

TO: Larry Greer; assorted other USG officials involved in various areas of the POW/MIA issue; POW/MIA family members and organizations, Concerned Citizens and everyone interested in this (or any other) case.

FROM: Patricia Hopper, Step-mother of Earl P. Hopper, Jr.

SUBJECT: Press Release No. 210-09 dated April 02, 2009

Larry:

The following Press Release was authored by a bureaucrat who has a gift for turning reality into fiction.

You know this document ignores pieces of truth and is not only misleading, but outright false and does not reflect the true situation.

Points of reality:

- The F4D was damaged by a SAM that exploded 100 feet below and to the right of the aircraft, not "slightly below their aircraft." Your wording implies it exploded nearly up against the fighter and it also implies little to no survivability. Both presumptions are patently false. The aircraft was seriously damaged, but still air worthy. In fact, according to field excavations documents, the nose to tail wreckage showed no fire damage from JP4 jet fuel burning after impact. The only fire damage to the aircraft was caused by Vietnamese farmers conducting their normal "slash-and-burn" farming techniques in the late 1970s. What these facts mean is the Phantom went down when and where it did because it flat ran out of fuel, not from battle damage.

- Information from the conversation recorded between Keith Hall and Earl that you refer to in your press release was provided by Keith in his debriefing statement after Operation Homecoming and is reasonably accurate based on his account, but additional information from that debriefing that is pertinent and missing is the fact that Keith did not report to the flight commander, other flight members, the ABCCC or SAR personnel that Earl was injured in any way. In other words, if Earl had sustained injuries in the explosion, he would have reported that information to Keith during their communications and Keith would have reported that fact to everyone else he had contact with while he was still in the aircraft and/or after he reached the ground. These are facts supported by Earl's casualty file, Squadron Commander's letter shortly after loss and a wide range of other USG generated documents dating from time of loss forward including in his 1980 Status Review Hearing.

- You know that Keith Hall was captured roughly 20 minutes after hitting the ground. He destroyed his radio/beeper before capture and Earl's was the only one transmitting for those 3 days after Keith's capture. In fact, Earl's beeper was the only one that could have been transmitting during that time from that location as no one was downed anywhere near him.

- You also fail to include the fact that in August 1970, better than 2 1/2 years after capture, Keith was interrogated about Earl and the only information his captors were interested in was personal information about Earl - was he married, did he have children where did he go to school, what were his hobbies, that sort of data. Now keep in mind this fact, the communists would not be looking for this type of information on a dead man over 2 1/2 years after loss. However, this is precisely the type of information they would be looking for if he was live in captivity and his captors' were looking for information to use against him.

- Your statement "...but Hopper was unable to get out of the aircraft" implies that he died in a catastrophic crash and that implication is just wrong. You know that, your analysts know that along with every other government employee who has worked his case from date of loss through today. This includes all of your crash site excavation records which are all in my possession and which show that all of the wreckage sits on the surface of the ground, not burrowed deep into it. These records show that the field excavation personnel dug no deeper than 27 inches in any part of the crash site and nothing of substance was found below 8 inches in any part of it.

- You have a wide range of USG/military documents that Earl was out of the aircraft, beeper heard and tracked for 3 consecutive days after loss. You also have a whole litany of intelligence reports - classified and unclassified - documenting his survival all the way through the spring of 1984 when he and some 25 other POWs were tracked by name and prison camp location in Laos by US military intelligence personnel given the express mission to search for living American Prisoners of War in Southeast Asia by then President Ronald Reagan.

- Over the last years, the USG's POW/MIA mission has primarily been focused on remains recovery and not the return of any living Prisoners of War. The USG talks a good show about Stony Beach "looking for live guys," but in the end we all know it's nothing but smoke and mirrors. You all prefer to discredit any and all information about men surviving his/their loss incidents, were/probably/undoubtedly were captured and are alive somewhere in the world today.

Here's a reality check for those in and out of government service:

- Examine the photo of the "remains" that came out of this crash site. Understand clearly that only 4 of the 5 teeth/tooth fragments match Earl's dental radiographs. Because it is an unusual combination of teeth, we believe they were knocked out during a post-capture beating or beatings. None of the 23 very small bone fragments are from any part of the body a person can live without if in fact they actually belong to him. 12 of the fragments were glued together to form part of the lower portion of the left femur. We had private DNA done on a sample taken from the femur and it proved inconclusive. The little round container in the upper left corner of the photograph is a pea tree dish containing "bone dust." The largest piece in the lower right-hand corner is the 12 bone fragments that were glued together to form an approximately 6-inch piece of the lower femur located just above the knee.

- For the most in-depth and complete look at this loss incident and why my husband and I did not accept this material as Earl, Jr; please read the four documents in this order as it is how they were prepared:

- BR Rebuttal document (22 pages)
- Response to DPMO Memo for Record (3 pages)
- Appeal Letter (9 pages)
- Accepting Under Protest (1 page)

Some members of the Hopper family felt the need to find closure by burying the 5 teeth/parts of teeth and 23 bone fragments CIL-HI and the USG considers to be Earl, Jr's mortal remains. Other family members, including me, do not accept this material as him.

You and others in government service have used this situation to your advantage once again to skew reality in his case to imply Earl, Jr is dead and buried. Clearly understand that laying this material to rest in a National Cemetery with full military honors under a marker bearing his name does not make him dead.

This is an open document to be shared with all who are interested in this issue.

Continuing to Keep the Faith,

Patricia Hopper
Proud widow of Col Earl P. Hopper, Sr
Equally proud step-mother of Lt Col Earl P. Hopper, Jr.