

# U.S. Reveals Nuclear 'Sprinkle' Over Spain

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States disclosed Wednesday that two unarmed nuclear weapons were blown apart by their conventional explosives and scattered some radioactive material when accidentally dropped at Palomares, Spain, 44 days ago.

"There was no nuclear explosion, and "no evidence of a health hazard," State and De-

fense Department announcements stressed.

One of the four nuclear weapons carried by the U.S. B52 which collided with a KC135 tanker plane in refueling Jan. 17 is still missing. An intense underwater search for it is underway off the coast of the Spanish Mediterranean village.

The announcements by State Department press officer Robert J. McCloskey and a Penta-

gon spokesman were the first official U.S. acknowledgement of the nuclear bomb aspects of the incident which has had wide international repercussions. U.S. officials said Spanish authorities had wanted a secrecy lid.

According to the details disclosed Wednesday this is what happened:

The ill-fated B52 was carrying four unarmed nuclear weapons

— officially described as hydrogen bombs — at the time of the accident.

Two of the bombs were blown apart by their conventional explosive charges which were set off by the impact when they hit the ground. This scattered some plutonium ((U239) and uranium (U235), nuclear bomb materials over an estimated 100 foot area.

One of the remaining two bombs has been recovered, presumably more or less intact.

The fourth bomb is the object of the intensive hunt.

Conventional explosives are used in the detonating mechanism triggering nuclear weapons. Elaborate safeguards have been devised over the years to prevent any nuclear explosion by accident.

The safety feature was emphasized in the Washington announcements.

The Russians have been trying to reap a propaganda harvest, accusing the United States of breaking the nuclear test ban treaty. Spanish citizens have been reported apprehensive of contamination danger.

The U.S. statements said radiological surveys covering some 2,000 persons who might have been exposed to radiation from the accident showed no

health dangers.

The Atomic Energy Commission announced that 1,500 cubic yards of earth and vegetation around the site have been collected and is now being packed in 55-gallon drums for shipment to the United States. It will be buried in one of the AEC's nuclear waste graveyards at the Savannah River facility near Aiken, S.C., "in the same manner as other low-level radioactive waste material is routinely disposed of."

The commission said the material was collected "to preclude any possibility, however remote, of public health or safety hazard." It added that the material contained "only small quantities of radioactive material."

"The levels of radioactivity are being carefully monitored to be sure they are well within the standard limits for such shipments," the AEC said.