



Camp Desert Rock

Introduction

Starting in 1951, thousands of military personnel from all four U.S. military services received orders to serve with the U.S. Army's Atomic Maneuver Battalion working at Camp Desert Rock at the Nevada Test Site.



Soldiers are briefed at Camp Desert Rock for an atmospheric nuclear test on Yucca Flat. It was the fourth test in the Buster-Jangle series, and the fourth test where military personnel were deployed from Camp Desert Rock.

A Step Back in Time

It is hard to imagine that in the 1950s the Nevada Test Site hosted a bustling military camp full of young soldiers, marines, sailors and airmen who were to witness the heat and blast of the ultimate "doomsday" weapon - the atomic bomb.

The camp was activated in the fall of 1951 for the Buster-Jangle Series conducted on Yucca Flat. Thousands of troop observers from all parts of the country were deployed from Camp Desert Rock to witness the atomic detonations. After the explosions, some were marched or bussed even closer to ground zero to see the effects of these explosions on military equipment before returning to Camp Desert Rock.

Establishing a Camp

The task of establishing Camp Desert Rock was assigned to the 231st Engineer Combat Battalion, who arrived in Las Vegas on September 14, 1951 from Fort Lewis, Washington. By September 18, the engineers had erected tents for living quarters, temporary sumps for garbage disposal, sanitary fill areas, a daily garbage service and began construction of 196 mess tables, and 42 wash racks, and kitchen areas. Engineers also constructed showers for the entire camp, which involved erecting towers to hold 3,000-gallon water tanks.

The first nuclear test of Operation Buster was Able, scheduled for October 19, 1951. However, on the morning of the scheduled test, the Atomic Energy Commission Information Office issued a media release from the El Cortez Hotel in Las Vegas informing the public of a test delay due to a mechanical fault in a key electrical test circuits. The test was postponed until 10 a.m. October 22.



Nevada Test Site History



Camp Desert Rock, also known as Desert Atom Camp, Nevada, was home to the U.S. Army's Atomic Maneuver Battalion in the 1950s. More than 9,000 soldiers were housed here during the 1955 series of tests. About 2,500 men made up the camp complement. The camp consisted of 100 semi-permanent buildings and more than 500 tents.

Camp Closes

After four years of collecting radiation effects data, the camp, under the command of the U.S. Sixth Army, was closed after the Operation Teapot series of tests in 1955.

For more information, contact:
U.S. Department of Energy
National Nuclear Security Administration
Nevada Site Office
Office of Public Affairs
P.O. Box 98518
Las Vegas, NV 89193-8518
phone: 702-295-3521
fax: 702-295-0154
email: nevada@nv.doe.gov
<http://www.nv.doe.gov>

