

## Missile

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would have ricocheted off the tarmac and landed God knows where.

It was a moment that would stay with Lambros, now a retired 75-year-old English teacher. After serving his entire military stint — October 1958 to February 1962 — at that local Nike base, he returned to his native Baltimore area, where he still lives.

All his life, Lambros has contemplated the effects that modern war and weaponry have had, and could have, on all life on the planet. His new novel, "To End All War," is set amid the turmoil of World War I, a war that in many ways, he said, set the stage for today's problems.

### Cold War revisited

Through the release of his book, Lambros is lending his voice to a resurgence of interest in the volatility of weapons now and the early days of the Cold War. In some ways, though, the interest is new and fueled by many factors, not the least of which is current events.

When Lambros was working on the Morris missile base, the Nike program, named after the Greek goddess of victory, was in full swing across the nation. The Continental United States, or CONUS, Air Defense System included 15 surface-to-air missile sites in northern and southern New Jersey and many more nationally.

According to "Hidden History of New Jersey at War," another new book, the Nike program was designed to protect major

### Learn more

Explore the history of Project Nike and Nike missile bases in New Jersey with these resources:

#### Reading material

- » "To End All War: An Historical Novel," by Nicholas Lambros (August 2014), [www.toendallwar.com](http://www.toendallwar.com)
- » "Hidden History of New Jersey at War," by Joseph G. Bilby, James M. Madden, and Harry Ziegler (The History Press, August 2014), [www.hiddenhistoryofnewjersey.com/hhnjaw.htm](http://www.hiddenhistoryofnewjersey.com/hhnjaw.htm)
- » Nike Battery NY-79/80, Livingston/East Hanover, <http://alpha.fdu.edu/~bender/NY79.html>

#### Places to visit

- » Fort Hancock Nike Association, Sandy Hook, <http://ny56nike.weebly.com>
- » National Guard Militia Museum, Sea Girt, <http://www.nj.gov/military/museum>

American cities from an air attack by the Soviet Union's Tu-95, a long-range bomber capable of flying 6,000 miles without refueling.

The site where Lambros was stationed was called Nike Battery NY-79/80 because its goal was to defend New York City.

These days, there is concern about Russia as the current crisis in Ukraine drives a rift between that country and the West, and as President Obama considers providing defensive weapons to Ukraine in its conflict with pro-Russian rebels.

Terrorism is another issue that pervades the cultural consciousness now, Lambros said.

"With the power of those JATOs on the missile that day in 1961, it could have come off the tarmac and landed in the middle of Livingston," Lambros explained. "It was a live warhead. You just don't know what that missile could have done."

"With all four boosters operating," he added, "the missile had a range of about 225 miles, so that would include Trenton and Philadelphia, probably Baltimore, and maybe as far as Washington, D.C."

Today he wonders what ISIS, the jihadist terror group, could do even with nuclear waste material.

"I'm not against nuclear missiles," he said. "I understand why they're needed, but I also understand the possibilities, and I don't like them at all. If they were to be employed in a war, they would literally wipe out this earth."

The cultural conversation on the topic has

opened in yet another way.

In his new high-profile new book, "Command and Control: Nuclear Weapons, the Damascus Accident, and the Illusion of Safety," Journalist Eric Schlosser uses recently declassified documents and interviews to explore how often the U.S. has come close to a detonating a weapon domestically or accidentally starting a war.

Among the incidents he presents is the 1980 Titan II intercontinental ballistic missile mishap at a launch site outside Damascus, Arkansas. It started when a worker mistakenly dropped a nine-pound tool in the silo. The tool pierced the skin of the missile and set off a highly dangerous leak of rocket fuel.

New Jersey has not escaped minor or major mishaps.

The state has never forgotten the 1958 explosion at the Nike site in Middletown.

On May 22 that year, four Nike Ajax missiles went off in Middletown — the Ajax is the predecessor of the Hercules, featuring a high explosive fragmentation warhead. Ten people who worked on the base were killed. According to news accounts of the day, one of the Ajax warheads landed near homes on Swarzel Drive in Middletown.

Another of the 10 sites that guarded New York City was the Fort Hancock base at Sandy Hook, which is now one of the two former Nike sites in the country to be restored. Tours are provided by nine guides, all of whom had worked in the Nike system in the U.S.

"A lot of people who come to Sandy Hook to take one of our tours of the base, to this day, had no idea there were Hercules missiles in their neighborhoods," said Pete DeMarco, one of the guides. "These sites closed down in 1973 in New Jersey. People still don't realize that big empty lot down the street from where they live was a launching area for a Nike."

### Looking back

Lambros wrote "To End All War" to highlight World War I, a war whose importance he feels is too often overlooked.

As a teacher, he said,

he knows people don't necessarily like reading history books, so he wrote a novel to dramatize the importance of World War I, including its weaponry, in creating today's world. It's a tale of three siblings, who each become involved in the war in different ways.

"I wanted three characters because I wanted to make sure I described the war in all three aspects — on the sea, on land and in the air," Lambros said. "I accomplished that with the three characters, two of whom are brothers, and their younger sister."

Literally, the story line fell into his lap. An antique book collector, he once bought "Now It Can Be Told," a World War I book written shortly after the war ended. When he opened its pages, a letter written in 1918 and signed by "Monroe," the chauffeur for three children, fell out. He was intrigued by its contents. In his mind, the story grew.

World War I, Lambros holds, was the first war of its type: It involved the world. Also, its weapons were the basis for modern weaponry and the means to deliver them.

Though the U.S. entered the war late, he added, the casualty and death rate of American troops was unprecedented. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, 204,000 were wounded and 116,500 died.

"That's a ratio, in wartime, that exceeds any norm in modern war," Lambros explained. "We were in the Vietnam War eight years and had half the deaths."

Because of World War I, he added, monarchies in the Austrian, German, and Russian empires were eliminated; Communism was born; and the Middle East was split up without regard to religion or tribal concerns.

Lambros said that in writing and talking about war, he hopes to encourage people to expand and deepen their knowledge of history and their understanding of the forces at work in the world. It's been that way for him since the summer of 1961.

"I'm the kind of guy," he said, "who looks before he leaps."

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