

"WE'RE FIRING INTERCONTINENTAL MISSILES NOW!"



Here's a firsthand report on the 5,000-mile Snark, which is combat-ready today.

by Capt. Albert C. Ricks, U.S.A.F.,

as told to Arturo and Janeann Gonzalez

MANY HEADLINE WRITERS and Government officials who loudly deplore the inadequacies of the U.S. missile program ignore one important fact: America has an intercontinental missile right now which can fly more than 5,000 statute miles, slip through enemy jamming, and land smack on its target.

I know. I've helped fire her!

My Air Force unit—the 556th Strategic Missile Squadron—is the first combat unit to be armed with these lethally efficient Snark missiles now rolling off the production lines. We're learning how to master these birds at the Air Force Missile Test Center at Cape Canaveral, and this Summer we will move to a specially built launching site at Presque Isle, Me., where much of the Soviet empire is within range.

Our Snark is a 69-foot, J-57 turbojet-powered bird with the wing span of a fighter plane. She roars along at high altitudes at subsonic speeds. Fully mobile, she can be loaded into a giant C-124 transport and airlifted anywhere.

The Snark can be kept fully fueled at all times, is relatively inexpensive to manufacture, and flies unerringly on course, thanks to an intricate guidance system which uses the stars to check its position. We know the Snark can drop her atomic or hydrogen payload on target for she's been test-fired successfully more than 80 times over a total distance of more than 100,000 miles!

We agree with the Snark's critics that our missile is slower and less deadly than some of the sleek new missiles on the drawing boards or the test pads at Canaveral. But our Snark is in production right now!

I confess that the life of a missile squadron officer is a new and fascinating experience for me. At Cape Canaveral, it's the Fourth of July every day. Even my little boy Ricky, two, has the spirit: he's more interested in missile models than in any other toy.

The suburbs of Canaveral are sort of a missile world. My neighbors are civilian technicians who work alongside me. Many are German-born rocket experts who have been masterminding much U.S. missile work since the end of World War II.

Local restaurants advertise missile-lingo sandwiches—the "Snarkburger," for instance. And the Chamber of Can-