

Engine Drops Out of B-52 During Training at Minot Air Force Base



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By: [Valerie Insinna and Aaron Mehta](#), January 4, 2017 (Photo Credit: US Air Force)

MINOT AIR FORCE BASE, N.D. — An engine dropped out of a B-52 bomber during a training flight on Wednesday, the Air Force has confirmed following questions from Defense News.

Because the B-52 runs on eight Pratt & Whitney TF33-P-3/103 turbofan engines, pilots were able to land the aircraft safely without any injury to the five personnel on board. The Air Force has since dispatched a UH-1N Huey helicopter to recover engine debris, which was found located in an unpopulated area about 25 nautical miles northeast of Minot Air Force Base, an Air Force spokesman said in a statement.

There were no weapons onboard the B-52, which belongs to Minot Air Force Base's 5th Bomb Wing and was conducting a training mission, he said.

The service was not able to provide the root cause of the mishap, but the spokesman said an initial safety investigation has been initiated.

The incident could also ignite debate about whether and how to re-engine the service's B-52 inventory. The Boeing-manufactured bomber has been flying since 1952 and is expected to remain operating until around 2040, depending on when it is fully replaced by the Northrop Grumman's B-21.

In 2015, Lt. Gen. Mike Holmes, deputy chief of staff for Strategic Plans and Requirements, said the service was especially interested in a public-private partnership, which would keep it from having to funnel procurement dollars into a new engine program.

"The idea is in a public-private partnership, somebody funds the engine and then we pay them back over time out of the fuel savings, which are generated out of the new engines," he said then.

Pratt & Whitney has proposed an upgrade package for the TF33-P-3/103 engines that would make them less expensive to maintain.

Analysts have also floated the Pratt PW2000, known as the F117 when installed on military aircraft, as a potential substitute for the TF33. Engine manufacturers General Electric and Rolls-Royce could also offer their own replacements.

There are currently 76 B-52's in the Air Force's inventory.

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