

# **A WORLD BALANCED ON A MOUNTAIN OF ARMS-2**

**By TONY SCOTT**  
in Colorado  
Springs

**The 12-foot-high war map on the far wall showed that North America was at peace.**

Superimposed on it were the track of the Strategic Air Command's flying HQ over Georgia, the position of a Soviet spy trawler off San Francisco, and the path of an Aeroflot liner approaching Montreal airport.

Below, two metal posts holding red handles and switches squatted in front of consoles on either side

**consoles on either side  
of the room. Two men**

**sat at desks by the  
posts.**

**If they stood up and  
reached out simulta-  
neously to the handles,  
they could release the  
programmed nuclear  
missiles that lie per-  
manently poised in si-  
los in North Dakota —  
and unleash Armaged-  
don.**

**We were in North  
America's nuclear com-  
mand centre, at the  
heart of a three-  
storey steel box inside  
Cheyenne Mountain,  
headquarters of the  
combined US-Canadian  
North American Air**

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**Defence Command out-  
side Colorado Springs  
Colorado.**

**Around us, 27 com-  
puters and their atten-  
dants helped to keep  
the wall map up to  
date—tracking known  
objects in space in  
case an unknown one**

**case an unknown one appeared; ready to analyse the path, launching site and target of any missile which pierced the continent's electronic curtain across the north; and ready to alert in seconds President Gerald Ford, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau of Ca-**

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**nada, the Strategic Air Command in Georgia and the Allied Forces HQ in Brussels, Belgium.**

**Below us, half-ton springs trembled under the weight of the building they protect from earthquake and nuclear blast.**

**Above, 1200 feet of solid granite hung between us and Cheyenne's 9565-foot summit.**

**It took five years and over K120 million to build this bunker in**

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**the clouds. Contractors began blasting out**

tors began blasting out the tunnels and rock reservoirs and the criss-cross caverns in 1961. Altogether they removed nearly 700,000 tons of granite.

In mid-1966 the 15 windowless boxes took up their deadly vigil.

Since then, the complex's 1500 staff have watched and waited round the clock, trained and waited and trained again for a job they will only ever do once.

NORAD's boss and the man who would in an emergency sit in the hot seat opposite the war map, is the U.S.'s first four-star General, Daniel James, an air force veteran of Korea and Vietnam.

He took over the job in September 1975. His deputy, who would have total command of the U.S. and Canadian war machine if James was out of commission, is a Winnipeg-born Canadian Lieutenant General

**WILMINGTON, Penn.**  
dian, Lieutenant General Richard Stovel.

On them rests the initial responsibility of deciding if an unidentified flying object over the Northwest Territories is a bomber, or a bush pilot who forgot to file a flight plan; of deciding if a lump of metal in space is a big meteorite, or an intercontinental missile.

Backing them up is some of the most sophisticated electronic gear in the world.

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Specialised radars guard a giant fan of airspace across the Arctic and down each side of the continent. Other detection devices are hung from planes that fly 24-hour patrols over the Atlantic and the Pacific, and mounted on satellites that can pick up the tailfire of a missile almost as soon as it leaves the ground.

ground.

The newest gadgets are extraordinarily sensitive Baker-Nunn cameras that can photograph a six-inch satellite over 2000 miles in space, and three 13-storey-high phased radars which can track 200 objects at a time.

The radars, built on the side of massive, wedge-shaped buildings loom over Shemya in Alaska, Eglin in Florida, and Diyarbakir in Turkey.

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The cameras, which are used to take pictures of objects the radars spot, are spread from Sand Island in the Pacific to Italy and Cold Lake in Alberta, Canada. Another camera at Chatham, New Brunswick, in Canada, will join the network soon.

As the gadgets have changed, so has the arsenal the two men have at their finger-

have at their fingertips. Last year, the U.S. set up its Safeguard anti - missile system near Langdon, North Dakota, to guard its nearby Minutemen silos.

And quivers of constantly improved smaller missiles crouch on mobile batteries aboard submarines and beneath the wings of fighters.

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To monitor it all, three more buildings (each is connected to other boxes only by movable steel flaps — like railway carriages — so that each can stand alone) are being moved into Cheyenne Mountain. The new building and a bigger power plant to run them, costing a total of K120 million, are due to be completed next year— detente or no detente.

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One will take over control of the Safeguard system; another will simply give staff more room; and the third will improve the monitoring of Earth's increasingly cluttered space.

(The mountain's space defence staff keep watch on nearly 4000 objects around the Earth, from major satellites to the booster rockets the satellites discard on their way up).

Even while this expansion is going on, however, Cheyenne Mountain faces a question mark over its future. The complex, which can be sealed off from the outside totally in a crisis, was set up initially because military chiefs decided the best way to keep the U.S. counter-punch safe was to bury the HQ in a bunker.

Now though nuclear

Now, though, nuclear bombs have so awesome a power that the chiefs are thinking again about what they

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call their "survivability".

Colonel Albert Heberly, who gives visitors one of three polished briefings inside the mountain, explains: "The thinking has changed from relying on hard rock to depending on mobility. So we have put in a requirement for a flying command centre to take over from here in times of extreme tension".

The "requirement", or request, is for a specially converted jet liner, probably a Jumbo Boeing 747, which would take off and take over if the chain of command from Cheyenne ever looked like being broken.

No date has yet been set for the start of this

set for the start of this new arrangement. But it seems likely that it will be approved by the Department of Defence in Washington some time this year.

Meanwhile the mountain's tense waiting goes on.

The suspense doesn't seem to bother either side. As Colonel Heberly said at one point when I asked him what he thought of his counterpart in Russia:

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"Sure, I'm aware, we are all aware, that there are other men doing like-type jobs in Russia. But we are military men . . . professionals. We don't think about them much. And I don't suppose they're much different."

Perhaps the man who best summed up the dispassionate spirit of the mole men was Malcolm Tasker.

As we finally walked

As we finally walked out of the complex, a few paces in front of the guard I asked him what he felt about the chance that he and his colleagues might have to set off nuclear annihilation.

"If you are in the military you get used to the idea of war," he shrugged.

"Here we press a lot of buttons, and we press the important one from time to time anyway as part of our training. If it had to be pushed for real, well we'd push it. To us, it's just another button".

When you came right down to it, that's what a credible defence is all about.

***Buried deep -  
just a button***