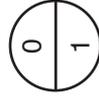


# h bombs keep falling on my head

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**nowt press**

The news that the United States of America dropped a bomb on or in itself in 1960 comes as no surprise to me. It's not that I had any idea that they had done so until this month. Nevertheless, it might have been expected.

It may be said that they didn't actually drop the bomb on themselves. That is, they did not drop it in what is called anger, although there is precious little anger in war command decisions: they are calculated and deranged acts. They fumbled it.

It may be said that it was an accident; and, in saying that they dropped a bomb on themselves, I do not dispute its accidental nature. However, while we may take an accidental element into account in deciding how to punish a person who kills or injures another on the roads by running them over, we do not say that they are exonerated because they didn't plan or want it to happen.

The important question is whether the possibility of an accident could have been anticipated. In this case, the USA constructed a device of massively destructive power, the purpose of which was only to destroy.

(There was a time when there was talk of using such bombs for civil engineering projects, much as we all use, from time to time, our domestic machine guns to open a can of beans; but I do not believe that has happened. That is because the proposal was bullshit.)

Because the device was so dangerous, they built in "fail safe" devices. These fail safe devices assumed the continued existence of the aircraft carrying the bombs. And the aircraft ceased to exist.

We are told we can trust these failsafe devices; but we now know beyond doubt that we cannot. It was an untruth to say that we could. Whether we should say that we were lied to depends upon the degree to which those making the statements of reliability had tested their logic. I suspect that, in all cases, what they did was ask "Is it safe?" and take the answer at face value, or the proffered "evidence".

In this case the aircraft carrying them began to break up. I have not read any detailed explanation of how that affected the bomb, but one assumes that the failsafe devices had referred to other and onboard devices which became unavailable once the aircraft started to disintegrate. The reader might care to view the film *Dark Star* (1974) in which an analogous problem is foreseen; but of course that's creative imagination and not the science of defence. That's a more intelligent bomb which eventually decides against the crew's instructions.

It might be argued that disintegration could not have been foreseen though it does raise questions about the design and inspection procedures in force; and they would be factors in establishing the degree of culpability of those responsible. However, we might reflect that any aircraft carrying a hydrogen bomb is in all senses a combat aircraft. It is in the nature of combat aircraft that they risk coming under fire. That fire is not fairground stuff, but high destructive power intended to... er... cause the aircraft to disintegrate.

This aircraft disintegrated under the stress of flying. In that sense it must be considered a fatally inadequate or failed aircraft, either by design or manufacture. And it was used to carry hydrogen bombs.

A failsafe device which relies on its efficacy for the continued integrity of an aircraft which is liable to lose its integrity is not terribly failsafe.

Of course, I only knew this month these few facts recently, along with most of the rest of the world. Until then, they were not what Hugh Howey in his novel *Shift* (Century, London 2013) – a future-fiction in which the USA really does drop hydrogen bombs on itself, in order to ensure the people's compliance with the fear of danger they are deemed to require – called "permitted truth". So, why am I not surprised that it happened?

Anyone who builds a hydrogen bomb is an immoral fool. Anyone who builds a hydrogen bomb and believes they can create safeguards is a criminally culpable fool and a buffoon.

Borrowing a metaphor from Howey, all such operations are rather like a game of patience. At best one does not know how it will come out; but once the pack has been shuffled, the result is pre-determined except that one does not know what that result will be until the game is played.

What is known is that players will lose. No matter how skilful they are, some of them will lose.

Just so, if you build a hydrogen bomb, some of them will explode; or leak radiation; and some of those explosions will not be intended. It hasn't happened yet; but it will.

We might pause here for a short religious service. One believer will sing over and over "Well how was I supposed to know?", another believer "What are we supposed to do?" or perhaps "We had to do something".

The sermon will claim that no matter how many failsafe devices failed, one didn't; and that proves that the system works. It's a much used equation to defend failed systems. (Of course, here, they didn't fail so much as display the effectiveness of an inherent design fault that everyone in the supposed know had been too stupid to comprehend; but let's not get caught up in semantics. (Another rhetorical device that's popular – to defend where there is no possible defence.) Or it might take a more decisive line: that of all the many nuclear explosions there have been since Trinity, none have been accidental, including the two that were quite deliberately dropped on civilians, and therefore there is reason to hope that there will never be accidents.

[And please, let's not hear that the two Japanese bombs – I think actually that only one was hydrogen, so lucky Hiroshima if that's so, I'm not good on this technology – were dropped on military targets.

Large urban areas were one of the criteria for target selection. Oh yes, and they were of course, US American bombs, not Japanese bombs – unless we are speaking Modern British, in which the local supermarket is said to be "your supermarket"]

As well as generating false hope for those with their brains asleep, that would put it in perspective. It's not that in 1960, millions of civilians were nearly murdered. That murder or, if you like fairy stories, the threat of that murder is the purpose of nukes; so one sees only a degree of near success in this incident. Surely, the point is that the wrong civilians were killed, if there are any right civilians to be selected as victims of murder.

Such an analysis will always see the aggressor's race, the aggressor being the one with a bomb in all cases, as the wrong one to be bombed. To that extent, war is a racist act. Sometimes it is deemed necessary to bomb those classed as criminal or outlaw; but that is no more than a declaration that such people are "not like us".

The doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction explains away all such moral quibbles; if you believe it; but like all doctrines it is nonsense. A more common version of its underlying logic, or rather something near it, can be heard from the petty thief who will exclaim "You shouldn't have left your property lying around". Both claims blame the victim, a defence apparently unavailable in the event of accident. As with the dangerous driver, we dismiss the defence. Except in such cases as this.

M.A.D. is, therefore, a special plea that the state or some states reserve the right to murder. The USA declares itself a Christian country; and Christianity forbids murder; but the special plea of the states' right to murder in the name of God has been a part of official Christian doctrine since Constantine, if not before. (I bow to the knowledge of those who know more about the history of this nonsense than I.)

What Jesus would have said is another matter. The Roman state murdered him before he said too much.

Since then, at least, we tell Jesus what he said or should have said. But those Christians who still make dangerous weapons and transport them in dangerous vehicles, might remember what Jesus is reported to have told Peter: that those who use weapons will be killed by them.

To be true, this need not be an edict of a or the deity, but a further reference to the Patience metaphor.

There is no such thing as failsafe, only “more safe” or “less safe”; and “less safe” will one day be seen to be “unsafe”.

We might also extend Jesus’ metaphor to say that those who poison the Earth shall die of that poison, or their children; that those who damage the weather system shall die of that damage; and so on.

I’d like to add that those who take more than their fair share shall suffer poverty, but I’m not sure it’s quite the same, possibly because money is not actually real in the way that floods and disease are; excessive money relies upon other special pleas and they are highly successful.

In all cases, the pleas rely on the religious impulse which is to believe the most unlikely explanation if it leaves things and beliefs the way they are.

They will have learned from this accident; and it was half a century ago; so it couldnt happen now.

That’s what will be said; and I am prepared to consider it. Yet I suspect that it will not have occurred to the buffoons who dare to govern us that, if they were that incompetent (at best) in that, then they probably are in all things.

Just now, badgers are being culled in UK on the assumption that they carry TB; but no one is testing the dead badgers to see if they are in fact carriers. Belief will carry us through, unless you’re a badger or under an exploding nuke. If you are then take comfort that you will not have died in vain. Because of your death, lessons will be learned and others will die of something else.