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HEADQUARTERS
EUROPEAN AIR TRANSPORT SERVICE
APO 633 US Army

O/CSP/sj

Wiesbaden, Germany

SUBJECT: Report of Finding B-17 No. 43-39338, Missing Since 1 November 1946.

TO : Commanding General
European Air Transport Service
APO 633, US Army

1. On 1 November 1946, B-17 No. 43-39338, pilot, Colonel Hudson H. Upham, Headquarters EATS, departed Capodichino Air Base, Naples, Italy at 0054Z for Bovingdon, England with eight people on board. One radio contact was made five minutes after take-off with Capodichino tower after which nothing more was heard from their aircraft.

2. After eighteen days of extensive land-sea and air search, orders were issued to abandon formal search. Subsequently numerous reports of crashed aircraft were investigated in hopes that this aircraft would be located, but without success.

3. On 25 July 1947, a patrol of the French 99th Bataillon D'Infanterie Alpine under command of Lt. Noel Mollard discovered the wreckage of an aircraft on a mountain named Aiguille des Glaciers, 45° 47' N. Lat., 6° 48' E. Long. The wreckage was discovered on a glacier at approximately 3750 meters (12,187 feet). Papers discovered at the scene indicated that this was B-17 No. 43-39338 which had been missing since 1 November 1946. This information was reported to Commandant Chalandon in command of the 99th Bataillon D'Infanterie Alpine who relayed the information through French Military channels to the American Legation in Paris.

4. On Friday, 1 August 1947, the American Legation notified Hqs. American Graves Registration Command, 3rd Region, Nancy, France and on Saturday, 2 August 1947, 1st Lt. Lauis A. Bockstahler of that Headquarters with a crew of six men proceeded to Headquarters 99th Bataillon D'Infanterie Alpine, Bourg St. Maurice, France.

5. On Saturday, 2 August 1947, TACC Headquarters EATS quizzed Associated Press correspondent, Paris as a result of AP news release and news broadcast on AFN. Associated Press in Paris stated that their news release originated in Grenoble, France and reported that the B-17 had been found on Mont Blanc, five hundred feet from the top of the mountain. This was the first information received by this Headquarters.

6. On Sunday, 3 August 1947, a team of US personnel from EATS Headquarters proceeded in a C-47 aircraft to Grenoble, France. The following personnel made up this team:

RESTRICTED

Capt. Clarence S. Parker — Chief of Flying Safety, Hqs. EATS.

1st Lt. William F. Shimonkevitz	Rep. PIO and Photo Officer Hqs. EATS
Sgt. Wilbur N. Guinn	Engineer
Pvt. Gene W. Robbins	Radio Operator
Pvt. Billy J. Norman	Theater Mortuaries, EUCOM
Mr. Robert G. Clifford (Civ.)	Theater Mortuaries, EUCOM

Inquiry at Grenoble revealed no information so this team proceeded the same day to Chambery (Bourget De Lac) France which is a French Air Force Base under command of Lt. Colonel Janicot.

7. At Chambery, US personnel received a most cordial welcome and unlimited cooperation from the French Air Force personnel. A 24 hour guard was provided for the aircraft, billets were secured for the crew, meals were furnished at a nominal fee, transportation was provided free, and personnel for assistance were placed at the disposal of Capt. Parker. Commandant Jean du Luzanne and Lt. Georges Bel were most helpful at Chambery in providing transportation, communication facilities and interpreting for US personnel.

8. On Monday, 4 August 1947 the team proceeded by French Military staff car, furnished by Lt. Colonel Janicot, to Bourg St. Maurice, France, Headquarters of the 99th Bataillon D'Infanterie, Alpine, where it was learned that Commandant Chalandon was at the mountain base of operations, Les Chapieux which is located approximately six miles north of Bourg St Maurice. The US team proceeded by noon of that day to Les Chapieux.

9. Upon arrival at Les Chapieux it was learned that Commandant Chalandon, Lt. Mollard and the S.E.S. (Elite Mountain Troops of the Bataillon) were making an ascent of the mountain. The US personnel proceeded on foot to meet the French teams coming down the mountain, returning to Les Chapieux at 1800 hours.

10. In cooperation with Lt. Bockstahler, AGRC, Capt. Parker studied results of searches and discussed plans with Commandant Chalandon and Lt. Mollard for further searches of the mountain area. Due to the heat of the summer the glacier had become so dangerous to cross that Commandant Chalandon refused to allow anyone to accompany the S.E.S. except experienced mountain climbers who could speak French, therefore the only US representative who was allowed to go to the scene of the accident was Mr. George A. Geno, Civilian employee of AGRC.

11. The work done by the French Alpine troops in these searches deserve the commendation, recognition and sincere appreciation of the United States. These courageous troops made five ascents of Aiguille des Glaciers without regard for their own safety. At one time Lt. Mollard and two of his men narrowly avoided death when a snow bridge across a deep crevasse gave way. This normally dangerous work was made more difficult because the unusually hot summer had made the glacier's snow and ice very soft. The crevasses were unusually deep (sometimes over 300 feet deep) and the snow bridges which must be used to cross the

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crevasses were thin and dangerous. The following personnel contributed most in this difficult work:

Commandant Jean A. Chalandon - Le Chef de 99th Bataillon D'Infanterie Alpine
Lt. Noel Mollard - Commanding the S.E.S. 99th Bataillon D'Infanterie Alpine
Sgt. Felix Bois
Sgt. Leon Beck
Sgt. Henri Brun
Cpl. Roger Poulenard
Cpl. Jorat
Non commissioned officers at the S.E.S. 99th B.I.A.

12. In a conference on 5 August 1947, Commandant Chalandon and Lt. Mollard stated that further searches would be made but that they believed nothing more would be found since everything of importance in the area had been recovered. (See French file attached for items recovered.) It was believed that the larger part of the aircraft and larger human remains were buried in the ice of the glacier and will not be discovered until discharged at the base of the glacier in approximately 30 years. In view of this information and because it was impossible to communicate with headquarters, Captain Parker decided to return to Wiesbaden until the following Sunday, when final results would be known.

13. At this time the following human remains had been recovered:

Part of a head (thick, black hair)
One arm from elbow down including hand
Part of a leg
Two feet

No identification could be made of any parts of bodies. In addition to these remains personal articles, parts of aircraft, operations orders and AAF Form 1 had been recovered sufficiently to prove conclusively that this aircraft was B-17 Number 43-39338 which had departed Naples on 1 November 1946.

14. At this time Commandant Chalandon placed the human remains in the chapel at Les Chapieux and posted a 24-hour armed guard at the coffin. He also informed Captain Parker that on Monday, 11 August 1947, there would be a formal military ceremony at Bourg St. Maurice to honor the deceased US personnel. The French General in command of that region was to attend along with other dignitaries.

15. After this conference, Lt. Bockstahler decided to remain at Bourg St. Maurice in the event more human remains were discovered. Captain Parker and the US team from this headquarters departed Bourg St. Maurice on 5 August 1947 at 1730 hours proceeding to Chambery and then on 6 August 1947 to Wiesbaden, Germany, arriving at 1300 hours.

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Ltr to CG, EATS, subj: "Report of Finding B-17 No. 43-39338, Missing Since 1 November 1946", dtd 21 August 1947.

16. A verbal report was rendered to the Commanding General, EATS Headquarters covering all information available at this time. Wires were also dispatched on 7 August 1947 in accordance with AAF Reg. 62-14 to: Commanding General, AAF; Chief Flying Safety Division, Langley Field, Va; Commanding General, USAFE; and Commanding Officer, Rhein Main Air Base.

17. On 10 August 1947 a party of Air Force personnel proceeded in two C-47 aircraft to Chambery to attend the commemorative ceremony at Bourg St. Maurice and to return the remains to Frankfurt, Germany. This party consisted of:

Brig. Gen.	James F. Powell	Commanding EATS
Captain	Robert L. Lovelace	Hqs. EATS
Captain	Donald W. Allen	Hqs. EATS
Captain	Clarence S. Parker	Hqs. EATS
Captain	Fon E. Johnson	Hqs. EATS
1st Lt.	William F. Shimonkevitz	Hqs. EATS
1st Lt.	John R. Walker	Hqs. EATS
2nd Lt.	Hazel Langdon	Hqs. EATS
Pvt.	Billy J. Norman	MUCOM Mortuaries.

18. On 11 August 1947 the party proceeded to Bourg St. Maurice in staff cars provided by Lt. Colonel Janicot arriving at 1000 hours. The ceremony was most impressive. Troops of the 99th Bataillon D'Infanterie Alpine were present in full dress. Commemorative addresses were made by Brigade General Collignon and Brigadier General Powell. The remains were then transported to Chambery and flown by Capt. Parker and Lt. Shimonkevitz to Rhein Main Air Base where an honor guard headed by Colonel Walter S. Lee met the airplane.

19. In conclusion it is the belief of the undersigned officer that no definite identification will be made of the remains. It is also believed impossible that anyone could have survived the crash, for indications are that the aircraft struck head on into a nearly vertical surface and exploded. There is nothing to indicate that any of the occupants attempted to parachute.

20. A revised AAF Form 14 will be submitted by Headquarters EATS.

CLARENCE S. PARKER
Captain, Air Corps
Chief, Flying Safety
Headquarters EATS

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1 Incl: Complete File of Incident
Compiled by French Army.