

MIA Recoveries, Inc
P.O. Box 12871
Prescott, AZ 86304-2871
928-899-1614
info@MIArecoveries.org
www.MIArecoveries.org

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Crashed Aircraft Site Report

Date Visited: 29 Sep 2011.

Model & Serial Number: C-47DL #41-18556 a.k.a. CNAC #60.

GPS Coordinates: N 25-38-58.7 E 100-05-30.2.

Datum: WGS 84.

Country: China.

State/Province/District: Yunnan.

Nearest Town/Village: Dali.

Distance/Direction: 4-day trek E of Yangbi Jiang.

Altitude: 13,400 ft.

Topography: Mountains.

Aspect: SE.

Terrain Notes: Steep, open slope just below summit ridge with rocky ravine extending below slope.

Vegetation: Grasses on slope below summit ridge, bamboo and shrubs alongside ravine.

Nearest Water: Intermittent runoff and standing pools in ravine at site.

Site Disturbance: Significant disturbance caused by landslides, rockfalls and hydraulic erosion.

Aircraft ID Method: Wreckage with aircraft construction number 4681 found at site.

Engines/Propellers: Engine and propeller wreckage found in ravine, some of it buried or partially buried. Metal detector indicated many metallic objects buried under boulders and landslide debris in ravine. Wet weather, flowing water and lack of excavating equipment prevented the uncovering of large metallic objects in ravine.

Wreckage/Artifacts/ID Tags: Wreckage found on steep slope at base of high cliff and extending approx. .5 mi. down ravine. Estimated point of impact was cliff face or steep slope directly below cliff face. Steepness of the terrain and torrential rainfalls in this area moved the wreckage debris significantly downslope. This area also experienced a major earthquake in the early 1950's, which probably brought down the landslide debris and boulders.

Human Remains: None seen by investigator.

Removed from Site: Nothing removed by investigator. Not known if others removed anything from site.

Photos: See website for photos. Additional photos and video on file.

Misc. Notes: By plotting CNAC #60's estimated location on a topographical map at the time pilot John Dean had his radio conversation with eastbound CNAC pilot Robbie Robertson about icing, told me Dean still hadn't flown over any mountains higher than 12,200 ft. since departing Kunming that day. He surely knew he wouldn't be able to clear the much higher Hengduan Shan beginning just W of Likiang, especially with his heavy cargo of tin billets. He was already experiencing bad icing and was in a desperate situation when Robertson said he had no icing on Charlie route. I reasoned that Dean made an abrupt course change to the SW soon after talking with Robertson, in an attempt to join Charlie course just S of Dali. My calculations showed #60 would be flying almost directly over the highest summit of Dali Mtn. (now named Cang Shan), which is approx. 13,700 ft. I further reasoned that #60 most likely crashed on or just W of Dali Mtn. My belief was further reinforced when I heard that former CNAC pilot, Pete Goutiere, had seen aircraft wreckage high on Dali Mtn in the 1940's. Also, former WW II L5 pilot, Arthur Clark, contacted me and said he had seen what appeared to be a C-47 wreck high on the W flank of Dali Mtn. in the mid-1940's.

Arthur said the wreckage was above the treeline, just below the summit ridge, and at about the same latitude as old town Dali or just slightly S of that latitude. Arthur's description of the wreckage location was exactly where I had plotted CNAC #60 to be on my topo map.

Upon arriving in Dali, I learned that numerous villagers on the W flank of Dali Mtn. had heard about the aircraft wreck high on the mountain. I independently interviewed 7 villagers from 4 different villages on the W flank of the mountain, and they all described the same location for the aircraft wreck and the crash date as being in late 1942. Their stories fully corroborated the report I received from Arthur Clark. I then interviewed a man from another village who said his father was hunting high on the mountain in late 1942 when he saw an aircraft spiral-in at a very steep angle while breaking apart or ejecting cargo, and crash just below the summit ridge on the W flank. Without me ever mentioning a cargo of tin billets, the man said he and a friend found a tin billet in the streambed below the crash site while hunting there in 1977. He described the tin billet as being approx. 14 in. dia. X 24 in. long, weighing between 100 and 150 lbs., silver in color and definitely being tin since he was familiar with tin. He said it was too heavy and bulky for them to carry out and they couldn't find it on a return trip to the area. Finally, I interviewed a 59-year old man and his younger brother from yet another small village on the W flank of Cang Shan, and they told me their father had found the crash site in late 1942 or early 1943 while gathering medicinal herbs high on the mountain. Their father heard many birds squawking on a steep slope just below the summit ridge. When he approached, he saw the birds were scavenging human remains amongst the wreckage laying on the slope. He noted the remains of 2 or 3 people and some of the bones were much larger than those of Chinese people. He also saw an aircraft wing and much wreckage scattered on the slope. He took his sons back to the crash site several times over the years while hunting, and now his sons agreed to guide me there. After 4 days of rugged trekking and enduring almost non-stop rainstorms, we reached the designated high camp area alongside the ravine and approx. 1 mi. below the estimated point of impact. The crash site was then visited and documented over the next several days and searches were made of the ravine for wreckage. The estimated point of impact proved to be directly on the plotted line I had calculated earlier to indicate the flight path of CNAC #60 while trying to reach Charlie course.

Investigator: Clayton Kuhles.