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

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: Yangbi.

Distance/Direction: 4-day trek NE of Yangbi.

Altitude: 13,400 ft.

Topography: Mountains.

Aspect: SE.

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

Vegetation: High-altitude grasses on slope below summit ridge. Bamboo and shrubs alongside ravine.

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

Site Disturbance: Significant disturbance caused by hydraulic erosion, landslides, rockfalls and 1950 earthquake.

Aircraft ID Method: Wreckage with aircraft construction number 4681.

Engines/Propellers: Engine and propeller wreckage found in ravine, some of it buried or partially buried.

Wreckage/Artifacts/ID Tags: Wreckage found on steep slope at base of high cliff just below summit ridge and extending approx. .5 mi. downslope from estimated point of impact.

Human Remains: None seen by investigator.

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

Photos: See website for photos. Additional photos/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 conditions, indicated to me that Dean still hadn't flown over any mountains higher than 12,200 ft. since departing Kunming. He surely knew he wouldn't be able to clear the much higher Hengduan Shan (just W of Likiang), especially with his heavy cargo of tin billets. He was already experiencing dangerous 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 have flown almost directly over the highest summit of Dali Mtn. (now named Cang Shan), which is approx. 13,700 ft. altitude 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, Peter J. Goutiere, had seen aircraft wreckage high on Dali Mtn in the 1940's. Also, former WWII 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 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 the CNAC #60 crash site to be on my topo map.

Upon arriving in Dali, I made numerous daytrips to villages on the W flank of the mountain in the vicinity of Yangbi. I learned that numerous villagers on the W flank of Dali Mtn. had heard about the aircraft wreck high on the mountain.

With the assistance of an interpreter, 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 collective 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 then crash just below the summit ridge on the W flank. Without me ever mentioning the aircraft had a cargo of tin billets, the man said he and a friend found a tin billet laying 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 Dali Mtn., 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 location 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 slope and ravine for wreckage. The estimated point of impact was the cliff face or the steep slope directly below the cliff face, and just below the summit ridge on the W flank of the mountain. It proved to be directly on the plotted line I had calculated earlier to indicate the flight path of CNAC #60 while trying to reach the safety of Charlie course. The steepness of the terrain and regular torrential rainfalls in the area moved the wreckage significantly downslope over the passing years. This area also experienced a major earthquake in 1950, which probably brought down the landslide debris and boulders clogging the ravine below the slope. Investigation of the ravine with a metal detector indicated metallic wreckage buried under the debris and boulders.

Investigator: Clayton Kuhles.