



Camp Cooke and Vandenberg Air Force Base, 1941-1966: From Armor and Infantry Training to Space and Missile Launches

Jeffrey E. Geiger

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During World War II, hundreds of military training installations were built throughout the United States to prepare servicemen for the rigors of overseas combat. One such installation was Camp Cooke in California, which since 1957 has become an internationally recognized missile and rocket base renamed Vandenberg Air Force Base.

This book examines the history of the camp, starting with its construction. Established some 150 miles north of Los Angeles, Cooke was designed for armored divisions, but by the end of the war hundreds of other specialized organizations trained there. It supported many USO clubs and attracted some of Hollywood's leading entertainers as well as many from radio and stage.

With the outbreak of the Korean War, Cooke supported Army National Guard and reserve units. Its large hospital cared for war evacuees and Army medical cases from other parts of the globe. When it became an Air Force base, America's first spy satellite program was conducted from there. The intelligence data collected from these missions exploded the myth of a "missile gap" with the Soviet Union. At the height of the Cold War, America's first ICBM missile equipped with a nuclear warhead was based at Vandenberg.

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