

U.S.S. PG 1206
c/o Fleet Post Office
San Francisco, Calif.

30 November 1945

From: Executive Officer.
To: SOPA (YAP).
SUBJ: American Plane Crashes, Investigation of.

Enclosures:

- (A) Group of photographs, referred to in letter as enclosures 1, 4, 5, 7, 8, and 11.
(B) Group of articles taken from crash sites, referred to in letter as enclosures 2, 3, 6, 9, and 10.

1. On Tuesday, 27 November 1945, an American party consisting of Ensign P. R. Malmberg, executive officer of PG1206, M. Kris, H. P., CM3/s, Nicky, G. L., SM3/s, Corporal Ichiji R. Watanabe of U.S. Army, American interpreter, and 2nd Lt. Suzuki Kanichi of Japanese Army, acting as guide, set out to investigate certain graves of American pilots which had been reported by the Japanese. The party left Yaptown at 0930 local time in a Jap outboard motor boat and landed on the western shore of Tomil peninsula. After walking 1500 yards directly inland over a native road the party met Captain Okawara of the Jap Army with five Jap laborers at the site of the first crash investigated. The party then proceeded to inspect the plane, visited the location of the propeller and engine which had fallen from the plane previous to the crash, and disinterred the remains of the flier, who had been buried near the scene of the crash. The party then proceeded to the site of a second plane crash and searched for the remains of the pilot and identification data. The following is a summary of the results of the investigation.

2. The first plane crash and grave investigated.

(a) The plane. Apparently the motor of this plane became detached from the fuselage before the plane hit the ground. The position of the crash is approximately 9°31'18" North Latitude, 138°09'48" East Longitude, and is situated 3/4 mile inland on the main road across Tomil peninsula and 150 yards north of that road. The plane was identified as an F4U Corsair. Photographs of it are attached as Encl. 1. The plane had evidently been scavenged by the Japs for intelligence material or by the natives for souvenirs. Parts of the plane remaining at the site of impact include both wings, fuselage, and impennage. Parts and equipment missing included fin and stabilizer, flight instruments, all electronic and ordnance gear, and interior furnishings. The fuselage was in an inverted position, with both wings laid against it on its starboard side. The fuselage and wings were inspected for serial numbers, names, and handwriting. The following markings

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were disclosed:

(1) On the starboard outer side of the fuselage the plane's number "279" was painted in large white figures.

(2) On the engine back plate, forward side, the number "1388" was stenciled in 2" figures, in blue paint. This appeared to be the fuselage number.

(3) On the port radiator in the engine compartment the words "L. H. 1st Shift" were written in pencil. The metal on which this was written was cut away from the plane and is attached as Encl. 2, for purposes of possible handwriting identification.

(4) Below the instrument panel was written in pencil "Your story is so touching, but it sounds like a lie". The metal on which this was written was cut out and is attached as Encl. 3, for purposes of possible handwriting identification.

(5) On the under and starboard side of the wing center panel was scratched in printed letters "Clark Rowton, Los Angeles, Washington High School".

(6) On the port side of the fuselage near the mounting step was written "Well, Hello", "Mike (illegible), (illegible), Ohio", and "(illegible) Kendall, 60 Maple Street, Akron, Ohio".

(b) The propeller and motor. The propeller and motor of the first plane investigated fell about 250 yards west of the site of the fuselage into a swamp area surrounded by thick underbrush. The engine was completely buried under the soft muck and water, while the adjustable-pitch propeller was left resting against a tree on the edge of a pond. Scattered fragments of aluminum were also lying about. The propeller, a Hamilton Standard, bore the following notation on the face of one of the blades--"Dwg. No. 6525A-21, Mfg. No. P224245". No other markings were found on the propeller. A photograph of the propeller is attached as Encl. 4.

(c) The grave. The grave as seen by the investigating party was simple but well-kept. Inasmuch as the Japs had had several days to prepare for the investigation, it is possible that the grave was made up in this manner only a day or two previous to the visit, but information supplied by Corp. Watanabe indicates that it and others of its type were made up in their present form at least at the conclusion of the recent war if not at the time of burial. The plot was approximately 8 feet square, with a 1 foot high circular mound of earth in the center, a 5 feet high square post of a hard grey native wood at the after edge of the plot and two large vases of bamboo with red native flowers at the forward edge of the plot. The grave was situated 40 yards northwest of the plane. The square post was painted on three sides with Japanese writing and served as grave marker. A literal translation of the Japanese inscription follows: front side--"War Dead Grave, Name Unknown", right hand side--"October 30 1944", rear side--"Battalion Number 17547--Captain Okowara". (The latter refers to the Jap battalion and commander that made the grave.) Photographs were taken of the grave and marker and

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and are attached as Encl. 5.

(d) The remains. After photographs of the grave were taken, an attempt was made to locate any identifying articles, such as dogtags, jewelry, clothes markings, and papers, by thoroughly searching the remains as unearthed by the Jap laborers. No effort was spared in looking over every bit of material, but the only objects found were two Jefferson dimes, two dimes, and a black plastic comb. These are attached as Encl. 6. Evidence was found that the flier had worn blue dungarees and a light blue cotton jumper with zipper. The hair on the skull was a medium brown color with a possible reddish tinge. It was difficult to ascertain whether or not the flier had been burned in the crash; while the clothes that were found were unscorched, some of the bones appeared a bit charred. It appeared that most all of the bones were present, though the whole was mixed with a mucky clay soil and in a state of active decomposition. There is no reason to suppose from the evidence uncovered in this investigation that any form of cruelty or brutal treatment had been exercised on this body; the flier very evidently had met an immediate death with the crash of the plane. After Lt. Farneter (SOPA, Yap) had been consulted following this disinterment, it was decided to reinter the remains in the same location, their condition making it unreasonable to transport elsewhere for burial. (On Wednesday, 28 November, 1945, Lt. Gallagher, USNR, Catholic chaplain, with Ensign Kalmberg, S3/c Makris, S1/c K. W. Barnes, Corp. Watanabe, 2nd Lt. Kanishi, and Capt. Okawara visited this grave, which had been remade by Jap laborers under Capt. Okawara, and at 1600 local time the Catholic burial service was read by Chaplain Gallagher for the victim of the crash. A photograph of this ceremony is attached as Encl. 7.

3. The second plane crash and grave investigated.

At the conclusion of the investigation of the first plane crash and grave the party proceeded eastward for about 1000 yards along the main road on Tomil peninsula until a second grave was reached. The approximate position of this grave is $9^{\circ} 30' 13''$ North Latitude, $138^{\circ} 10' 20''$ East Longitude. It is 250 yards west of the eastern shore of Tomil peninsula. This grave was nearly identical in appearance with the first. The grave was 8 feet square, situated in the southern half of the road and facing north, and had a small circular mound of earth in its center, a 5 foot grey wooden post with Japanese inscription as grave marker, and two bamboo vases with flowers. A literal translation of the grave marker is as follows: front side--"War Dead Grave, Name Unknown", right hand side--"March 21, 1945", rear side--"Battalion Number 17547--Captain Okawara". Pictures of this grave are attached as Encl. 8. From the evidence uncovered the plane concerned was most probably an F6F Grumman Hellcat. The plane was said to have exploded in mid-air and the pilot to have been blown to pieces. The crash occurred on the southern

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half of the road following an approach from the east. The pilot may have attempted to land in the clearing which the road made. The remnants of the flier were placed in a grave at the site of the crash together with his parachute and parts of the plane, including the engine. It was said that some parts of the body including the head and hands were missing at the time of burial. The bulk of the plane was dumped into the ocean off Tomii peninsula in water too deep to permit identification without diving equipment. The Jap laborers uncovered many pieces of plane during the disinterment, including one wing flap, one air cooler jacket and barrel for a .50 cal. machine gun, large pieces of shattered bullet-proof glass, a piece of armor plate apparently from back of head rest, Very's pistol cartridges, starter cartridges and firing mechanism, and many pieces of scrap metal. The armor plate was 1/2" thick, 2' long, 1' wide, and was half-moon shaped. The armor had "HOMO" stencilled on it in yellow paint, and bore the following stamped markings: "25351-D," "OH 146," "10-10-44," "7E5501," "Homogeneous." Pencil rubbings of this marking were taken and are attached as Encl. 9. The .50 cal. barrel carried the number "D-28254-11" near the breech and the breech was stamped with the number "D-28254-10". The personal gear of the pilot disclosed by the disinterment included parts of a Mas Rest, the backpiece and straps and buckle of an unopened parachute, and pieces of blue dungarees. A lump of mud and paper was found which upon washing and drying appeared to be copies of operational plans. The only legible printing which was coherent on these mimeographed sheets were the phrases "Air-Sea Rescue F--" and "O'DO King 21 Mar--". These pieces of paper were pasted on a sheet of paper and are attached as Encl. 10. The comparatively few bodily remains which were found were in a state of active decomposition. It was decided by Lt. Farmer (SOFA, Yap) to re-inter these remains and to make up the grave as before. (On Wednesday, 28 November, Lt. Gallagher, OMC, Catholic chaplain, after visiting the grave of the first pilot mentioned in this report, visited this grave and at 1630 local time read the Catholic burial service for the deceased. A photograph of this ceremony is attached as Encl. 11.)

4. Most of the information obtained concerning the crashes of these two planes and their pilots was received from Captain Okawara of the Jap Army, who is the commander of Battalion No. 17547 which is stationed in the Tomii area. Captain Okawara was in command at the time of both crashes and was in charge of the burial proceedings. It was maintained throughout by the Japs that no I.D. tags or bracelets or other personal belongings were taken from the bodies or clothing of the fliers. Though it was impossible to obtain such indication from the graves as to whether or not this was true, no evidence was uncovered to refute that statement.

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5. It is hoped that the serial numbers and other data given in this report may be a means to establishing the identity of the two fliers concerned in this report.

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