

SENATE OPERATIONS COMMITTEE HEARING, MAY 7, 2019, 1:30  
Room 11

Good Afternoon,

*early  
1960's.*

My name

is Roger Bourassa. I am a native of Winooski, currently living in

Colchester. I am a retired Lt. Col. USAF, Air National Guard. I served 11 years as an Air National Guardsman.

My flying experience as a crew member in these aircrafts includes:

- 2 years in the F-89 as Radar Intercept Officer for the Air Defense Command with the 158<sup>th</sup> at the Airport in Burlington, Vermont.

3 years in the C-97 as Navigator for the Military Airlift Command in Schenectady, NY.

- \* 6 years in the F-101 as Weapon System Officer for the Air Defense Command in Bangor, Maine.

In Burlington I was a crew member on the F-89, one of several air defense squadrons to defend the North East from possible enemy attack by Russia. Our mission was to defend the homeland and nuclear weapons were an essential part of our weapon system.

Our F-89's carried two high explosive missiles and **two nuclear war heads mounted on two self-propelled rockets.** These nuclear warheads were the AIR-2 Genie nuclear tipped air-to-air missile. These nuclear weapons were stored

in Burlington. Part of the air crew check list was to check the proper mounting of these weapons prior to takeoff or taking control of the aircraft on alert.



As crew members, we were intentionally not made aware of **where the nuclear warheads were stored at BTV**. That knowledge was exclusively for the ground crews who were responsible for transporting and loading the rockets.

While at the Vermont National Guard (VTANG) in Burlington, our routine training flights were with simulated missiles and rockets. **Our nuclear weapons were armed when the aircraft and crew members were on alert status. Alert aircraft did not fly missions unless scrambled.**

**While at VTANG, my aircraft was scrambled once carrying nuclear armed rockets** to investigate an enemy Russian bomber that had penetrated our airspace. By the time we reached the air space violation, the Russian bomber was back in international air space. In Maine, I was scrambled twice with the same outcome. Penetrating one another's air space was a game played by both the Russians and the US to gather intelligence.

**Make no mistake we carried nuclear weapons in this game.** And had we been given the order, we would have launched our nuclear weapons. Had that ever happened, we could have started a nuclear war. We had been trained in how to quickly maneuver out of the area after we had launched our nuclear rockets in order to save our lives from the nuclear attack on the Russian aircraft. But we knew there was the possibility we would be caught in the nuclear burst. Strangely enough, we were never told what might happen to the rest of the world after our launch. We knew there was no way to recall the rocket once launched. But I don't recall, at the time, ever thinking that we could start a nuclear holocaust.

Crew members and ground crew all had to have Top Secret clearances and we were not allowed to disclose any information about nuclear weapons at BTV to the public. **The Department Of Defense and the Air Force, did not tell the public about OUR NUCLEAR MISSION OR about the nuclear weapons STORED IN BURLINGTON.**

My personal experience with the F-89 nuclear mission leads me to believe that the public will not be told anything should the Air Force decide again to give the Vermont Air National Guard a nuclear mission. **In other words, we could again have a nuclear mission without the Governor, legislators or the public knowing about it.**

Having a Master's degree in International Relations, I cannot help but be concerned about how many of our international conflicts were initiated by blunders, mistakes, mis-calculations and/or failures in our military/political systems. But there is no safe level of failure when nuclear weapons are involved.

Having a nuclear bomber based at the Burlington Airport is an existential threat to Burlington, the Northeast and to our humanity. Prohibiting the F-35 nuclear delivery system from being based in Vermont means one less possible catastrophe from happening to us all.

**Thank you.**