



DEFENSE PRISONER OF WAR/MISSING PERSONNEL OFFICE  
2400 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-2400

15 MAY 2001  
In reply refer to:  
I-01/003696

MEMORANDUM FOR HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES AIR FORCE  
MISSING PERSONS BRANCH

SUBJECT: Information concerning Lt Col Earl P. Hopper Jr., (Refno 0981)

The Hoppers request numerous tapes, logs, debriefing statements, etc., relating to the command and control aircraft, rescue personnel and others who were operating in North Vietnam for the period of 10-17 January 1968. DPMO does not have any of the requested materials, and we are not confident that the requested items exist. Over the years, efforts to find audiotapes of similar events have been unsuccessful. We found that tapes were routinely reused (recorded over) and that material was not archived. Nevertheless, some of the requested written material might have been saved and thus could be available in Air Force archives, should the Service wish to conduct their own research. Since these items have no bearing on resolution of this loss incident, the Research and Analysis Directorate does not plan to further pursue the matter.

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**Colonel and Mrs. Earl P. Hopper, Sr.**

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15 June 2001

**TO:** Mr. J. Alan Liotta, Director  
Defense Prisoner and Missing Office  
2400 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301-2400

**FROM:** Colonel and Mrs. Earl P. Hopper, Sr.

**SUBJECT:** Information concerning Lt. Col. Earl P. Hopper, Jr. (Refno 0981)

**REGARDING:** DPMO'S MEMORANDUM FOR HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES AIR FORCE MISSING PERSONS BRANCH DATED 15 MAY 2001, I-01/003696

According to this Memo for Headquarter, United States Air Force Missing Persons Branch, we are being denied access to pertinent debriefing statements, logs, reports, records and tapes "since these items have no bearing on resolution of this loss incident."

Since when is material evidence such as this, which we strongly believe confirms that Earl Hopper survived his loss incident, considered to have "no bearing on the resolution" of this case?

In this memorandum, the statement is made that DPMO has been "unsuccessful in finding audiotapes of similar events in the past because the tapes were frequently reused." Did any of your staff even make an attempt to find any of the requested material or did the analyst of record, Melinda Cook, simply set our request aside until sufficient time had passed before drafting this lame memorandum for Dr. Whitley's signature?

The fact is that at lower echelons audiotapes may or may not have been recycled; however, at the Command and Control level this material was maintained. The reason for this was because the Command and Control recordings covered ALL the mission communication traffic in such a manner that it made others redundant and unnecessary to maintain.

Audiotapes of incidents wherein American personnel became unaccounted for were of intense interest and steps were taken to ensure the information remained accessible. This material most certainly would have been classified and archived by the intelligence community both during and after the end of the war. It was just too valuable to be handled in the cavalier off-hand manner described in this memorandum.

Witness debriefing statements were also of intense interest when it came to POW/MIAs. Even though this family was provided the debriefing statements of the other members of Rematch flight, the debriefing statements from the A-1E and helicopter SAR personnel have never been provided to us.

Further, the debriefing statement of the "F-4D pilot from Ubon" who heard Earl's emergency beeper while over flying the loss location the next day - and who gave Earl's authenticator code, requested that he come back at 15 second intervals and received a positive response to his request - has never been provided to us.

We have attempted to locate the SAR personnel and the F-4D pilot from Ubon on our own through unit associations, etc. All of our attempts have been fruitless to date.

Facts provided in Colonel Henehan's letter to the family dated 16 January 1968:

- "Emergency radio signals from the hand held distress radios were heard."

- "The A-1Es were trying to pin point the beeper transmissions with their D/F equipment and they received an emergency response from two locations."
- "The A-1E On Scene Commander transmitted that he could no longer operate in the area, to dig in and that he would return at first light."
- "The following day an F-4D pilot from Ubon RTAFB reported that he received an emergency signal while over flying the same location. He asked for another response of fifteen seconds duration and got it."
- "At present there are twelve people down in the area, including ours, all of them have established radio contact with Rescue Forces."

The last relevant point made by Colonel Henehan in this letter states: "In any event our squadron will continue to make radio calls when in that location."

From a follow up letter from Lt. Col. Gratch, Chief, Casualty Division, dated 7 February 1968:

- "Two objects were seen to leave the aircraft within a three to five second interval; however, no parachutes were observed."
- "Shortly afterwards, two emergency electronic signals were heard almost simultaneously."
- "The strong possibility exists that your son may have been taken captive. This conclusion is supported by the fact that he landed in a populated area and evasion for an extended period would have been unlikely."

And finally from another letter from Lt. Col. Gratch dated 13 January 1970:

- "We have carefully screened the statements of those who witnessed your son's incident and find that ... after reporting they were hit, Major Hall kept the aircraft under control for several minutes and maintained voice contact with other flight members. He gave no indication that anything was wrong with your son."
- "The aircraft was at about 20,000 feet when the two objects were seen to leave it."
- "While talking with Major Hall on the ground, the flight leader specifically asked if he knew how much time elapsed after Captain Hopper ejected before he made his ejection. He indicated that he did not know if your son got out."
- "... on at least two occasions (the flight leader) thought he heard two beeper signals on the air simultaneously."
- "Four of the five other witnesses (from Rematch flight) also commented that they believed two signals had been heard, but the second one was weak."
- "That could have accounted for why your son's failure to make voice contact from the ground...."

Why are all these point relevant? Because they prove Earl Hopper did not ride the aircraft to the ground and die in it, which is the basis for CIL-HI's premise that the five teeth/parts of teeth constitute his total mortal remains and should be identified and buried as such. These requested items have an absolute bearing on the resolution of this case because they are tangible evidence that he survived and US military personnel knew it right from the time of loss.

We have not asked idle questions that were pulled out of thin air just to "make work" for USG personnel. Further, we have asked these questions in the past, often repeatedly. They have been asked generally a few at a time, and frequently in person during regional and national meetings. Our questions have either gone unanswered or have met with incomplete and unsatisfactory answers.

In the last 33 years we have routinely requested a variety of material – debriefing statements, records, reports, logs, intelligence documents - regarding this case through our casualty officer as well as directly through DPMO, it's predecessors and/or other agencies. For whatever reason, many of our requests have met with the same less than adequate response as this latest one. Understand one point clearly: We are not going to go away no matter how much we are stonewalled.

The fact is these debriefing statements, records, reports, logs and/or audiotapes should have been made available to us years ago when President Reagan ordered all POW/MIA information be declassified and provided to the families. Every president since Ronald Reagan has made the same presidential order. As you well know, the families are still waiting.

Because these documents and audiotapes were not provided to us in the past, we continue to request them today. It is now incumbent upon DPMO, as the agency responsible for Prisoner of War/Missing in Action matters, to search out and provide this requested material to us in as timely a manner as humanly possible. If it remains classified today, get it declassified.

For the record, in January 2001 we received information from a well-placed former intelligence officer who had direct knowledge of a Russian intelligence report that is under the control of the Defense Intelligence Agency regarding a Soviet (Russian) delegation's trip to Sam Neua, Laos during or shortly after 1973 wherein the Russians interviewed American POWs being held there.

This intelligence report was forwarded to the participants' superiors and was obtained by DIA after the collapse of the Soviet Union. DIA personnel immediately classified this document in order to keep its explosive content hidden from public view. It may or may not remain classified today.

Attached to the formal report is a list of names of the specific American Prisoners of War who were interviewed including Earl P. Hopper, Jr. We are told his name appears on this list as "Earl P. Hepper" or "Earl P. Hepper, Jr."

On 4 February 2001, we sent a letter through Air Force Casualty requesting this Russian/Soviet intelligence report. The response we received via e-mail on 7 May 2001 states: DPMO has indicated they have nothing that resembles what you are asking for. In 1969, a Mr. Loboda and two Russian journalists went to Laos. They claimed to have seen David Hrdlicka." The name 'Hopper' was never mentioned and the trip took place in 1969. DPMO has nothing linked to Lt. Col. Hopper in a 1973 report."

As the "umbrella organization" responsible for control of all USG POW/MIA activities, including interacting and assisting families of missing men, it is now your responsibility to find and provide the requested material particularly when adequate information is provided to you to aid your staff in that search. In the case of the Russian/Soviet intelligence report, we did everything but give you the DIA IR number associated with it. If we had it, we certainly would have provided it, too.

Herein we request yet again:

- A complete unredacted copy of the Russian/Soviet intelligence report including the list of all POWs named. We also want any and all other attachments that are associated with it.
- The debriefing statements of the "F-4D pilot(s) out of Ubon" who picked up Earl's emergency beeper.
- The debriefing statements from all of the SAR aircrews who participated in the attempted rescue of Earl Hopper and Keith Hall.
- The Airborne Battlefield Command and Control Aircraft audiotapes, logs, reports, records, debriefing statements or any combination thereof. The call signs for the ABCCC's included, but were not limited to Hillsboro, Motel, Waterboy, Crown and College Eye.
- In preparing our rebuttal document, we found references in Earl's file to Crown 2 also monitoring the Rematch mission and downing of Rematch 3. Crown 2 was a US Navy early warning vessel located in the Gulf of Tonkin above the 18<sup>th</sup> parallel. We want all of Crown 2's audiotapes, logs, reports, records, debriefing statements or any combination thereof that relates to the Rematch mission, Rematch 3 loss and subsequent rescue attempts.
- The "day to day operations log" of the 13<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Squadron, and the 432nd Tactical Reconnaissance Wing to which it was assigned, for the month of January 1968.

If DPMO personnel in the Research and Analysis Directorate are not competent to fulfill their mission, then we recommend they be replaced by personnel who can.