

# Tucson and the Titans

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The truth behind a two-year-long cover-up of a lethal mistake in ICBM site-selection policies of the Air Force was spread across the front page of the October 3, 1961, *Tucson Daily Citizen* in a headline that announced: "BRASS ADMITS TITAN SITES SELECTED FOR ECONOMY, NOT SAFETY."

In April, 1960, much bigger headline type on Tucson front pages announced Air Force plans to locate a Titan ICBM launching base at Tucson. "It will be a fine thing for the community," noted Mayor Don Hummel. Asked by a reporter if he thought the missiles implied any danger to the community, Hummel answered "Absolutely not." "Something we've been working for and hoping for a long time," stated Chamber of Commerce President Arthur Pack. "Titan Project Called Tremendous for City" ran the banner headline — all these in the *Citizen* for April 19, 1960, with the *Star* carrying similar stories. Tucson, it seemed, had won a handsome prize in the form of an eighty million dollar military construction project.

However, a number of Tucsonans felt otherwise. Forming themselves into the "Committee Against Ringing Tucson with Titans" (CARTT), they protested that to surround a city of 250,000 with such ultra-high priority targets was equivalent to dooming essentially that whole population to radiological ex-

tingtion should the base ever come under enemy nuclear attack. Deadly fallout could not possibly fail to blanket a city ringed in such a way.

CARTT's protests and its plea that the Air Force shift part of the Tucson Titans from the dangerous upwind (west) side of the city to the much less dangerous east side of town, immediately drew from Air Force spokesmen such stout denials that most Tucsonans were convinced that their safety was being scrupulously considered by the Air Force.

Thus, a *Citizen* editorial, May 11, 1960, told its readers that "... The important factor of prevailing winds will be given full consideration in relation to this city. There would have to be a heavy weight of evidence and advantage on other scores before the Air Force would approve a Titan site which would place Tucson in a downwind position," apparently having been satisfied by the Air Force that this view was "reliable and correct." A *Star* editorial, curiously ignoring previous Air Force statements that the Titans would be placed in a ring around the city, calmly assured Tucsonans that the sites would all be put many tens of miles southeast of the city.

CARTT stuck to its guns and embarked on as extensive a campaign as its very limited resources permitted. Through several dozen talks to local service groups and churches, CARTT speakers spelled out the evident hazards which the Air Force was about to erroneously impose on Tucson. Leaflets were passed out at street corners and supermarkets, 1200 signatures to protest-petitions were assembled and sent to the Secretary of Defense, ads were run in local papers asking for downwind siting, and Congressmen and national leaders were appealed to on behalf of the Tucson population. That story has already been sketched briefly in *Arizona Frontiers* (October, 1961) by Drs. Paul Martin and Cornelius Steelink.

The crucial blow to CARTT's initial campaign really came when, on May 21, 1960, statements by Senator Goldwater, Gen. LeMay, and Gen. Power added up to the broad hint that Tucson had better come around or it would lose not only the Titans, but also find itself without remunerative Davis-Monthan AFB. The spokesman for SAC's Gen. T. S. Power went so far as to speak of "Tucson's lack of constructive response regarding the location of Titan ICBM launching sites in this area!" But along with the hints came the same old reassurances which, of course, Tucsonans *ought* to have been able to believe implicitly: "It is obvious to most thinking people that such matters as prevailing winds and areas of



Mauldin in St. Louis Post-Dispatch

"Maybe it will go away if we put out the light!"

possible nuclear fallout are taken into account when sites are selected," SAC headquarters said that day.

CARTT continued its efforts into midsummer without succeeding in getting an opportunity to discuss publicly its technical claims with qualified Air Force experts. The Air Force's broad hints of May 21, which the *Citizen* bluntly headlined "Tucson Warned: TITAN MISSILES NEEDED OR D-M WILL BE USELESS" and which the *Star* put even more clearly: "NO MISSILES, NO D-M," plus the unvarying assurance that fallout hazards had been given fullest Air Force attention, did the trick.

One Tucson civic group after another expressed "votes of confidence" in Air Force siting wisdom, and finally even the City Council, reversing an earlier decision made in Mayor Hummel's absence, voted an "emergency resolution" of faith in whatever sites the Air Force might select. The *Citizen* on May 24, 1960, headlined the Council's action as follows: "COUNCIL ASSURES AIR FORCE TUCSON WANTS TITANS, WON'T QUESTION SITES."

The Air Force had won out; two days later the site-locations were definitely announced. They nicely ringed the city. Well, not quite. In the meteorologically "safest" sector (namely towards the northeast of Tucson, where winds would have made them least dangerous of all) no silos were to be located because no good highways existed there!

Now, long after the construction has passed the point where talk of shifting the most dangerous of the sites makes sense, the Department of Defense has finally acknowledged that the fallout hazard never was a controlling factor in site selection and that economy was put ahead of civilian protection in the location of missile sites. (I would say they did not even consider the fallout hazard.) The Military Operations Subcommittee, in the document which revealed this acknowledgment, points out a directive of July, 1961, wherein the new Secretary of Defense promises that fallout hazards will be carefully taken into account in all future ICBM sites. The Subcommittee expresses regret "that this important decision has come after major site locations have been determined." CARTT, to put it mildly, agrees!

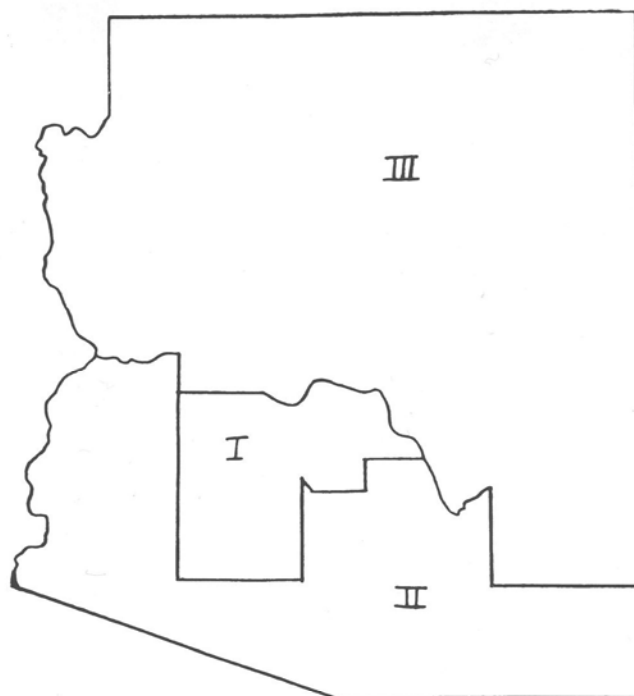
Finally, what will be done now? Will our Congressional delegation, realizing now that they were given misleading assurances by the Air Force at the time when CARTT's first protests might have led to corrective action, do something about all this? Will there be suitably high-level inquiry into the history of how the same type of incredibly hazardous siting patterns were used by the Air Force at Spokane, Omaha, Lincoln, Topeka, Wichita, and other ICBM-base cities? Will our civil leaders in Tucson demand federal corrective action — to the dubious extent that corrective action is even now possible?

It will be interesting to see what happens.

Today the Tucsonan has not yet been told officially

## Is Redistricting Act of 1947 Equitable?

Next year the Congressional Redistricting Act of 1947 will take effect. Arizona will be divided into three congressional districts.



District 1—Maricopa County

District 2—Cochise, Pima, Pinal, Santa Cruz, and Yuma Counties

District 3—Apache, Coconino, Gila, Graham, Greenlee, Mohave, Navajo and Yavapai Counties

Observers are wondering whether the legislature will attempt to change the law next year. Principal objection to the Act of 1947 is that more than 50% of the state's population is concentrated in Maricopa County. Thus, more than half the people of Arizona would have only one representative in Congress, while less than half would have two. As there is increasing evidence the Supreme Court will require "equality of districts," the present law could be challenged in the courts.

what he is really up against with respect to civil defense hazards of these first-priority targets. Whereas typical military targets, such as SAC air bases, can be knocked out by an *airburst* nuclear weapon of a few megatons, it can be reliably predicted that the hardened Titan complex will draw around 300-400 megatons of *surface* bursts near Tucson. The key question now is: When will the Department of Defense spell out in full detail, to the Tucsonans now digging into their pockets to build themselves shelters, the full story of the almost insuperable difficulties blocking any paths to survival after nuclear attack on the Titans?