

## **BULLET BACKGROUND PAPER**

**ON**

### **MINOT-BARKSDALE WEAPONS TRANSFER INCIDENT**

#### **SUMMARY:**

- While this was an isolated incident, it is clearly unacceptable to the people of the United States and to the United States Air Force. We discovered it, we took immediate action – keeping leadership informed – and we have taken steps to prevent future mishaps. All munitions were maintained under Air Force control throughout the weapons transfer. At no point was there a risk to public safety.
- The Commander Directed Investigation (CDI) found that there has been an erosion of adherence to weapons handling standards at Minot and Barksdale Air Force Bases. We have acted quickly and decisively to rectify this.
- We are aggressively examining and implementing corrective measures to our weapons handling and transfer process. The CDI was the first step and determined what went wrong. The Air Force Chief of Staff commissioned an Air Force Blue Ribbon Review that will examine policy and procedures of weapons systems under Air Force purview. A Defense Science Board Task Force is also conducting an independent inquiry into this incident.
- General John Corley, Commander of Air Combat Command, carefully considered individuals at all ranks and levels for accountability and responsibility. COMACC has delegated authority to 12 AF/CC, a general court-martial convening authority, to review the evidence. Lt Gen Seip has authority to then to take appropriate disciplinary or administrative action should the evidence warrant it.
  - On Thursday, 18 Oct 07, COMACC relieved the 5<sup>th</sup> Bomb Wing Commander and the Maintenance Group Commander at Minot and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Operations Group Commander at Barksdale. Also, the Munitions Squadron Commander at Minot was relieved immediately after the incident.
  - In addition, General Corley took actions to temporarily or permanently decertify specific individuals from the Personnel Reliability Program.

#### **FIVE PROCEDURAL ERRORS THAT LED TO THE INCIDENT:**

- First, Airmen assigned to the Minot weapons storage area failed to examine each one of five pylons (a pylon is a self-contained package of six cruise missiles) located in the storage area.
- Second, the driver of the trailer that moves the pylons to the aircraft began loading the pylons before the required pylon inspection was complete.
- Third, the driver failed to inspect the missiles before hooking up the trailer for transport.
- Fourth, when the driver radioed the munitions control center to verify the status of the pylons, the control center failed to access a database (as required) that would have alerted them that one of the pylons was not properly prepared for transfer.
- Finally, the B-52 navigator neglected to check all missiles loaded for transport, as required.