

## NORAD NOSTALGIA

Having just read the history survey of the Cheyenne Mountain NORAD command center in the Edition (Feb. 3), I am motivated to share one (Navy!) man's memories of the NORAD facility. In the early 1960s I served as operations officer on a U.S. Navy Destroyer Escort Radar, DER 329. We had air search and air control capabilities and operated as the "seaward extension" of the CONAD/NORAD system. Our primary station was in the North Atlantic, as part of the Greenland/Iceland-United Kingdom (G.I.-U.K.) Barrier, where we would be one of the first reporting stations if all those Soviet Bears and Bisons ever tried to get to the continental U.S.

Our ship, the USS Kretchmer, was a relatively small vessel at 1,500 tons displacement and the Navy would not let us up there in the winter, patrolling beneath Iceland, where sea conditions were prohibitive.

Our alternative operating

area was in the Caribbean, air searching the Cuban area, which in 1962 became all the rage — both for participating in the Cuban missile crisis and for enjoying those delicious Mai Tais at the Guantanamo Naval Base officers' club! "Gitmo" was our home-port-away from our-home-port at Newport, R.I. Not a bad duty station, offering R-and-R port visits at Kingston, Nassau, Port-au-Prince, etc.

Coincidentally, my family's home was on Mesa Avenue here in town, a short bike ride from The Broadmoor where I grew up. As the NORAD hole-in-the-hill construction began down-mountain it offered an odd feeling for us locals. I remember as the Kretchmer's Ops officer offering the comment at crew mission briefings that if the "balloon" ever went up targeting NORAD and my hometown Colorado Springs, all we natives could do would be to go up to the roof and watch! While I was still in uniform in 1966 I joined a tour the



The USS Kretchmer upon which Cheyenne area resident Whitney Galbraith served in the 1960s. Courtesy photo

brand new NORAD facility and was awed.

— Whitney Galbraith

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*CORRECTION: In the Feb. 3 Woodmen Edition article about NORAD's 50th anniversary, the caption for the photograph of former NORAD commander Laurence S. Kuter had his name misspelled.*

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