



# A Veteran Reminisces

by Deb Auer

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Wow- it's been almost 40 years since that fresh-faced version of me entered the USAF at the ripe old age of 18! I remember being so excited yet scared to death as I got on the bus in Waterloo, IA for my transport to the *Des Moines* MEPS before being flown to Lackland AFB in San Antonio. The first chance I had to call home I was bawling so hard my sister couldn't understand me saying I wanted to quit and come home!

While I didn't serve during any major conflicts and have the utmost respect for those who did, I do feel I made a contribution to our nation's security. I was assigned to the 5<sup>th</sup> BMW under the former *Strategic Air Command* as an Avionics Instrumentation Specialist for B-52's & KC135's, stationed in the tropical paradise of Minot, ND in the early 80's- that put a whole new spin on the term "Cold War"! My team was tasked with ensuring we kept the formidable bomber and its best friend, the ariel Texaco, operating under all conditions, from 100+ in the summer to as low as 90 below (with wind chill) in the winter. <https://www.onlyinyourstate.com/north-dakota/1983-winter-nd/>

Some of the more intimidating moments were when a plane on the "Alert Pad" needed repair. Those planes were loaded with nuclear weapons at all times and could get airborne in minutes, also known as MITO- Minimum Interval Take Off. MITO is a technique to scramble all available bombers and tankers at 12-15 second intervals with a goal to have a fleet in the air within 15 minutes of an incoming missile attack.

It was absolutely awe-inspiring to watch practice MITO's launching toward the heavens one after the other and know I played a key part in making sure we could be ready to defend the US in such a short time. (At no time were the MITO's performed with live weapons)

In summary, I learned a lot and had an awesome amount of responsibility for a kid, but I am extremely proud to have done my duty to protect this great nation and supported our ability to Shock and Awe! What an experience it was!



**U.S. AIR FORCE**

AIM HIGH!



ANDERSEN AIR FORCE BASE, Guam -- A KC-135 Stratotanker refuels a B-52 Stratofortress from Minot AFB, N.D., over the Pacific Ocean Jan. 22 during exercise Tropic Fury. The exercise was developed to train aircrew on the use of conventional air-launched crew missiles and joint air to surface standoff missile conventional weapon systems. The B-52 is deployed to Andersen AFB, Guam, with the 23rd Expeditionary Bomb Squadron and is part of a continuous bomber presence in the region. The KC-135 is deployed to Andersen from 434th Air Refueling Wing, Grissom Air Reserve Base, Ind., supporting Pacific theater refueling operations. (U.S. Air Force photo by Master Sgt. Kevin J. Gruenwald)

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