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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
BOLLING AFB DC 20332-6098

7 December 1988

Mr. George T. Chandler
Box N
223 S. Main
Pratt KS 67124-1113

Dear Mr. Chandler

I've appreciated receiving copies of your correspondence concerning the expedition these past few months, and you keeping me informed of your progress.

The enclosed correspondence with Mr. Vander Clute will, I hope, clarify our position on convening a new board. I understand from your meeting with Colonel Harris in Public Affairs that you are concerned about a fair hearing. Please put those fears to rest. None of us here has a vested interest in the dispute over the victory credit. Our only concern -- and my personal and professional responsibility -- is to have the Air Force act in a just, reasonable, and responsible manner to ascertain and act on the truth as it can best be determined, and be fair to the individuals involved. We do not want to spend the taxpayers' money to convene a distinguished board unless the evidence you produce somehow calls into question the previous conclusion. But let me assure you that if any credible evidence is produced to question the previous board's findings, we will not hesitate, as I stated at our June 16 meeting, to convene a board and to put on it distinguished people with appropriate expertise and experience.

Let me recommend to you that in addition to the results of your expedition, that you and your associates assemble as much documentary evidence as possible concerning the expedition, particularly contemporary accounts. It is important to the Air Force to be able to consider every scrap of evidence that can reasonably be assembled if another board convenes.

Sincerely

RICHARD H. KOHN
Chief, Office of
Air Force History

4 Attachments

1. Kohn Ltr to Mr. Vander Clute, 7 Dec 1988
2. Vander Clute Ltr to Secretary, 15 Nov 1988
3. Vander Clute Ltr to Dr. Kohn, 15 Nov 1988
4. Kohn Ltr to Mr. Vander Clute, 16 Sep 1988

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August 31, 1988

Dr. Richard H. Kohn
Chief, Office of Air Force History
Department of the Air Force
Hq., U. S. Air Force
Bolling AFB, D.C. 20332-6098

Dear Dr. Kohn:

At our recently completed 89th National Convention held in Chicago, Illinois, the delegates attending adopted Resolution No. 302, entitled "Determine Victory Credit Award for Yamamoto Shootdown," a copy of which is enclosed.

This issue was brought to our attention by several of our members who were directly involved in the mission and who knew both Thomas G. Lanphier and Rex T. Barber.

Upon reviewing this resolution you will find that the resolve clearly calls for you and for the United States Air Force to authorize an investigation to be performed by qualified crash investigators to determine if the present Victory Credit Award of one-half to Lanphier and one-half to Barber should be changed or confirmed. The resolution in its resolve, also recognizes the present limits on United States Air Force funding and suggests that the investigation be funded by private or corporate support.

We would very much appreciate your response concerning this matter.

Sincerely,

Howard E. Vander Clute, Jr.
Adjutant General

HVC: jn
Enclosure

cc: Larry W. Rivers, Commander-in-Chief
George T. Chandler



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BOLLING AFB DC 20332-6098

16 September 1988

Mr. Howard E. Vander Clute, Jr.
Adjutant General
Veterans of Foreign Wars
of the United States
Broadway at 34th Street
Kansas City MO 64111

Dear Mr. Vander Clute

I returned from being out-of-town to receive your letter of 31 August with the resolution of the VFW enclosed.

From my perspective, given the evidence now available, proper credit has been bestowed for the shooting down of Admiral Yamamoto's airplane in 1943. The shared credit was originally awarded in the 1960s, and reconfirmed by a review board as recently as 1985.

As I explained to the American Fighter Aces Association, until new and credible historical evidence about the event is offered to us, shared credit stands. The USAF Historical Research Center periodically updates its victory credit list, and under normal procedures reviews any new evidence about victories to make the listing as accurate as possible. The Yamamoto mission must be treated similarly, under standard operating procedures.

R. Cargill Hall, who is Chief of the Research Division at the Center, and who would oversee a new board should one become necessary, informs me that after 45 years the wreckage of the Yamamoto aircraft has been disturbed. If that is the case, analysis of the wreckage will be extremely complicated and must take into account the passage of time and human tampering, if the analysis itself is to be offered as new evidence.

I hope that my letter is helpful to you and the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Richard H. Kohn", is written over the typed name.

RICHARD H. KOHN
Chief, Office of
Air Force History