

U.S. TO CLEAN UP ATOM-CRASH SITE

Washington, March 1 (AP)—The United States and Denmark have decided to scoop up snow contaminated by the shattering of four hydrogen bombs when a United States B-52 crashed off Greenland in January. The snow will be shipped to this country.

The Defense Department disclosed the plan today in response to questions from the Associated Press.

The radioactive snow lies over a flame-blackened area of frozen bay off the Greenland coast where the big Strategic Air Command bomber went down January 22.

Ships To Await Thaw

"This material will be stored at Thule Air Base, Greenland, in sealed metal containers for subsequent shipment to the United States during the summer shipping season for final disposal," the Pentagon said.

Ships cannot get to Thule until the bay thaws in summer.

"Since the depth of the snow varies, actual tonnage cannot be determined at this time," the Pentagon said, adding that perhaps none of the 7-foot-thick ice will have to be removed. "Except in the impact area, the contamination is in the snow on top of the ice."

Officials assert that only low-level, relatively harmless Alpha radiation was released when the 1.1-megaton bombs broke apart

in the fiery crash.

Ease Danes' Fears

Presumably the United States agreed none the less to remove any hint of hazard to ease fears of the Danes, who own Greenland.

Air Force Maj. Gen. Richard O. Hunziker, in charge of the recovery operation, code-named Project Crested Ice, terms the removal "a matter of good housekeeping."

In 1966 after another B-52 incident spilled hydrogen bombs over Palomares, Spain, the United States hauled away 17,000 tons of soil which was exposed to nuclear emissions.

Barrels of the contaminated earth were buried at the atomic wastes dumping ground near Aiken, S.C. The barrels of Greenland snow—which will be water by the time it gets back to this country—may be disposed of in the same area.

Radiation Count Drops

The Pentagon said only minute bits of the aircraft remain around the impact site and as these are removed the radiation count continues to drop. The 500 people assigned to the recovery operation require no special protective garb against radiation.

Debris from the aircraft itself is being sealed in more than 180 containers ranging in size from 20-gallon barrels to 18,000-gallon tanks.

The Defense Department said the plane wreckage, bomb pieces and weapons-associated gear such as bomb parachutes are being flown to a Strategic Air Command base at Amarillo, Texas, for examination by SAC and Atomic Energy Commission officials.

"The specific amount of weapons material found is classified," the Pentagon said. "But significant portions have been recovered and positively identified as portions of the four weapons in the crash."

The thick ice layer racked to some extent when the B-52 smashed down, but the Pentagon said it has not been determined whether any debris went completely through and into the waters of the bay.

About two weeks ago Joergen Koch, Danish physicist, said none of the devices penetrated the ice.

"Numbered machine parts from the four bombs were found on the ice and it can be granted that no bombs have gone through," he said. Except for relatively brief weather delays, recovery teams at the crash site—named Camp Hunziker after the SAC general—are conducting daily search and retrieval operations.

One result of the Thule incident has been a cancellation, disclosed this week, of airborne alert flights by nuclear-equipped B-52's.