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L&M Lends a Helping Hand to Support Cold War Exhibit at the Northwest Museum of Arts & Culture

Few people may know or remember, but once upon a time the city of Spokane, Washington and its surrounding area were home to one of our country's most dramatic and tense political situations of the 20th century, as the United States squared off against the Soviet Union over a nearly two week span of time that would later come to be known as the Cuban Missile Crisis.

After photos surfaced on October 15, 1962 showing Soviet built missiles being prepared in Cuba, the United States government issued an ultimatum: Remove the missiles, or go to war. Over the next 13 days, the United States and the entire world would watch and wait in anticipation, wondering if the standoff would become a massive nuclear conflict.

In the area around Spokane, nine Atlas-E nuclear missiles housed in underground installations were activated, armed and raised to launch position, and held in launch ready mode. An unprecedented event, one made even more daunting by the admission of U.S. government that those nine missiles were the only U.S. missiles that were both ready and capable of hitting Cuba when launched.

A tense situation, to be sure, one that marked its 50th anniversary last month. The Spokane Museum of Arts and Culture remembered this important historical date with a large museum exhibit that included aerial photographs and other images of Atlas E missile sites and control room. A fully restored Nike Ajax missile, used in the 1950's for air defense of the area, was also showcased in the exhibit. Fifty years ago, the men and women in that launch room went underground for a 7-day lockdown, not knowing whether nuclear war was about to begin.

In operation, the Nike missile is held upright by internal air pressure that holds the weight of the missile. This pressure is then replaced by fuel pressure during activation. Obviously, the missile on display at the Museum would not active, so a new solution was needed in order to hold the missile during display. Enter L&M Precision Fabrication. The museum contacted L&M and requested assistance with the display. In less than 24 hours, L&M fabricated internal framework to bear the weight of the vertically mounted missile in time for the museum exhibit's opening on October 17, 2012. The project proved a real eye stopper for employees as well as people driving by.

See photos for the results! All of us at L&M are so proud to have been able to contribute to the celebration of this important part of our region's history.

