


Fort Miles Museum Opens NAVFAC Exhibit

By James Pierce, President, Fort Miles Museum

Fort Miles Museum located in Cape Henlopen State Park, Lewes, Delaware recently opened a new Cold War exhibit featuring information about the Navy SOSUS program (NAVFAC Lewes), which was in effect at Fort Miles from 1962 until 1981.


NAVAL FACILITY LEWES




NAVFAC Lewes was commissioned on May 1, 1962. The headquarters were in what is now the Biden Center. It held offices, dormitories, and a mess hall.

The USSR spy boat, *USS Grom*, was intercepted here. The intercept was the second of two for the boat.

Battery Smith, a World War II gun emplacement, became an auxiliary building with workrooms and storage. Battery Herring, another World War II emplacement, was expanded into the terminal building. This is where the SOSUS cable came ashore and hydrophone sounds were analyzed. The Navy also constructed a transmitter building along what is now the Walking Dunes Trail. It sent secret coded data to other U.S. Navy assets.



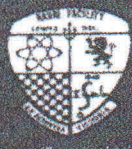
The transmitter building held powerful radiofrequency equipment, in service in 1967.



On September 16, 1977, Lieutenant Commander Margaret Anne Frederick assumed command becoming the first female commander of a NAVFAC shore facility. The exhibit proudly displays her photo.

As technology improved, fewer facilities were needed. The Navy decommissioned NAVFAC Lewes on September 30, 1981. During 26 years of service it won multiple Navy awards, including two Meritorious Unit Commendations.

149 people worked at NavFac Lewes at its height: 8 officers, 125 enlisted personnel, and 16 civilians. On September 16, 1977, LCDR Margaret Frederick took command of NAVFAC Lewes. This made her the first female commander of a NAVFAC shore facility.



The motto "By knowledge, we win" is inscribed on the building's facade.

The exhibit features three panels describing the history of SOSUS, as well as specific information about the Fort Miles installations. Supporting the panels is a display of the SOSUS cable that ran from the terminal building out to the ocean. This cable has been opened up so visitors can view its construction and complexity, as well as pick up and examine a cross section.

HISTORY NAVFAC Lewes had its origins when NAVFAC Cape May was established in New Jersey in 1955. However, this facility was destroyed by a storm in 1962 and it was decided to move the remaining equipment to Fort Miles in Delaware. Battery Herring, the location of an artillery placement during World War II, was expanded and became the terminal building. The Navy also constructed a transmitter building nearby, which was used to send coded data to other Navy assets.

At its height, 149 personnel consisting of 8 officers, 125 enlisted personnel and 16 civilians worked at NAVFAC Lewes. On September 16, 1977, Lieutenant Commander Margaret ("Peggy" as known to her colleagues) Anne Frederick assumed command becoming the first female commander of a NAVFAC shore facility. The exhibit proudly displays her photo.

NAVFAC Lewes was closed September 30, 1981. During its 26 years of service it won numerous awards, including three major Navy awards two of which were Meritorious Unit Commendations. At the closing ceremony, Commanding Officer, CDR William Zuberbuhler pointed out that NAVFAC Lewes had received every possible award the Navy issues.

WHAT WE ARE Fort Miles Museum operates to inform and educate visitors, military history buffs, school children and veterans about the key role Fort Miles played in both WWII and the Cold War. Information about the Museum and its programs can be found at

www.fortmilesmuseum.org or email info@fortmilesmuseum.org.

CREDITS: The Cape Gazette, Fort Miles Historical Association

