

B47 Officers Question Crew of Hunter Bomber

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A Board of Inquiry of B-47 officers yesterday questioned the crew that dropped the Mars Bluff bomb and scrutinized their plane, seeking ways to prevent the misfortune from happening again.

The Public Information office at Hunter Air Force base said the board — all pilots with hundreds of hours in the air — will issue a thorough report on completion of the probe.

At the same time, Maj. Gen. John P. McConnell, commander of Second Air Force, said the probe will look for damage to the inside of the bomb bay doors on the B-47 that dropped the bomb.

He said that the weight of the bomb could crack the doors open since they are thin.

GENERAL McCONNELL, who flew to Hunter for the investigation "and other business," said officers have pretty well ruled out everything but "mechanical failure" as the cause of the accident.

The bomber was not on a practice bombing run, the Air Force emphatically states.

However, the B-47 was on some kind of operation with other planes in training. The PIO office at Hunter said the base is on an "alert" and some components of the base personnel are on temporary duty.

Such "alerts" usually indicate large scale training operations which squadrons temporarily shifted to various fields.

In a meeting with newsmen in Savannah, the crew of the bomber said they flew for two and a half hours before landing at Hunter.

In the meantime, they bore the excruciating pain of thinking their errant A-bomb had leveled a motel.

THROUGH A GARBLED radio message to the plane, the crew understood the bomb might have hit a motel near Florence. It was not until they landed that they knew no one was killed.

Capt. Karl E. Koehler, plane commander, extended sympathy to residents of Mars Bluff and said "our anxiety was as great as anyone's until we learned there were no fatalities."

The public information office at

Hunter described Koehler and his men as still "quite shaken" up about it.

The PIO said the crew's time is being taken up entirely for the present by the probe. They're still on flight status.

In Florence yesterday, Walter Gregg and his wife spent the day talking with Rep. John McMillan about quick settlement of their damage claims and looking for a place to live.

THE FAMILY was reunited for

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the first time last night, at the home of Clyde Gregg on the Old Georgetown Road. It was the first time the whole family had been together since the bomb fell Tuesday.

Gregg said Congressman McMillan told them that local real estate men were being contacted to provide three-bedroom furnished houses to look at.

Gregg said the Air Force will provide them the temporary quarters until settlement is made. He quoted the Air Force as saying

May would be about the soonest he could expect settlement, and perhaps later if the settlement bill doesn't pass Congress hurriedly.

"The Air Force has treated us wonderful," Gregg said. He especially praised the legal officer who has been working with the family to collect an inventory of their losses.

The Air Force also provided Gregg with a late model auto to drive yesterday, replacing the coupe that was blasted in his back yard.

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Gregg Home Bombing Draws Washington News Comment

The Morning News Washington Bureau WASHINGTON.—The accidental bombing of Walter Gregg's home at Florence last Tuesday yesterday drew the editorial attention of The Washington Daily News.

"Any way you look at it," says the Daily News, "the fall-down—if not the fall-out — of that atomic bomb in South Carolina produces some goose flesh on John Q. Public, and goose flesh is something that can't be measured with a Geiger counter."

The newspaper, one of Washington's three largest, said the bomb dropping "serves to point up the grim fact that American bombers are perforce constantly in the air hauling around those nuclear things, and whether they're cocked or not, they're apt to fall easy if someone brushes against the wrong button. Of course, the radiation danger is ever present, even if the Air Force manages to dig up intact a falldown bomb.

"DEFENSE SECRETARY Neil McElroy says it proves what the Pentagon has been saving —

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Relief Bill Being Pushed

The Morning News Washington Bureau WASHINGTON — Sixth District Rep. John L. McMillan acted Friday to ease the plight of his constituents suffering as a result of Tuesday's atom bomb drop by removing the \$1,000 limitation on claims the Air Force may settle in the field.

He introduced legislation which would "remove the present \$1,000 limitation which prevents the Secretary of the Air Force from settling certain claims arising out of the accidental release of a bomb from an Air Force aircraft on an authorized non-combat training mission over and near Mars Bluff, Florence County.

that these bombs can't really go off unless triggered.

"No doubt there will be other reassurances coming after due investigations.

"But we might as well face it," says the News, atomically speaking, we're a pistol-packing nation.

"And even an unloaded pistol is no plaything."

The Florence incident drew top headline play in the Washington and Baltimore newspapers.