

# Cold War Presidential Bunkers

Presenter: Tom Roemer

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Lee Halverson introduced Tom Roemer for this program of the month.

- Tom grew up in Appleton and left college in 1965 after receiving his draft letter.
- He joined the Army with an interest in microwave communications training. After completing various tests, he was asked to consider joining the WHCA (White House Communications Agency). He agreed, and was accepted after passing extensive background checks and a lie-detector test.
- The WHCA began as the Army Signal Detachment in 1941 before becoming the multi-service organization it was when Tom joined.
- In 1947, the Truman Doctrine was the beginning of the U.S. containment policy to limit Soviet expansion, which would later be considered the start of the four decades for the Cold war.
- In 1948, Russia exploded their first atom bomb, which led to the creation of a plan for the continuation of the U.S. government in the event of an atomic attack.
- One communication site was the Raven Rock Complex in Pennsylvania (site R), which is located about six miles from Camp David.
  - The mountain that it was dug into is made up of greenstone granite, which is some of the hardest rock on the east coast.
  - It was created for communications between the Joint Chiefs of the military and the President.
  - It was started in 1959, and completed in 1962.
  - It is bigger than the site at Cheyenne Mountain, and it still may be in use.
  - The communications tower was twelve stories tall, with ten of those stories located underground. The microwave transmitter was aimed towards Camp David.
- In 1966 digital phone equipment first became available.
- The WHCA also maintained communications and security on the Eisenhower farm, which is near Gettysburg.
- The WHCA was not responsible for Congress's bunker. The WHCA was only responsible for the President, since he is the Commander-in-Chief of the military.
- In the book Breaking Cover by Bill Gulley, it is mentioned that Lyndon Johnson had a telephone recording system set up that he controlled. While it was maintained by the WHCA, the Secret Service was unaware of its existence.
- Today satellites and digital technology have replaced the communication equipment familiar to Tom back then.
- After four years with the WHCA, Tom served nine years with the Secret Service before starting his own security company.

Following the presentation, Tom answered a number of questions from the audience.