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Crashed Aircraft Site Report

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Wreckage: Yes

Model & Serial: B-24J #42-100184

Date Visited: 07 Dec 2010

GPS Coordinates: N 28-33-47.6 E 095-23-27.4

Datum: WGS 84

Country: India

Province / State: Arunachal Pradesh

Nearest Town / Village: Cheppe

Distance / Directions: 3-day trek SW of Cheppe.

Map: Google Earth or other satellite imagery.

Elevation: 11,432 ft.

Aspect: SW

Topography: Mountains. See photos and attached Expedition Notes.

Terrain Notes: Steep slope in forest. See photos and attached Expedition Notes.

Vegetation: High-altitude forest with trees and shrubs. See photos and attached Expedition Notes.

Aircraft ID Method: Engine with serial number 42-1462 found at site. See photos and attached Expedition Notes.

Engines / Propellers: 4 engines and 4 propellers found at site. See photos and attached Expedition Notes.

Wreckage / Artifacts / ID Tags: Wreckage extending approx. 200 yds down slope from estimated point of impact. Clothing remnants (shoes and jackets) seen at site. See photos and attached Expedition Notes.

Human Remains: Yes. See photos and attached Expedition Notes.

Removed: I removed nothing from site. See attached Expedition Notes.

Water: Nearest water was .25 mi distant and consisted of a small stream.

Site Disturbance: None noted. See photos and attached Expedition Notes.

Photos: See website for photos. Additional photos on CD and video on DVD available upon request.

Misc. Notes: See attached Expedition Notes.

B-24J #42-100184 Expedition Notes

The American Graves Registration Service (AGRS) made two unsuccessful attempts in the late 1940's to find this missing airplane. They wrote a report in 1948 summarizing their search attempts. I obtained a copy of the 1948 AGRS report and studied it for clues that might help me solve this case. My lucky break came when I focused on researching the names of the local tribesmen mentioned in the AGRS report. I discussed the tribal names with an Adi Abor friend of mine in Damroh village, and he quickly identified the men as being of the Idu Mishmi tribe. Furthermore, he knew that in the 1940's, some of those men lived in the upper Sessari River valley, just S of a large mountain known locally as Shidibi Mtn.

The tribal groups in this area of India usually hunt only in their ancestral tribal territory, and avoid hunting in the territory of a neighboring tribe. If the tribal men mentioned in the AGRS report were of the Idu Mishmi tribe, then I reasoned the aircraft wreckage was probably somewhere in their tribal territory, and they (or one of their tribal friends) happened to discover it while hunting. Furthermore, since some of the Idu Mishmi mentioned in the report were believed to have lived in the upper Sesarri River valley in the 1940's, then I also reasoned there was a high-probability the aircraft wreckage would be somewhere in that valley or on the slopes of nearby Shidibi Mtn. The mountain seemed the most likely location, given that it's the highest mountain in the area and could easily contribute to an airplane crash in poor weather conditions, so I decided to make Shidibi Mtn my primary search area. I learned the Idu Mishmi had long ago vacated the remote upper Sessari River valley and had migrated to the E and N. Interestingly, the Adi Abor folklore in Damroh talks about a mysterious airplane wreckage high up on a big mountain and far to the E of Sarcing (the local name for the geographic area NE of Damroh where I found B-24J #42-73308 on 07 Dec 2006), but none of the local Adi Abor hunters had ever been to this *far away* wreckage site nor did they have any direct knowledge of its exact location. With the remote upper Sessari River valley now uninhabited and with no known roads or trails entering the area, I decided to access Shidibi Mtn from the N side. The Idu Mishmi village closest to the N side of Shidibi Mtn is named Cheppe, and reaching this village was my next goal.

Abu Tayeng, the District Commissioner of Upper Dibang district (which includes Cheppe village and Shidibi Mtn) has taken a keen interest in my MIA search expeditions in NE India. Abu instructed his staff to ask local villagers if anybody knew of any old airplane wrecks within the district. Soon afterwards, word arrived to Abu that a young Idu Mishmi hunter named Mate Miuli had reported an old airplane wreck on his family's ancestral hunting grounds located on the SW slopes of Shidibi Mtn. Abu promptly notified me, and then introduced me to Mate and arranged for Mate and a team of porters to take me to the crashsite.

Starting at road marker 173 km on the Roing - Anini road, we trekked W through the village of Aneleih and then continuing W to the tiny village of Cheppe. In Cheppe, I met Mate's 85-year old grandfather, Naji Miuli. Naji said I was the first white person to ever visit Cheppe. Naji then recounted in great detail how his father, Longe Miuli (now deceased), had discovered the airplane wreckage in the mid-1940's while hunting on the SW slopes of Shidibi Mtn. Longe returned to the wreckage site soon afterwards with some friends (Tako Mena, Takiri Linggi, Poso Miuli and Anjou) to recover items to sell. Some of these men were also referenced in the AGRS report of 1948. Naji said his father and friends collected some crewmember dogtags and 3 pistols from the crashsite, and sold those items to a shopkeeper in the town of Sadiya for 70 rupees plus a bag of rice and a bag of tea. The US Army somehow became aware of those artifacts now in the possession of the Sadiya shopkeeper, and that eventually led to the AGRS search efforts for the crashsite.

Naji said he was unaware of any US attempts to reach the crashsite in the 1940's. This means that any search attempts by the AGRS must have surely approached from the S of Shidibi Mtn, and not from the N through Cheppe as I had chosen to do. We do know from the AGRS report that they started their search expedition in the village of Damroh, and no mention was made in their report about circling around to the N side of Shidibi Mtn. The local Mishmi hunters told me there are no known trails or bridges which would allow safe access to the crashsite area from either Damroh or Milang villages, and the area can be reached safely only through Cheppe village on the N side of the mountain.

It took us 2 days of very rough trekking to reach Cheppe from the roadhead at marker 173 on the Roing - Anini road. It then required 2 additional days of even rougher trekking to reach the preferred area for our highcamp. Highcamp was located at 10,640 ft. on the NE face of Shidibi Mtn, along a small stream flowing from the N side of the mountain.

The next day started at 5 AM, and after following an ice-clogged stream leading to the base of a cliff, we were soon climbing up frozen waterfalls and over dangerously-angled snow slopes. The summit ridge of Shidibi Mtn at 12,873 ft. was reached by mid-day. The village of Milang could be seen to the W, and the Brahmaputra River could be seen to the far S. We then downclimbed the steep SW slope of the mountain into the pine forest below, reaching the crashsite at 11,432 ft. in the early afternoon. It was already dusk by the time I finished documenting the wreckage and we had climbed back up to the summit ridge. The entire very hazardous downclimb back to highcamp had to be done in the dark with the aid of headlamps and flashlights. Everybody was soaked through, cold and exhausted by the time we reached highcamp at 7 PM.

I wish to express my immense gratitude to Abu Tayeng, the District Commissioner in Anini, for his kind and invaluable assistance in helping me reach this important US MIA site. Any US recovery work at this crashsite will need to be coordinated through Abu Tayeng.