

Martin B-57C #53-3829

March 26, 1957

On March 26, 1957, Martin B-57C serial number 53-3829 took off from Wendover AFB, Utah, at 1:20 p.m. The aircraft and crew were with the 764th Bomb Squadron, 461st Bomb Wing at Blytheville AFB, Arkansas, but they were temporarily assigned to Wendover for training. The pilot was Maj. Albert C. Hegenberger, and navigator-bombardier 1Lt. James A. Hughes was in the rear seat. The purpose of the flight was a LABS (Low Altitude Bombing System) training mission in which the aircraft would approach the target at low altitude and high speed, release a bomb and lob it forward while pulling up in a vertical climb, then reverse course. On its second practice run, the aircraft made a normal pull up, but instead of completing an Immelmann turn and reversing course, it continued in almost a complete loop. It impacted the ground in a near vertical dive, killing both crewmen.

Maj. Hegenberger was a veteran of World War II and the Korean War, receiving the Distinguished Flying Cross with two Oak Leaf Clusters and the Air Medal. He was director of operations for the 461st Bomb Wing. He was also the son of American aviation pioneer Maj. Gen. Albert F. Hegenberger, who made the first flight from the U.S. to Hawaii, made the first blind solo flight, and developed the first instrument landing system.

1Lt. Hughes was a Korean War veteran who received the Air Medal. He was from Rock Island, Illinois.

Special thanks to Craig Fuller for help with visiting this crash site. Site visited on 6/17/25.



Large round cast aluminum piece with safety wire still visible on bolts



Larger piece of riveted sheet aluminum



Plexiglass



Green zinc chromate primer still visible on this piece



An ink printed part number. The “272-” part number prefix indicates the aircraft was a Martin B-57.



A tubing junction block



Large curved cast aluminum piece with many bolts



American flags placed at the crash site



Smaller pieces of wreckage scattered across the salt flats



Miscellaneous tubing



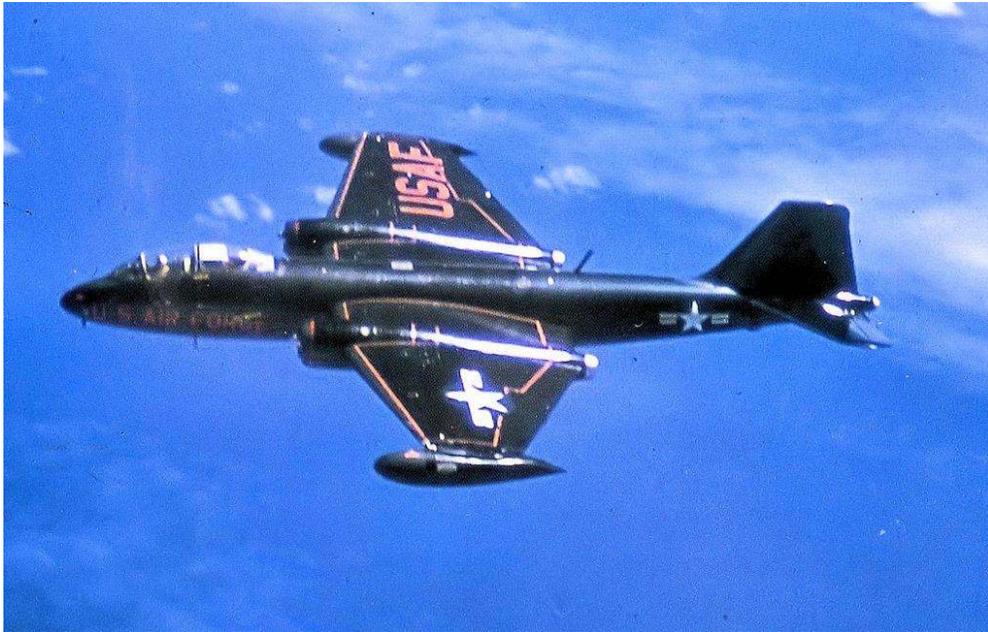
Electrical wiring and connectors



A knurled knob from the cockpit



Maj. Albert C. Hegenberger (Courtesy of Find-A-Grave.com)



A Martin B-57C similar to the one that crashed (USAF photo)