

~~SECRET~~

HISTORY OF STRATEGIC AIR COMMAND

JANUARY-JUNE 1968

HISTORICAL STUDY NO. 112 (U)

VOLUME I

Microfilm Frames 009 thru 238.
NARRATIVE

SPECIAL HANDLING REQUIRED
NOT RELEASABLE TO FOREIGN
NATIONALS OR THEIR REPRESENTATIVES.

EXCLUDED FROM AUTOMATIC
REGRADING/ DOD DIR 5200.10
DOES NOT APPLY

B. K. Holloway
B. K. HOLLOWAY, General, USAF
Commander in Chief

*Reproduced on 20 July 1994
by authority of
HQ ACC/HO.*

HISTORY & RESEARCH DIVISION
HEADQUARTERS STRATEGIC AIR COMMAND

FEBRUARY 1969

*Reproduced copy #
RC1 of IRC.*

Ref 94-IPD-229

~~SECRET/FAO~~
~~RESTRICTED DATA~~
~~AF EYES ONLY~~

92-TS-AFHRA-011

A FHRA Cy 20

Doc # 68-B-3214

(THIS PAGE IS UNCLASSIFIED) SAC CY 2 OF 5 CYS

ACC 94-HO-65

OR-CVI-3767-4A

DEPARTMENT OF ARMY INTEL COLLECTION REVIEW
1ST REVIEW DATE: 01/19/69
AUTHORITY: 1.001-100
2ND REVIEW DATE: 08/11/69
AUTHORITY: 1.001-100
CLASSIFIED BY: 1.001-100
DECLASSIFIED BY: 1.001-100
DATE: 08/11/69
DOE INFO IS SPED

~~SECRET~~

77

Airborne Alert

U (S) During 1967, Headquarters SAC developed a new B-52 employment concept to replace airborne alert. Called Selective Employment of Air and Ground Alert (SEAGA), its basic advantages were compatibility with the SIOP and the potential for immediate response. In September 1967, General McConnell approved the concept as a replacement for airborne alert effective 1 July 1968. In the meantime, SAC continued indoctrination in accordance with the bomber stream concept of airborne alert (Chrome Dome and then Giant Wheel).¹⁴ The southern route had been unavailable at the indoctrination level since the accident near Palomares, Spain, in January 1966. Beginning in July 1966, the JCS had authorized only four B-52 airborne alert sorties daily. As a result, SAC normally assigned one sortie daily to each the northern and western route, and two daily sorties to the BMEWS monitor function. The 45-day indoctrination cycle beginning 1 January 1968 involved one B-52 sortie daily from the 2d Bombardment Wing (northern route), the 5th Wing (western route), and one each from the 380th and 410th Wings (BMEWS monitor function).

U (S) On 21 January 1968, a B-52D of the 380th Strategic Aerospace Wing, monitoring the Thule site of the BMEWS in accordance with Giant Wheel and carrying four unarmed MK-28 nuclear weapons, crashed near Thule Air Base, Greenland.* As was the case with the Palomares accident in January 1966, this crash had a significant impact on the SAC airborne alert indoctrination program. On 22 January, the JCS directed SAC to stop carrying nuclear weapons on airborne alert indoctrination sorties at once.¹⁵ Even before receipt of the official JCS directive, General A. C. Gillem, II, the SAC DCS/Operations, had stopped launches of Giant Wheel sorties with nuclear weapons.¹⁶ Headquarters SAC immediately notified the JCS that the last sortie with nuclear weapons was enroute to its home station for a scheduled landing at 23/0515Z.¹⁷

* (U) This accident and the consequent activities of the SAC Disaster Control Team in Greenland are discussed in a monograph Project Crested Ice: The Thule Nuclear Accident.

~~SECRET~~
UNCLASSIFIED

~~SECRET~~

78

UNCLASSIFIED

u (A) The cited directive from the JCS also specified that indoctrination training could be continued at the current level (four daily), that the fact that weapons were not being carried could not be publicized, and that plans and procedures for higher level operations were not affected.¹⁸ This left SAC Headquarters with three possible courses: fly four unloaded indoctrination sorties daily without degrading the ground alert force, fly four unloaded indoctrination sorties and continue to allow participating units to downgrade one alert sortie, or forget the indoctrination program except for the BMEWS monitor function. General Gillem's interim guidance was to fly four sorties without weapons and to continue to allow one degraded ground alert sortie per participating unit.¹⁹

u (A) However, on 24 January, General Nazzaro stated that he had no desire to fly airborne alert indoctrination sorties without weapons. As a result, SAC indefinitely suspended the daily sortie on the North and West routes, and the last B-52 sortie on each route was launched on 25 January 1968. Two units, the 380th Strategic Aerospace Wing and the 410th Bombardment Wing, each continued to launch one B-52 sortie daily in support of the BMEWS monitor function. This responsibility was assigned to the 379th and 450th Bombardment Wings from 15 February through 31 March, and then to the 42d and 449th Bombardment Wings for the month of April. After 22 January, all these B-52 sorties were launched without weapons and without combat mission folders aboard. Although SAC Headquarters maintained airborne BMEWS site surveillance, both the type aircraft utilized and the site monitored were changed on 1 May 1968.

u (A) During development of the SEAGA study, the SAC Headquarters staff had reviewed the need for an airborne monitor of a BMEWS facility and the most efficient method of accomplishing it. The staff concluded that a continuously airborne monitor of a BMEWS site would be necessary at the time SAC was recommending adoption of the SEAGA concept (1 July 1968). However, it did not have to be performed over the Thule site

UNCLASSIFIED

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

79

UNCLASSIFIED

or by B-52 aircraft. Changes in Russian ICBM deployment and in BMEWS site detection capabilities made surveillance of the site at Clear, Alaska, an acceptable alternative. Use of B-52 aircraft for the monitor function was not especially compatible with the SEAGA concept. Efficient use of KC-135 aircraft, the most obvious alternative, required an operating location near the site to be monitored.²⁰ During the July-September 1966 quarter, SAC had monitored the Thule BMEWS site with tankers from Goose AB and then from Eielson AFB. Because of the distance from the launch base to the BMEWS site, such KC-135 monitor missions were not satisfactory.²¹ The staff concluded that either airborne surveillance of the site at Clear by KC-135s operating from Eielson AFB or of the Thule site by KC-135s operating from Thule AB would be satisfactory. Since logistical support would be more difficult at Thule AB, the SAC/SEAGA study group recommended that KC-135s operating from Eielson AFB monitor the BMEWS site at Clear.²² This Thule/Clear KC-135 monitor issue had not been finally settled when the January 1968 nuclear accident occurred. As a result, B-52 surveillance of the site at Thule continued for a time.

u ~~for~~ On 21 February 1968, General Nazzaro and General Compton reviewed the latest staff evaluation of the command's BMEWS monitor procedures. The main points were two: an assessment of the Soviet ICBM threat in relation to the detection capabilities of the BMEWS sites at Thule and Clear, and an evaluation of the cost and effectiveness of KC-135 surveillance of the Clear site. Special tests conducted in early February with the Clear site indicated that an effective monitor mission could be performed at that site. The staff recommended continuous airborne surveillance of the Clear site by KC-135 aircraft operating from Eielson AFB as a replacement for the B-52 Thule monitor. The Eielson tanker task force would also be responsible for monitoring the Thule site if directed by SAC Headquarters. In late March, after further review of the relative benefits of a Clear or Thule monitor and of the ability of KC-135s to provide continuous radar coverage, General Nazzaro approved the change in monitor procedures to be effective

UNCLASSIFIED

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

UNCLASSIFIED

80

1 May 1968.²³ In early April, Headquarters SAC notified all concerned agencies of the impending termination of the B-52 Thule monitor and initiation of the KC-135 Clear monitor mission.²⁴

U (S) The major continuing peacetime responsibilities of the Eielson tanker task force were support of reconnaissance missions and of Giant Wheel indoctrination. Headquarters SAC normally required the numbered air forces to furnish on rotational TDY a specified number of KC-135s to the Eielson tanker task force. Primarily because of Arc Light, SAC changed the usual method of tanker selection on 1 April 1968. During the April-September 1968 period, the 92d Strategic Aerospace Wing and the 509th Bombardment Wing operated as two of the Arc Light cadre units. Each wing had two KC-135 air refueling squadrons and more tankers than required for Arc Light and SIOP alert commitments during the six-month period. As a result, SAC assigned to the two wings responsibility for providing the tankers needed at Eielson AFB for reconnaissance and Giant Wheel support. Each wing was committed to maintain five KC-135s and six flight crews on TDY at Eielson. Headquarters SAC suggested that each rotate three aircraft and six crews each week--in one aircraft/two crew increments.²⁵ The Clear monitor mission required a force of five KC-135s operating from Eielson. A continuous airborne monitor of the Clear LMEWS site required three KC-135 sorties daily. Each sortie had an eight hour monitor responsibility time.²⁶ The Eielson tanker task force satisfactorily accomplished the new mission during the months of May and June. Effective 1 July 1968, the monitor function would be included in the SEAGA operations order (23-69) just as it had been in the airborne alert operations orders.

U (S) Once the SEAGA concept had been approved, the SAC staff began preparing for its adoption on 1 July 1968. Such matters as preparing flight plans, revising EWO plans, coordinating air traffic procedures, insuring logistical support, and securing base rights were some of the more important and necessary actions. In addition, two side issues exerted an immediate effect upon the character of the indoctrination program to begin on 1 July 1968. Both were tied in

UNCLASSIFIED

~~SECRET~~

with airborne alert generally, and not with the SEAGA concept specifically. The first of these was the BMENS site monitor issue, which has already been discussed. The other was the weapons on indoctrination issue, which has been introduced but not resolved.

U ~~(S)~~ Headquarters SAC did not officially attempt to persuade the JCS to review its "no weapons on indoctrination" policy insofar as it applied to the current airborne alert operation. Shortly after the January accident, Air Staff representatives had informally advised Headquarters SAC officers that the weapons on indoctrination issue might not be resolved by 1 July 1968. Somewhat later, the SAC Headquarters staff learned that the problem would not even be considered until May.

U ~~(S)~~ As a result, Headquarters SAC was compelled to make some decisions concerning FY 1969 SEAGA indoctrination before the weapons carrying issue was settled. General Nazzaro did not wish to fly B-52 indoctrination sorties (monitor function excepted) without nuclear weapons under the bomber stream airborne alert operation, but indoctrination flights for the SEAGA operation commencing 1 July were a different matter. On 31 March 1968, General Nazzaro approved a FY 1969 indoctrination training schedule to be followed whether or not authority to carry nuclear weapons was granted. If flown without weapons, indoctrination sorties would be supported by a unit's follow-on force and alert force degradation would not be authorized.²⁷

U ~~(S)~~ Headquarters SAC preferred to fly SEAGA indoctrination sorties with nuclear weapons aboard. On 19 April 1968, SAC furnished the JCS and Headquarters USAF with a listing of the sorties and nuclear weapons movements needed to support the SEAGA indoctrination program desired for FY 1969. Also addressed was the number of B-52 overflights of Canada for all levels.²⁸ Although the command annually provided similar data to the JCS and Headquarters USAF, this submission also amounted to a request for reconsideration of the ban against carrying nuclear weapons at the indoctrination level. One indoctrination flight for each authorized B-52 G and H crew would require 391 sorties

annually (17 squadrons x 23 authorized crews) and approximately 1500 nuclear weapon movement credits.²⁹ The maximum number of B-52 overflights of Canadian territory for the SEAGA program was two at the indoctrination level, 20 at the Show of Force level, and 23 at the Enduring Survival level. Specifically, Headquarters SAC requested the JCS obtain Presidential and Canadian approval for the scheduled SEAGA indoctrination flights and for advanced level postures.³⁰

~~u~~ (S) During the time between the SAC request and the JCS response, an unfortunate bit of publicity occurred concerning flights with nuclear bombs. On 30 April 1968, in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, correspondent Richard Dudman, attributed to General Nazzaro the statement that SAC planned to resume B-52 flights with nuclear weapons on 1 July.³¹ On the day the story appeared, General Nazzaro was appearing before the Preparedness Investigating Subcommittee of the Committee on Armed Services of the U. S. Senate. General Nazzaro denied making such a statement, and later provided the following explanation to the subcommittee:³²

This is apparently what happened. On 25 April 68 we gave one of our SECRET briefings to the Council on Foreign Affairs. In the course of this briefing, I pointed out that on 1 July of this year we would be instituting a new type of airborne alert. I made no specific reference to resuming flights with nuclear weapons. Apparently, I was misrepresented and somehow the erroneous view got into the press.

Whether or not this publicity was critical to the final decision, it did nothing to relieve Pentagon sensitivity concerning flights with nuclear weapons.

~~u~~ (S) ~~(TS)~~ The Joint Chiefs of Staff split the SAC request into two separate parts: weapons on indoctrination and nuclear overflights during advanced level postures. Its position on the first issue was basically a reiteration of the January ban. On 29 May 1968, the JCS notified SAC that: "Request to carry nuclear weapons on SEAGA indoctrination training flights cannot repeat cannot be favorably considered at this time due to current international sensitivity to flights with nuclear weapons. Request will be reviewed in approximately 6 months,

UNCLASSIFIED

TOP SECRET

83

if desired."³³ At the same time, the JCS stated that it was acting to obtain Canadian approval for nuclear overflight during advanced SEAGA postures.³⁴ On 3 August 1968, the JCS notified SAC that the Canadian government had approved up to 23 overflights of its territory daily by SAC aircraft carrying nuclear weapons for the period 1 July 1968 through 30 June 1969. The Joint Chiefs of Staff cautioned SAC that this authorization could be used only if it directed an advanced SEAGA posture since the provisions of the May directive still applied.³⁵

~~(TS)~~ On 17 June 1968, Headquarters SAC informed its subordinate agencies of the "no weapons on indoctrination" policy and outlined its own guidance for avoiding disclosure of that policy. The command's policies governing the conduct of the FY 1969 indoctrination program without weapons corresponded with General Nazzaro's decisions of 31 March: SEAGA indoctrination would continue as outlined in Operations Order 23-69, no EWO CMF materials would be carried, and no degradation of ground alert sorties would be authorized.³⁶

~~(TS)~~ Lieutenant General William B. Kieffer, Commander of Eighth Air Force, was not enthusiastic about flying lengthy SEAGA indoctrination sorties without weapons. He initially raised the issue during a review of SIOP-4E plans and policies held at SAC Headquarters on 3 May 1968 for the three numbered air force commanders and selected senior staff officers. At that time, the JCS decision concerning weapons on SEAGA indoctrination flights was still pending. General Kieffer proposed that if weapons were not carried, indoctrination sorties complete only one heavyweight refueling.³⁷ On 21 June 1968, shortly after receipt of the SAC weapons policy governing FY 1969 SEAGA indoctrination, Major General Kenneth R. Powell, Eighth Air Force Vice Commander, officially recommended shortened indoctrination missions to the VCINCSAC, General Compton. Specifically, Headquarters Eighth Air Force recommended that B-52 missions be reduced to a single orbit and one air refueling in the orbit area. The Eighth questioned the training benefits of additional orbits, and emphasized the savings in B-52 flying hours and KC-135 sorties.³⁸

TOP SECRET

UNCLASSIFIED

~~TOP SECRET~~ UNCLASSIFIED

84

u (S) In response, General Compton assured General Powell that the entire question had been thoroughly examined. The primary reasons for a realistic indoctrination program for SEAGA were the following:³⁹

To exercise and evaluate the tanker task force capability to support the operation.

To provide realistic training and insure aircrew confidence. Once a year the aircrew would fly the identical sortie that is assigned under the more advanced options. This is particularly important in view of the high turnover rate of aircrew personnel at the present time.

To realize maximum crew training benefits in multiple heavyweight refueling during a sortie similar to the SEAGA EWO profile.

To exercise the full altitude reservation, thus providing indoctrination for air traffic control agencies in the complexities associated with traffic clearances required for a SEAGA sortie.

To provide data for evaluating aircraft performance so that planning factors may be validated.

To provide a continuing daily demonstration of SAC's proven capability.

u (S) Headquarters SAC's original decision concerning indoctrination sorties was that they "would match as closely as possible the unit's assigned SEAGA profile." Following General Kieffer's recommendation to the SAC EWO Panel in May, the headquarters again evaluated the expenditure of command resources and reconfirmed its initial decision. General Compton declared that: "Flying an abbreviated mission will do little towards exercising the forces involved and validating our planning." The only modification was that when SEAGA indoctrination sorties were flown without weapons, the last refueling would be reduced to permit immediate landing upon return to home station. If forced to reduce Operations and Maintenance (O&M) expenditures, SAC would reduce the number of sorties per unit rather than sortie length. In any event, the headquarters staff would further evaluate benefits and costs after completion of the initial indoctrination program.⁴⁰

u (S) On 31 March 1968, General Nazzaro reviewed and approved the proposed SEAGA indoctrination program for FY 1969.⁴¹ Only the B-52

~~TOP SECRET~~ UNCLASSIFIED

G and H units were scheduled for the initial indoctrination program. The 16 B-52 G and H wings were treated as 17 units because one, the 2d Wing, possessed two bombardment squadrons. Three units each were assigned to the Eielson, Goose North, Goose South, Spanish Atlantic, and Spanish Mediterranean orbits; and two units were assigned to the Pacific orbit. Forward area KC-135 tanker task forces supporting the B-52 G and H orbits were located at Eielson AFB, Alaska; Goose AB, Labrador; Torrejon AB, Spain; and Kadena AB, Okinawa. The SAC indoctrination schedule assigned each unit a 15 day period during which it would launch two B-52 sorties daily until all available combat-ready crews (23 authorized) had participated. The schedule was drawn up so that all activity on a particular orbit would be completed before any began on another orbit. The indoctrination schedule began with the B-52 units assigned to the orbit supported by Eielson AFB, the only tanker task force base on United States soil.⁴²

U (S) Apart from the ban against carrying nuclear weapons on indoctrination, another restriction, perhaps more apparent than real, developed concerning the use of the Mediterranean orbit. In early June, the Air Staff notified SAC that, "because of current political-military considerations," the Mediterranean orbit could not be used for SEAGA indoctrination flights. The Air Staff intended to review this restriction after completion of the Spanish base negotiations.⁴³ Since these negotiations were expected to be completed in September 1968, and indoctrination on the Mediterranean orbit was not scheduled until February 1969, it was possible that the restriction would have no impact on SEAGA indoctrination.⁴⁴

U (S) The issue of foreign military rights was not a critical problem insofar as the indoctrination program for FY 1969 was concerned. However, SAC required either new or expanded KC-135 operating rights for any advanced level SEAGA posture--particularly after 1 January 1969. Before outlining the requirement for and status of operating rights, the scope of the approved program for 1 July 1968 and SAC's plans for expansion during the fiscal year should be reviewed briefly.

~~UNCLASSIFIED~~
~~SECRET~~

86

u (s) The Air Staff had notified SAC of explicit approval for inclusion of only the B-52 G and H forces in initial SEAGA plans. Specifically, in October 1967, the Air Staff informed Headquarters SAC that: "On 26 September, the Chief of Staff, USAF approved the SEAGA concept of operation and directed actions to achieve implementation of SEAGA with the B-52 G and H aircraft by 1 July 1968."⁴⁵ The 17 B-52 G and H squadrons provided a basic SEAGA force of 34 aircraft. However, the Air Staff went on to state that: "Funding requirements have been developed in FY 69 budget request to support the 64 aircraft SEAGA concept."⁴⁶ And this meant making provisions as well for the entire B-52 fleet at some unstated time.

u (s) Not unnaturally, Headquarters SAC considered this to be implicit approval for expanding the SEAGA force during FY 1969. In November 1967, Headquarters SAC explained its SEAGA expansion plans to the Air Staff. In addition to the 34 B-52 G and H sorties, the command intended to include up to 16 B-52D Arc Light aircraft at Andersen AFB in the plan, bringing the total SEAGA force for 1 July 1968 to a maximum of 50 B-52s. Headquarters SAC also informed the Air Staff that it was proceeding with plans to include B-52 C through F forces in SEAGA "later in the FY 69 time period."⁴⁷

u (s) General Nazzaro also wanted to develop, by 1 July 1968, an emergency plan which included more than the 50 aircraft force outlined above. Following additional study by the SAC staff, General Nazzaro approved the following program in late December 1967: by 1 July 1968, develop an emergency plan for six B-52 C through F units (12 aircraft) in addition to the 50 aircraft force; and by 1 January 1969, endeavor to include all B-52 C through F forces in SEAGA plans.⁴⁸ Again, on 31 March 1968, General Nazzaro reiterated his approval of the 50 plus 12 SEAGA force for 1 July 1968. The SAC Commander in Chief also reviewed the status of actions taken and required for the 1 January 1969 position.⁴⁹

u (s) The Strategic Air Command currently operated KC-135s at all the task force bases required to support the B-52G and H forces (as well as the Arc Light D force). Neither Eielson nor Kadena required

~~SECRET~~

UNCLASSIFIED

u ~~(S)~~ Also in mid-June, Headquarters SAC was informally advised that the Deputy Under Secretary of the Air Force for International Affairs, Philip F. Hilbert, was concerned about SAC's pressures regarding SEAGA plans. He reportedly feared that the "folks in Omaha" were not fully aware of diplomatic-political sensitivities.⁶⁴ At the end of June, Major General T. N. Wilson, Deputy Director of Plans, DCS/Plans and Operations, Headquarters USAF, forwarded Mr. Hilbert's official memorandum and announced a policy of closer coordination between his office and SAC Headquarters.⁶⁵

u ~~(S)~~ Despite these admonitions, Headquarters SAC intended to press for an expanded SEAGA force. The official attitude of the Headquarters could be summed up in a comment of General Compton's: "Either the posture is required or it isn't."⁶⁶ The command's concern was not limited to the B-52 C through F expansion plans for January 1969. In fact, at the end of June, none of the foreign basing and overflight rights necessary for the 1 July 1968 posture had been officially sanctioned. No particular problems were expected with the Canadian and Spanish governments; and the command's primary concern was operating rights at Keflavik and Thule, particularly the latter.⁶⁷

Survivability

Dispersal Plans and Exercises

u ~~(S)~~ Force dispersal was a fundamental means of improving survivability of aircraft. Most beneficial was permanent dispersal of alert forces, allowing response to tactical warning of an impending attack. However, under conditions of advanced readiness, emergency force dispersal also improved the strategic aircraft posture. General McConnell, the USAF Chief of Staff, had approved a reoriented and expanded SAC plan for emergency aircraft dispersal in April 1967. The most significant new feature of the revised dispersal plan was that consideration was given to the Soviet submarine launched ballistic missile (SLBM) threat as well as the ICBM threat. Limiting the number of generated aircraft at bases vulnerable to SLBM attack was thus a major objective. The revised plan also required more dispersal bases,