

Konavle region (Republic of Croatia) crashed aircraft in WW 2

A – B24J 195 # 44 41120

Introduction:

The aircraft 44 41120 went on a mission 126 to Linz, Austria and hit the cliffs on mountain Sniježnica in Konavle region in Republic of Croatia during level flight in heavy clouds. Remains were never discovered. One of the silver wrist bracelet with name and number was discovered at the site. Official statement was that it went missing somewhere on Adriatic sea. All the crew members names were included on Tablets of the Missing in Sicily-Rome American Cemetery in Nettuno, Italy.

Aircraft:

B-24J-195-CO 44-41120, built by Consolidated San Diego, left CONUS on 30 July 1944 and arrived at Gioia on 6 August 1944. On 8 August it was assigned to the 461st Bomb Group, 767th Bomb Squadron and given RC# 61. As of the Fifteenth Air Force Aircraft Inventory dated 20 November 1944, it was still with the 461st, and have been transferred to the 484th shortly thereafter. It was assigned to the 825th Bomb Squadron and the RC# was changed from 61 to 43. The Aircraft Record Card (attached) simply states "Condemned, MIA".



Picture 1. - B24J 195 #44 41120 no. 61 pictured in Italy



Picture 2. - B24J 195 #44 41120 no. 61 pictured in Italy

Mission:

They were part of the mission #126 on 9 December 1944.

The formation took off at 08:15 hours on 9 December 1944 enroute to the target. The rendezvous was partially completed in cloud cover ranging from 2 to 10 tenths and none of the members of other crews who flew, saw aircraft #43 at any time after the take off, or if they did, they did not recognize it as that plane. After about an hour of flying in the clouds the formation was recalled and Lt. Compton's crew did not return to the base. During the period before recall, the plane flew over general area of Foggia, Italy and over Adriatic Sea.

Mission briefing is attached at the end of the document.

Crew:

No crew survived the crash and official MACR 10248 from 11 December lists the crew as MIA. The full crew list was:

1. Pilot – Compton, Vern E. (2nd Lt 0826046) MIA
2. Co-Pilot – Helbert, Richard J. (2nd Lt 0829207) MIA
3. Navigator – Warnock, Galen L. (2nd Lt 02061087) MIA
4. Bombardier – Tomchik, Alfred J. (2nd Lt 0777507) MIA
5. Engineer – Lough, Warren D. (T/Sgt 35404828) MIA
6. Radio Opr – Moore, Harvey L. Jr. (S/Sgt 13134142) MIA
7. Nose Gnr' – Haverty, Robert L. (S/Sgt 31422063) MIA
8. Tail Gnr' – Mayers, Robert J. (S/Sgt 16117147) MIA
9. Ball Tur Gnr' – Fincher, Emil E. (Sgt 39922366) MIA
10. Top Tur Gnr' – Woods, John L. (S/Sgt 39114787) MIA

At the end of the document is MACR report

Location:

Location of the site is on mountain Sniježnica that is the biggest mountain in Konavle region with peak Sv. Ilija at 1234 m (4000ft) altitude. It has 3 peaks with the highest one in the middle. The peak has a helicopter pad and communication tower. There is a small church of Sv Ilija built in the ground due to the fact that there are many lightning strikes in there. There is no cemetery near church. First lower peak to the west is actual location of the site on his southern side. Southern side is rocky with vertical cliffs. Place of an impact is somewhere around 30 meters (100 ft.) below the top of the peak. Exact coordinates are 42°34'37.6"N 18°20'34.4"E

No excavation was done at the site



Picture 3. Mountain Sniježnica in Konvle region (Republic of Croatia)



Picture 4. Coordinates of crash site



Picture 5. Cliffs on location



Picture 6 . Possible ground zero



Picture 7. Possible ground zero close up



Picture 8. Location of the site (from the suthern side from distance)

Parts:

Due to the impact with full payload no larger parts were found on location. On site parts are still scattered around. Two parts were taken from the site for further research.

No parts with numbers from the aircrafts were found by now.



Picture 8. part pictured at the site and taken for further examination.



Picture 9. first discovered part



Picture 10. part at the site



Picture 11. parts taken from the site



Picture 12. Part at the site

Silver wrist bracelet:

Silver wrist bracelet was found at the crash site by unknown person by now after the crash. The bracelet went forgotten for years until recent discovery by person mr. Niko Selak who took it for further research. Due to the fact that he has little knowledge of English he did some research and left it as it is. I found that he is possession of silver bracelet and took the full research and reported everything to the officials. Silver wrist bracelet wears the name and number of 2Lt Galen L. Warnock (Topeka, Kansas) that went MIA. According to the bracelet we found all the rest information about the flight, crash, crew list, parts etc.



Picture 12. Silver wrist bracelet with name of 2Lt Galen L Warnock



Picture 13. Silver wrist bracelet with serial number of 2Lt Galen L Warnock

Story:

My name is Antun and I live in small town of Cavtat in Republic of Croatia. I am an active person who likes to spend free time in any outdoor activity. I am an amateur hiker and climber and during the winter times I go to the hills in my area and to wander around in search for the lost villages, barns, wells etc.

Few years ago I started actively to walk around in the mountain of Sniježnica and all my trips starts from small village Kuna Konavoska.

My ancestors are from that place so I know all the people in the village and during the time I came to know them very well and they told me lots of stories from the past.



Picture 14. Me my son Ivan and wife Lucija

Once in my regular conversation with Mr. Antun Banović from Kuna I was told that during the World War II plane crashed in mountain Sniježnica. I asked him about the location and he gave me basic directions where it should be. That information I heard few years ago. I am the father of a 9 year old son Ivan and have a wife Lucija, and due to my obligations from work and family I didn't have the time to search for the site. This winter I decided to finally go there and spend some time around with no initial interest to search for more. In February 2017 I went for the first time to search for the site and I didn't find anything and went back. Later on I found I was at the wrong location. Story I got is that at the site there was a big bomb like crater. I returned home and I started thinking was I really at the right place. I went back in March 2017 and decided I will search for more. In that search I found one small aluminum plate with rivets on the other side of location and I knew I was getting close.

I went for the third time in April 2017 and struck gold. I decided I will try to go further from the initial directions and try to search much bigger area. On southern side of the hill I found place with metal pieces still lying on the ground. Later on I found the possible impact area with blown up cliff rock. I took two pieces for the further research. It is mostly cliffs with rocks. Crash site is very dangerous area with cliffs and vertical drop. It is not easy to even get to the location.

I went back and I started asking questions is there any story behind it, maybe someone knows or was witness during the crash. All the stories were bit misleading due to the fact that in that area all persons who spoke English language were considered English, so the basic story is that in 44 British bomber crash in Sniježnica and all of the crew were killed, burned or missing. So that was my starting point which was wrong from the start. I started searching on the internet and I got back information that it could be American bomber and maybe American crew. At that point I didn't even know what type of aircraft crashed in there.

At the same time at my work I started showing the pictures of parts to my college Mr. Pero Selak and he told me that his father is in a possession of a silver tag from one of the crew members. The very same day he sent me pictures from the tag and information written on it. We together started searching for more. His father Mr. Niko Selak got the silver tag from a friend that claimed that his ancestor found it on the crash site. That person found it on site and the tag went forgotten for more than sixty years, and then by some sort of luck Mr. Niko Selak found it in a garage and took it for research. He did some research but due to the fact that he doesn't speak English very well, he left it as it is.

In that moment we realized that according to the official report we had something which was different and maybe report was not correct and possible MIA was in place. We got together and decided that this must be reported straight away to the officials. I created basic report and send it to the US Embassy in Zagreb and to the MIA/POW Agency. That was very simple report with the facts and proofs that we had in our possession at that time. We got reply and we continued to search for more, and this is what we got by moment of writing

Credits:

All the initial research and on location research was done by me, but it would not be fair to say that this story is a one man show. This is basic research, no excavations were done, no parts were destroyed or sold, no personal belongings were taken, parts are still at the same locations and at the same persons. Silver wrist bracelet is kept by Niko Selak.

Person who gave help in any way to this research

- Mr. Antun Banović , Kuna Konavoska
Local person who told me about the crash site and gave me basic directions to the site.
- Mr. Niko Selak, Zvekovica
found the silver bracelet and took it for research
- Mr. Pero Selak
son of Niko Selak who provided information about the silver wrist bracelet and did research
- Mr John Long - retired U.S. Coast Guard Master Chief Petty Officer, 1680 Westbriar, Traverse City, Michigan 49696
Person who pointed me in right directions to reports regarding research
- Mr. Charles Parsonson - Historian, 461st Bomb Group, 55 Whistling Duck Drive, Bridgeville, DE 19933
Valuable informations regarding the research
- Mr. Hughes Glantzberg - President and Webmaster for the 461st and 484th websites, P.O. Box 926, Gunnison, CO 81230
Valuable informations regarding the research
- Mr. Dick Olson – 10051 Julian Court, Westminster, Colorado 80031
Valuable informations regarding the research
- My family

This report was done by:

Name: **Antun Burđelez**

Address: **Kvaternikova 7**

Town: **Cavtat**

Zip code: **20210**

Country: **Republic of Croatia**

Tel : **+385981685735**

Email: **antunburdelez@gmail.com**

DECLASSIFIED
 Authority: NND 735001
 By: NARA NARA Date: 1973

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MISSING AIR CREW REPORT

1. ORGANIZATION: Location Torretto Field, Italy Command or Air Force 15th Air Force
 Group 484th Bombardment Group (H) Squadron 825th Bomb Sq (H)

2. SPECIFY: Place of departure Torretto Field, Italy Course 270° TC
 Target Linz, Austria Type of mission Combat

3. WEATHER CONDITIONS AND VISIBILITY AT TIME OF CRASH OR WHEN LAST REPORTED:
2-10 tenths clouds - visibility 0-1 mile.

4. GIVE: (a) Date 9 Dec 1944 Time 0900 hours Last known position Torretto Field, Italy
 (b) Specify whether: () Last sighted, () Forced down, () Sent to crash,
 () Last contacted by radio, (x) No information.

5. AIRCRAFT ~~TYPE~~ (BELIEVED LOST) AS A RESULT OF: (check one only)
 () Enemy aircraft, () Enemy anti-aircraft, (x) Other Unknown

6. AIRCRAFT: Type, model & series B-24J AAF Serial Number 44-1120

7. NICKNAME OF AIRCRAFT None

8. ENGINES: Type, model & series 1830-65A AAF Serial Number (a) BP-441179
 (b) BP-441206 (c) BP-441222 (d) CP-326682

9. INSTALLED WEAPONS: (Make, type and serial number)
 (a) Basic type Cal 50 1261445 (e) Basic type Cal 50 967658 (i) Basic type Cal 50 1539454
 (b) Basic type Cal 50 1539376 (f) Basic type Cal 50 967217 (j) Left Ball Gun (Number Unknown)
 (c) Basic type Cal 50 1261379 (g) Basic type Cal 50 599054 (k)
 (d) Basic type Cal 50 1203670 (h) Basic type Cal 50 1239321 (l)

10. PERSONNEL LISTED BELOW REPORTED AS: (x) Battle Casualty, () Non-Battle Casualty.

11. NUMBER OF PERSONS ABOARD AIRCRAFT: Crew 10; Passengers 0; Total 10
 (If more than 12 persons aboard aircraft, use separate sheet.)

STATUS	CHIEF	POSITION	RANK	SERIAL NUMBER	FULL NAME (Last, first, initial)	CURRENT STATUS	NEXT OF KIN	RELATIONSHIP	AND ADDRESS
DEP	(1)	Pilot	2nd Lt	0826046	Compton, Vera E.	MIA	Opal N. Compton	(Mother)	RFD #2, Oconee, Illinois
DEP	(2)	Co-Pilot	2nd Lt	0829207	Halbert, Richard J.	MIA	Myrtle Halbert	(Wife)	Stuart Ave., Newark, N. Y.
MIA	(3)	Navigator	2nd Lt	02061087	Warnock, Galen L.	MIA	Harold L. Warnock	(Father)	807 Lindenwood, Topeka, Kansas
DEP	(4)	Bombardier	2nd Lt	0777507	Tomchik, Alfred J.	MIA	Stephen Tomchik	(Father)	252 Bronx, Bridgeport, Connecticut
DEP	(5)	Engineer	T/Sgt	35404828	Lough, Warren D.	MIA	Minnie B. Lough	(Mother)	1684 Edwards Ave., Springfield, Ohio
DEP	(6)	Radio Opr	S/Sgt	13134142	Moore, Harvey L. Jr.	MIA	H. Lee Moore	(Father)	431 Fulton Bldg., Pittsburgh, Pa.
DEP	(7)	Nose Gnr	S/Sgt	31422063	Haverty, Robert L.	MIA	Etta Haverty	(Mother)	114 Tolman St., West Newton, Mass.
DEP	(8)	Tail Gnr	S/Sgt	16117147	Meyers, Robert J.	MIA	Irene W. Meyers	(Mother)	3218 S. Indiana Ave., Milwaukee, Wisc.
DEP	(9)	Tur Gnr	Sgt	39922366	Fincher, Emil E.	MIA	John F. Fincher	(Father)	North Dale, Colorado
	(10)	Top Tur Gnr	S/Sgt	39114787	Woods, John L.	MIA	Elsa C. Woods	(Mother)	RFD #2, Strathmore, California
	(11)								
	(12)								

12. IDENTIFY BELOW THOSE PERSONS WHO ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE LAST KNOWLEDGE OF AIRCRAFT AND CHECK APPROPRIATE (one only) COLUMN TO INDICATE BASIS FOR SAME: SAW CONTACTED LAST SAW FORCED BY RADIO SIGHTED CRASH LANDING

(1) NONE

(2)

(3)

13. IF PERSONNEL ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE SURVIVED, CHECK ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:
 () Parachutes were used, () Persons were seen walking away from the scene of the crash.
 (x) Other reasons (specify) Unknown (See attached statement)

14. ATTACH PHOTOGRAPH, MAP OR SKETCH SHOWING LAST KNOWN LOCATION OF AIRCRAFT.

15. ATTACH EYEWITNESS DESCRIPTIONS OF CRASH, FORCED LANDING, OR OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES.

16. ATTACH A DESCRIPTION OF EXTENT OF SEARCH, IF ANY, AND GIVE NAME, RANK AND SERIAL NUMBER OF OFFICER IN CHARGE OF SEARCH HERE. No search made

2-Inclosures.
 Incl 1-Statement of Date 11 Dec 1944 Circumstances
 Incl 2-Statement (Last known location)

Signature of reporting officer
 GEORGE F. COLEMAN, JR.,
 Capt., Air Corps, Adjutant.

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Authority: NND 735001

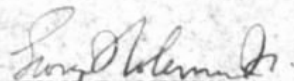
By: NARA NARA Date: 1973

~~C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L~~

S-T-A-T-E-M-E-N-T

The formation took off at 0815 hours on 9 December 1944 enroute to the target. The rendezvous was partially completed in cloud cover ranging from 2 to 10 tenths and none of the members of other crews who flew, saw aircraft #43 at any time after the take off, or if they did, they did not recognize it as that plane.

After about an hour of flying in the clouds, the formation was recalled and Lt. Compton's crew did not return to the base. During the period before recall, the planes flew over the general area of Foggia, Italy and over the Adriatic Sea.


GEORGE F. COLEMAN, JR.,
Capt., Air Corps,
Adjutant.

~~C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L~~

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By: NARA NARA Date: 1973

~~C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L~~

S-T-A-T-E-M-E-N-T

2nd Lt Vern E. Compton's plane was not seen after leaving the runway at Torretta Field, Italy; therefore, it is not deemed necessary by this organization to submit a sketch showing last known location of aircraft.

George F. Coleman, Jr.
GEORGE F. COLEMAN, JR.,
Capt., Air Corps,
Adjutant.

~~C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L~~

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 Authority: NND 735001
 By: NARA NARA Date: 1973

eb/1/23/45

2nd Lt. Vern E. Compton

Mrs. Opal H. Compton (mother)
 Route Number Two
 Geneva, Illinois

2nd Lt. Richard J. Holbert

Mrs. Myrtle D. Holbert (wife)
 Stuart Avenue
 Newark, New York

2nd Lt. Galvan L. Warnock

Mrs. Althon L. Warnock (wife)
 Central Trust Company
 Topeka, Kansas

2nd Lt. Alfred J. Tomchik

Mr. Stephen Tomchik (father)
 252 Bronx Avenue
 Bridgeport, Connecticut

T/Sgt. Warren B. Lough

Mrs. Minnie B. Lough (mother)
 1684 Edwards Avenue
 Springfield, Ohio

S/Sgt. Harvey L. Moore, Jr.

Mr. H. L. Moore (father)
 430 Fulton Building
 Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

S/Sgt. Robert L. Haverly

Mrs. Etta Haverly (mother)
 114 Tolman Street
 West Newton, Massachusetts

S/Sgt. Robert J. Meyers

Mrs. Irene W. Meyers (mother)
 3218 South Indiana Avenue
 Milwaukee, Wisconsin

S/Sgt. John L. Woods

Mrs. Dorothy M. Woods (wife)
 Route Two
 Strathmore, California

3-11 Sgt. Earl E. Fincher

Mr. John F. Fincher (father)
 Northdale, Colorado

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Authority: NND 735001
By: NARA NARA Date: 1973

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10248

PPA
(22)

AG 360.33/030-C W/Ind.
HQ., MTOUSA, APO 512, U. S. Army, 16 December 1944.

JKR/hk

TO: Commanding General, Army Air Forces, Washington 25, D. C. ✓
(Att: Statistical Control Division)

Forwarding Missing Air Crew Reports carrying AG Casualty
Branch Control Numbers 1120 thru 1130 inclusive.

For the THEATER COMMANDER:

Jack Roberts

JACK K. ROBERTS,
1st Lt., AGD,
Asst. Adjutant General.

(AD)

11 Encls: (as above)

RESTRICTED
Date
BY: J. M. HONDRON, Lt. Col., AG
BY: K. A. BRADUNAS, Lt. Col., AG
MAR 15 1945
Classification changed

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

ACT NAT-F-1902

INDIVIDUAL AIRCRAFT RECORD CARD

FORM, MODEL, SERIES: **B-24J-195** A. A. F. SERIAL NUMBER: **44-41120** MANUFACTURER AND LOCATION: **Consolidated, San Diego, California**
 CONTRACT NUMBER: **AC-40033** FOREIGN SERIAL NUMBER: _____ FINAL DESTINATION IN U. S.: _____
 ALLOCATION, BLOCK, PRIORITY NUMBER: **AAF (ps. 33-2)** PROJECT OR LEASE LEASE REQUISITION NUMBER: **90799R**
 MANUFACTURER'S SERIAL NUMBER: _____

UPPER COLUMN HEADINGS ARE FOR HAND-POSTED OPERATION IN KARDER
 LOWER COLUMN HEADINGS ARE FOR I. B. M. POSTED OPERATION IN VERTICAL CABINET

LOCATION		ORGANIZATION		RECIPIENT	NEXT DESTINATION	CRATED OR FLY AWAY	CONDITION	DATE 1944		ACTION	REMARKS	
STATION	COMMAND	PARENT UNIT	SUB-UNIT	TYPE	GAINED FROM OR LOST TO		SERIAL NUMBER	MO	DA	STATION NO.	COA	SOA
San Diego		Consolidated					Accepted		6-23			
"	"	"		Cousin	by Tucson		Available		6-26	6-2230	(Re)	
Tucson	Log Point						Delivered		6-26			
"	Mod						57		6-26			
"	A/C				C/Mitchel Fed NY		35		7-5	7-454		CEL NP
Low Sea							14		7-10			
Washington							3		7-11			
Mitchell							78		7-12			Gen 7-12 DAW
Hunter									7-22			Gen 7-22
Proper									7-23			
									7-26			
									7-31			
OHAM	15A				A B24J		12	44	41120	730	44	
OHAM	15A				G B24J		12	44	41120	8	644	
OHAM	15ACDN		MIA	M	B24J		44	41120	14	944	12345	
OHAM	15A	CON	MIA	M	R B24J		12	44	41120	12	944	12345

SIGNAL OVER MONTH: GREEN-U.S. ORANGE-BRITISH RED-RUSSIA PURPLE-CHINA DUTCH-TAN MISC-PINK
 FAC-FACTORY MOD-MODIFICATION CENTER DEP-DEPOT STA-STAGING INS-INSTALLATION ENR-ENROUTE POR-PORT GRO-GROUNDED
 AIRCRAFT DISTRIBUTION OFFICE: A.F.M.M. & D. PATTERSON FIELD, OHIO FORM # 1103
 PLANE: _____ A. C. SERIAL NO.: _____ OTHER SERIAL: _____ STATUS: _____ DATE REPORTED: _____
 1 - 3 - 5 - 7 - 9 - 11 - 13 - 15 - 17 - 19 - 21 - 23 - 25 - 27 - 29 - 31