

## New START: 564th MS silos being eliminated

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3/4/2014 - **MALMSTROM AIR FORCE BASE, Mont.** - The permanent removal of 50 formerly deactivated Malmstrom Air Force Base 564th Missile Squadron Minuteman ICBM III launch facilities, located in Toole, Pondera, Teton and Chouteau counties, Mont., has initiated and is scheduled to be complete by early 2015.

Following the initial phase, which included hazardous material surveys and the staging of fill material, the actual removal of launcher closure doors initially scheduled for late March, began in February.

Although all 50 of the 564th MS launch facilities scheduled for elimination were previously deactivated in 2008, which involved the removal of ICBM's from the facilities, silos have remained in caretaker status until now.

"This [silo elimination] is history in the making," said Col. Robert Stanley, 341st Missile Wing commander.

In order to comply with the requirements set by the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty from February 2011, 103 deactivated intercontinental ballistic missile silos - 50 at the 341st MW, 50 at F.E. Warren AFB, Wyo., and three test silos at Vandenberg AFB, Calif., - must be eliminated by February 2018. Elimination of the 50 F.E. Warren launch facilities began in August 2013 and is scheduled to be complete by December 2014.

Under the New START, the U.S. and Russia are required to have no more than 1,550 deployed warheads; 800 deployed and nondeployed ICBM launchers, submarine-launched ballistic missile launchers and heavy bombers and to reduce their deployed ICBMs, SLBMs and heavy bombers equipped for nuclear weapons to no more than 700.

According to Richard Bialczak, 341st MW treaty compliance specialist, although none of the silos have been officially eliminated from treaty accountability, the removal process of the facilities has been ahead of schedule despite sub-zero temperatures.

"The progress is going very well," Bialczak said. "There are several actions that must take place before we achieve that milestone [of permanent elimination]. The [launcher closure] door must get buried but the contractor can't perform that yet due to the frozen ground. Once the weather breaks, they will bury the doors, then there will be a 60-day inspection window that must be complied with before the launchers are officially eliminated."

Although not required by New START, in addition to removing the 103 ICBM missile silos, nine of the 10 missile alert facilities will be eliminated across the ICBM force.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Air Force Civil Engineering Center are eliminating the launch facilities by filling them with earth and gravel, which is an effective and environmentally friendly method of elimination. This method is also more cost effective and poses no threat to public safety.

Following silo elimination, land will be available for purchase by federal, state and local government agencies. Adjacent landowners will then have the opportunity to obtain the land. The last option for acquirement will be through public auction.



The launcher closure door is pulled from the top of Launch Facility R-29, Pondera County, Mont., Feb. 25. A nine-foot deep hole was dug for the 110-ton launcher closure door and the dirt from the hole was used to fill in the silo. The 50 Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile silos belonging to the 341st Missile Wing, Malmstrom Air Force Base, are being eliminated in accordance with the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty requirements. The missile launch facilities set to be eliminated were part of the 564th Missile Squadron, which were deactivated in 2008. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Katrina Heikkinen)