

Nuclear WMD

The U.S. accounts for more than 40 percent of the planet's military spending and has more than 5,500 strategic nuclear weapons, enough to blow the world up 5 to 50 times over.

Then, understand that the extremely expensive nuclear "modernization" programs, as well as many other programs related to military "defense" don't typically show as line items in the swollen defense budget, such as discussed under the "DoD Budget" topic.

Meanwhile, we run the risk of some of those countries "discovering" we've got nukes illegally stored in their country (the DoD supports over 800 military bases around the world in 68 countries). Last year it increased its "defense" (military empire) spending, which was already three times higher than China's, and nine times higher than Russia's....

Also, consider the risks being run by the ego-driven childish exchanges between "president" tRump and Kim Jong-un_of N. Korea.

Meanwhile, we are also running the risk of nuclear maintenance errors detonating a weapon such as I highlight in my story of "A Personal Near Miss," below and the inserts I've authored under "Other anomalous incidents".

A PERSONAL Near Miss

Date: Early '60's; **Place:** A specials weapons maintenance facility at an Air Force Base on an island in the Caribbean; **Author:** Don Chapin

Introduction:

At this time, long after the cold war has ended, we are now hearing about some of the various operational situations, both American and Russian, where we have been just seconds away from missile launches because of radar "bogies" or false electronic information. No one has mentioned the fact that every-day life at the technical level around nuclear weapons could have also been a problem. As an electronics technician in the special weapons field, I have run across and heard of various near misses of nuclear-related "incidences" in the field. But, this one in which I was personally involved was, by far, the worst of those incidences of which I have direct knowledge. Yet, considering the circumstances, I would strongly suspect that it was/is not an isolated situation. While there (hopefully) have been advances in technology and operational support to preclude repeat situation of this magnitude, considering the spin that has become typical for political purposes, I would hesitate to accept any assurances that situations such as the following cannot be repeated to some extent.



The Incident:

There were three of us in the maintenance building: a senior master sergeant (the NCOIC) in the front office, a SSGT Team Chief in the south maintenance bay doing a Final Assembly Test (FAT) on a thermonuclear weapon which had the explosive

capability equal to about 500 times the capability of the Nagasaki bomb, and myself in the center bay, working on sealed-can inventories.

Suddenly, the SSGT burst through the maintenance door, yelling, "RUN, IT'S TICKING."

The three of us ran out the front door and, knowing we didn't have the time to get any further, we tried "covering up" in a shallow ditch across the road from the facility. We had NO idea what was going on inside the weapon... whether it might go full TN (thermonuclear) capability (in which case we and some of the base would be vaporized, and the island a full-scale disaster area, 10X worse than Nagasaki), full HE (high explosive, without the atomic-TN chain going), or low-order HE with just some of the explosive going off, in which case we MIGHT live through it.

There were seven critical "switches" in this particular weapon, some for safety but most for operational applications, and I could visually place each of them as I had given classes on that fuzing and firing circuit to our other technicians. (and "fuzing" is the correct spelling)

After about five minutes - the longest year in my life - we decided that it wasn't going to blow in any of those modes, so we (very weakly) crawled out of that ditch to reenter the building and initiate the necessary reporting. It was then that the SSGT, who had been acting in the capacity of a technician, related what had happened.

During the FAT, using the T-138 portable test set with a **rotary selector switch** for specific functions, the sequence for this weapon was to plug both test cables into the top receptacles and go through specific test steps. The cables were then pulled from the top receptacles and one of them plugged into the side receptacle for an additional set of tests. This cable was then extracted from the side receptacle and both cables then re-inserted into the top receptacles for the last test steps.

However, in this case, the technician, "in order to save a little time," left the second cable in the top receptacle when he pulled one cable from the top and plugged it into the side receptacle... a very clear

checklist procedure violation. Then, when he rotated the tester selector switch, he heard "strange noises" inside the weapon, whereupon he rapidly exited the maintenance bay and shouted the warning. A VERY STUPID CHECK-LIST VIOLATION!!!

Naturally, even though we could have torn the weapon apart to do our own postmortem, we were not "qualified" to do so and had to send the weapon back to Albuquerque, NM, for the tear-down and analysis.

Several weeks later we received a very abbreviated result - of the seven critical "switches," in the weapon, six had "fired," in sequence, for a full TN surface burst. Therefore, only one "operational" switch had not closed and that was simply because it was normally pre-set to a position where it was up to the orders received by the aircrew, immediately prior to "delivery," as to where it was to be positioned. That was how close we were to a very major disaster.

Just a couple weeks after the results of that weapon tear-down was announced, the Strategic Air Command (SAC) initiated their well-known Two-Man Policy for nuclear weapon access: (paraphrased) ANY time there is a human presence around a weapon there had to be at least a second person there as well, of equal knowledge with respect to weapon operation. The theory was that this would preclude another incident such that with which we were involved. This policy has long since morphed into the USAF no-lone-zone policy, Air Force Instruction 91-104 and AFD 91-1, Nuclear Weapons and Systems Surety, now addressed as the more PC Two Person Policy.

Nothing was said about the technician (SSGT) that had violated the checklist procedure, but he was soon re-assigned to a different base... the normal military and civil service procedure for such situations.

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Personnel Selections:

USAF enlisted personnel assigned to the special weapons field were initially in the 96-98th percentile group of all enlistees, had a



minimum of a high school diploma and, preferably, already had some degree of electronics knowledge. However, such selection criteria, obviously, does not preclude anyone in that group from accomplishing a normal, human, d _ _ b-a _ _ action. I do not remember the background of the SSGT technician responsible for this incident, but I believe he was one of the "old heads" in that particular field.

However, in the time I was in that field, I saw it being rapidly "watered down" with higher ranking enlisted personnel that had no concept of what it meant to have to "stay current" with technical manuals that were

written at the 5th-year college level or higher (example, the above-mentioned senior master sergeant, who also had many psychological problems). When I had only two, then three stripes, I often had the responsibility of "training" a senior NCO that wanted to cross-train into the field, often because of the "prestige," but who had no interest in listening to someone of a junior rank, nor had the capability of deciphering those tech manuals. The obvious implications are...

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Speculations:

Now, if that weapon had gone off, who would have realized that it had happened because of somebody not following a checklist and that there was no intentional sabotage or "enemy action" that required a retaliatory response?

Getting back to the global stage, what about these other countries that are developing a similar capability? Where are they going to get the reliable personnel to properly maintain their stockpile(s)? ... And what would happen if one of their weapons went off in a similar manner... without traceability, who would be blamed?

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Other anomalous incidents, before the DoD had them pulled from the internet:

LESSONS LEARNED (from:

<https://onkruid.sarava.org/axies/lessons.html#12>, 717 MUNSS NUCLEAR SURETY WEAPONS SAFETY LESSON PLAN)

It is important that we learn from our past mistakes. Here are some examples of past accidents/incidents and how we have learned from them.

- (on internet before DoD action to delete) PRP - An individual was given very strong medication but wasn't taken off PRP. He reported to work the next day very "high" from his new pain killers and failed to inform anyone. This condition went undetected by fellow workers and supervisors. While performing his duties he caused major damage to a weapon system because he was just too drugged up to pay attention. This could have been prevented very easily. The person giving the medication should have annotated his medical records and notified someone in the individual's chain of command. His co-workers should have detected his unreliable condition. This must never be allowed to happen again.
- (on internet before DoD action to delete) Tech Data - A Weapon Loading crew was conducting a loading operation when they failed to closely follow the specific technical data. A weapon was subsequently incorrectly hung and later fell on the runway, cracking the case. There is no excuse for not using tech data. This accident could have had international repercussions. We were lucky. People need to be aware of the awesome responsibility they have, no matter what their job is. Everyone has a role. (Here we go again! If this had been a MK 5 or 6 series, that facility could have instantaneously had some real trouble!)
- More inserts by Don Chapin:
 - 1) I remember a situation where one of our mechanics, who was renowned for his tractor and tug skills in handling

nukes in and out of the revetments and maintenance bays, one day simply couldn't seem to get anything right, banging the weapons and carriages around to the extent that we became quite worried. Asking him what his problem was, he simply replied that this was the first day in over a year that he had come to work sober!)

- 2) Another situation, where a very senior Non-Commissioned Officer (the same NCOIC mentioned in the above incident) was put in charge of our nuclear maintenance facility: This individual had “cross-trained” into this field from a previous “career” job as a plumber! He had absolutely no respect for the fact that THIS “career” field had technical manuals and very rapid updates to these manuals written on a 5th-year academic level, but insisted that NO ONE was allowed to read and study these manuals.
- 3) A relatively minor incident where a loading crew was using the typical “single sling” method of loading a Mk6/6 into a B-47, when the cluth on the loader slipped and the weapon dropped a foot. The guy that was riding (sitting on) the weapon in order to connect to the bomber’s latch mechanism and circuitry was a black that morning but could have almost passed for Caucasian that evening.
- 4) A B-47 with a production Mk 6/6 weapon (a descendent of the Hiroshima bomb) was making a landing at Whitman AFB, my first duty station, when it ran off the runway, crashed and began burning. The crew escape methods you might normally expect to be available, were invalidated in such a situation and the fire department apparently hadn’t been properly briefed that the High explosives in that bomb would not detonate from a fire, so they stayed well back. Post-mortem, scratch marks on the inside of the bomber’s skin attested to the charred crew members’ attempts to get out.



- 1961 Goldsboro B-52 **crash**. The 1961 Goldsboro B-52 **crash** was an **accident** that occurred near Goldsboro, North Carolina, on January 24, 1961. A B-52 Stratofortress carrying two 3–4-megaton Mark **39** nuclear bombs broke up in mid-air, dropping its nuclear payload in the process. (Electrically, the incident I described above was the same as that resulting in this incident) (REF: <http://blog.nuclearsecrecy.com/2013/09/27/final-switch-goldsboro-1961/>)

- Another B52 bomber carrying four nuclear warheads crashed close to Thule U.S. air base in Greenland, with only three of the bombs recovered.
- The **Palomares incident**, occurred on 17 January 1966, when a [B-52G bomber](#) collided with a [KC-135 tanker](#) during [mid-air refuelling](#) off the coast of Spain. The KC-135 was completely destroyed when its fuel load ignited, killing all four crew members. The B-52G broke apart, killing three of the seven crew members aboard. Of the four [Mk28](#)-type [hydrogen bombs](#) the B-52G carried, three were found on land near the small fishing



village of [Palomares](#) Spain. The high explosives in two weapons detonated upon impact with the ground, resulting in the contamination of a 490-acre by [plutonium](#). The fourth, which fell into the [Mediterranean Sea](#), was recovered intact after a 2½-month-long search.

Picture: The recovered hydrogen bomb displayed on the fantail of the submarine rescue ship [USS Petrel](#) after it was located by [DSV Alvin](#) and recovered by [CURV-I](#), pictured, at a depth of 2,500 feet.

It has happened before **MANY TIMES**, but the DoD doesn't DARE release the info on the true number of such situations as it had several years ago. ... **AND IT CAN HAPPEN AGAIN, because when I attempted to gain "official" information on this AND OTHER INCIDENCES I KNEW ABOUT, the records "couldn't be found"**. So, Please, if you enlist and are assigned to this "career field," don't be the one who makes the fatal mistake due to such carelessness.

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