

Peasants Near A-Crash Wear Geiger Counters

AP 1/23/66

Reuters

ALMERIA, Spain, Jan. 22—Anxious peasants in southeast Spain wore miniature Geiger counters tonight as American troops continued their search for the radioactive heart of a missing atomic bomb.

What the U.S. Air Force called "unarmed nuclear armament" was slammed into the dusty hillsides near Cuevas de Almanzora on Monday when a giant B-52 Strategic Air Command bomber and a KC-135 tanker collided and crashed during refueling operations.

U.S. officials refused to confirm or deny reports that 400 American searchers discovered the remains of two atomic bombs and were searching for a third.

The reports said the officials were worried that the third device might have been buried.

An official Spanish spokesman denied that an anti-American gathering had taken place last night in nearby Cuevas de Almanzora. Reports said about 50 persons shouted "down with the Americans and their bombs" during a street demonstration.

The Air Force has assured the inhabitants that there is no danger to health, but local farmers in the bleak area eyed the security measures and restrictions on their

movements with grave concern.

They say crops worth thousands of dollars have been declared untouchable.

Officials have distributed pen-size radioactive indicators to some to warn them if they are in the presence of the missing bomb fragment.

Edmund Gress cabled from Madrid in a special dispatch to *The Washington Post*:

So far the press in this capital has not carried a word about the nuclear aspects of the plane crash. Given the xenophobic character and history of the Spanish people, the Franco government's discretion becomes clear.

On-the-scene observers quote local peasants, for example, as saying "The Americans ought to take their ashes and leave immediately."

A municipal official of a nearby town asked, "What's Spain got to do with the cold war?" A domestic employe near the scene said quite seriously, "Wait until the Spanish government hears about this. They won't let the Americans get away with it."