

March 1945: Appendix III to Form 540

Report

WOO? Of No. 357 aircraft – KJ921

From R.A.F Liaison Officer, 14th U.S.A.A.F.

To: Headquarters Strategic Air Force (for attention W/Cdr. S.D. Ops.)

Date: 19th March 1945

Ref: RAFIO/51/3/Air

Loss of No. 357 aircraft – KJ921

1. The above aircraft was on a supply dropping mission to the British Army Aid Group party at Yanping. (22 11 N 112 19E)

2. As this Headquarters Operations had successfully run this operation to drop half an hour before sunset making use of cloud cover and were again going to do so, RAFIO after consultation with P/O Hunter, on the evening of 28th February 1945 decided to despatch the aircraft in formation with the 14th Air Force C-47 the next day if cloud cover permitted.

3. The crew were briefed at 1000 hrs. on 1st March in 322 Troop Carrier Squadron (USA) Ops Room in conjunction with the crew of that Squadron who were also going to drop over the same D.A. This crew had previously carried a successful daylight drop over the Yanping D.Z. and were therefore familiar with the area. Full radio, navigational and alternative aerodrome information was given to the crew, they were shown a large scale sketch map of, and photographs of the D.Z. and they were particularly warned of the hills in the area.

4. At 0900 hrs. on the morning of March 1st the weather forecast was 'too good' for the area, insufficient cloud cover over the area being anticipated, but the briefing was carried out as stated in para 3 above with the intention of carrying out the operation on the evening of the 1st March although the 14th Air Force had definitely decided not to do it by night.

5. At 1100 hrs. on the morning of March 1st. further weather reports were received from the area concerned and the Met Officer amended his forecast for the D.Z. with a ceiling of 2500 feet and a rout forecast of clear from Kunming to Poskh, broken to Nanming area and overcast from thereon to the target area. Kunming base was forecast as clear at the time the aircraft was due back. In view of this forecast the 14th Air Force decided to go and RAFIO despatched P/O Morten in formation with 322 Squadron's aircraft.

6. The Captain of 322 Squadron's aircraft reported on return as follows:-

The flight to the target area was uneventful although a solid overcast was not encountered until the target area itself was reached. The route followed was Base-Poskh-Nanming thence East to a point (approx 21 56 N 111 50 E) on the river north of Yeungkkong. Here there was a break in the overcast the top of which was about 4500 feet and the aircraft went down.

As the bottom of the overcast was down on to the hills the aircraft followed the river down to the sea hoping to get out round the coast and up the estuary to Yanping. As they came out over the sea at about 40 feet and heading S.W. the overcast and fog went right down to the water and the USA aircraft, which was then being led by our aircraft, turned slightly to port and pulled up on top of the overcast. It did not see our aircraft again and after about 3 minutes heard our pilot say on the command set, 'I am out over an island'. Nothing more was heard and the USA aircraft after trying to find Yanpung (no contact was made with Eureka) turned for home.

Attached is a copy of letter received from BAAG and photographs have been taken of the crash which it is hoped to be able to get out in due course. It is regretted that duplicate copies of photographs and large scale drawing maps of the D.Z. are not available but the originals are available for briefing purposes in 322 Squadron's Ops Room. It may be of interest to note that 322 Squadron have since this date made two further successful drops over the D.Z. both in daylight.

Signed Waleran.

2 Copy of letter attached to the above report

Restricted

Headquarters British Army Aid Group
Kunming

Ref: JDm/SD/1
Dat 8th March, 1945

To:-
Wing Commander, Lord Waleran,
RAFLO,
14th USAAF, Kuming

Subject:- RAF Aircraft

1. The following is the gist of a message received from Yanping dated 8th March.
2. The aircraft, bearing on tail marks KJ921 with half blue and white rectangular mark and with RAF circle still visible was discovered at approximately 21 38N 111 51E. It has crashed into 1200' hill about 50' below crest.
3. Both engines were in valley 600' below with the tail of the machine which was practically intact, 50' above the engines.
4. Four bodies were recovered and buried on East side of the hill, the graves being marked with small cairns. They were charred beyond recognition.
5. No stores were recovered in serviceable condition.
6. Locals state that two aircraft were seen at dusk circling, then both came in from South in very low cloud. One plane was slightly above the other and to the East of it. This plane cleared the hill by a small margin but the westerly plane crashed into the hill.
7. Photographs have been taken of the main points.

(Signed) Col.
Commandant, British Army Aid Group,
Kunming

Copy to:- Lt. Col Rucker, O.S.S.