

Poem

San Antonio Summer '64

*...there are approximately 16,300 nuclear weapons
located ...in 14 countries.*

Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 2014

Rising on columns of fire,
rockets launched to the moon –
and I who'd wished
to work with astronauts,
am assigned instead

to weigh SAC bomber crew
immersed in water –
measure "lean body mass,"
wondered what difference
a paunch on a pilot would make
sitting in a B52.

Silent—
eyes hidden
behind red goggles,
they swaggered
in their muscled nakedness
into my lab.

Dark-adapted to their cockpits,
ready day or night, airborne
at the President's command –
fly over the pole, drop hydrogen bombs –
mutual assured destruction.
MAD it was called.

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