

BOMB OFF SPAIN SHIFTED BY NAVY

Aim Is to Make Sure Missile
Doesn't Slip Any Deeper in
Mediterranean Canyon

By TAD SZULC

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MADRID, March 19—A tubular object, presumed to be a missing United States hydrogen bomb, was gingerly shifted along the Mediterranean Sea bottom today to prevent it from vanishing in a submarine canyon.

The highly delicate operation, carried out in the darkness by the small research submersible Alvin and Aluminaut at a 2,500-foot depth, was aimed at moving the object and its parachute away from its perch on the side of an underwater hill sloping at a 70-degree angle.

"If successful, this course of action will lessen the risk of having the object fall from its present precarious position into much deeper water," a statement issued by the United States Embassy said.

'Unidentified Object'

The plans of Rear Adm. William S. Guest, commander of the Navy task force in charge of the hunt for the unarmed bomb, were to attempt to lift the object to the surface as soon as it could first be shifted to "a more favorable recovery area."

Although the general assumption was that the Navy had finally located the bomb, missing off the Palomares resort area since an aerial collision last Jan. 17, all the official statements here still referred to it as "an unidentified object." Positive identification can be made only when it can be seen.

Thus far only sonar contacts

and blurred photographs taken by the Alvin's television cameras indicated that the bomb had been sighted. Its shape and the presence around it of what appeared to be a parachute were the indications that the object on the underwater slope was the bomb.

The word from Admiral Guest's flagship, the missile cruiser Alderney, was that if it goes well the object will have been lifted to the surface by late tomorrow or Monday, assuming the weather remains good. Once aboard a rescue ship, it will be taken to the United States.

Since the Navy force began operating off the Spanish coast shortly after the collision between a bomber and a tanker plane, the sea bottom in a 125-square-mile area has been mapped by hydrographic ships, submersibles and divers.

Sea Bottom is Rough

Like the land area in the vicinity of Palomares, over which the air collision occurred, the sea bottom is mountainous.

The object sighted is apparently intact. Three other bombs fell in the Palomares area; two of them cracked on impact and scattered low-level radioactive materials. Though the contamination was never considered dangerous to health, United States Air Force teams spent nearly two months on clean-up operations. These were ended this weekend.

Maj. Gen. Delmar E. Wilson, commander of the Spain-based United States Sixteenth Air Force, who acted as coordinator for the search and decontamination operations, met with the elders of Palomares and Villaricos, a nearby fishing community, to give them the equivalent of \$1,200 collected by his troops to expand the two villages' churches.

The villagers handed the general six-foot streamers proclaiming in Spanish that "the troops of Wilson were kind to Palomares."

Weather Delays H-Bomb Pickup

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PALOMARES BEACH, Spain (AP)—Bad weather and a tricky 70-degree undersea cliff on which a missing H-bomb is sitting combined Monday to delay recovery of the U.S. nuclear weapon.

A strong east wind whipped the Mediterranean into such large waves that U.S. Task Force 85 was forced to suspend its deep-water operations just as it seemed about to cap its work of weeks with success.

Officials here acknowledged that the bomb and its attached parachute had slipped deeper into the sea from the 2500-foot level where the midget submarine Alvin found it last week.

Francisco Simo, 40, the Spanish fisherman who pinpointed the bomb's location and directed the Alvin to it, told newsmen in an interview the 16-ton midget sub twice almost had the bomb in the grasp of its mechanical arms. But something happened.

"It seems the parachute got in the way or something," Simo said, and the Alvin was forced to abandon its efforts and return to the surface.

DAYTON DAILY NEWS 22 Mar 1966

10:00—Ch. 9—CBS News Special. "One of Our H-Bombs Is Missing." An up-to-the minute report on the search for the unarmed hydrogen bomb lost in a crash on the coast of Spain last January when a Strategic Air Command B-52 bomber collided with a refueling tanker. In addition to on-location films of the effects of the crash on residents and officials of the Spanish fishing village of Palomares, a key segment features clarifying interviews with U.S. Ambassador to Spain Angier Biddle Duke in Madrid; Gen. Curtis LeMay of the Strategic Air Command in Los Angeles; Major General Delmar Wilson, director of the Palomares search operation, in Palomares; nuclear physicist Dr. Ralph Lapp in Washington; and Lt. General H. C. Donnelly, director of defense of the Atomic Support agency, in Washington.