

“The Hole” - North Bay

Hidden amongst the structures of 22 Wing North Bay is a subterranean relic of the Cold War called the underground complex commonly referred to as the hole. The underground complex was one of a number of such structures built to sustain a nuclear attack during the Cold War. North Bay was chosen due to the existing RCAF Station and the durability of the granite rock formation, also centrally located in relation to North America. Located approximately 60 stories below the surface of the earth, construction started in 1959 and finished in 1963. One third of the cost was paid by Canada and two thirds by the USA. The complex was designed to accommodate approximately 400 personnel for four weeks. It included its own power plant, water source, offices and a control center, all manned 24 and 7.

Hard rock miners and many other skilled tradesmen were brought in during its construction and all rock extracted found itself lining the waterfront of North Bay on Lake Nipissing as a breakwater. The initial primary task of the underground complex was to secure North American airspace against a Soviet attack as the first line of defence for NORAD. With the end and reduction of the Cold War, the role was modified to include drug runners, UFO'S and other suspect aircraft intruding into Canadian airspace. During its 46 year life space over 17,000 US and Canadian Airforce personnel served in the complex and were known as “mushrooms”. Today the under ground complex is no longer in use and was replaced by an above ground structure.

The authors photographs include an aerial picture of the entrance to the hole, a visit by the NORAD commander to the “hole” and a typical radar scope image of Canadian airspace with a CF 18 superimposed.

Randolph Rice



LOCATION OF
COMPLEX
ENTRANCE



