

Skysweeper 75mm Anti-Aircraft Artillery

A new weapon system was developed and fielded in the early 1950s to replace the anti-aircraft [40mm Bofors guns](#) and [.50-caliber machine guns](#). Called the Skysweeper, it was the first Anti-Aircraft Artillery to emerge in the atomic age with radar, computer and gun on one carriage, a fully integrated gun and fire-control system. It was also the last conventional gun to be used for anti-aircraft defense as missiles and jet aircraft made the guns obsolete in the 1950s.

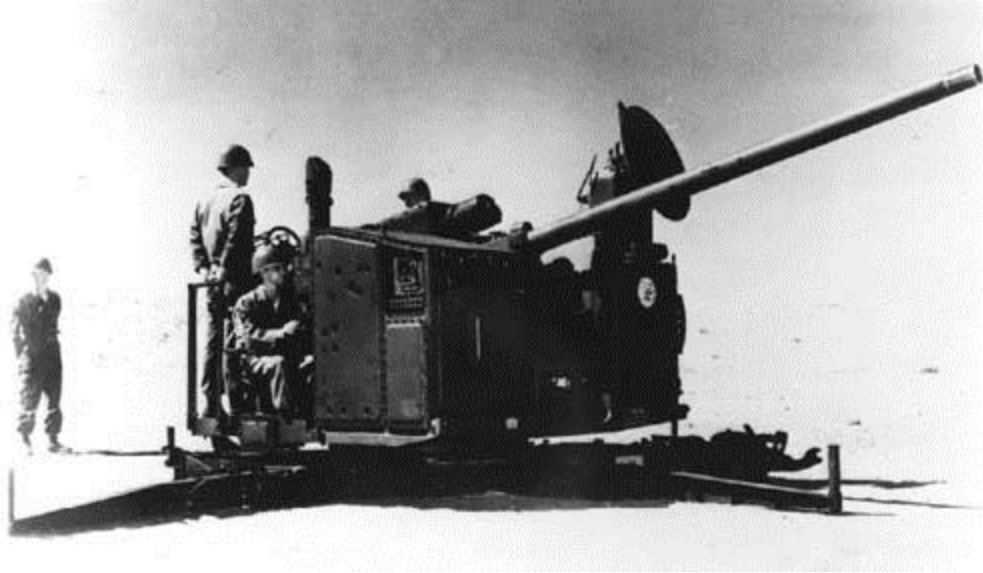
With its 75mm gun, the Skysweeper could find and track approaching aircraft as far as 15 miles away and destroy air targets as far away as four miles. Its automatic loading and firing capability allowed it to fire 45 rounds a minute. Peak deployment for Skysweeper battalions was achieved in the mid-1950s when eight battalions were deployed.

As more and more [NIKE missile systems](#) were deployed, ARAACOM slashed the number of AAA guns in the command in the last half of 1957. By the end of the year only three 75mm Skysweeper battalions remained, one at Sault Sainte Marie and two at Savannah River, plus one [90mm Anti-Aircraft Artillery](#) battalion and two Skysweeper battalions at Thule, Greenland.

In June of 1960, the last Skysweeper battalion in ARADCOM inactivated at Camp Lewis, MI, thus completely ending the gun era. At that snapshot in time, ARADCOM had 88 NIKE HERCULES batteries and 174 NIKE AJAX batteries, with 52 of the latter manned by National Guardsmen.



75mm Skysweeper emplacement, Ladd Air Force Base, Fairbanks, AK, 1950s.



75mm Skysweeper training, White Sands, NM, 1950s.

Glad I was drafted during the "Nike Era" as opposed the era of Skysweeper manning , drilling and pulling checks on this equipment in Alaska must have been some bad times at places like Ladd Field in the winter. Personal observation by your webmaster.