Identification and Categorization of Cold War–Era Research, Development, Testing, and Evaluation Property Types

Background:
The Department of Defense (DoD) has long recognized a need for the effective and consistent management of its Cold War assets. The task of identifying and evaluating Cold War resources continues to be a primary cultural-resource priority as many properties reach or surpass the 50-year mark for assessing historical significance. DoD has to consider the effect of its activities on properties listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, as required by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Because of the large number of Cold War facilities and the scale of effort necessary to handle them, DoD cultural resource managers continually search for strategies to make the inventory and evaluation process more efficient.

After the end of the Cold War, DoD produced two reports outlining the process, methods, and goals for future studies treating Cold War resources—Interim Guidance: Treatment of Cold War Historic Properties for U.S. Air Force Installations and Coming in from the Cold: Military Heritage in the Cold War. Interim Guidance has been instrumental to the Cold War inventory process and includes an initial list of primary property types for all functional areas within the different commands. Cultural resource managers at military installations across the country use Interim Guidance and its list of property types to complete Cold War building inventories. As more inventories and evaluations of Cold War facilities are completed, DoD expects to identify additional property types and subtypes.

Objective:
The current project, initiated by Headquarters Air Force Materiel Command through the Legacy Program, seeks to identify and categorize property types associated with research, development, testing, and evaluation (RDT&E) activities during the Cold War and present them as an addition to the current Interim Guidance list. RDT&E refers to the development of the technology base on which the military’s current and future materiel, equipment, and weapons systems rely. RDT&E encompasses a wide range of activities, including basic research, applied research, advanced technology development, and the testing and evaluation of individual components or their higher systems. The end result of the current project will be a more complete Air Force Cold War property typology for materiel development facilities that augments the current typology. The Air Force and all of DoD recognize the need to inventory the large number of Cold War properties, but guidance must also be established to ensure the task is completed in a consistent, timely, and cost-effective manner.

Summary of Approach:
Because of constraints on time and funding, nine military installations (representing the Air Force, Army, and Navy) were selected for visitation and research of property types: Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD; Arnold Air Force Base (AFB), TN; Dugway Proving Ground, UT; Edwards AFB, CA; Hill AFB, UT; Holloman AFB, NM; Naval Air Weapons Station, China Lake, CA; Wright-Patterson AFB, OH; and Yuma Proving Ground, AZ. Property types were determined through a combination of documentary research and field reconnaissance. Data collection at each installation included a review of historical records, real-property records, architectural and engineering drawings, and photographic documentation of RDT&E properties.

Benefit:
This initial list of property types will be used at all DoD RDT&E installations during future Cold War building inventories to ensure consistent categorization across the services. Such a typology is necessary for effective building inventories, and thus the project enhances the preservation and management of one functional aspect of DoD's Cold War resources.

Accomplishments:
To date, over 30 RDT&E property types and subtypes have been identified. Properties can be grouped into three general categories: buildings, structures, and sites. Buildings include laboratories, control centers, assembly plants, hangars, munitions magazines, and observation bunkers. Examples of structures are gun positions, launch pads, missile silos, wind tunnels, and engine test cells and stands. Sites include test tracks, biological and chemical test grids, and vehicle proving grounds. These property types are described in terms of their function and, in the case of functionally specific buildings and structures, their character-defining elements.

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