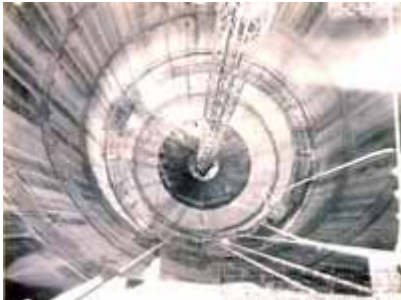


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Side Note



A view of Red Hill tank #4, taken Sept. 30, 1942, after it was completed, showing the upper dome spring line after pre-stressing and steel plating were set.

Landmark Red Hill Facility Was Once Top Secret

By Cynthia Greenwood

It is buried several hundred feet deep in the volcanic hills looming above picturesque Honolulu. The Red Hill Fuel Storage Facility consists of 20 gargantuan, capsule-shaped fuel vaults, each tall enough to hold a 20-story building. At 100 feet in diameter, each tank required 72,250 cubic feet of concrete to construct and holds 12.6 million gallons of gasoline, enough to power the average car for 500,000 years.

The Red Hill storage facility stores more than 250 million gallons of fuel used by sea and air fleets owned by the U.S. Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps. The facility, operated by the Navy's Fleet and Industrial Supply Center (FISC), is connected to many fueling piers at Naval Station Pearl Harbor by several 3.5-mile fuel pipelines. The massive fuel depot serves Pearl Harbor, Hickham and Wheeler Air Force Bases, Kaneohe Marine Corps base, and the U.S. Coast Guard.

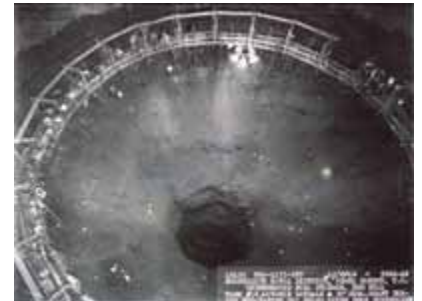
"We're the last stop before they go out into the battlefield," said Lt. Commander Tom Gorman, Bulk Fuels Director at FISC.

Between the Second World War and the Cold War, the Navy remained circumspect about Red Hill's existence. "It was one of the first Navy 'Black' projects," said Gorman, "which meant that it was top secret from the time it was built until the early 1990s. It was unclassified after the Cold War, but we still scrutinize all visitors and maintain tight security at the hill."

In 1995, the Red Hill facility was designated as a civil engineering landmark by the American Society of Civil Engineering (ASCE). At that time it became a monument and joined ranks with the Brooklyn Bridge, the Washington Monument, the Hoover Dam, the U.S. Capitol, and other feats of American civil engineering.



The facility took nearly three years to build, beginning after Christmas of 1940 until September 1943, and was finished nine months ahead of schedule. Engineers managing the project adapted classic mining methods used in Colorado and West Virginia. It took 3,900 laborers toiling around the clock to build the facility, according to Navy reports. There were no housing or residential accommodations near the Red Hill site while crews worked, so the Navy created a Red Hill camp and imported entertainment after hours, Gorman explained. "For national security reasons, they didn't want people in Honolulu or Waikiki to know what was going on," Gorman said.



A bird's-eye view of the excavation and funnel effect of tank #18's movable catwalk and 30-foot-diameter shaft while it was excavated 20 feet below the upper dome springline.

When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, construction at the Red Hill site continued with little interruption because of its underground location. The storage facility has served U.S. armed forces during World War II and a variety of Service operations since then. In 1991 during Operation Desert Storm, the Air Force and Navy used it to

re-fuel between the U.S. mainland and the Persian Gulf. Today, the terminal is automated, which requires fewer personnel to be on hand during fueling evolutions, Gorman said. "The manual turning of valves is a thing of the past." After the tragedy of September 11, the Navy began limiting tours of the storage site and installed 36 additional security cameras. "We know who's entering the facility and where everyone inside is located," said Gorman.

Even though the Red Hill facility has been de-classified by the Navy, it's a well-kept secret, Gorman says. "When the ASCE was in the process of designating it as a civil engineering landmark, they tried to track down the people that worked on it. They had a hard time getting anybody to acknowledge they knew anything about the project."

"People are still keeping it a secret after all these years," Gorman recalled.

All photos courtesy of 14th Naval District, Pearl Harbor.