

Underground

Underground storage of ammunition and bombs is accomplished in both excavated underground complexes and natural caves. The only target signature for this type of storage area is a drive-in tunnel entrance with blast doors.

The security measures taken to protect underground storage areas are not as easy to detect as those found at other storage facilities. Security fencing is seldom used at these sites, to do so would accentuate the location of the site. Security guard posts and controlled entry points are normally built on the inside of the cave leaving the exterior undisturbed and deliberately plain looking. The desirability and tactical effectiveness that this type of storage method offers is the ready made camouflage cover provided by the terrain features that they occupy.

Although underground storage areas are difficult for aircrews and image analysts to locate and identify, once found they are quite vulnerable targets. A significant amount of interior damage can be inflicted upon an underground facility by an experienced infiltrator or by using an aircraft delivered, "through the door" laser guided weapon. Prior to the arrival of the highly accurate weapon systems in use today, the greatest threat to underground facilities came from collateral damage incurred by conventional gravity bombs. The explosions from these weapons easily dislodge enough overburden from above the cave entrance to bury and temporarily restrict operation of the door. Thus interrupting access and making departure quite difficult. Very seldom will attack by conventional gravity bombs result in a direct hit on the door.

Short Term Storage

Air-to-air missiles, air-to-surface missiles, bombs and aircraft cannon rounds are usually kept near aircraft alert areas in order to provide quick access to the aircraft for reloading. Ordnance and missiles are usually stored in earth covered, partially underground buildings, or in earth covered, above ground drive-through buildings. Both structures are connected to the alert area by improved roads and are usually surrounded by at least one row of security fence.

There are two significant differences between the functions provided at short term storage facilities and at long term ordnance storage facilities, they are:

1. the amount of time that the ordnance is stored there, and
2. the quantities of ordnance that are stored in them.

The same explosive devices that are stored in short term storage areas and are ready for immediate use are kept unassembled in their shipping containers at long term ordnance storage facilities. Short term facilities temporarily store ordnance in small quantities, for short duration, and they are situated near the runway. On the other hand, long term storage facilities are located at greater distances from the base for reasons of tactical separation.