

MACR Section M—Accident Report Army-9338 (verbatim)

On 1st November 1946, B-17 No. 43-39338, pilot Colonel Hudson H. Upham, Headquarters EATS, departed Capodichino Air Base, Naples, Italy at 0054Z enroute to Bovington, England with eight (8) people on board. One radio contact was made with Capodichino tower five minutes after take-off. Nothing more was heard from this aircraft. After eighteen (18) days of extensive land, sea and air search, orders were issued to abandon formal search. Subsequently, numerous reports of aircraft wreckage were investigated in hopes that this aircraft would be located, but without success.

On 25 July 1947, a patrol of the 99th Bataillon D'Infanterie Alpine, French Army discovered the wreckage of an aircraft on a mountain called Aiguille des Glaciers, 45° 47' N. Lat., 6° 46' E. Long. The wreckage was discovered on a glacier at approximately 3750 meters (12,187 feet). This wreckage was positively identified as the remains of B-17 No. 43-39338 by means of personal papers, operations orders and parts of aircraft found at the scene of the crash. This particular mountain is approximately fifteen (15) miles southwest of Mount Blanc and is a part of the mass generally considered as Mount Blanc. (Mt Blanc is the highest peak in Europe 15,781 feet). The wreckage was scattered over a wide area and only the lighter parts of the aircraft and equipment were found. It is believed that the heavier parts of the aircraft are buried in the glacier.

A few human remains were located but no positive identification was made. There was no indication that anyone had attempted to use parachutes. Personal articles were found that belonged to personnel who would normally be in the pilots compartment and other articles were discovered which would belong to personnel normally stationed in the rear compartment. Therefore it is believed that all eight people were on board the aircraft at the time of the crash.

The aircraft flew head on into a nearly vertical (*sic*) face of the mountain. It exploded and was scattered over a wide area of the glacier below the point of impact which was about 450 feet from the top of the mountain. Judging from the point of impact the aircraft was flying on a heading of approximately 350° just prior to the crash.

The pilot filed a flight plan and was briefed to fly from Naples to Poretta, Corsica; to Istres, France; to Lyon, France; to Paris, France; to Bovington, England. The crash occurred at a point approximately 92 miles east of Lyon, France.

Although the weather over the Tyrrhenian Sea was forecasted to be very poor, the severity of the weather is not believed to have been a major cause factor because at the time of the crash the aircraft had already passed through the area of most severe forecasted weather.

No accurate and complete winds aloft information is available now as nearly all weather records covering the period of the accident have been destroyed or returned to the United States.

Assuming that the aircraft was in level flight prior to the crash, it is probable that a 10/10 overcast condition existed at the 12,000 feet level, the result of a warm moist easterly and southeasterly flow associated with the low pressure area centered over the Tyrrhenian Sea. This warm moist air having been forced up the southeastern slopes of the mountain probably caused a deck of clouds obscuring the mountain at the point of the crash.

In view of the lack of positive evidence no definite causes or conclusions may be stated. However, it is believed that the pilot was off course due to one of two reasons. First, he may have decide to fly direct from Naples to Bovingdon instead of the route shown on the form 23 or, second, he may have been off course due to strong unforecasted westerly winds and faulty navigation.

Recommendations

None

Action Taken

- a. To preclude the possibility of pilots attempting to fly over the Alps, a directive has been published which requires aircraft of this command to fly via Lyon and Istres, France, when flying to and from the Mediterranean area under IFR conditions
- b. All pilots of this command have been required to attend a one week flight planning course which stresses proper procedures for flying in this theatre.

Signed by: Aircraft Accident Investigating Board:

Charles F Juan (Major); Bernard Peterson (Capt); Clarence Parker (Capt; Fon Johnston (Capt; Robert Brunke (Capt) all of HQ EATS.