

## **U.S. Air Force Statement on B-52 Nuclear Incident at Minot**

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The commander of Air Combat Command has directed an immediate investigation, led by a general officer, into a situation involving the transfer of weapons from Minot AFB, N.D. to Barksdale AFB, La, on Thursday, Aug. 30. The transfer was safely conducted and the weapons were in Air Force custody and control at all times. The Air Force takes its mission to safeguard weapons seriously. This investigation is being conducted to find facts, determine causes, and to identify any appropriate corrective actions. No effort will be spared to ensure that the matter is thoroughly and completely investigated.

There was an error which occurred during a regularly scheduled transfer of weapons between two bases. The Commander of Air Combat Command has directed an investigation to review operational procedures. At no time was there a threat to public safety. It is important to note that munitions were safe, secure and under military control at all times. The error was discovered by Airmen during internal Air Force checks. The weapons were safe and remained in Air Force control and custody at all times.

All weapons have been accounted for.

General Ronald Keys, the Commander of Air Combat Command, has appointed Maj. Gen. Douglas Raaberg, Air Combat Command Director of Air and Space Operations, to investigate the incident. The Command Directed Investigation is scheduled to conclude on or about 14 Sep.

Safety is paramount in every munitions activity. Designed-in safety features as well as specific handling, maintenance, transportation, and storage procedures all serve to minimize risk to all personnel, especially the general public. The Air Force maintains the highest standards of safety and precision so any deviation from these well-established munitions procedures is considered very serious.

All evidence we have seen so far points to an isolated mistake. ACC has directed a command-wide stand down to review process at all of our bases. Though this incident involved elements of only two of our wings, we believe we should take an opportunity for all units to review their procedures.

Generally, weapon inspection, verification, and accountability documentation are activities required throughout the transfer process whenever there are changes to any munition's location. These activities are covered in applicable Air Force Instructions. More detailed procedures, specifically tailored for the type of munitions and transportation method involved, have been developed to assure the safest operations possible and any deviation from those procedures are taken seriously and investigated thoroughly.

Munitions are transferred for a variety of reasons to include maintenance, retirement, modernization, and inventory adjustments to name a few. During the transfer planning process, available transportation modes are always assessed to determine which best satisfies the particular requirement at hand. Military airlift and ground transportation over public routes each have positive and negative factors that are considered during this process.

Pending the completion of the Command Directed Investigation, a Munitions Squadron commander was relieved of his duties and additional Airmen have been temporarily decertified to perform their duties involving munitions.

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