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Subject: Final Mission Report

4 August 1947

The belief that the crash was that of the unreported B-25. The Passenger, Sgt. E. L. TAPP, of Ft. LAWTON, SEATTLE, was uninjured, but reported that the crew chief, T/Sgt. W. D. MATHEWS, was at a farm house near the scene of the crash and was injured. Sgt. TAPP then led an ambulance to Sgt. MATHEWS who was subsequently taken to a local hospital. At 0610 PST an attempt was made to telephone Sq. B at HAMILTON FIELD but no answer was received; however, it was known that HAMILTON APS was aware of the incident and would notify Sq. B. At 0700 PST Capt. LITRELL departed in a C-45 for KELSO. At 0745 PST Sq B was contacted by phone and given a flash report. At 0905 PST CAPT LITRELL phoned and informed that he had placed CAPTAIN FORSBERG in charge of Army personnel proceeding to the scene of the crash. No aerial search was necessary as civilians in the area knew the exact location of the crash and had reported finding one (1) body in the wreckage. CAPT. LITRELL prepared to fly Sgt's TAPP and MATHEWS to MCCORD FIELD for medical attention, arriving at 0945 PST. The survivors stated that they believed neither the pilot nor co-pilot has parachuted from the plane. The cause of the incident was at this time determined to be a fire in the left engine. CAPT LITRELL was informed by Sgt. TAPP that he believed classified documents had been aboard the plane; CAPT FORSBERG was instructed to take necessary precautions. An ambulance met the plane at MCCORD FIELD carrying the two survivors and took them to the hospital. Interrogation revealed that the left engine had caught fire in the power section and flames and smoke had spread to the flight deck almost immediately. The crew chief, MATHEWS, assisted TAPP in attaching his chest pack and TAPP abandoned the plane at an estimated altitude of 10,000 ft (this fact is doubted but is not considered necessarily relevant). MATHEWS helped the pilot and co-pilot attach their chest packs (all personnel had been wearing the harness) and as he left the plane was aware that the co-pilot was preparing to follow. The pilot had started to leave and, to the best recollection of MATHEWS, was partially standing and holding the control wheel with his left hand. MATHEWS' statements indicate that proper emergency procedures had been performed but that the flames had enveloped the entire left side almost immediately. TAPP stated that, because of the full moon and good visibility, he saw MATHEWS leave the plane and was able to follow the plane to the ground and that he saw no one else bail out. The ship was enveloped in flames and was beginning to fall apart before hitting the ground where it exploded and burned about one (1) mile from where he, TAPP, landed. He lit in a tree, and not knowing how to release his parachute of the quick-detachable kind, cut himself loose from the harness with his pocket knife. He kicked and struggled and eventually jumped to the ground, receiving a jolt on impact but was unable to guess how far he had fallen. He then followed a cow path for an estimated two (2) miles to a farm house, arriving after MATHEWS. Meanwhile, as MATHEWS cleared the plane he turned and saw the plane strike the ground, explode and burn. Just before or just at the time of impact he saw an object afire thrown clear of the plane but did not know whether it was a person or part of the plane. MATHEWS also lit in a tree, and after freeing himself from his harness, fell to the ground where he injured his back. He lost consciousness and on recovering went to the burning plane, about fifty

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