Regarding Missile Sites in Montana

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001
Statement of Senator Mike Mansfield (D., Montana)

On Thursday, January 16, 1958, I had a conference with General Thomas D. White, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, relative to the possibility of a missile or missile sites in the State of Montana.

He told me at that time that the Air Force was interested in Montana along with a number of other States, but that no firm commitment could be made and that, as a matter of fact, no encouragement could be given at this time. He stated that it would depend on the results of survey teams being sent out, and he stated further that these teams would be sent out without publicity or advance notice, and that after sites had been surveyed, then it would be necessary for final decisions to be made back here.

I urged General White that he give every possible consideration to the State of Montana in this matter because, as I indicated, we have the area; we have the transportation, water, power, and fuel facilities; we have sufficient labor because at the present time Montana is undergoing a drastic degree of unemployment; and I assured him that if Montana could be considered in any way, he would have the full support of the Montana Congressional delegation and the people of the State.

General White expressed interest, he was courteous and sympathetic, but -- I repeat -- would make no commitment, offered no encouragement except to say that Montana along with a number of other States was being considered, and he appreciated my calling to his attention the general situation as it affected the State as a whole.
January 15, 1958

COPY

Mrs. Isabelle M. Sheck
Box 186
Browning, Montana

Dear Isabelle:

This will acknowledge receipt of your letter of January 9 requesting information on the meeting held by the officials of the Air Force with the delegation from Cut Bank.

On Saturday afternoon, Mr. Frank Whetstone came in to see me and told me that he was back here to attempt to get a missile site for Glacier County. I was informed that an arrangement had been worked out with the Blackfeet Indians by means of which 2,000 acres of Indian land would be offered to the government for a missile site or any other sort of defense installation which would fit in with the defense effort. He indicated that he had seen Sherman Adams and other Republican officials and that a meeting had been arranged for Monday morning, January 13, with officials of the Air Force. He stated that he was aware of the fact that I had very likely heard from other Montana communities interested in a missile site, but he felt that he ought to come in and tell me just what the situation was as far as Glacier County was concerned. He had evidently prepared a very excellent brochure having to do with all possible questions which the Defense Department could raise.

On Sunday, he called my administrative assistant, Mrs. Peggy DeMichele, and asked if it would be possible for her to go with the delegation, representing this office, to the Pentagon. Peggy did go to the Pentagon and sat in on the meeting, at which time the Cut Bank Delegation presented its case and at which time Peggy brought out the fact that shortly after Sputnik I, I had contacted the Secretary of Defense relative to a missile project or projects in the State of Montana, and indicated that we would be interested if there was a possibility in a number of missile sites in our State.

(OVER)
Mrs. Isabelle M. Sheck

January 15, 1958

At that meeting, the following were present: Mr. and Mrs. Frank Whetstone; Mr. Email Rudman of the Glacier County REA Co-op; Walter Wetzel and Henry Magee, Cut Bank; Smith Brookhart, Washington, D. C. attorney; Arthur Lazarus, Washington, D. C. attorney; William Duncan, representative of the Great Northern Railroad; and Mrs. Peggy DeMichele. Representing the government were the following: Lt. Col. Hageman, Legislative Liaison of the Air Force (who did not remain for the entire meeting); Mrs. Close, Legislative Liaison of the Air Force; Colonel Garrett, Chief of Real Estate of the Office of Director of Real Property, Air Force; Mr. Johnston, Department Chief of Base Selection Branch of the Air Force Planning Division (Office of Director of Real Property); Lt. Col. Matthews, Office of the Assistant for Guided Missiles, Air Force; Mr. Lowe, Office of Industrial Programs, Bureau of Indian Affairs; and Mr. E. J. Utz, Assistant Commissioner of Resources, Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Frank Whetstone called at the office yesterday afternoon to express his appreciation for the assistance given by the office and to notify me he would be going home shortly.

As I understand it, the Defense Department may be interested in additional sites throughout the country. I would be most desirous that, if at all possible, at least one and possibly more sites be located in Montana because we have the area, we have the necessary requisites, and we have an unemployment situation so there would be no shortage of labor. You may rest assured I will do everything in my power to be of whatever assistance I can in this matter because I believe that Montana is a "natural" for a missile project, or, for that matter, other kinds of projects which might be necessary in the present defense effort.

I am sending this information on to you in answer to your communication. I did not issue a press release from Washington because I did not wish to raise any false hopes and because I did not know and still do not know of any definite possibilities in these fields for the State of Montana. It is my understanding that material of this nature is generally classified, and not made known until the proper requests are made to the Congress. You may be assured that if there is any possibility of a site or sites anywhere in our State being considered, that I will do my very best in their behalf and will keep the people of Montana informed.

Must close now, but with best personal wishes, I am

Sincerely,

/s/
MIKE MANSFIELD

P. S. When Frank Whetstone called on me yesterday, he left with this office a copy of the brochure he had prepared for his meeting with officials at the Pentagon.

M. M. COPY
November 26, 1957

The Honorable Neil McElroy
Secretary of Defense
The Pentagon
Washington, D. C.

My dear Mr. Secretary:

Recent Russian advancements in missile and rocket technology have spurred the United States on to an intensified development and production of guided missiles and rockets.

We all recognize that America must regain its superiority in these fields and to attain this goal, it will require additional missile bases and testing sites in this country.

The Defense Department has announced plans for the construction of a giant missile base near Cheyenne, Wyoming. Newspaper reports infer that the base would be designed as a site for launching platforms and related installations for intercontinental ballistic missiles. Subsequent news stories indicated that perhaps an additional missile base is being planned.

In the event that additional missile and rocket testing bases are planned in our intensified defense effort I ask that consideration be given to Montana.

Montana offers a number of desirable features for such a base. There are vast empty spaces lying to the east and stretching all the way to the Dakota border. This area is served by good highways and adequate train and airline service. In addition, such an installation would be located advantageously to the SAC base at Great Falls and the Defense Air Command Base being constructed at Glasgow.

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The construction of a missile or rocket base in Montana would be of great assistance in bolstering its now sagging economy.

I realize fully that such matters as this are top secret, but I want to impress upon you the advantages of locating such an installation in Montana as compared to the more populated areas of the Nation.

Your earnest consideration of this matter will be deeply appreciated by not only me, but by the other members of the Montana Delegation as well as the people of Montana.

With best personal wishes, I am

Sincerely yours,

/s/
MIKE MANSFIELD

OFFICE OF SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
Washington 25, D. C.

December 2, 1957

Honorable Mike Mansfield
United States Senate
Washington, D. C.

Dear Senator Mansfield:

The Secretary of Defense has asked me to acknowledge your letter of November 26, in which you request that consideration be given to Montana as a site for a guided missile base.

Your suggestion has been brought to the attention of the appropriate officials within the Department with the request that they advise you direct of the action taken thereon.

Sincerely yours,

/s/

CARLTON B. ADAMS
Captain, USN
Deputy Assistant to the Secretary (Legislative Affairs)
January 17, 1958

General Thomas D. White
Chief of Staff
United States Air Force
The Pentagon
Washington, D.C.

Dear General White:

May I take this means to thank you for the courtesy and consideration shown to me when we had our conference on the possibility of missile sites within the State of Montana.

I want you to know that I appreciated your frankness in our discussion. I was, of course, disappointed that there was nothing definite in the wind as far as Montana was concerned but pleased with your assurances that Montana along with other states would be considered in the location of any future sites which might be considered.

Also, I understand and appreciate your position that if survey teams are sent to any part of the country it will be done without publicity and that any decisions will be made after they return, make their findings known and the Air Force has the opportunity to make a full evaluation.

As I indicated to you General, I have received letters, telegrams and telephone calls from at least a score of Montana communities. They are all very interested in any possibility which may arise in this respect and, in my opinion, consideration of Montana would be of benefit not only to the State but to the Nation as well.

We have great areas, adequate housing, the necessary facilities and a great work force available. Montana at the present time is suffering from a severe slump in certain areas and therefore all of the necessary manpower would be available.

You may recall that at the present time the Air Force has a Strategic Air Command Base at Great Falls and at Glasgow facilities are being built for the Air Defense Command and the Strategic Air Force. We have along the Northern border of Montana 5 radar

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stations and we are in the area which has the greatest amount of clear weather on a North - South line.

I do not need to recall to you the importance of the Great Falls Air Base or that from Great Falls during the second world war over 7,000 combat planes of all sorts were shipped north to Alaska and Siberia. What was a one way street then could in the future become a two way street. I point this out to you as an indication of the tremendous strategic importance of my state.

I would call to your attention also, the fact that in the last two world wars on a per capita basis Montana contributed more manpower to the armed services than did any other state.

Again, General White, I want to thank you for the kindness and courtesy shown to me in your office in the Pentagon and to assure you of my deep appreciation for your consideration and to express the strong personal hope that Montana will be given every possible consideration if the Air Force contemplates additional missile bases or sites along the northern border of our country. In my opinion, if Montana is so designated it will not only be of immediate benefit to the State but far greater importance to the welfare, the security and the defense of our country.

With best personal wishes, I am

Sincerely yours,

Signed/ Mike Mansfield