

Datebook

“Dakota Datebook” is a radio series from Prairie Public in partnership with the State Historical Society of North Dakota and with funding from the North Dakota Humanities Council.

Air Combat Command

by Jack Dura

June 1, 2026 – The Cold War left many marks in North Dakota, from its Air Force stations near Fortuna and Finley to the giant concrete radar pyramid at Nekoma. Most of these structures are now abandoned or converted for other uses. But the Minot Air Force Base is still the headquarters for the 5th Bomb Wing, an element of the Global Strike Command, and the 91st Missile Wing, with nuclear missiles located in three main fields to the north, west, and south of the base.

The base was activated in 1957 to counter northern attacks during the Cold War. Surveillance and air fueling support were early missions. A blast-proof building and the first missile field were installed in the base’s first few years. By 1964, the base was ready for combat with state-of-the-art ICBM technology. Over the years, the base’s mission changed as Strategic Air Command took over from Air Defense Command.

The 1970s saw a lot of upgrades at the base as its arsenal grew and bombing technology improved. The base grew further in the ‘80s with the implementation of the Strategic Projection Force. This concept allowed for conventional warfare anywhere in the world. The base played a part in Operation Desert Storm by deploying aircraft and personnel to Iraq.

But the ‘90s brought major changes. The Cold War ended and the Air Force prepared for an enormous reorganization. The bomb wing came off alert status after 35 years. On this date in 1992, the Air Combat Command was created. It replaced the Strategic Air Command as host at the base. The world had evolved since the Cold War, and the military sought to restructure. The change brought the bomb wing and missile wing under Air Combat Command’s umbrella. The missile wing was later reassigned to Air Force Space Command.

Today, the Minot Air Force Base supports over 12,000 residents, including active duty personnel, civilians and their family members. It’s been said that the arsenal would make North Dakota the third largest nuclear super power on earth.

Rattlers

by Merry Helm

June 2, 2026 – Rattlesnake season is upon us – anyway for those of us who live west of the Missouri River. Rattlers will need a full meal every 10 days until the weather reaches the 80s and 90s; then they only need to eat only once every three weeks. During the fall, they’ll increase their meals to once every two weeks to store enough fat to get them through winter hibernation.

Rattlesnakes are less dangerous than their reputations have led us to believe. The most deadly species, the diamondbacks, aren’t found in North Dakota. They reside in the Southwest and in Mexico. Their bites cause less than one death per year in the parts of Arizona where they’re especially numerous.

The rattler’s nasty reputation stems largely from hair-raising stories invented for gullible immigrants; they were told that a rattler’s bite always led to death, sometimes within 3 or 4 minutes. They were even told that if a diamondback bit an ax handle or wheel spoke, it would swell up as big as a man’s arm.

The prairie rattler’s bite is, of course, a serious thing, but it’s not necessarily deadly to a grown adult or animal. Small rodents, on the other hand, succumb very quickly. Once its prey is dead, the snake unhinges its jaw, grasps the rodent by its nose, and slowly swallows it whole.

The rattlesnake gets its name from its warning signal – the vibration of the hollow horny segments at the tip of its tail. Depending on the prevailing temperature, the rattles vibrate at speeds from 20 to 90 cycles per second. Many believe that each segment in the rattle represents a year’s time, but actually, a segment is added each time the snake sheds its skin, which can happen a couple times a year.

Surprisingly, rattlesnakes have very poor eyesight and no ears. They sense movement through vibrations in the ground. Their keen sense of smell is not through their nostrils, but through the tips of their forked tongues, which is why they flick them when they’re alert or excited.

Between their eyes and nostrils is a small deep pit that’s highly sensitive to temperature. This feature provides a means of sensing warm-blooded animals and has led to the name “pit viper.” These sensors are especially useful at night and during cooler weather.

Rattlesnakes give birth to live young. Here in North Dakota, they do this every other year. They breed in the fall, hibernate during the winter, and give birth in midsummer after a gestation period of 155 days.

They hibernate in large groups and are often found traveling to their underground dens at the same time. The observation has led to the belief that the snakes migrate, but that isn’t true. They’re simply converging for the winter.

Morton County Commission minutes

MORTON COUNTY COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING April 28, 2026

The Morton County Commission Regular Meeting was called to order on April 28, 2026 at 5:30 PM by Chair Boehm at the Morton County Courthouse, 210 Second Avenue NW, Mandan, North Dakota. Others present were Commissioners Buckley, Tokach and Morrell and Auditor Rhone. Commissioner Zachmeier was present virtually. Also present was States Attorney Koppy. Morrell moved and Tokach seconded to approve the agenda. All voting aye, motion carried.

Tokach moved and Morrell seconded to approve the minutes of the April 9, 2026 regular meeting. All voting aye, motion carried. Zachmeier moved and Boehm seconded to approve bills and payroll. All voting aye, motion carried.

Buckley moved and Morrell seconded to approve the refunds for the Primary Residence Credits for the 2025 Mobile Homes. All voting aye, motion carried.

Morrell moved and Tokach seconded to deny refunding building permit 26-18. All voting aye, motion carried. Tokach moved and Buckley seconded to approve abatement #7209. All voting aye, motion carried.

Morrell moved and Tokach seconded to approve abatements #7210-7213. All voting aye, motion carried. Morrell moved and Buckley seconded to approve abatements #7214-7221. All voting aye, motion carried.

Tokach moved and Buckley seconded to accept the low bid from Midwest Contracting LLC in the amount of \$939,370.25 for replacement of Bridge 30-114-08.0. All voting aye, motion carried.

Buckley moved and Morrell seconded to approve the payment of \$3,900 for temporary construction easements, permanent drainage easement and permanent right of way for Sweet Briar Bridge #30-145-11.1. All voting aye, motion carried. Buckley moved and seconded to approve a Special Use Permit to allow scoria mining from the designated area within S½ Section 2, Township 138N, Range 89W, as the site is in close proximity to highway being improved and is not in conflict with neighboring land uses, with the following conditions: 1) Hours of operation will be limited to 7am to 8pm. 2) The maximum amount of material that may be removed in any given year is 16,000 cubic yards. 3) Applicant will control dust as directed by the County Engineer. All voting aye, motion carried. Morrell moved and Tokach seconded to approve the final plat of the short-form subdivision known as White Oak Ranch Subdivision and a zoning map amendment from Agricultural to Residential, as the subdivision conforms to the regulations established in Article 7 of the Morton County Land Use Code and the use is adequately distanced from neighboring residential properties. All voting aye, motion carried. Buckley moved and Tokach seconded to approve the final plat of the long-form subdivision, known as Tokach Timberhaven Fourth Subdivision, and a zoning map amendment from Agricultural and Residential to Estate District, as the proposed subdivision reduces the overall zoning non-conformity of the subject properties. All voting aye, motion carried.

Morrell moved and Buckley seconded to approve Lot 1 to be rezoned to Residential if and when the lot owner is granted official permission from FEMA to remove the entire lot, or a portion of the lot, from the special flood hazard area, such that there is adequate room for a residential structure to be built entirely outside the special flood hazard area. All voting aye, motion carried. Public Comment period as required by NDCC 44-04-20.1 was opened at 6:52PM. There was no public comment and comment period was closed at 6:53PM.

The total of all county funds expended from April 10, 2026 through April 28, 2026 equals \$2,310,673.97. A detailed list of funds expended by check is available for public inspection anytime during regular business hours at the Morton County Auditor’s Office. Chair Boehm adjourned the meeting at 7:01PM.

Nathan Boehm, Chairman,
Morton County Commission
Dawn R Rhone,
County Auditor

REAL PRESENCE RADIO 101.9 FM

5-5

ATTENTION HEBRON RESIDENTS

Trees that hang over the street MUST be trimmed.



Any branches below 14 feet above the street or within one foot of curb must be removed.

See figure above.

ALL TREES MUST BE TRIMMED

By Order Of the Hebron City Council

18-19