



INTERNATIONAL
SECURITY AFFAIRS

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
2400 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-2400

04/016542

INFO MEMO

FOR: ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR INTERNATIONAL
SECURITY AFFAIRS

DEC 08 2004

FROM: Jerry D. Jennings, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for POW/Missing
Personnel Affairs

SUBJECT: DPMO Libya Team Visit

- This memo informs you of the results of a DPMO team visit to Libya December 2 - 4, 2004.
- This was a follow-on visit to pursue leads DPMO developed after discussions with the Government of Libya (GoL) in April. The team met their three objectives by:
 - Photographing the Protestant Cemetery where crewmembers of the USS Intrepid crew lost in 1804 are buried, and assessing for the Department of Navy (DoN) possibilities for repatriating them to the United States.
 - ✓ Following up on DPMO's request in April, the U.S. Liaison Office (USLO) had located the cemetery and gained control of the property.
 - ✓ DPMO will continue to work with the DoN, the USLO and GoL to repatriate the crew.
 - Providing follow-up questions for the USLO to pass to the GoL regarding the 1986 F-111 loss incident.
 - ✓ Using evidence our team gathered during its first visit to Libya, DPMO analyzed the information along with other U.S. agencies, and developed new leads.
 - ✓ The USLO will also work with other diplomatic offices in Tripoli to acquire the requested information.
 - Passing new information on 19 loss locations of American servicemen missing from WWII in Libya that DPMO analysts validated recently, as well as a comprehensive package of information on the WWII Lady Be Good loss incident.
- The GoL point of contact was unavailable for meetings. The USLO provided strong support and will continue to facilitate future contact with the GoL.

COORDINATION: Attached

cf: DoS/NEA (Libya)

Attachment:

As stated

Prepared by: Lt Col Kripner, DPMO/ACP, 703-699-1158

COORDINATION

DUSD NESA, Dr. William J. Lutti

PDASD/ISA, Peter C. W. Flory:

Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office Analyst Report

Case Summary Information:

Name: Lorence, Paul Franklin

Loss Rank: Captain

Service: Air Force

Executive Summary

Major Ribas-Dominicci, pilot, and Captain Lorence, WISO, were lost off the Libyan coast near Sidi Bilal on 15 April 1986. Subsequent SAR efforts revealed no wreckage, debris, or parachute. No communications from the aircraft were heard prior to or after the loss incident. Approximately three weeks later, Maj Ribas-Dominicci's remains washed ashore 20 kilometers west of Sidi Bilal near Zawiyah. A subsequent autopsy revealed the cause of Maj Ribas-Dominicci's death was drowning. The only trauma to his body was a broken heel bone, consistent with a hard parachute landing in the pod. This indicates the pod, which carries both the pilot and the WISO, successfully separated from the aircraft and that Maj Ribas-Dominicci was still alive after the pod landed in the water. Because the pod was not subsequently seen by SAR forces, it is likely the pod sank due either to a failure of the flotation device or an inability of the aircrew to deploy it. Maj Ribas-Dominicci managed to unbuckle his harness and open the cockpit after landing. Whether he got out and drowned while attempting to swim to shore or whether he drowned in the pod and subsequently washed out is not known. Given these circumstances, it is likely Capt Lorence also drowned. His remains may be in the pod, washed out to sea, or washed into one of the many caves that are found along that portion of the Libyan coast. It is possible, though not likely, his remains washed ashore were found and not repatriated. In the nearly twenty years since the loss occurred, however, no concrete evidence indicating the Libyans have his remains has surfaced.

An even more remote possibility exists that Capt Lorence survived the landing, made it out of the pod, and successfully made it ashore. There is no credible evidence indicating this occurred.

In 2004, a DPMO team visited Libya in an effort to begin a dialogue with Libyan officials on finding Capt Lorence. The Libyans allowed the DPMO team to see some wreckage, which was found to be consistent with an F-111 wing pivot attachment point. They also allowed the team to interview six witnesses who had either seen wreckage or Maj Ribas-Dominicci's remains. None of the witnesses provided any information that might help account for Capt Lorence. A subsequent visit with the Libyans also revealed no new information.

Resolution of this case will come about only when additional clarifying information is obtained from the Libyan government and/or, the ejection pod is discovered. In December 2004, DPMO submitted a list of follow-on questions for the Libyan government through the U.S. Liaison Office in Tripoli. So far, no response has been received.

Incident Summary

On 15 April 1986, Major Ribas-Dominicci, pilot, and Captain Lorence, WISO, were flying an F-111F (call sign KARMA-52) as part of a package of aircraft bombing targets in Tripoli, Libya during OPERATION ELDORADO CANYON. As the formation began a high-speed ingress into the target area, several aircraft reported seeing a large fireball. Two aircraft reported a fireball traveling from west to east near Sidi Bilal, which impacted near the beach at 150004Z. This was confirmed by a third aircraft, which also reported a fireball near Sidi Bilal. A fourth aircraft reported the same fireball and crash as he exited the target area, position estimated to be 10NM from the beach, near 32-52N/013 00E. Although numerous SAR assets were in the area, no contact was made with Major Ribas-Dominicci's aircraft before or after the reported fireball. Search and Rescue efforts continued late into the night with no wreckage, debris, or parachute spotted. On 16 April, the Air Force determined the aircraft must have disintegrated upon impact with the water and that there was no hope of survival or remains recovery. In May 1986, however, the remains of Major Ribas-Dominicci were found on a beach 40 miles west of Tripoli. Those remains were returned to the U.S. via the Vatican in January 1989. Captain Lorence remains unaccounted for.

US Government Information

01/89: An autopsy of Major Ribas-Dominicci conducted by the Armed Forces Medical Examiner reveals the cause of death as drowning. There is no evidence of crash trauma except for a fracture of the right heel, such as might be sustained within the pod during a hard parachute landing. ((Note: This indicates the ejection pod successfully separated from the aircraft. Because the F-111 ejection pod is designed to carry both the pilot and the WISO, it is probable that Capt Lorence was also alive at the time the pod hit the water.)) Other items returned with Major Ribas-Dominicci include: \$59.00 in U.S. bills, a ten pound note, a cricket lighter, a survival knife, 13 bullets, and a wedding band with the inscription "Blanca Linda."

06/99: The Libya/Tunisia Desk Officer, Department of State, informed DPMO that a retired general officer contacted her claiming to have knowledge of American remains in Libya. The desk officer and a DPMO analyst subsequently interviewed the retired general who said that through two Canadian acquaintances (NFI) he met an a naturalized American citizen who was related through marriage to a high ranking official in the Libyan Protocol Office. The naturalized American citizen passed to the general that the Libyan government was interested in securing the general's support for developing business with the U.S. The general reportedly told the naturalized American citizen he would not consider getting involved until Libya turned over the remains of the two F-111 aviators lost in 1986 ((The general appeared not to know that Maj Ribas-Dominicci had been returned).

The general advised the naturalized American citizen the Libyan's should prepare to work out a plan to return the remains and he would be willing to go to Libya to secure them. When the DPMO analyst suggested the general first obtain some identification media to prove the Libyans had remains, the general believed the gesture was unnecessary as he had no doubt the Libyan government held them. The State

Department desk officer then requested the general not contact Libyan officials at the UN and asked him to contact the State Department if he received any further information from the Libyans.

06/99: A DPMO analyst contacted the naturalized American citizen in reference to the information provided by the retired general officer. The source clarified that he is related to Col. Chadly, a Libyan officer. Col Chadly does not work in the Protocol Office but knows Mr. Abdallah Mansour, who is a high ranking official. The source corroborated the general's information about the Libyan government's desire to renew business contacts with the U.S. The source contacted the general through a mutual friend from Canada. The source reported the Libyan government had admitted to him they had the remains of "two airmen" and would take the general's request under consideration. The source further explained that Mr. Mansour was very close to Muammar Qadhafi and that Qadhafi was aware of the general's request. The DPMO analyst requested the source have the Libyans provide the names of the two airmen and identification media to confirm his information. (Note: CIA, State Department, and the FBI were unable to corroborate the source's story.))

01/00: The naturalized American citizen previously interviewed contacted DPMO and said the general had passed away. He reported he and his brother-in-law, were still interested in normalizing economic relations between the U.S. and Libya and wanted to continue negotiations on the return of the two aviators. The source explained that in order to do this, they would need a high-ranking contact equivalent to the general. The source said the general promised he would have direct contact with President Clinton and could handle high-level economic and political negotiations. The source said he was willing to travel to Libya and begin those negotiations, but needed the endorsement of the U.S. government and funds to cover expenses. The DPMO analyst explained that amplifying details on the American remains were needed. The source was unable to provide any details in terms of identity or current whereabouts. He became impatient and said, "you know, those pilots lost during the Reagan administration." The source then admitted the turnover of remains was not a Libyan initiative, but one that had been instigated by the general, their Canadian friend, his brother-in-law, and himself. The DPMO analyst then asked the source how he knew the Libyan government had remains. The source explained his brother-in-law was very close to the "number two guy" in the Libyan government, who had admitted to holding remains. The source could not provide the name of this official. The DPMO analyst explained that in order to pass this information to higher U.S. officials, more details on his Libyan contact and information on the remains were needed. ((Note: The source spoke in very broad terms and was insistent on gaining contact with a "high ranking official." His information is second or third hand and he had no knowledge that one aviator has been unaccounted for))

02/01: The naturalized American citizen previously interviewed contacted DPMO to report he was planning travel to Tunisia and implied he would be in touch with his Libyan contacts, to include a potential exchange with Col Qadhafi. He wanted U.S. government support to see if the "door was open" for pursuing the turnover of remains of the two U.S. aviators as a goodwill gesture towards reestablishing economic relations. The source requested to be put in contact with a high-ranking U.S. government intermediary that could assist in this project. The DPMO analyst explained the recovery U.S. remains is a humanitarian issue not related to economic endeavors. The source assured the analyst the idea was intended as a goodwill gesture to "open the doors," and potential compensation for families of the Lockerbie aircraft could be addressed as well. The

analyst explained the Libyan government had made no public admission of holding the F-111 aviators' remains and the source had not provided any concrete information to the contrary. The source stated he and his contacts knew the "reality of the situation" and asked for examples of concrete information. The DPMO analyst explained the details regarding his contact, and the remains, e.g., identity, location, and disposition, would be helpful. Source seemed optimistic he could provide such information and promised to contact analyst while abroad.

08/03: The naturalized American citizen previously interviewed again called DPMO and said he had high-level contacts within the Libyan government and might be able to assist in recovering "the live American" still being held there. The call was referred to a DPMO analyst who confirmed the source had no information or specific knowledge of live Americans in Libya. The source said he was referring to the Americans killed "during the Reagan administration." When asked again, he emphatically stated he had no knowledge of any live Americans. The source then offered his services as an intermediary between DPMO and Libya. Without naming them, he explained to have Libyan contacts "at the highest level." The source speculated the time was right for making contact because it appeared that Libya was eager to be more open and had taken the responsible position of acknowledging their role in the Lockerbie incident. The analyst thanked the source for his offer of assistance, but added in such matters DPMO would work through the Department of State. ((Note: Source called back and subsequently asked for contacts in Department of State.))

ANALYST NOTE: It appears the line of investigation beginning in June 1999 with the retired general officer and ending in August 2003 with the naturalized American citizen was nothing more than an attempt to use DPMO as a conduit to improving economic ties to Libya. At no point during numerous interviews were any of the sources able to supply names, identification media, or any other evidence indicating Libya was holding Capt Lorence's remains. Indeed, neither source seemed aware that one of the aircrew was returned in 1989.

Joint Investigations

04/04: Two DPMO representatives traveled to Libya and met with members of the Libyan government to establish communication with appropriate officials and assess matters related to accounting for Capt Lorence. Col Abolgasem Mohamed, Director of Libyan League for Families of Martyrs, Prisoners of War, and War Wounded was the primary Libyan host for the visit.

The DPMO representatives were taken to Col Qadhafi's residence where they viewed pieces of wreckage from the aircraft. Subsequent analysis of the wreckage indicated they were from the wing pivot joint of an F-111. Five helmets were also seen at the site, two of which were of the same type used by Air Force crewmen in the mid-1980s. The DPMO representatives were unable to determine if any names were on the helmets. ((Note: When initially queried, Libyan officials said an effort had been made to recover portions of the F-111. Subsequently, they denied any such effort. The presence of the wing pivot joint, however, suggests a recovery effort was made. Even if Libyan officials know the location of the primary aircraft wreckage, it does not mean they know the location of the pod, which likely ejected from the plane prior to impact.))

The Libyans arranged for the DPMO representatives to meet and interview six witnesses to the incident: Mr. Taib Othman, driver of official photographer of Maj Ribas-Dominicci's remains; Mr. Madqur Yousef, a fisherman; Mr. Mohammed Sayah, an oil

refinery worker; Mr. Ali Mohammed Veshna Sayed, official incident photographer; Mr. Abdul Salem Ashor, officer in charge of refinery security; and Mr. Munji Hussein, the police officer in charge of the investigation. None of the witnesses provided any information that would help account for Capt Lorence. All witnesses had either seen portions of wreckage or Maj Ribas-Dominicci's remains. Mr. Sayed, the photographer, took the photos and video of Major Ribas-Dominicci's remains. He stated he took photos of a helmet on the beach at Zawiyah and at the police station. When queried, he did not know if the helmet he photographed at the beach was the same helmet that was photographed at the police station. He did not know the subsequent disposition of the helmets. Mr. Hussein, the investigating police officer, described how civilians had discovered Maj Ribas-Dominicci's remains at the Zawiyah beach on 6 May 1986, approximately three weeks after the attack. He provided a list of items found with the remains, which matched the items returned in 1989 with the exception of a canteen and a wallet. He claimed he may have seen dogtags, though there was no mention of dogtags in his official report. He believed all the items found were returned to the American's in 1989, including the canteen and wallet ((Note: This testimony indicates the Libyans withheld at least two personal items belonging to Maj Ribas-Dominicci)). Mr. Hussein did not know of any other unidentified bodies washing out of the sea in the intervening years.

The DPMO representatives were then taken to the beach where Maj Ribas-Dominicci was found. The coast was rocky with numerous caves cut under the shoreline. Libyan officials said many fishermen drown off the coast and are not seen again as their bodies wash into the caves and are not seen again. Mr. Hussein said the currents off the coast were variable and strong, though they generally went west. This was confirmed by Col Muhamed, who said that recently a Libyan aircraft had been lost off the coast and the body was subsequently returned by the Tunisians. ((Note: The beach is just over 20 kilometers west of Sidi Bilal. The fact that Maj Ribas-Dominicci's remains and some wreckage was found at the beach confirms the Libyans' assertions the current runs generally to the west.))

The following information was requested for the next visit: Access to the original police report, access to military (air defense records) that relate to the shoot down, access to videos and any other photographs taken during the recovery of equipment and remains, meetings with members of air defense units active during the evening of the shoot down, meetings with any potential witnesses to the shoot down.

12/04: DPMO representatives returned to Libya for follow-up questions to Libyan officials. Though the meeting had been fully coordinated with Libya prior to the DPMO representatives visit, no Libyan officials were made available for interview. The DPMO representatives passed questions of interest on to the U.S. Liaison Office in Tripoli for forwarding to the Libyan government.

1/06: DPMO analyst resubmits follow-on requests and questions to the U.S. Liaison Office in Tripoli for forwarding to Libyan government officials.

Libyan Unilateral Information

05/86: Libyan autopsy report of Major Ribas-Dominicci describes extensive decomposition, pulmonary congestion, and emphysematous changes from decomposition and no apparent signs of injury. The body was reported to be wearing one boot at the time of the Libyan examination. The body was reported to be covered in aquatic weeds and algae and the flight gear pockets were to be full of sand such as was

typically found on beaches. ((Note: The original Libyan autopsy does not identify Major Ribas-Dominicci by name. Instead he is described as 'American Pilot.' When Major Ribas-Dominicci's remains were returned to U.S. custody, they were identified by the Libyan government as Capt Lorence.))

Further Pursuit

The F-111 aircraft ejection pod, which descends beneath a large parachute, carries both crewmembers from a stricken aircraft, and there is no provision for individual ejection or parachute descent. Consequently, it is likely that Capt Lorence was alive at the time the ejection pod descended into the Mediterranean Sea ((Note: During an investigation of a B-1 Bomber incident, which uses an escape pod similar to the F-111, it was noted that one of the retro rockets misfired causing the pod to land at an angle. This resulted in the death of one aviator while the other survived)). If Capt Lorence survived the initial descent, it is not known whether he subsequently drowned. The escape pod is equipped with flotation air bags, which are designed to keep it upright and afloat during a water landing, once activated by one of the aircrew. A bilge pump is also included in the pod. It is probable these systems failed and the pod sank shortly after landing. An extensive U.S. search and rescue effort conducted after the loss found no signs of the pod or debris. To date, all efforts to clarify the fate of Capt Lorence have been unsuccessful.

At this point, the resolution of the case will come about only when additional clarifying information is obtained from the Libyan government and or, the discovery of the ejection pod.



INTERNATIONAL
SECURITY AFFAIRS

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
2400 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-2400

04/016542

INFO MEMO

FOR: ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR INTERNATIONAL
SECURITY AFFAIRS

DEC 08 2004

FROM: Jerry D. Jennings, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for POW/Missing
Personnel Affairs

SUBJECT: DPMO Libya Team Visit

- This memo informs you of the results of a DPMO team visit to Libya December 2 - 4, 2004.
- This was a follow-on visit to pursue leads DPMO developed after discussions with the Government of Libya (GoL) in April. The team met their three objectives by:
 - Photographing the Protestant Cemetery where crewmembers of the USS Intrepid crew lost in 1804 are buried, and assessing for the Department of Navy (DoN) possibilities for repatriating them to the United States.
 - ✓ Following up on DPMO's request in April, the U.S. Liaison Office (USLO) had located the cemetery and gained control of the property.
 - ✓ DPMO will continue to work with the DoN, the USLO and GoL to repatriate the crew.
 - Providing follow-up questions for the USLO to pass to the GoL regarding the 1986 F-111 loss incident.
 - ✓ Using evidence our team gathered during its first visit to Libya, DPMO analyzed the information along with other U.S. agencies, and developed new leads.
 - ✓ The USLO will also work with other diplomatic offices in Tripoli to acquire the requested information.
 - Passing new information on 19 loss locations of American servicemen missing from WWII in Libya that DPMO analysts validated recently, as well as a comprehensive package of information on the WWII Lady Be Good loss incident.
- The GoL point of contact was unavailable for meetings. The USLO provided strong support and will continue to facilitate future contact with the GoL.

COORDINATION: Attached

cf: DoS/NEA (Libya)

Attachment:

As stated

Prepared by: Lt Col Kripner, DPMO/ACP, 703-699-1158

COORDINATION

DUSD NESA, Dr. William J. Lutti

PDASD/ISA, Peter C. W. Flory:

Defense
Prisoner Of War/
Missing Personnel
Office

Memorandum



Date: 29 April 2004

To: Gary Sydow and Paul Mather

From: RA-SEA/Wakabayashi

Subject: Interviews of Libyan Witnesses of 1986 F-111 Loss and Remains Recovery

1. On 12 April 2004, Lt Col Olga Kripner, DPMO Personnel Accounting Policy, and LCDR Matt Wakabayashi, DPMO Research and Analysis, met with Abdul Dijouli, Minister of Justice for the Zawiyah area, site of the 1986 F-111 loss and recovery of remains. The Minister provided six witnesses for interview. LCDR Wakabayashi conducted the interviews with the aid of Mr. A. B. Elbizanti, an interpreter from the Libyan Protocol Office.

2. Details of the interviews are as follows:

Name: Mr. Taib Othman

Age: 60 years old

Occupation: Driver (Mr. Othman drove the official photographer of Maj. Ribas-Dominicci's remains.)

Narrative: At 1000-1030 the morning after the attack, Mr. Othman was told the remains of a pilot had been found on shore. He drove to the site with the photographer. The pilot had no boots, but was otherwise clothed. His eyes were missing. He wrapped the remains in plastic and took them to a mortuary in Zawiyah where they were placed in an icebox. The pilot had on his person a wallet with a photo of his family. Mr. Othman believes the pilot had boys.

Ammunition was recovered from the body, but no firearms were found. Mr. Othman heard that a helmet and a piece of wing had also been recovered near the oil refinery (the oil refinery is west of Zawiyah). Mr Othman did not personally see the helmet or the wing.

Comment: Mr. Othman is almost certainly wrong on the date he was called. All other evidence suggests Maj. Ribas-Dominicci's remains were found in May 1986, a month after the attack. The claim that a wallet was found with a photograph is new information and was corroborated by several other sources. He is the only witness who reported seeing a photo. Notably, both officers had one son and no other children. When asked what happened to the wallet and other personal effects, Mr. Othman claimed not to know. As the driver of the photographer who took photos of Maj. Ribas-Dominicci's remains and the helmet and wing fragment, it is interesting that he did not see the helmet himself.

Name: Mr. Madqur Yousef
Age: 54
Occupation: Fisherman

Narrative: While fishing on an unrecalled date at about 1030, Mr. Yousef found a red piece of wing about a mile off shore. It was a meter in length and had "USA" written on it. He recovered the wing and brought it to an official. The current that morning was moving northerly (toward Tunisia). Mr. Yousef also saw the helmet on the west side of the oil refinery. The helmet was inscribed with the name "C. Brons."

Comment: Mr. Yousef spoke some English. The two pilots lost in this incident were Capt. Paul Lorence and Maj. Fernando Ribas-Dominicci.

Name: Mr. Mohammed Sayah
Age: 57
Occupation: Refinery Worker

Narrative: On the night of 15 April, 1986, Mr. Sayah was working at the refinery. From shore, he saw a plane in flames over the sea. The plane exploded. He could not tell the direction the plane was flying, but thought it might be coming from Tripoli. He did not hear the plane explode. When asked what distance from shore the plane exploded Mr. Sayah was reluctant to give an estimate, but finally said about two-three kilometers. He also said that sea currents in the area were variable.

Comment: Mr Sayah did not view Capt. Ribas-Dominicci's remains or the helmet.

Name: Ali Mohammed Veshna Sayed

Age: Unknown

Occupation: Photographer (employed by the police at time of incident)

Narrative: On 20 April 1986, around 1100-1130, Mr. Sayed arrived at the beach west of Zawiyah to take photographs of a pilot whose remains had washed up on shore. He took photos of the pilot and some personal effects, including a wallet with 40-45 dollars. He did not see a photograph in the wallet. He also took a video tape, which was sent to officials for broadcast over Libyan television. Later in the morning, he took photographs of a helmet that washed up near the refinery. Photos and video of a helmet were also taken at the police station. Mr. Sayed did not know if the helmet photographed at the beach was the same helmet photographed at the police station. After the helmet was photographed at the police station, it was brought to the town square for viewing by the general public.

Comment: Mr. Sayed is the third witness to mention a wallet. He showed us photographs he took of the helmet. The quality was very poor and it was impossible to make out a name on the helmet. We did not see the video. Officials promised copies of the photos and video would be given to us.

Name: Abdul Salem Ashor

Age: 48

Occupation: Officer in Charge of Refinery Security

Narrative: On an unrecalled date, while working as a guard at the refinery, he received a telephone call informing him that a piece of aircraft wreckage was being delivered to the refinery. He saw the wreckage, which he described as red, but did not see any other items. He did not see the helmet.

Name: Munji Hussein

Age: 45

Occupation: Police Officer

Narrative: On 6 May 1986, some civilians on the beach west of Zawiyah found the remains of a pilot. The remains were in the water, face down. The remains were long, about 185 meters, and wore a military (flight) suit. After the phone call, Mr. Hussein began the official investigation. When he arrived at the beach, he found a badly decayed body that gave the impression it had been in the water a

long time. The body was swollen and, aside from missing a boot, was otherwise fully clothed. He searched the body and found the following items:

- Wallet in nylon bag
- 59.00 dollars
- 10.00 pounds
- Small holster (no weapon)
- 14 bullets
- Canteen with U.S. written on it.
- Silver Wedding Ring with Blanca Linda written on it
- Red knife
- Cricket lighter

After the body was found, it was sent to the hospital for examination. The body was photographed, but he did not see the photos.

Comment: Mr. Hussein was the most knowledgeable of the witnesses. He was very clear on the date, the state of the remains, and what the pilot was carrying. It was, however, only after several questions that the timeline of events became clear. Civilians found the body and called the police. The police went to the beach and directed a boat be brought in to move the body to the refinery. Mr. Hussein claimed he was the first person who had a chance to investigate personal items on the body. Although he saw the helmet, he could not remember a name. When asked how the identification of the pilot was made, he mentioned he might have seen or heard of dog tags being found near the body (interesting as the body was found in the water). He did not believe there was any mention of dog tags in the official report and he cannot recall who might have mentioned or shown him the dog tags. I asked about what happened to the pilot's personal effects, including the wallet. Mr Hussein's belief was that everything had been returned. According to our records all the items he mentioned except the wallet and canteen were returned. He said no other unidentified bodies had washed up on the Zawiyah beach in the intervening years.

3. Other Observations: It was clearly news to the Libyans that the returned remains belonged to Maj. Ribas-Dominicci and not Capt. Lorence. I explained the post-mortem conducted in Spain revealed through dental records the remains belonged to Maj. Ribas-Dominicci and the cause of death was drowning, not crash trauma. This indicates that both pilot and WISO likely successfully ejected from the aircraft. Mr. Hussein suggested it was possible Capt. Lorence's body washed into one of the many caves on section of beach where Maj. Ribas-Dominicci's

body was first sighted. If that were the case, Capt Lorence's body would likely not be recovered. The currents along that portion of the coast are strong and variable and it is unlikely that anything that washed into a cave would come out. Mr. Hussein mentioned frequent drownings in the area and said many bodies were unrecoverable. This was confirmed by the other witnesses. Our host, Col. Mohamed, mentioned that the Air Force recently lost an aircraft off Zawiyah and the body was recovered near the Tunisian border.

On the whole, I felt the witnesses tried their best to be cooperative.

4. As follow-up we requested the following:

- Access to review or copies of the original police report
- Access to military/air defense records that might pertain to the shoot-down
- Copies of or ability to view videos showing helmet and remains
- Other photographs taken during the recovery
- Meetings with individuals who may have seen or handled dog tags
- Meetings with anyone else from the area that may have witnessed the loss incident or remains recovery.



**Probable HGU-55/P Flight
Helmet of the type worn by US
pilots in the 1980s**



**Probable F-111 Wing Pivot
Attachment Point or Wing
Carry- Through Box**

US F-111 Information Sheet

Circumstances of Loss: On 15 April 1986, Major Ribes-Dominici, pilot, and Capt. Lawrence WISO, were flying an F-111F as part of a package of aircraft bombing targets in Tripoli, Libya during OPERATION ELDORADO CANYON. As the formation began a high-speed ingress into the target area, several aircraft reported feeling a large fireball. Two aircraft reported a fireball traveling from west to east near Sidi Bani, which impacted near the beach at 160004Z. This was confirmed by a third aircraft, which also reported a fireball near Sidi Bani. A fourth aircraft reported the same fireball and crash as he exited the target area, position estimated to be 10NM from the beach, near JZ-52N013 00E. No contact was made with Major Ribes-Dominici's aircraft before or after the reported fireball. Search and Rescue efforts continued late into the night with no wreckage, debris, or parachute spotted. On 16 April, the Air Force determined the aircraft must have disintegrated upon impact with the water and that there was no hope of survival or remains recovery.

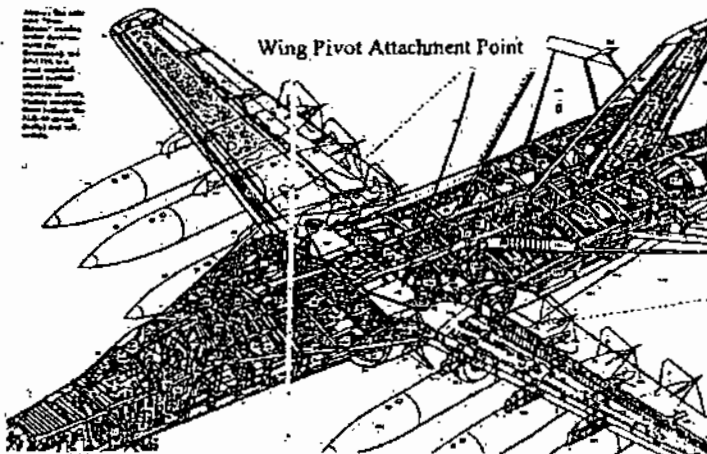
Status of Crewmen:: Maj. Ribas-Dominicó's body washed ashore on the Libyan coast in May 1986. His remains were returned through third-party routes to the Vatican in January 1989. Libyan officials identified the returned remains as those of Capt. Lorencor; however, a postmortem examination of these remains revealed the remains to be those of Maj. Ribas-Dominicó. Further examination revealed the cause of death was drowning and there were no signs of high-speed crash trauma, since the body only had a broken heel bone. In accordance with these findings, it is likely that the F-111 ejection pod successfully separated from the aircraft and landed in the sea. The ejection pod is designed to carry both crewmembers from a stricken aircraft, and there is no provision for individual ejection. It is unknown if Capt. Lorencor was alive during the pod descent and later drowned, or if he made it ashore.

In April 2004, the Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) had a chance to investigate this case in Tripoli, Libya. During the investigation, portions of probable F-111 aircraft wreckage and several helmets were recovered and turned over to DPMO representatives. Photographs were taken and given to specialists in the United States for analysis. It was subsequently determined that two of the helmets photographed were consistent with helmets worn by F-111 aircrew in the 1980s. Furthermore, portions of the wreckage appeared to be part of the F-111 wing pivot attachment point or wing carry through box.

Information Sought: U.S. analysts would like to determine if the portions of aircraft wreckage displayed are those of the Ribas Domínguez-Lorenzo aircraft and if any of the helmets displayed belonged to the either of the crewmen. Ideally, photographs of the entire display along with photographs of any serial numbers or names would be obtained.

Aircraft Data. If possible, look over wreckage for serial numbers. Pay special attention to the large piece of wreckage that is likely a portion of the wing/wing assembly. A photograph of the wing pivot attachment point and a diagram of where it fits into an F-111 are on the back of this information sheet.

Helmet Data. If possible, check the inside of the helmets for names.



April 19, 2004

DPMO INFO MEMO

**FOR: DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR POW/MISSING
PERSONNEL AFFAIRS**

FROM: Melinda Cooke, Senior Director for Policy, 699-1236

SUBJECT: DPMO Libya Assessment Visit After Action Report

- This memo informs you of the results of the DPMO Libya Assessment visit to Tripoli from April 10 – 13, 2004.
- Lt Col Olga M. Kripner, DPMO Personnel Accounting Policy, and LCDR Matt Wakabayashi, DPMO Research and Analysis, met with members of the Libyan Armed Forces and other local government officials. Ms. Leslie Tsou, U.S. Interest Section (USINT) Tripoli, accompanied the DPMO team to several of the meetings.
- The purpose of the visit was to establish communication with appropriate Libyan government officials, assess matters related to accounting for the two missing American airmen, and propose a timeline for follow-on visits to pursue accounting efforts.
 - Due to time constraints, this visit focused primarily on the 1986 F-111 loss incident.
 - The Libyans arranged for us to meet with and interview six witnesses to the incident; however, these interviews did not reveal anything relating to the recovery of a second crewmember.
 - LCDR Wakabayashi shared the account of the returned remains; this was the first the Libyans heard that their identification did not match ours.
 - There was also some confusion regarding the number of helmets recovered from this incident. Again, we asked for specific follow-up videos/photographs that they said would clarify this.
- We met primarily with the following individuals:
 - Ms. Leslie Tsou, deputy USINT and U.S. liaison with the Libyan government;
 - Col Abolgasem Mohamed (Libyan Air Force), Director of Libyan League for Families of Martyrs, Prisoners of War, and War Wounded, the Libyan host and primary representative for the visit;

- Col Sagar Adam (Libyan Air Force), Base Commander for Nasser Air Base, Tobruk and individual primarily responsible for relocating WWII wreckage of *The Lady Be Good* to Tobruk;
 - Mr. A. B. Elbizanti, from Libyan government protocol, our primary interpreter for the visit;
 - The Minister of Justice for the Zawiyah area, site where the F-111 crashed and the remains were recovered; and
 - Mr. Mansour E. Shouieb, Head of Secretariat Peoples Committee of Tourism, Tobruk.
- During our initial meeting, Col Mohamed asked about and clarified our objectives and desired itinerary.
 - Lt Col Kripner thanked the Libyans on behalf of Mr. Jennings for their assistance and briefed the U.S. commitment to and process for accounting for Americans still missing from past conflicts.
 - She briefed the following requirements to help determine the fates of unaccounted for Americans and asked for their assistance to accomplish these during this and subsequent visits:
 - ✓ Access to the loss sites;
 - ✓ Interviews with individuals who may have witnessed the loss incident, seen the missing Americans or have other knowledge of them;
 - ✓ Examination of wreckage or personal effects which may have been recovered from the sites; and
 - ✓ Access to documents related to the loss incidents.
 - Col Mohamed understood and agreed to facilitate these objectives stating that, unfortunately, due to great distance, it was not possible to visit the original loss location of *The Lady Be Good* site during this visit.
 - Both sides confirmed this visit would probably be the first of several visits in the process to find information regarding these loss incidents.

- Per our stated objectives, Col Mohamed revised the itinerary. He reiterated that they were fully cooperating in accordance with the desires of their leadership to ensure our mission is successful. Our itinerary included:
 - A visit to the memorial for the Libyan naval vessel sunk in 1986 and the cemetery where civilians killed during the incident are buried;
 - A visit to the Leader's House (HQ) to view pieces of wreckage and artifacts from the 1986 loss incident;
 - Meetings with Libyans from the Zawiyah area who knew about the 1986 incident;
 - ✓ We met with six witnesses to this event, including the photographer of the recovered body, the police official in charge of the investigation, and the fisherman who recovered the body from the ocean.
 - ✓ LCDR Wakabayashi is preparing a separate report on these interviews.
 - A visit to the site where the remains were first discovered in the sea and to the refinery where the remains were brought on shore; and
 - A visit to Tobruk to view the wreckage of *The Lady Be Good* and the local museum.
 - ✓ The wreckage of *The Lady Be Good* was removed from its desert crash site to minimize the damage from tourists and shepherds removing pieces of the wreckage.
 - ✓ Mr. Mansour E. Shouieb expressed his government's desire for help from the U.S. government in restoring the aircraft.
- Based on meetings and site visits, the DPMO team requested the Libyans research and provide, if possible, the following information by the next visit:
 - The 1986 F-111 loss:
 - ✓ Access to the original police report;
 - ✓ Access to military (air defense) records;
 - ✓ Access to videos they saw clearly show the helmet(s);
 - ✓ Other photographs that may have been taken during the recovery;

- ✓ Meetings with members from air defense units active during the evening of the shoot down;
 - ✓ Meetings with individuals who may have seen or handled the dog tag(s); and
 - ✓ Meetings with anyone else from the refinery who may have witnessed the shoot down.
- The wreckage of *The Lady Be Good* loss:
 - ✓ Site visit;
 - ✓ Meetings with anyone who may have knowledge of the area in which the crew members died; and
 - ✓ Records from previous British military maneuvers or petroleum exploration.
- Col Mohamed repeatedly reiterated his and his government's willingness to cooperate with our mission and to research our requests for follow-up.
 - He requested that both governments use the same teams in future visits.
 - We discussed a tentative timeline for a return visit but did not discuss any dates:
 - ✓ 2 days: travel to London to secure visa through the Libyan embassy
 - ✓ 1 day: travel to Tripoli
 - ✓ 5 days: conduct follow-up meetings and visit *The Lady Be Good* site
 - ✓ 1 day: travel to Washington
- Ms. Leslie Tsou, USINT, provided exceptional support throughout the visit despite having no back-up.
 - Our visit was her first opportunity to work with the Libyan military.
 - She encouraged both us and the Libyans to contact each other directly but to keep her informed.
- Col Mohamed and the other Libyan counterparts demonstrated a sincere desire to fully cooperate by:

- Providing unrestricted access to the F-111 incident sites,
 - Locating first-hand witnesses in less than 24 hours, and
 - Arranging transportation for us to view the wreckage of *The Lady Be Good* in Tobruk.
- Assessment: The Libyans were extremely interested in demonstrating their cooperation and exceeded our expectations in meeting our stated objectives for this trip. Although the 1986 incident is sensitive, they were willing to share documents and allow open access to witnesses from this incident. Additionally, they:
 - Asked for specific items on which they could provide more information regarding both events;
 - Stated they would like for us to share ideas on their organization as they believed they had much to learn from our experience and expertise; and
 - Confirmed their desire for us to visit again and for them to visit the U.S. in the future.

Attachments:

None

Prepared by: Lt Col Kripner, ACP, 699-1158