

Exploding bottle of gas blamed for Bomarc blast

WASHINGTON (AP)—An explosion and fire in a Bomarc missile at McGuire Air Force Base, N.J., on June 7 are believed to have been traced to the bursting of a helium gas bottle.

The Air Force, reporting preliminary results of its investigation, said parts of the shattered high pressure container are being pieced together in an effort to learn what caused it to burst.

Safety Checks

Other Bomarc missiles are being inspected as a precaution against similar accidents, the Air Force said Thursday. The Bomarc, an antiaircraft missile with an atomic warhead, is being positioned around a number of U. S. cities.

No one was injured in the New Jersey accident, which occurred in an isolated launching shelter.

Even though the missile's nuclear warhead was burned, Air Force and Atomic Energy Commission experts said that safety features designed into the missile

and warhead acted as expected in preventing any nuclear detonation.

Some Contamination

Also as expected, they said, there was some radioactive contamination which was confined to the missile launch shelter area.

The Air Force said the fire presumably started when the container of nonflammable helium gas, located between two fuel tanks, burst from some undetermined cause.

Experts of the Boeing Aircraft Co., which manufactures the Bomarc, and of the Air Force's development division from Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio are reassembling the bottle. Metals used in the bottles will be analyzed.