

Chapter 3: Minuteman Missile National Historic Site (1990–present)

Site Selection

In creating Minuteman Missile National Historic Site, the American government has transformed what was once a secret and well-guarded location into a public space. As a component of the National Park System, the site will be preserved for future generations to learn first hand of the Minuteman missile's role in the Cold War. This was the hope of Soviet and American leaders even at the end of their bitter bipolar standoff. The terms of the Treaty Between the United States of America and the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (START Treaty), allow both the United States and the Soviet Union to preserve examples of their Cold War armaments as static displays for public education purposes. The Minuteman II installations of the 44th Strategic Missile Wing (SMW) at Ellsworth Air Force Base drew the attention of the National Park Service (NPS) and the Air Force during the deactivation of Minuteman II ICBMs, since the Launch Facilities (LFs) and Launch Control Facilities (LCFs) in the 44th SMW displayed original technology developed for the early Minuteman I ICBM system. The LFs and LCFs of Ellsworth Air Force Base remain largely as originally constructed, and reflect the massive retaliation strategy that governed the first Minuteman I installations. For these reasons, the NPS focused on the South Dakota Minuteman LFs and LCFs when selecting an LF and an LCF for preservation.

In 1993 the NPS and the Air Force selected Delta-01 LCF and Delta-09 LF of the 44th SMW for preservation. Delta-01 and Delta-09 were chosen over other sites in South Dakota for the physical integrity of the LF and LCF and for their location near other historic sites, federal lands, and Interstate 90. Minuteman Missile National Historic Site is located within easy driving distance of Badlands National Park, Mount Rushmore National Memorial and the Black Hills National Forest. Buffalo Gap National Grassland is adjacent to the LCF and LF, providing a protected natural setting for the historic site.ⁱ

The NPS's Rocky Mountain Regional Office and the Air Force entered into a series of Interagency Agreements to coordinate the effort to convert Delta-01 and Delta-09 into static displays. The first such agreement, signed in 1993, committed the NPS to completing a Special Resource Study to determine formally that Delta-01 and Delta-09 were the best choice for preservation of a Minuteman II LCF and LF. This study considered the suitability and feasibility of developing Delta-01 and Delta-09 into a National Historic Site and investigated alternatives for managing the site. The study also considered the environmental and socioeconomic conditions in the area and what effect the new historic site might have on these variables.ⁱⁱ Funding for the Special Resource Study came from the Department of Defense's "Legacy Resource Management Program," which awarded the NPS a \$150,000 grant to study alternatives for preserving examples of America's Cold War history.ⁱⁱⁱ The NPS completed the Special Resource Study in 1995.

Delta-01 and Delta-09 Deactivation

The work to deactivate Delta-01 LCF and Delta-09 LF differed dramatically from the procedures followed for the other Minuteman II missile sites in South Dakota. The Air Force deactivated both sites but did not dismantle them. Instead, the NPS and the Air Force began planning for conversion of these two sites into monuments to the Cold War and the nuclear threat that existed during the second half of the twentieth century. The Air Force prepared special supplemental orders for these two sites. At the same time, deactivation of Delta-01 and Delta-09 needed to be completed in compliance with the START Treaty. Some of the deactivation tasks included those on the standard Air Force deactivation list, for example removing classified information and hazardous materials. The Air Force removed the Minuteman II missile at Delta-09, severed the Hardened Intersite Cable System (HICS), disconnected or removed other military communications equipment, and disconnected alarm systems used during the Cold War.^{iv} The technical order for Delta-01 required severing and removal of a one-foot section of the HICS to prevent any future restoration of communications between Delta-01 and Delta-09, overwriting of the Weapon System Controller/Digital Store and Processor, removing all classified information from the site, installation of non-functioning radio control panels, and the replacement of any missing face plates to cover exposed drawer openings. Diesel storage tanks were also removed. Mechanical equipment such as the electrical system, air filtering systems, and heating system remained intact and interior furnishings, including tables, sofas and chairs were retained.^v The deactivation procedures checklist for Delta-01 was completed on 11 May 1993, however it is not known if this is the last day crews were on the site, or if they had left Delta-01 earlier. Delta-01 and Delta-09 continued in caretaker status until they were transferred to the NPS.^{vi} During the period of caretaker status, both NPS and Air Force personnel performed basic maintenance at Delta-01 and Delta-09, upgraded fire and security systems, and installed a viewing enclosure over the missile launcher at Delta-09.

After deactivation, the NPS and the Air Force continued to work together to assure that the proposed Minuteman Missile National Historic Site became a reality. Interagency Agreements between the two organizations continued to coordinate the activities related to the historic site development. In 1995 Historic American Engineering Record documentation for the two sites were prepared with funding from the U.S. Department of Defense Legacy Resource Management Program.^{vii} In 1996 the NPS and the Air Force developed a conversion plan to convert Delta-09 into a static display and the two agencies also finalized plans which included a viewing enclosure to allow future visitors the opportunity to see into the silo. Construction on the enclosure began in 2001.^{viii} Other activities included the Air Force's sponsorship of a draft National Historic Landmark nomination that was not submitted to NPS for designation.

Enabling Legislation

South Dakota Senators Tom Daschle and Tim Johnson introduced a bill to establish Minuteman Missile National Historic Site in 1998 and Congress began hearing testimony on the bill that same year. The bill failed in 1998 and was reintroduced the following year to the 106th Congress. Representatives from the NPS and the Air Force testified in favor of

establishing the site. By 1999 both the House and Senate passed legislation creating Minuteman Missile National Historic Site and the federal budget for that year included \$5 million to help preserve Delta-01 and Delta-09. The law describes the purpose of Minuteman Missile National Historic Site as:

To preserve, protect, and interpret for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations the structures associated with the Minuteman II missile defense system;

1. to interpret the historical role of the Minuteman II missile defense system-
 - a. as a key component of America's strategic commitment to preserve world peace; and
 - b. in the broader context of the Cold War; and
2. to complement the interpretive programs relating to the Minuteman II missile defense system offered by the South Dakota Air and Space Museum at Ellsworth Air Force Base.

After the federal government officially endorsed the creation of the historic site, the NPS and the Air Force began preparations for the opening of the LF and LCF to the public. Once the legislation was passed, the specific plans to convert Delta-09 to a static display were formally presented to the START Compliance Review Group in Washington, D.C. for approval. Moreover, the new law gave the NPS funds to produce a general management plan for the site.^{ix} A general management plan attempts to establish a clear management philosophy and provide direction for interpretive themes, resource preservation, and visitor use.^x

The NPS began work on the general management plan for the site in the spring of 2001 and hosted a series of public meetings to gather input from interested groups and individuals on their vision for the new historic site. The general management planning team included representatives from the Air Force, Forest Service, South Dakota Air & Space Museum, Badlands National Park, NPS Midwest Regional office, NPS Denver Service Center, and NPS Harper's Ferry Center.^{xi} The general management plan is expected to be available for public comment in the summer of 2004 and finalized in late 2004 or early 2005.

Development and Future of the Historic Site

While the NPS occupied itself with the general management plan for Minuteman Missile National Historic Site, the Air Force worked on the conversion of the Delta-09 LF to a static display to comply with the START Treaty. This conversion was necessary prior to the transfer of ownership to the NPS. The Air Force worked to acquire an unarmed training missile and refurbished and painted the missile prior to shipping it to Delta-09. Procuring the display missile proved no small task for the Air Force staff working on the site with the NPS. Intense competition for training missiles and/or static display missiles existed, as military museums also desired their own Minuteman II ICBMs

for their exhibits. Additionally, many of the high level officers who once staffed the Air Force's six operational missile wings had moved on after their wings were deactivated. These colonels and generals had supported the establishment of a monument to the Cold War and their transfer or retirement reduced high-level support for the new historic site and made obtaining a deactivated Minuteman II ICBM more difficult.^{xii}

Once Air Force staff at Ellsworth had located the component parts of a training missile at Hill Air Force Base in Utah, technicians at Hill Air Force Base refurbished the object.^{xiii} On 12 June 2001 the Air Force emplaced the missile in the Delta-09 silo using a Transporter Erector vehicle designed to emplace Minuteman Missiles. Missile crews from 90th Logistics Group at F.E. Warren Air Force Base in Wyoming, many of whom were based at Ellsworth during the Cold War, assisted in the installation of the training missile. Local media were invited to the emplacement, increasing the profile of Minuteman Missile National Historic Site.^{xiv}

Construction of a viewing enclosure for the missile silo began shortly thereafter. The design of the enclosure represented a joint effort between the NPS and the Air Force and met START Treaty requirements and interpretive needs.^{xv} The enclosure allows viewing below grade with minimal visual impact to the site. To complete the viewing enclosure and platform, the Air Force opened the silo door one-foot past halfway and welded and grouted the door in place. Crews then placed a glass enclosure and stainless steel railing around the silo opening. Future visitors will be able to approach the silo and peer down at the Minuteman II display missile in the silo. By 15 August 2001 the viewing enclosure was largely completed.^{xvi} After the installation of the static display missile and the completion of the viewing enclosure, a Soviet inspection team traveled to South Dakota on 21 May 2002 to verify that Delta-09 complied with the START Treaty's specifications for static displays.

The Air Force and the NPS conducted a formal transfer of ownership of Delta-01 and Delta-09 to the NPS after the work of converting Delta-01 and Delta-09 was complete. On 27 September 2002, exactly eleven years to the day from stand down, the Air Force officially turned Minuteman Missile National Historic Site over to the NPS at a ceremony at Delta-09. The festivities included a B-1 flyover, presentation of colors by the Ellsworth Air Force Base Honor Guard, a performance by the Rapid City Central High School Marching Band, speeches by Fran Mainella, Director of the NPS, and Lieutenant General Robert Hinson, Vice Commander Air Force Space Command. Craig Manson, Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, Department of the Interior and former missileer, spoke of his memories as an officer of the 44th SMW at Ellsworth. Colonel James Kowalski, Commander of the 28th Bomb Wing, then transferred the keys to Delta-01 and Delta-09 to William Supernaugh, Superintendent, Badlands National Park.^{xvii}

As of 2003, minor modifications had occurred to Delta-01 and Delta-09 in preparation for their opening as Minuteman Missile National Historic Site. New security and fire detection/suppression systems were installed at Delta-01 and Delta-09. Delta-01 remained largely as it was when it was deactivated and care has been taken to keep as much of the original mechanical equipment and historic furnishings at the site.

The NPS plans to open Minuteman Missile National Historic Site to the general public, following the completion of an interpretive visitor center, anticipated in 2006.

If not for the dedication of many individuals, both at the Air Force and the NPS, Minuteman Missile National Historic Site site would not have become a reality. For the Air Force and former missileers, the establishment of the historic site provides the opportunity for the public to view their contribution to winning the Cold War. Former missileer Craig Manson stated that the preservation of Delta-01 and Delta-09 "is a most fitting idea because, for this reason, the Cold War dominated the last half of the twentieth century, and some will not believe this or accept this, but most of American life, in one way or another, was defined by the Cold War."^{xviii}



Plate 81. The training missile in the transporter erector prior to emplacement in the Delta-09 silo (Photograph by Staff Sergeant Melissa Phillips, F.E. Warren Air Force Base, Wyoming, U.S. Air Force photo)



Plate 82. Convoy transporting training missile for emplacement at Delta-09 (Photograph by Staff Sergeant Melissa Phillips, F.E. Warren Air Force Base, Wyoming, U.S. Air Force photo)



Plate 83. Transporter Erector ready to emplace the training missile at Delta-09 (Courtesy of the 28th Civil Engineer Squadron, Ellsworth Air Force Base)



Plate 84. Training missile emplacing, Delta-09 silo (Photograph by Staff Sergeant Melissa Phillips, F.E. Warren Air Force Base, Wyoming, U.S. Air Force photo)



Plate 85. Training missile emplacement team (Photograph by Staff Sergeant Melissa Phillips, F.E. Warren Air Force Base, Wyoming, U.S. Air Force photo)

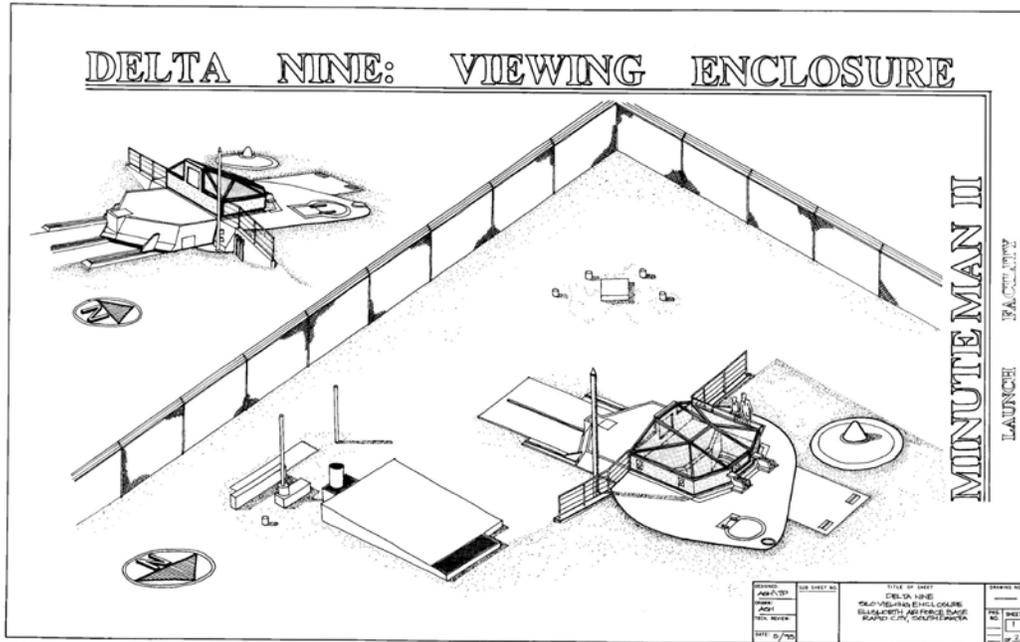


Plate 86. Line drawing of Delta-09 viewing enclosure
 (Courtesy of the 28th Civil Engineer Squadron, Ellsworth Air Force Base)



Plate 87. Missile viewing enclosure, Delta-09 (Photograph by Mead & Hunt)



Plate 88. Ellsworth Air Force Base Honor Guard, Minuteman Missile National Historic Site dedication ceremony *(Courtesy of Public Affairs Office, Ellsworth Air Force Base)*



Plate 89. Lieutenant General Robert Hinson, Vice Commander, Air Force Space Command (right) and William R. Supernaugh, Superintendent, Badlands National Park (left) during the dedication ceremony *(Courtesy of Public Affairs Office, Ellsworth Air Force Base)*



Plate 90. Colonel James Kowalski, Commander, 28th Bomb Wing, Ellsworth Air Force Base and William R. Supernaugh, Superintendent, Badlands National Park conduct the official transfer of ownership for Delta-01 and Delta-09 *(Courtesy of Public Affairs Office, Ellsworth Air Force Base)*

Conclusion

Minuteman Missile National Historic Site in South Dakota, including Launch Control Facility (LCF) Delta-01 and Launch Facility (LF) Delta-09, will be preserved for future generations to learn about our past and reflect on our country's future. The site encompasses not only the history of the men and women of Ellsworth Air Force Base that maintained the missiles at a ready alert, but in a larger context the history of the Cold War which was a defining period in American history. The Cold War, as many historians have noted, affected every aspect of American life. Its history is vital to understand, especially as we enter a new century, and a new period of international relations. As historian Derek Leebaert has written, "Many of the attitudes and institutions that America is taking into the new century have their roots in an adventure that cost more and shaped more lives than any other in history. Today's world has been molded by the Cold War, as has the world of skill levels, technology, business, and finance. Debates about missile defense, energy, taxes, and terrorism all reflect the experiences of these decades just past."^{xix}

Isolated on the South Dakota Plains, the Minuteman I and later Minuteman II missiles stood at ready alert to deter Communist or Soviet aggression. They were on the front lines of the Cold War, a conflict with battle lines drawn shortly after World War II, continuing until the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the signing of the Treaty Between the United States of American and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (START Treaty) in 1991, and thereafter the crumbling of the Soviet Union. The Cold War ended with these events. It never escalated to a "hot war" involving direct combat between Soviet and American troops, the type of combat that, unlike the proxy wars fought by both sides throughout the Cold War, could easily have escalated into a devastating full-out nuclear conflict.

What must be understood in evaluating this period and the contribution of a program such as the Minuteman is that victory in the Cold War did not just happen. It was instead the product of dedication by military personnel and civilians alike, from analysts in Washington, to missile designers in California, and the cook at the LCF. Former employees at the missile sites are proud of how they served our country and have commented that they are anxious to "bring their grandchildren" to Minuteman Missile National Historic Site so they can show them where they once lived and worked in dedication to our country's freedom. Their work left a legacy for future generations, and the place they worked remains a legacy for us all. With the placement of the training missile in the silo, the 90th Logistics Group at F.E. Warren Air Force Base placed a plaque in the silo dedicated to the memory of the men and women who worked and maintained the missile system over nearly three decades. The plaque reads, "rest easy old friend your targets are covered."

Today, the Minuteman II missiles have left little impact on the physical landscape. The landscape has largely been returned to its pre-Cold War state. Following the signing of the START Treaty, the 150 former LF sites in South Dakota, with the exception of Delta-09, were dismantled and a simple chain-link fence surrounding the grassy

landscape marks their former boundaries. Components of many of the fifteen LCFs remain.

Even without a thousand-odd missiles beneath the American plains, the images and the effect of the Cold War remain a part of our everyday life, culture, and history. The Berlin Wall stood for generations as a physical symbol of the Cold War, a symbol of a continent divided, and of a people restrained. Project Looking Glass, the Strategic Air Command's airborne command center, flew continuously in the skies from 1961 to 1990 on ready alert to take over command of the nuclear arsenal, if needed. Its very existence illuminated the constant terror of nuclear attack. Generations grew up in fear of Communism and the Soviet Union, and school children learned "duck and cover" techniques to hide under their desks in the event of a nuclear attack. For their homes, the federal government published "how to" brochures on the construction of bomb shelters and some families built shelters and stored supplies in the hopes of surviving a nuclear attack.

East-West tensions were also a rallying cry, and sometimes a warning. In the later years of the Cold War, a nation cheered as the United States Olympic Hockey Team beat the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics at Lake Placid, New York during the 1980 Olympics. Their "miracle on ice" went beyond a sporting event, with sentiment against the Soviet Union rooted in the decades of the Cold War. Movies addressed the Cold War both through sarcasm, such as Stanley Kubrick's 1964 *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*, and through the portrayal of what life may be like after a nuclear attack, as in the 1983 television movie *The Day After*. All of these events and cultural icons have shaped our nation and our collective memory. They are who we are.

The Cold War is in the past, but it has a lasting effect on the present and future. It was a time in the life of our nation and the experience of many individuals that may be unmatched. Minuteman Missile National Historic Site offers the opportunity to reflect upon this significant period in our nation's history and to remember all of the aspects of the times. The opening of these sites to the public will facilitate a public dialogue on the Cold War, nuclear weapons proliferation and disarmament, the role and dedication of Air Force personnel, and the nation's political and military future.

The power and potential destruction of the missiles was and remains incomprehensible for most of us. It is important to remember this past, while simultaneously recognizing that the end of the Cold War did not bring about the wholesale destruction of nuclear arsenals. Minuteman III and subsequent generations of missiles remain throughout the nation's landscape. As a result, peace activists remain committed to the cause of nuclear disarmament, to them a symbol of social injustice as much as of potential destruction. As activist Jay Davis from Rapid City explained, "People ought to ask themselves what's a more important contribution from the Midwest to the world, to feed hungry children and raise their standard of living and start to deal with the problem of world population and all the economic and social issues that revolve around that, which one of our own famous political leaders is pushing? Or is it more important for us to spend our resources on nuclear weapons and on what we think is our national security? And I think that's a pretty stark choice."^{xx}

The stark choices presented by military programs such as the Minuteman I and II left their mark on the men and women who operated them as well. General George Lee Butler, Commander-in-Chief of the Strategic Air Command and subsequently Commander-in-Chief of the United States Strategic Command, reflected on his role as the head of the United States Air Force and United States Navy Strategic Nuclear forces from 1991 to 1994. For him, the life and death decisions required for the operation of the country's nuclear arsenal were real as perhaps for no other. Butler stated, "I lived for three years, every day of my life, with the requirement to answer a phone within three rings and be prepared to advise the president on how to retaliate with respect to the real or perceived threat of nuclear attack. I found it extremely sobering."^{xxi} General Butler clearly knows first hand what nuclear weapons can do. Since his retirement from the Air Force he has become an advocate for the banning of these weapons.

No matter what personal opinions one has on the Cold War, nuclear weapons, and the actions of the United States and the Soviet Union, all must recognize that the Cold War's lasting social, economic, political, and cultural legacy is a significant part of the nation's history that needs to be understood. The optimism and security that the country felt with the end of the Cold War has been shattered somewhat by the events of 11 September 2001. The United States is now facing new challenges and conflicts within the world. This new adversity provides further proof of the necessity of understanding the work and the lessons of generations' past, as inspiration and guidance for the future. The Cold War is over. South Dakota's role on the frontlines of this international conflict has ended as well, however efforts at Ellsworth Air Force Base continue currently battling our nation's current war on terrorism. With Minuteman Missile National Historic Site, the Plains might again assume their role in the service of the nation, this time as vessel for its memories.

ⁱ "Special Resource Study for the Minuteman Missile Sites: Management Alternatives and Environmental Assessment," 16-18. Delta-09 is located on former U.S. Forest Service land.

ⁱⁱ "Special Resource Study for the Minuteman Missile Sites: Management Alternatives and Environmental Assessment."

ⁱⁱⁱ U.S. Department of the Interior, "Defense Department Awards Grant to the National Park Service," (18 October 1993).

^{iv} "Supplement to Basic Technical Order: Deactivation of Wing II Minuteman Launch Control Facilities," (U.S. Air Force, 7 April 1993).

^v "Supplement to Basic Technical Order: Deactivation of Wing II Minuteman Launch Facilities."

^{vi} "Supplement to Basic Technical Order: Deactivation of Wing II Minuteman Launch Control Facilities."

^{vii} A National Register Nomination for the Minuteman Missile National Historic Site was completed in 2003. The HAER record number for the Delta-01 and Delta-09 documentation is SD-50.

^{viii} "D-01/D-09 Briefing Notes - SPTG/CC," (Ellsworth Air Force Base, S.Dak., 30 January 2001).

^{ix} *Minuteman Missile National Historic Site Establishment Act of 1999*, Public Law 106-115, 106th Cong., 1st sess. (29 November 1999).

^x U.S. Department of the Interior, "Project Agreement: Minuteman Missile National Historic Site General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement," (December 2001), 2.

^{xi} Nancy Baker, "Draft Purpose and Significance Statements," (National Park Service, Badlands National Park, March 2001).

^{xii} Tim Pavek, "Minuteman Missile National Historic Site," email message (Ellsworth Air Force Base, S.Dak., 2 May 2000).

^{xiii} Training missile (S/N 7205002) is believed to be originally from a Minuteman II Training Launch Facility at Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri, but it is unlikely that it had been at Hill Air Force Base since the mid-190s when Whiteman's Minutemans were deactivated. Tim Pavek, "Memo for the Record" (Ellsworth Air Force Base, S.Dak., 13 April 2000).

^{xiv} "June Minuteman II Missile Placement Tentative Schedule of Events" (4 June 2001).

^{xv} Plans for the viewing enclosure were developed by Sayre Hutchinson of the National Park Service and Tim Pavek of Ellsworth Air Force Base.

^{xvi} "D-01/D-09 Briefing Notes - SPTG/CC"; Tim Pavek, "Talking Paper on Ellsworth AFB D-01/D-09 Minuteman Missile Historic Site," (Ellsworth Air Force Base, S.Dak., 2 November 2000).

^{xvii} Bill Cissell, "Park Service Takes Over Missile Sites," *Rapid City Daily Journal*, 28 March 2002, A1-A2.

^{xviii} Manson, interview, 13-14.

^{xix} Leebaert, *The Fifty-Year Wound: The True Price of America's Cold War Victory*, ix-x.

^{xx} Davis, interview, 12.

^{xxi} "A Cold Warrior Looks to Ban the Bomb After a Career in Brinkmanship," 23 May 1999, <http://www.wagingpeace.org/articles/butler_la_times_99.html> (25 November 2003).