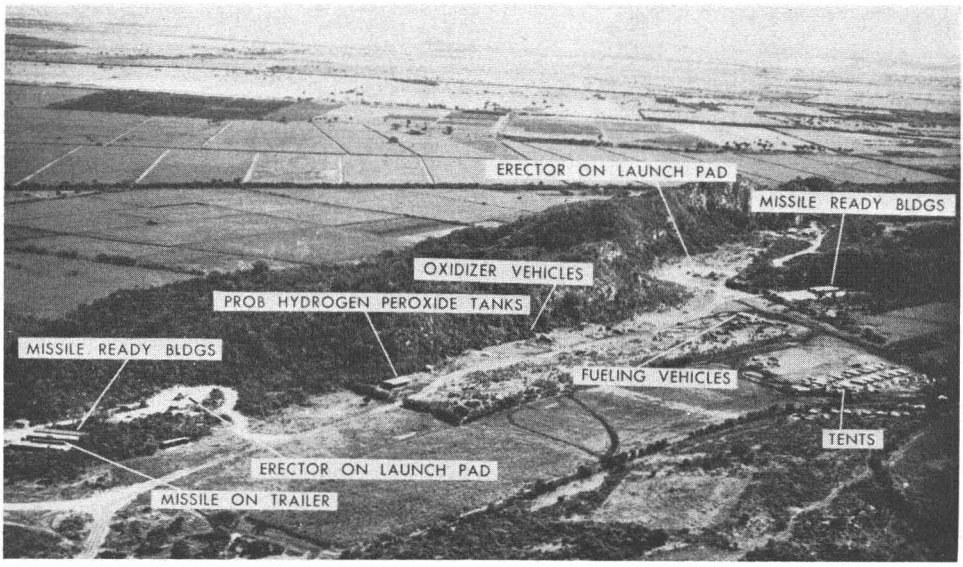
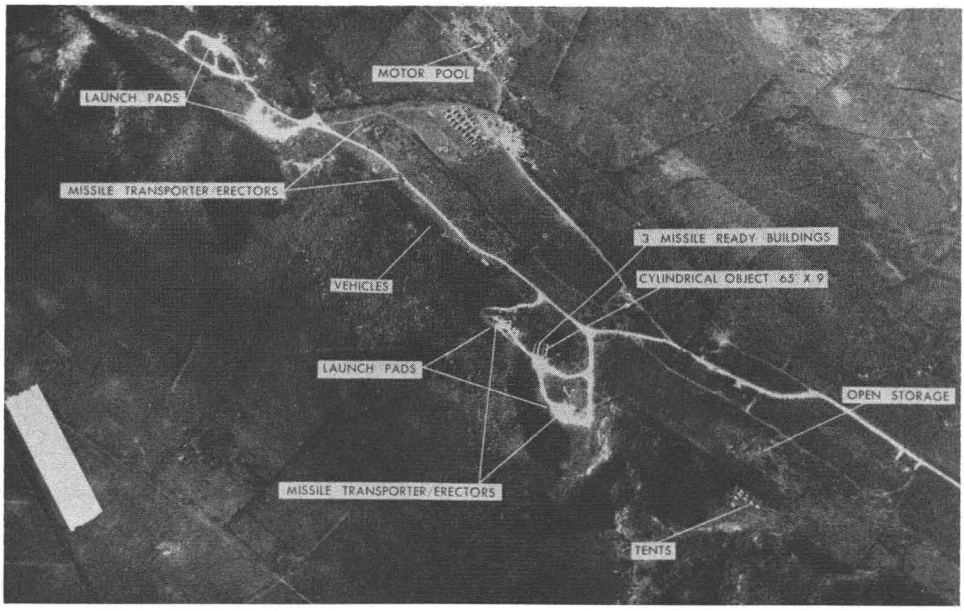
Photo Interpretation and the Cuban Crisis

EXPLANATORY NOTE BY ABRAHAM ANSON

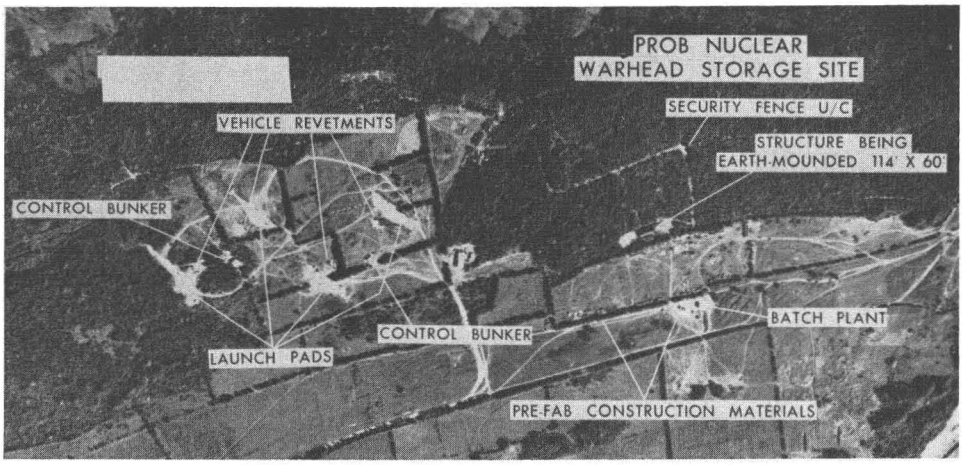
Aerial surveillance combined with skilled photo interpretation has long been employed as an undercover intelligence operation. Photo interpretation has now become an instrument of foreign policy. On the following pages are shown aerial photographs, with their interpretations, of the recent missile build-up in Cuba. These photographs which were furnished by the Defense Department are duplicates of photographs which were mentioned by President Kennedy in his address to the Nation and were also shown at the United Nations Security Council Meeting. Some of these photographs have been published in newspapers and magazines and have been shown on television programs. This demonstration of national service is highly gratifying to this Society and its Publications Committee. Never before has there been such widespread recognition and appreciation of the values of photo interpretation for a multitude of uses, including national defense and military operations. Despite the widespread publicity many people in the United States and Foreign countries have not seen any of the photos. Many more will desire copies. Accordingly the Editor and the Publications Committee decided on one more showing of some photos.



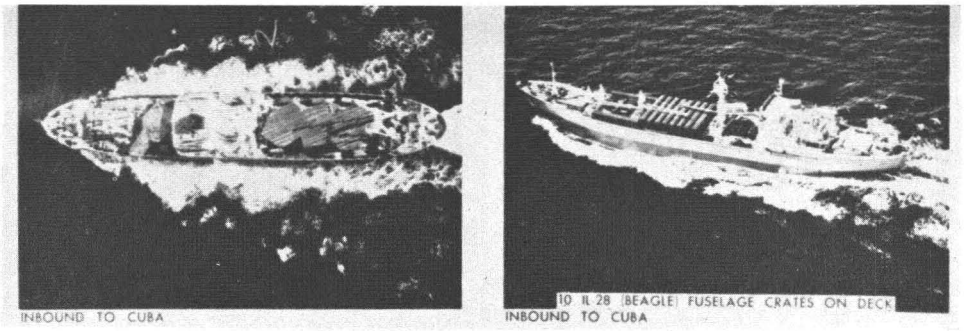
Medium Range Ballistic Missile Base.



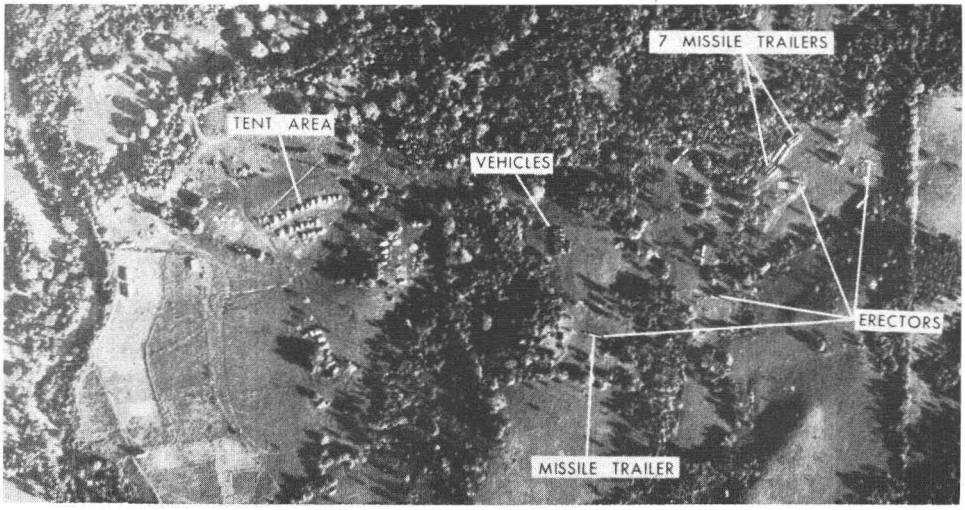
Medium Range Ballistic Missile Base in Cuba.



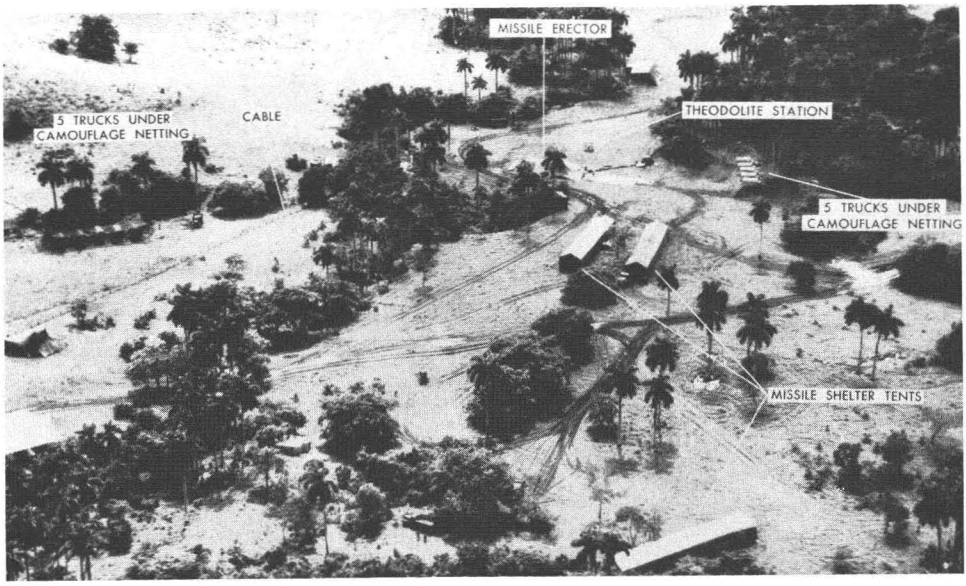
Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile Base in Cuba.



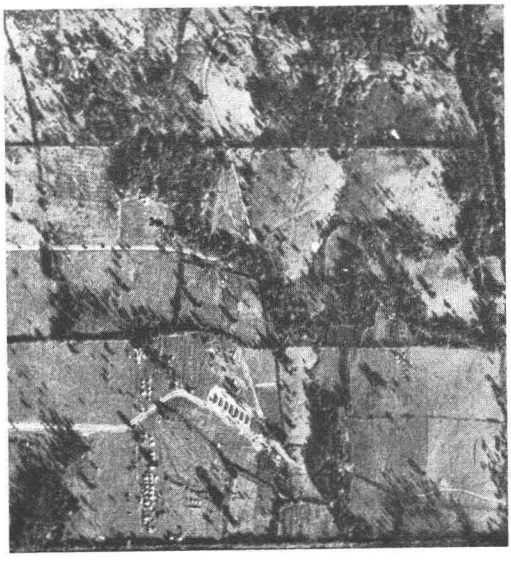
Soviet Ships Carrying Jet Light Bomber Crates to Cuba.



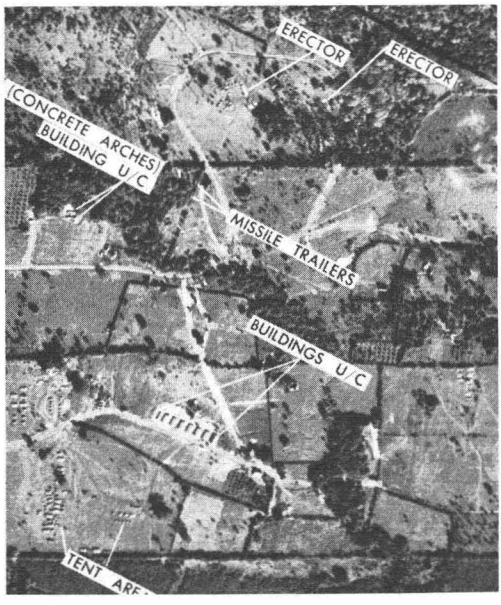
San Cristobal MRBM Site #1—October 14—A Soviet MRBM unit has moved into the heavily wooded San Cristobal Area, established temporary billeting areas and emplaced four missile erectors. Seven missile trailers with missiles are clustered near two missile shelter tents. while another missile trailer is positioned adjacent to an emplaced erector. Missile oxidizer tank trailers are evident nearby in open field.



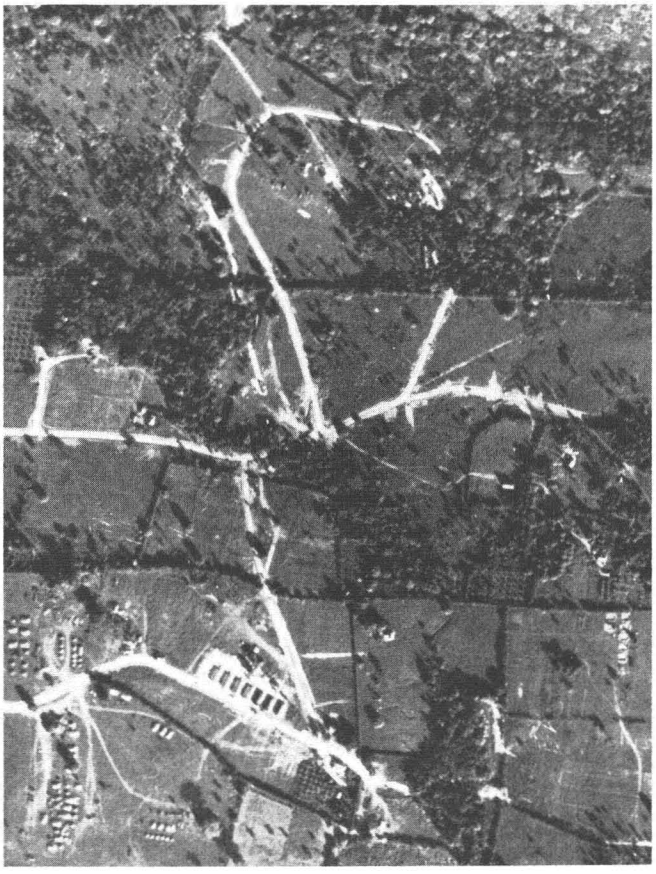
San Cristobal MRBM Site #1. Low level photograph on 23 October shows an additional missile shelter tent and camouflage netting over ten trucks at two locations. Missile erector is also draped with canvas. A second missile shelter tent has been erected. Cabling connecting missile erector with control van (not shown) from which launch order is given. Missiles fired from this site have a range of 1,000–1,100 nautical miles.



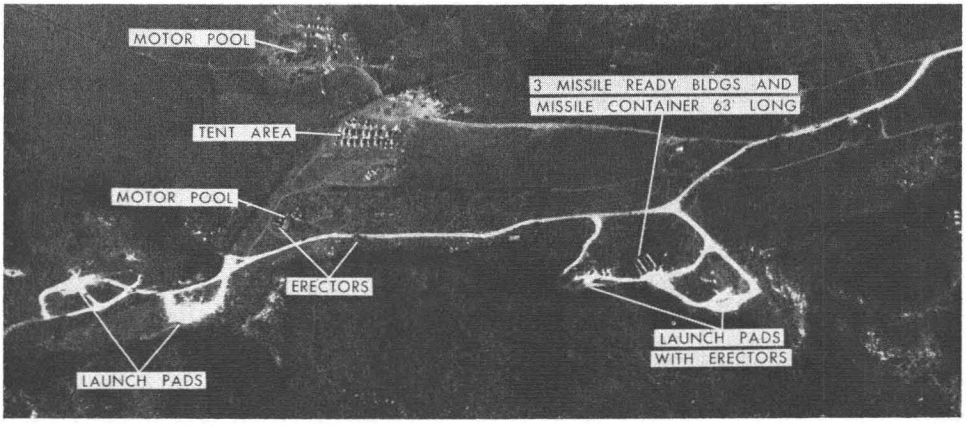
This picture, taken 14 October, shows the start of construction of a second MRBM Site #2 at San Cristobal, Cuba. A prefabricated housing area for crews (seven buildings), and an extensive loop service road system are under construction. Pyramidal tents are shown.



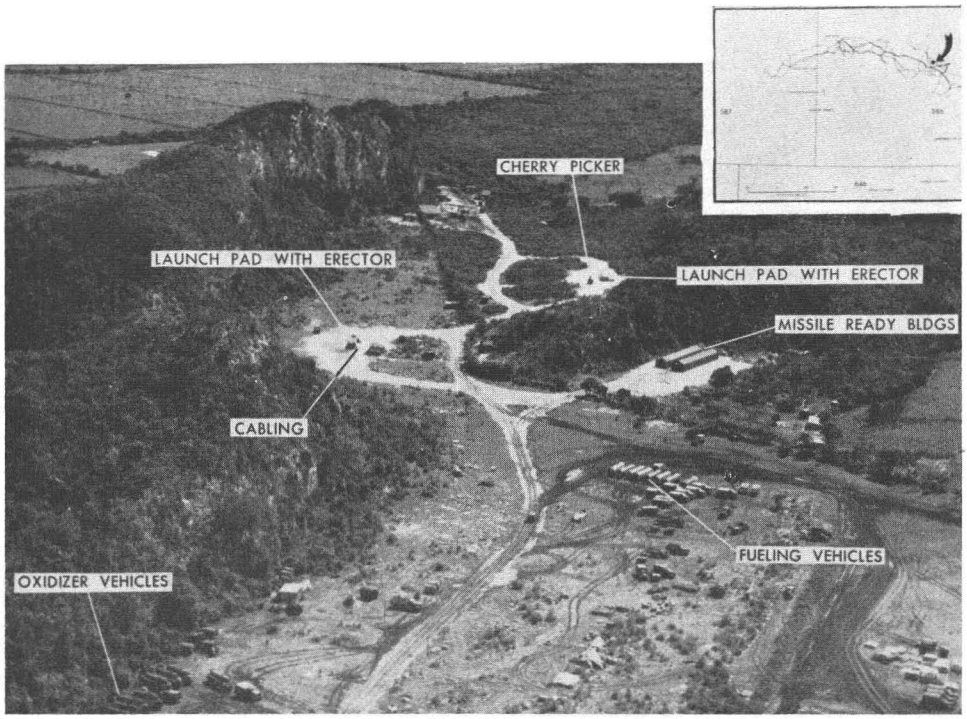
San Cristobal #2, 17 October. During the interim three day period the launch site is near completion. Two missile erectors, missile trailers and other vehicles are visible. Intensive activity is apparent.



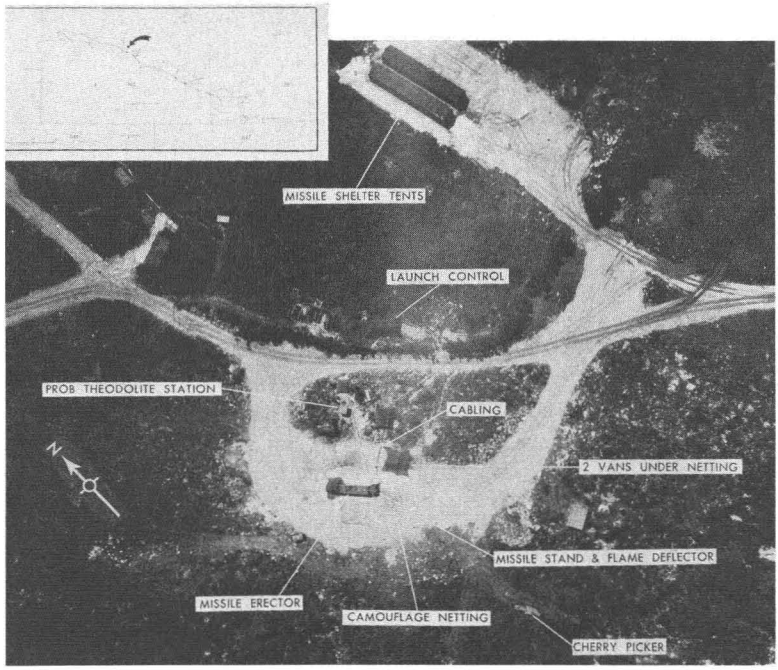
San Cristobal MRBM Site #2, 22 October. Four prepared launch positions have been completed since 14 October. Missile erectors are positioned near by. Three prefab houses have been roofed and crew quarters expanded. Missiles fired from this site would have a range of 1,000–1,100 nautical miles.



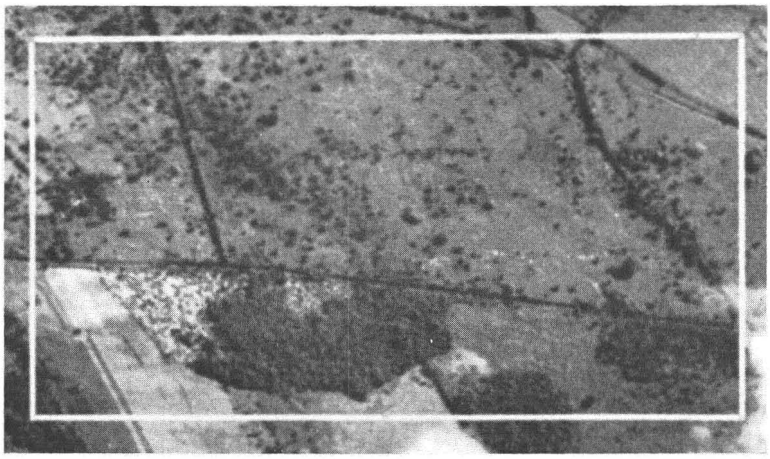
Sagua La Grande MRBM Site. 17 October. In this period between 5 Sept. and 17 Oct. this was transformed into a Soviet MRBM Launch facility well along toward completion. Service roads and launch pads are evident. Missile erectors are already in position at two of the launch pads and missile ready buildings are complete. A missile container (63 feet long) was observed between two buildings. The other two launch pads are near completion. The erectors are along the approach roadway near the motor pool area.



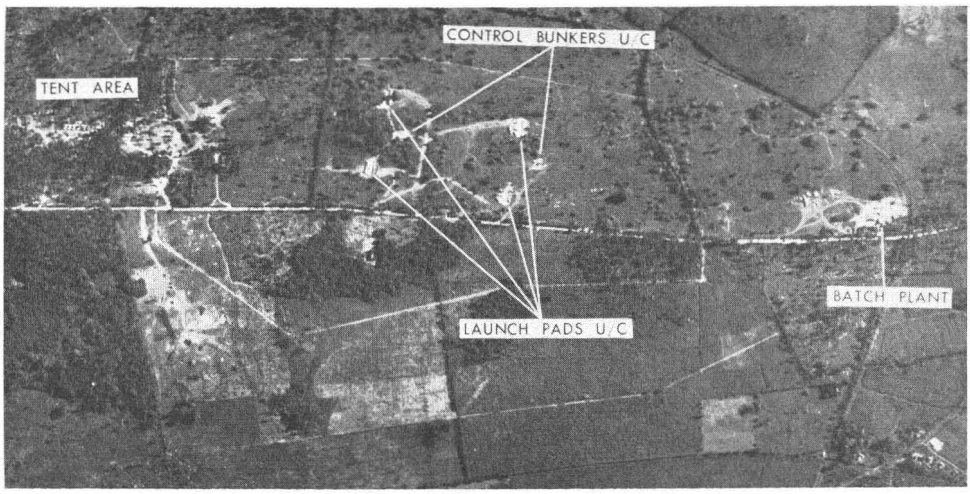
Sagua La Grande MRBM Site. 23 October. A low level oblique photograph shows changes in 6 days. Missile erectors have been positioned on two launch pads. Missile oxidizers and fuel tank trailers are parked. The "cherry picker" crane provides access to the upper portions of the missile when in position.



Sagua La Grange MRBM Site. 23 October. This low vertical shows operational readiness of the same area. A canvas covered missile erector and other command equipment are shown. There is a missile stand and flame deflector, a theodolite station for targeting, two vans under a netting and cable connections to launch control. A major effort was being made to camouflage the installation.



5 September. Remedios IRBM Site. This vertical aerial photo shows no signs of activity.



Remedios IRBM Site. 19 October. In two days between Oct. 17 and 19 the crews have completed the major sections of the footings for the launch pads and control bunkers. The "batch plant" is used to mix concrete for the construction work. A semiburied storage structure in the left front across the road from a launch pad was probably to be used to store nuclear warheads.