



Smithsonian

National Air and Space Museum

Polaris Missile Materials [Bourgeois]

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2024

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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Air and Space Museum Archives
Title:	Polaris Missile Materials [Bourgeois]
Date:	1960s
Identifier:	NASM.2025.0010
Extent:	.01 Cubic feet
Language:	English
Summary:	Materials document early milestones of the U.S. Navy's Polaris missile program, including a 1960 memorandum from USS <i>George Washington</i> and 1963 items related to President Kennedy's observation of a missile launch aboard the USS <i>Observation Island</i> .

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Brian Bourgeois, Gift, 2024, NASM.2025.0010

Processing Information

Arranged, described, and encoded by Amara Pugens, 2024.

Preferred Citation

Polaris Missile Materials [Bourgeois], NASM.2025.0010, National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

No restrictions on access

Conditions Governing Use

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Biographical / Historical

The Polaris missile was the United States Navy's first submarine-launched ballistic missile. Serving from 1960 to 1980, the first successful test occurred when USS *George Washington* (SSBN 598) launched a Polaris missile from a submerged position off Cape Canaveral on July 20, 1960. Subsequent launches improved the missile's technology and increased its capabilities. On November 16, 1963, President John F. Kennedy aboard the USS *Observation Island* (EAG 154) observed a Polaris launch from a submerged USS *Andrew Jackson* (SSBN-619), highlighting the

program's importance to national defense. In the late 1970s, these missiles were phased out and replaced with the more advanced Poseidon and Trident missiles.

Scope and Contents

This collection consists of materials related to the launching of the Polaris, the United States Navy's first submarine-launched ballistic missile. Items include an envelope and memorandum from USS *George Washington* (SSBN 598) dated 1960 as well as a photograph and a booklet documenting President John F. Kennedy aboard the USS *Observation Island* (EAG 154) to observe the launch from a submerged USS *Andrew Jackson* (SSBN-619) dated 1963.

Arrangement

No arrangement.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Polaris (Missile)
Rocketry

Names:

Kennedy, John F. (1917-1963)

Container Listing

USS George Washington memorandum and envelope, 1960

"November 16, 1963", 1963-11-16

Notes: Booklet detailing President John F. Kennedy aboard the USS *Observation Island* (EAG 154) to observe a Polaris launch from the submerged USS *Andrew Jackson* (SSBN-619).

[\[J. Kennedy photograph\]](#), 1963

Notes: President John F. Kennedy, aboard the USS *Observation Island* (EAG 154), radioing to the submerged USS *Andrew Jackson* (SSBN-619) after successful launch of the Polaris missile.