

Nike Missiles on Guard in Formosa Mountains

Firing Crews to Become All Chinese When Control Is Turned Over to Chiang Forces

This is the last of a series of 17 articles by Times reporter Ted Sell, now touring military installations in the Pacific and Far East under Army sponsorship.

BY TED SELL, Times Staff Representative

TAIPEI—High in the mountains surrounding this Formosan capital, the glistening white Nike-Hercules missiles lie ready on launching racks.

They are American weapons, but the crews around them are mixed, half Chinese, half American.

In September, the crews will become almost 100% Chinese when the United States turns over the anti-aircraft site to the Nationalists. Only a few highly technical jobs will be filled by Americans serving in an advisory capacity.

The missiles are the most modern in the Army anti-aircraft arsenal. (Three of 16 Nike sites around Los Angeles are equipped with the Hercules. The others still have the older Nike-Ajax.)

Ready for Reds

If Communist planes should strike at Formosa, the missiles might fire, although until the official turnover of the site comes, any decision to fire the missiles would have to be made by American officers.

After the turnover, the decision will be a Chinese one.

To prepare for the change to Chinese control, gunners of Lt. Col. Roland Denby's 2nd Missile Battalion, 71st Artillery, have been training picked Chinese soldiers for months.

Another group of some 200 Chinese have been attending missile school at Ft. Bliss, Tex., to learn more technical jobs. Their return will be the signal for the change-over.

Bombardment Crisis

The American battalion was rushed to Formosa last fall when the Communists created a new crisis by heavy bombardments of the Nationalist-held offshore islands near the mainland.

Capt. Robert A. Douglas, a blue-eyed Texan from El Paso and commander of B Battery, was in the group.

"We were supposed to go to Alaska," the captain recalled. "Then at the last minute at Ft. Bliss they changed our orders and we started out here."

Eight days after the battalion arrived on Oct. 9, it was ready to fire its first missile.

Tea Fields Used

In the time between Sept. 15, when the battalion heard it was headed for the Far East, and Oct. 17, engineers and construction crews had wrested a missile site from terraced tea fields.

Maj. Gen. Leander L. Doan, commander of the U.S. Military Advisory Group in Formosa, explained how the near-miracle was wrought.

"There was an American construction firm out here," Gen. Doan remembered. "It was Vinnell Corp. (of Alhambra). They had been doing another job and had finished it. They were packing up their heavy gear to go back to the states when we got the order.

Work Speeded

"We called them and they went right to work."

Vinnell built two of the

preters and we started on classes right away. The Chinese learned fast.

"One odd thing is that Chinese doesn't have many technical words. So when one of the Chinese is talking about the missile we can sort of tell what he's talking about by the number of American words he throws into the stream of Chinese — like 'radar.'"

Eager to Learn

Chinese crews also showed themselves eager to learn English, and Sgt. 1st Class Wesley Wilson, a former schoolteacher, volunteered to teach the language three nights a week.

"The Chinese would spend all day in class learning about the missiles, then go to Sgt. Wilson's class at night," Capt. Douglas went on.

Liaison officers translated American words into Chinese ideographs and control consoles all bear two legends, one painted in English, one taped on in Chinese.

Security Guards

Chinese guard companies also provide security around the launching sites. Moving at fixed bayonet, they patrol

the fences surrounding the

revetted launchers. "They don't let anyone get close to the site," Capt. Douglas explained.

Back when we had first arrived, I went out one night to check on some of the supplies that had been coming in.

"Next thing I knew, one of the soldiers had his bayonet tip in my stomach. I took a step back and darned if there wasn't another in my back.

"I never even heard them."

battery-launching complexes in record time. Two other battery positions were built by Chinese army engineer units under the supervision of U.S. Army engineer officers from Taipei and an American unit rushed from Guam.

"The Chinese were pouring concrete from grass baskets," Capt. Douglas said, "and as fast as a section would cure we'd move in a launcher and erect it."

From Oct. 9 until Feb. 10, the battalion lived in tents near the firing complex. Now the Americans are housed in steel buildings and the Chinese missileers use the tents — until takeover day.

Picked Chinese

Chinese crews were carefully selected and represented the intellectual cream of the Nationalist army, Capt. Douglas said. Other Nationalist anti-aircraft units, gun battalions near airfields and cities, are from the Air Force.

"The Chinese assigned liaison officers to us as inter-