

# NRO leaves Blue Cube

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'Mission accomplished' for NRO at Onizuka AFS  
by Capt. Tony Muro  
Operating Division 4 Detachment 1

4/23/2007 – ONIZUKA AIR FORCE STATION, Calif. — The National Reconnaissance Office's mission here ended recently after 46 years of service to the nation.

Dr. Donald Kerr, director of the NRO in Washington, D.C., presided over a deactivation ceremony in March wherein he thanked the men and women of the Blue Cube here for their dedicated service.

More than 800 guests attended the ceremony and open house, including Lt. Gen. Frank Klotz, vice commander of Air Force Space Command; Brig. Gen. Larry James, director of the Signal Intelligence Systems Acquisitions and Operations Directorate; and former NRO director Jeff Harris.

The ceremony reflected upon the rich history and many contributions that the Onizuka facility has made to the nation's space reconnaissance efforts. The division's story dates back to the late 1950s and the beginning of Soviet and American efforts in space.

The space race began with the launch of Sputnik in 1957, after which a small plot of land in Sunnyvale, Calif., became the hub of space reconnaissance. At its peak in 1993, the Blue Cube housed more than 1,200 people and provided communications and infrastructure support to a wide variety of organizations.

Onizuka AFS holds a legendary history of firsts that helped the NRO become the leading-edge organization it is today, Dr. Kerr said. Throughout the years, the facility has been a critical node in space operations and has led the way during the nation's first steps in groundbreaking reconnaissance from space.

At the dawn of imagery intelligence from space, Onizuka AFS was the

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birthplace of the Corona program, the world's first photo reconnaissance satellite. Included in this program was the first mapping of Earth from space, the first midair recovery of a vehicle returning from space and the first views of denied areas from space.

Dr. Kerr honored the men and women of Onizuka for their dedication to establishing the NRO as well as for being the cornerstone in the nation's security from space. He thanked them for their tenacity in protecting freedom and for ensuring the United States always held the ultimate high ground.