

Directive details the deactivation of ABM system

By WARREN STRANDELL

The directive to deactivate much of the Safeguard system in North Dakota sets in motion a detailed Department of Defense plan that will take effect immediately, according to a copy of the directive provided to Congress.

Implementation of that plan begins with the immediate cessation of radar operations from the Missile Site Radar facility and, shortly thereafter, the deactivation of the launch circuitry for the intercept missiles.

By Oct. 1, the Nekoma, N. D., portion of the Stanley R. Mickelsen Safeguard Complex and four remote missile fields will have been vacated and some 1,230 military, Department of Defense civilians and contractor personnel phased out.

The perimeter acquisition radar (PAR) site near Concrete, N. D., will continue operation on a 24-hour, seven-day a week basis, both prior to and after its radar is modified for a new "attack characterization mission." Those modifications are to begin Oct. 1 and be completed by the end of the year.

The directive to deactivate was made by the Joint Chiefs of Staff following President Ford's signing of the 1976 appropriations bill for the Department of Defense. An amendment to that bill, introduced by Sen. Kennedy, limited the use of funds for Safeguard to be used "only for the purpose of the expeditious termination and deactivation" of the defense facility, with the exception that the PAR be continued.

Following the initial shutdowns of Safeguard radar operation at the missile site radar (MSR) portion of the system and deactivation of the intercept missile circuitry, will come removal of equipment. Seventeen weeks are said to be needed to remove warheads from the 100 Sprint and Spartan missiles located both at the MSR and at the four remote sites.

Another 13 weeks will be required to remove the missiles.

Personnel will be phased out as rapidly as possible "consistent with the demands of system deactivation." There will be substantial reassignment of military personnel, and a large-scale reduction of civilians. The disposition of affected "contractor personnel" will be the responsibility of the contractors.

Personnel reductions will include 433 military and 108 civilian positions. Contractor personnel will be reduced from 1,130 to about 490.

Of the military and civilian personnel reductions, 39 military and six civilian spaces are at the Ballistic Missile Defense Center, Colorado Springs, Colo., with the remaining personnel to be phased out at the Nekoma-based MSR site of Safeguard.

After the phase out period, only 52 remaining military and civilian spaces will remain with all involved with the operation and maintenance of the PAR site at Concrete, N. D. That total includes 25 military personnel and 27 civilians.

Warhead removal from the missiles and the actual missile removal will be performed by government employees. Warheads are to be temporarily stored at the Sierra Army Depot in California, with the missiles themselves sent to either Anniston Army Depot, Alabama, or Red River Army Depot, Texas.

Tactical facilities to be deactivated include the MSR building, remote launch operations buildings, missile cells, limited area and controlled area sentry stations, the universal missile building and warhead section building.

Disposal of the internal components of the MSR will be initiated after a search is completed to determine if there is a user of the radar or its subsystems. Some operation of the MSR control building will continue during the 30-week missile removal period to monitor activities on the site. The hardened structures will then be secured. Covers will be placed over the missile cells.

The non-tactical facilities on the MSR grounds— the dispensary, chapel, community center, gymnasium, the 200 units of family housing, officers and enlisted mens barracks and similar structures— will be vacated by Oct. 1.

Furnishings will generally be processed for return to the Army supply system. Personal property and support equipment not essential to the military service will be left in the buildings to support the community adjustment period.

Priorities for the disposition of excess real or personal property are first for the army, then for other Department of Defense activities and then to the federal government. Property surplus to federal needs is then available for donation to state and local governments for educational, health and welfare purposes or for community uses.

Property not disposed of by donation to state and local governments could be processed for sale to public agencies or sold at public auction.

Priority consideration is to be given to the "in-place re-use" of the facilities to offset the economic impact in the Cavalier County area.