

Iwo Jima Caves Now Nuclear Age Shelters

IWO JIMA, June 6.—(INS)—The bloodied caves under Iwo Jima have today assumed a new nuclear age function for the United States Air Force—as earthenwork shelters against the terror of atomic warfare.

The caves, built by frantic Japanese in the waning days of World War II, turned the six week campaign to conquer Iwo Jima into one of the bloodiest military campaigns in history.

Five thousand United States Marines were killed digging stubborn Japanese defenders from an underground city carved out of the sulphur ridden innards of the island.

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Now the Air Force has begun a program to turn the caves into life saving shelters, and form what will perhaps be the most protective network of atomic protection found anywhere.

Scientists have long declared that thick layers of earth are the best protection against nuclear explosions and their radioactive aftermaths.

In a recent atomic defense exercise, the 300 Air Force men stationed on the island scurried to prearranged caves and huddled there until the imaginary danger from nuclear air attack passed.

The test was considered successful and the ready built shelters may well increase the strategic importance of Iwo Jima—which in the ten years since World War II ended has become only an Air Force way station.

Lt. Col. Arthur Kingham of Riverside, Calif., in charge of the program, explained that the biggest job thus far is finding caves which are cool enough for humans to huddle in.

Iwo is riddled with live sulphur veins which make parts of the underground cave network uninhabitable even for a short time.

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Kingham is conducting a search now for enough caves to accommodate his men, and when he completes his search, he plans to stock these shelters with medical and food supplies.

If an atomic attack comes, Iwo's men could drive two and a half ton trucks into the massive shelters, equipped with portable electric generators which would light the caves. Ventilation holes could be dug where needed.

The largest of the caves can comfortably accommodate 125 men in each enclosure, but most of them are considerably smaller.