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 UNITED STATES  
 ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION  
 WASHINGTON, D.C. 20545

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 DC-6780

January 22, 1968

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 No. [REDACTED]

MEMORANDUM FOR CHAIRMAN SEABORG  
 COMMISSIONER RAMEY  
 COMMISSIONER TAPE  
 COMMISSIONER JOHNSON

75943

SUBJECT: B-52 CRASH AT THULE AIR BASE, GREENLAND

The information contained in this memorandum is the latest available as of 2:00 p.m., January 22, 1968. This information has been summarized from National Military Command Center and Headquarters, U. S. Air Force Command Post Memoranda provided to DMA by the Office of the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense (Atomic Energy).

At 3:40 p.m. (EST) on January 21, 1968, a SAC B-52 on a normal airborne alert mission crashed seven and one-half miles southwest of Thule Air Base, Greenland. The aircraft was executing an approach for a landing after having declared an emergency because of a fire in the navigator's compartment. The aircraft and crew of seven were assigned to the 380th Strategic Bomb Wing at Plattsburg, New York.

The crew abandoned the aircraft after smoke filled the cockpit so that the pilot was unable to see the instruments, all aircraft power was lost due to failed generators, and it became apparent that the aircraft could not reach Thule Air Base. The aircraft crashed on the ice of North Star Bay, estimated to be seven to nine feet thick, approximately seven miles southwest of the runway of Thule Air Base. Thule is currently in polar darkness except for a period of sub-twilight lasting

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from approximately 10:00 a.m. (EST) to 2:00 p.m. (EST). After crashing the aircraft burned for five or six hours until it melted through the ice and the main part of the aircraft sank in water estimated to be six hundred feet deep. Major General R. O. Hunziker, USAF, Deputy Chief of Staff (Materiel), SAC, has viewed the accident scene from a helicopter and reported that only six engines, one tire and smaller bits of debris are visible on the surface, and the water has refrozen. The helicopter is unable to land due to heavy snow on the ice in the area. The main body of the SAC Disaster Control Team has been dispatched to the scene by dog sled.

Six of the aircraft crew members have been recovered alive. Four are in excellent condition, the fifth suffered only a broken arm, the sixth is suffering from exposure having been missing until approximately 12:00 Noon (EST), January 22, but is expected to survive. The seventh crew member was a fatality as a result of injuries suffered in the bailout and his body has been recovered.

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There have been no reports of any explosions resulting from the accident, only the fire. There have been no reports of any radiological contamination.

In addition to the SAC Disaster Control Team led by General Hunziker, two Air Force EOD teams, a safety team composed of AEC/ALO, Sandia Corporation, and LASL representatives, the DASA Nuclear Emergency Team, and Air Force Directorate of Nuclear Safety personnel have been dispatched to Thule Air Base and are scheduled to arrive at about 4:00 p.m. (EST), January 22.

**DOE ARCHIVES**

A Public Affairs officer from the U. S. European Command is in Denmark to assist the Danish Government and an officer from OASD/Public Affairs is en route to Thule.

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