

U-Tapao RTAFB

635th SPS

B-52 Crash, 1972

by Roland "Larry" Miller

*Photo: Good looking guy is me, beside our barracks.
Larry Miller, MSgt, USAF (ret) (in August 1988)*



U-Tapao, Air Base (June 1972-1973) - I was Sgt Larry Miller, in the 635th SPS, Law Enforcement (June 1972-1973), and remember well the B52 crash HL Hartford talks about in his **Homing Bird, B-52 Battle Damage** story. Although I wasn't on duty that night, one person I knew was and he said it appeared to him that the crew switched off all power to the aircraft (probably to lessen the chance of fire after the crash).

Photo Left: "G" model '52 (short tail) and was probably from Kadena or Guam. The Buffs at U-Tapao were all "F" models (tall tails).

As I remember it, the BUFF (*Big Ugly Fat Fellow*) couldn't get down on the runway and overflowed the base, landing in the banana groves across the highway outside the base. The tail gunner and co-pilot survived (the tail broke off, and the co-pilot was saved by an officer who commandeered a bhat-bus to the

scene). I learned later that he was awarded the "Airman's Medal." The citation reads that he braved "exploding ammo and fire" to rescue him. I've always thought he should have gotten a higher award since he climbed up on the aircraft while it was burning.

Steve Hughes' account is the only one of the incident that I've seen so far. Usually, the after-action report only says, "destroyed," "crashed on landing," etc. I enjoyed reading Steve's account.

Photo Right: Bomb Dump. Tight security too. The guard was asleep when I approached his post.

I'll always remember the aircrews and planes at U-Tapao RTAFB. By the way, my Dad was a tail gunner on B52's, retiring in 1964, so never saw action there. One night while working the main gate, I saw two drunken senior NCO's (tail gunners) approaching and asked for their ID cards. I recognized them from Minot AFB, ND, where my Dad last served, and asked them if they knew AP Miller. They said sure, and I told them I was his son. Not impressed, they gave a laugh and were on their way.





I also saw a B52 pilot come through the gate that I had partied with in Las Vegas in 1969. He didn't remember me, but I sure remembered him. He tried to steal my girl friend! It was all a long time ago!

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