

AG 704 - Missing (16 Jul 45)
S. R. & D. No. 3521

16 July 1945

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, Casualty Branch.

SUBJECT: Review and Determination of Status
under the Missing Persons Act.

I. - FACTS

1. The persons named below were reported missing in action over Yap Island by SWP Shipments Nos. 137 and 160 and have been carried on War Department records as missing in action since 15 July 1944: (To facilitate reference each crew has been assigned a number which is shown in column 4 below.)

Name	ASN	Grade	Crew Number
Principle, Joseph S.	0689581	First Lieutenant	1
Rowan, Walter C.	0673904	First Lieutenant	1
Sylor, Ulna H.	0803306	First Lieutenant	1
Callaway, Jack S., Jr.	0767739	Second Lieutenant	3
Camp, Sam, Jr.	0696746	Second Lieutenant	1
Diederich, Anthony F.	0697342	Second Lieutenant	2
Garrett, Eugene W.	0708251	Second Lieutenant	2
Klincefelter, Leslie E.	0765808	Second Lieutenant	3
Pomeroy, Robert W.	0768215	Second Lieutenant	2
Sekanics, Andrew	0703402	Second Lieutenant	2
Harder, Charles J.	T124507	Flight Officer	+
Koefe, Francis R.	11,116,730	Technical Sergeant	1
Vetrecin, Michael G., Jr.	15,320,307	Technical Sergeant	1
Dickerson, Clarence W.	35,442,185	Staff Sergeant	1
Hitchcock, James H.	39,256,020	Staff Sergeant	1
Jacobs, Robert F.	33,738,013	Staff Sergeant	2
Miller, Ruben O.	15,323,660	Staff Sergeant	1
Seiler, Kenneth W.	32,762,907	Staff Sergeant	2
Smethurst, Harold A., Jr.	12,040,886	Staff Sergeant	3
Waters, William W., Jr.	16,168,122	Staff Sergeant	1

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<u>Name</u>	<u>ASN</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Crew Number</u>
Crowley, William E.	16,004,052	Sergeant	2
McNab, Sherlock T., Jr.	14,101,595	Sergeant	3
Moores, William E.	36,647,606	Sergeant	2
Bauer, Chester	33,734,914	Corporal	3
Dunbar, John O., Jr.	37,540,207	Corporal	2
Hundley, Clint D.	38,135,303	Corporal	2
Patla, Joseph C.	16,170,402	Corporal	3
Reynolds, Charles F.	37,676,896	Corporal	2

2. Missing Air Crew Reports submitted in this case show that on 15 July 1944 B-24 aircraft based in the Admiralty Islands were flown on a combat mission to Yap Island, which is located at the coordinates 09° 35' North, 138° 10' East in the Caroline Islands. The following paragraphs, Nos. 3 through 5, summarize the information available in the case of each crew involved.

3. Crew No. 1:

a. Missing Air Crew Report No. 6923, dated 17 July 1944, states that B-24 plane No. 44-40555 of 370th Bombardment Squadron, 307th Bombardment Group, was seen to crash as the result of a collision with B-24 plane No. 42-73119. The accident occurred at approximately 1220K at the position 09° 08' North, 138° 17' East. A flight strip map attached to the Report shows that the location of the crash was about 25 miles southeast of Yap Island. The personnel named below formed the complete crew:

<u>Crew Position</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>ASN</u>	<u>Grade</u>
P	Sylor, Ulma H.	0803306	1st Lt
CP	Camp, Sam., Jr.	0696746	2d Lt
N	Principe, Joseph S.	0569581	1st Lt
B	Rowan, Walter C.	0673904	1st Lt
E	Vetraccin, Michael G., Jr.	15,320,707	T/Sgt
AE	Miller, Ruben O.	15,323,000	S/Sgt
RO	Keeffe, Francis R.	11,116,700	T/Sgt
ARO	Waters, William W., Jr.	18,162,127	S/Sgt
G	Hitchcock, James M.	39,256,040	S/Sgt
G	Dickerson, Clarence W.	35,442,155	S/Sgt
N	Harder, Charles J.	T124507	F/O

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The Missing Air Crew Report states that Flight Officer Harder was aboard the plane in the capacity of Observer. The pertinent parts of three co-witness statements inclosed with the Report are quoted below:

Statement by Lieutenant James P. Hobstetter:

"The crash involving Lt. Sylor occurred shortly after our withdrawal from the target area, the exact distance from this area I cannot accurately say. The leader of our squadron was pulling up on the right of a seven ship formation lead by the group leader in an effort to present a group front to enemy interception. My position at the time was C-2: Lt. Sylor was approximately in a C-3 position with Lt. Diederich on his left wing.

" * * * The ship piloted by Lt. Diederich crashed into Lt. Sylor striking him behind the flight deck. The left wing of Lt. Diederich's plane was torn away and Lt. Sylor's ship was severed in half just back of the flight deck. Both planes burst immediately into flames and went down. Although reports indicate that several men bailed out of the burning planes no parachutes were observed by the members of my crew. * * *

Statement by Corporal George W. Krum:

"The B-24's were in even a closer formation and all at once the B-24 in C-3 position banked steeply to the right and up and struck the plane flying C-1 position, with the first contact being made by the props of C-3 plane against the bottom of the fuselage just behind the wing section of C-1 plane, as it began chewing its way through the fuselage proper. C-3 plane then began exploding from both wings and the planes both went to pieces.

"The complete wing sections of both planes stuck together in sort of a 'X' design and fell separately. The wing section of C-3 plane broke out in flames and exploded as soon as it hit C-1 plane--it fell fairly well in pieces as it descended. C-1's wing section fell in one piece in sort of a falling leaf pattern and seemed little hurt--being apparently intact from

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the nose section to just behind the wing and fuselage point where it had been chewed in tow. Some turrets from both planes were thrown from their wells and were left to fall clear with other pieces of the wreckage. When we were at about a mile or so from where the accident occurred chutes began to open at about 8000'. I would say at least five of them puffed into view in quick succession. By then the Zeros were making passes at ours and surrounding B-24's as fast as they could so I left off watching the falling chutes to fight off the attacks being made on the bottom of our ship. Bombs were away at 1211K and the approximate time of the collision was 1220K. I am the ball gunner on the crew of Lt. Gago and am reporting this as an eyewitness account of what I saw."

Statement of Corporal Raymond R. Altieri:

"I didn't see the crash itself but I noticed the pieces flying by our tail. The wings were interlocked and were going down in flames, the biggest pieces I noticed was the tail end of the fuselage of the last ship. This piece extended from the waist window to the tail. I noticed four bodies tumbling down and one parachute open also and empty life raft. Most of the parts were burning when they hit the water and were pouring black smoke. After we were out of sight of the wreckage I saw a large column of gray smoke rise above some clouds."

4. Crew No 2:

a. Missing Air Crew Report No. 6924, dated 17 July 1944, states that B-24 plane No. 42-73119 of 372nd Bombardment Squadron, 307th Bombardment Group, piloted by Lieutenant Diederich, collided with plane No. 44-40553 while on a combat mission to Yap Island. The collision occurred at approximately 1220K at the position 09° 08' North, 138° 17' East. (See paragraph 3, above.) The following-named persons formed the complete crew:

Crew Position	Name	ASN	Grade
P.	Diederich, Anthony F.	0697342	2d Lt
CP	Pomroy, Robert V.	0768215	2d Lt

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<u>Crew Position</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>ASN</u>	<u>Grade</u>
N	Garrett, Eugene W.	0708251	2d Lt
B	Sekanics, Andrew	0703402	2d Lt
E	Sciler, Kenneth W.	32,762,907	S/Sgt
AE	Hundley, Clint D.	38,135,303	Cpl
RO	Jacobs, Robert F.	33,738,013	S/Sgt
ARO	Reynolds, Charles F.	37,676,896	Cpl
G	Dunbar, John O., Jr.	37,540,207	Cpl
AG	Crowley, William E.	16,004,052	Sgt
CG	Moorcs, William E.	36,647,606	Sgt

Three eyewitness statements attached to the Report contain essentially the same information as that given in paragraph 3, above. One of these statements reads as follows:

Statement of Lieutenant Earl F. Rice, Jr.

"Plane #119 was awaying back and forth in formation and suddenly dropped right wing and peeled onto plane #555 cutting #555 into. No. 2 engine of #119 came out of wing and left wing fell off; plane then broke up and flames came out from fuselage. When #555 broke in half (behind trailing edge of wing) it also burst into flames. Bodies came out of both ships, but from my position I could not see any parachutes open. This happened approximately ten minutes from target area. I was pilot of plane #803 flying in a formation to the right of and a short distance behind the two planes."

b. Morning Report Locator Card filed in Sergeant Moores' Enlistment Jacket showing him as assigned to the 307th Bombardment Group on 21 July 1944 is obviously in error. Rosters for the month of July 1944 of the 372nd Bombardment Squadron show that he was missing in action 15 July 1944.

5. Crew No 3;

a. Missing Air Crew Report No. 7180, dated 18 July 1944, states that B-24 aircraft No. 42-40857 of 371st Bombardment Squadron,