

7 ESCAPE CRASH AT CAPE

Air Force Opens B52 Crash Probe



Wreckage of Air Force B52 Litters Cape

Tribune Staff Photo by Robert McDonald

Stratofort Dives Into Corner of AF Test Range

By GEORGE ALLEN
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An investigation into the cause of the crash of a B52 Stratofortress at Cape Kennedy was begun today by the Air Force Strategic Air Command.

An Air Force spokesman said a Board of Inquiry had already started the investigation.

The \$10 million B52 crashed at 8:50 p.m. Thursday in the southeast corner of the Air Force Eastern Test Range.

All seven crewmen bailed out of the aircraft. Six of them landed in Orange County near McCoy AFB where the plane was stationed, but the captain of the B52, Maj. Bobby L. Ward of University City, Tex., remained at the controls of the plane to prevent it from landing in populated areas.

Eyewitness Describes Shock Wave

The crew of an underwater nuclear weapons carrier witnessed the crash of an unarmed atomic weapons carrying aircraft at the Cape Thursday night.

He ejected from the plane at the last minute and landed on the south side of Port Canaveral, a few miles from the point where the plane smashed into the Atlantic Beach, plowing a deep furrow in the ground and scattering charred wreckage over a wide area.

Members of the crew of the nuclear submarine Daniel Webster were waiting in a bus to go to Cocoa Beach when the disabled aircraft passed over the submarine's berth at Port Canaveral, just moments before it crashed in the southeast corner of Cape Kennedy.

The only crew member injured seriously enough to be hospitalized was Capt. Ladry J. Pankau of Chattanooga, Tenn., who suffered a possible fractured shoulder blade.

The plane crashed near the site of the deactivated Azusa Mark 2 tracking station, and the site of the Dragon Anti-tank missile test range.

The Air Force said the craft developed "engine difficulties" after takeoff at McCoy Air Force Base South of Orlando. The pilot said he had lost all electrical power in the plane and was no longer able to control the giant plane.

The plane was on a "routine combat training mission," the Air Force said.

There was no damage to facilities at Cape Kennedy where several rockets are

"When it hit we felt the heat and shock waves. The explosion was so big we couldn't look at it."

All seven persons aboard the fuel-loaded Stratofortress parachuted from the plane before it smashed into the Atlantic Beach at the Air Force Station.

The pilot of the craft, Maj. Bobby L. Ward, was the last crew member to leave the B-52 just prior to its crash. He ejected when the plane was at 6,000 feet.

The first person to reach the pilot after he landed was Jimmy Dingus, second mate

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AF Probes Crash

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poised in the multimillion-dollar launch pads, including the Saturn 1B which is to launch the first three-man Apollo astronaut team into orbit in October.

The area about two miles south of the new Poseidon missile pad was littered with bits and pieces of the destroyed aircraft, smoldering in the blackened area.

The largest pieces appeared to be no longer than six feet across and no heavier than 200 to 300 pounds.

But, Col. John I. McClure, Cape Kennedy base commander, said "nothing was hit but deer and rattlesnakes."

Col. McClure said it appeared there were no large fragments left after the explosion. But he added more pieces might be found.

Wooden stakes which are part of the Azusa site were still smoking after the explosion.

The plane was assigned to the 367th Bomb Squadron at McCoy.

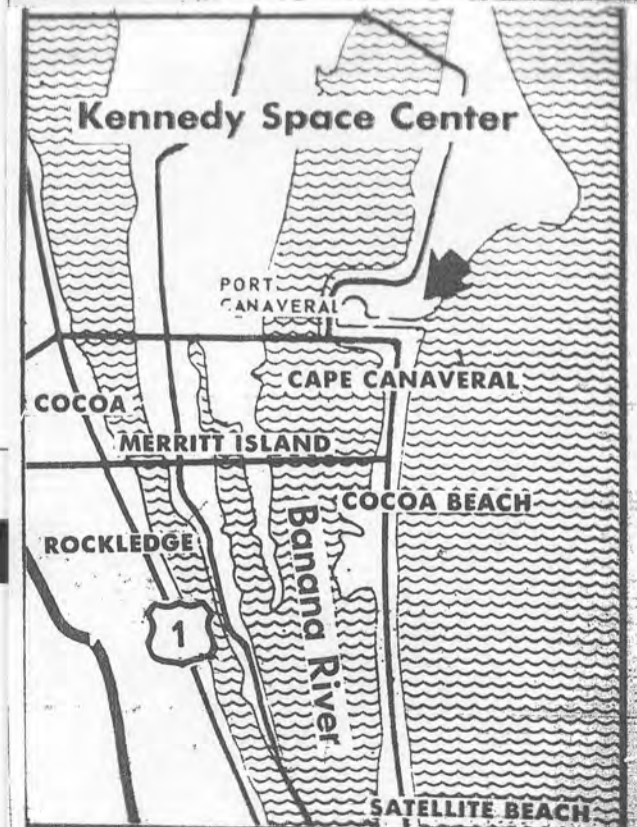
Eyewitness

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of the Miss Cape Canaveral, a fishing boat at Port Canaveral.

"I just looked up," Dingus said "and saw the parachute floating to the ground." It landed about 40 feet from the Fischer Sea Food market at the port.

The first words Wood uttered according to Dingus were, "Just hold me, just hold me."



Where Bomber Struck (Arrow)

Near port, Cape launch facilities