

Date: 10 June 2023

To: Defense POW-MIA Accounting Agency, or
US Army Special Actions Branch

Via: Congressional Representative

From: Captain Ted Mikita, Delta Air Lines (Cellular (406) 546-5383;
email:ted.mikita@gmail.com) primary contact for “Dixon Crew” family members
and Project Recover

Subject: URGENT request to repatriate unrecovered WW II remains:
1944 crash site(s) of USAAF Dixon Crew, located near Koror, Palau

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1. Objective:** The relatives of the 1944 “Dixon” B-24 crew urgently request that responsible agencies (including Defense POW-MIA Accounting Agency and US Army Special Actions Branch) promptly reopen and expedite a cold case closed in 1950 in order to repatriate the unrecovered remains of up to eight Army Air Force crew members downed in 1944 in the vicinity of Koror, Palau. **Specifically, we request that a non-governmental organization, Project Recover, be tasked to accomplish the recovery.**¹
- 2. Background:** On 28 August 1944 a U.S. Army Air Force B-24, serial number 44-40603 was downed by anti-aircraft fire over Koror, Palau. This plane, piloted by Captain William “Gordon” Dixon, Commander of the 372nd Bombardment Squadron, was leading a 307th Bombardment Group strike consisting of 18 aircraft against the Japanese Regional Naval Headquarters. All 11 members of the Dixon crew were KIA. Of the plane parts that rained down, two main sections would have contained crew members: the aft hull section with five to six crewmembers and the nose section with five to six crew members.²
- 3. AGRS 1948 investigation:** In September 1948 the American Graves Registration Service found in Koror Town three unidentified remains from the aft hull section of the crash, but concluded their search without locating any additional remains or debris fields, and officially closed the case in 1950.³ Other than the aft hull section with remains of three (of eleven) crewmembers, no additional parts of the aircraft were located. This effectively created a prematurely closed “cold case”.

¹ <https://www.projectrecover.org>

² Mission Report MR 19440828 372BS 4M319 NARA RG 18

³ Burial File Zachary Taylor Burial Record GB385 NARA RG 92

- 4. Recent discoveries 1994-2023:** Since the 1948 recovery and 1950 closure of the case, exhaustive investigations have developed extensive new evidence from onsite discoveries both on land and below the surface of the lagoon, together with exhaustive review all official records, personally conducted interviews with surviving 307th Bomb Group crewmen from this mission and residents of Koror Town. This evidence confirms the probability that 5 to 6 crewmen were within the undiscovered nose section. In 1994 Dr. Pat Scannon of Project Recover discovered the nose compartment in inshore water on the north side of the island, located 2/10 mile from the investigated wreck site on the other side of an imposing mangrove forest. More recently, between 2015 and the present, the two debris sites have been further pinpointed and mapped.
- 5. Declined requests for renewal of repatriation efforts:** In 2019 DPAA had been notified about the existence of the nose section but declined to fund a field study due to the case having been administratively closed in 1950. Closing the case was understandable in 1950 because the existence of the nose section was unknown. Today, even though new evidence has been discovered, the continued official status of the case as “closed” has blocked any path forward to recovering the remaining crew members.⁴
- 6. Availability of non-government resources for recovery:** Project Recover (ProjectRecover.org) is familiar with the wreck site, contracts with and for the DPAA and is qualified and able to accomplish the recovery of the remains within the newly found nose section. Accomplishing this objective in compliance with applicable regulations would require official tasking from DPAA or Army’s Chief, Special Actions Branch, Congressional Inquiry Division.
- 7. Additional information:** Footnote reference and additional materials are provided at www.307BG.org/307Dixon.⁵ In addition, a complete in person brief and analysis, including detailed photos and maps, plus discovery and identification records for the known three remains, is available upon request.
- 8. Conclusion and request for action:** The conclusion is inescapable that, with the weight of new evidence regarding additional debris fields and likely locations of aircrew remains, there is additional work to be done to identify and bring home the Dixon Crew. The crewmembers’ next of kin, with the full support of Project Recover, are respectfully urging that the cold case be officially re-opened to create a path forward to the recovery of our heroes and loved ones that are certainly still in the nose section of the aircraft. After waiting over 75 years, it is time to complete the job of bringing home and laying to rest Captain Dixon and his fellow Army aviators.

⁴ Email 20191029 Senator Rubio Response to T Mikita

⁵ Crash site photos, crewmember list and NOK