvador, Mayaguana and Grand Turk in 1955, St. Lucia and Mayaguez in 1956 and extended the full 5000 mile distance to Ascension Island in 1957. Six ocean range tracking vessels were also added in 1957 to fill in the Data Acquisition gaps between St. Lucia and Ascension.

The first Jupiter-C was launched in September 1956. The year 1957 was a year marked by "firsts", as the first USAF THOR IRBM was launched in January, the first Navy Polaris in April and the first USAF Atlas ICBM in June. In January 1958, after several disastrous attempts the spaced age officially dawned with the launching of the free world's first earth satellite, Explorer I. The 31-pound satellite rode into orbit on a Jupiter-C rocket.

Space activity picked up momentum at the Cape in early 1959 with the launch of the Titan ICBM. Proven and tested for reliability, the Titan, Atlas and Redstone boosters were to serve the future manned spaced flights of the Mercury and Gemini programs of the 60's. The programs were successfully concluded in November 1966 with a total of 16 manned space missions conducted and "tons" of vital data collected, in part, by RCA-operated instrumentation.



MODEL II RADAR

1954



TELEMETRY VAN