

DAYTON OHIO

Crash Broke Up Bombs, Thule's Searchers, Fear

THULE AIR BASE, Greenland—(AP)—Air Force officers have given up hope of finding an intact hydrogen bomb in this Arctic wasteland an on-the-scene assessment corroborated in Washington yesterday.

Despite this, they plan to spend months searching the ice and crusty snow of North Star bay where a B-52 bomber carrying four of the deadly "nukes" crashed and burned a week ago. The defense department in effect confirmed the word, passed privately in Thule when it announced yesterday that parts of all four bombers have been recovered.

Serial Numbers Check

A brief statement said serial numbers of weapon fragments found at the crash site correspond with Strategic Air Command records of numbers on various components of the four bombs.

It said the search is continuing for further fragments—a search officers indicate may go on until the summer breakup of the bay ice.

"We know damned well," one Air Force colonel said, "that those bombs were torn apart when that plane came down and burned."

One reason the Air Force isn't making its private conclusion official is that it doesn't wish to publicize any details of the construction of the four devices, believed to be in the 1.1-megaton range.

But, the finding of the four parachutes that are a vital part of the bombs' delivery system made it all but certain that nothing would be found of the bombs themselves except fragments.

The chutes, one Pentagon nuclear expert acknowledged, are sealed within the casing of the



Associated Press Wirephoto

Maj. Gen. R. O. Hunziker
... Bomb hunt director

bombs. Their purpose is to slow the descent of the bombs in an attack so that the delivery plane will have ample time to get out of the way before they go off.

Maj. Gen. Richard O. Hunziker, directing the around-the-clock recovery effort, acknowledged the four chutes were found in a compact area on or near the dark scar in the ice and snow where the Strategic Air Command bomber crashed and burned.

"You can draw your own conclusions from the fact that the chutes were found separate from anything else," one source said.

"Yet, the tedious recovery effort goes on. Several officers involved concede in private that one of the primary missions is to soothe the feelings of Greenland's mother Denmark.

Officers from Hunziker on

down are falling all over themselves to be courteous, cooperative, hospitable and helpful to the Danish scientists, health specialists, and journalists who have come to this desolate air base at the top of the world.

The recovery effort is enormous.

The United States shipped up 1,500 pounds of horsemeat to feed the Eskimo sled dogs that ferry men from the air base 7½ miles across the ice to the crash scene. Electrical generators are being hauled out to the area to provide light for the search in the nearly continuous winter darkness.

Polar Storm Feared

What the searchers and visitors—not to mention the Thule veterans—dread most is the onslaught of a Phase 3. This is Arctic talk for a severe polar storm in which the blowing snow from the Arctic icecap reduces visibility to zero. All activity stops except for emergency rescue missions. Prolonged exposure during a phase 3—at temperatures 30 or more degrees below zero—means death.

The Thule troops rely on a buddy system when a phase alert is sounded. No one walks alone. No one walks between buildings.