



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
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Mr. George T. Chandler
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Dear George

The holidays and two trips delayed my response to your 19 December letter, as I explained on the phone last week.

Let me define the term "new credible evidence" as follows: "facts not now known that would reasonably call into question the current awarding of shared credit."

In that regard, Cargill believes it important to state the facts as they are presently known to us. On 18 April 1943, Admiral Yamamoto's bomber was proceeding on a southeasterly course along the south coast of Bougainville Island when it was attacked by American aviators. After the attack, the pilot of the bomber turned almost due south, toward the beach. The bomber did not reach the water, however, and crashed into the forest.

Neither the tail nor the wings of the bomber separated in flight. The outer left wing separated on contact with the forest canopy and fell a few hundred feet behind the bomber, which burned on the ground. I am advised that about one-third of the rear fuselage, the two engines, and the two outer wing panels are the principal artifacts remaining at or near the scene. With the possible exception of the fuselage and engines, however, virtually all of the wreckage has been moved; most of it, based on recent photographs, appears to be piled in front and to the left of the fuselage. As you are aware, moreover, souvenir hunters have for many years cut up and carried away pieces of the bomber wreckage.

Given these facts, it seems to me that your group will necessarily focus attention on the starboard engine and fuselage. If careful analysis by a qualified crash investigator shows no bullet damage to the starboard engine or starboard side of the fuselage from the 3 o'clock position, I would judge that to be credible new evidence.

As I said on the phone, the composition and procedures of any Victory Credit Board of Review should not be decided when the time comes to create a new board, if that action is warranted. My present thinking would be to have in any such group distinguished people with professional historical credentials and accomplishments, experience in military aviation including victories in combat, and experience in crash investigation.

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Let me refer you to Cargill for further advice on evidence available at present. But as I said, any documents, contemporary or memoir in nature, would likely be helpful.

All best wishes for the new year.

Sincerely

Dick

RICHARD H. KOHN
Chief, Office of
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