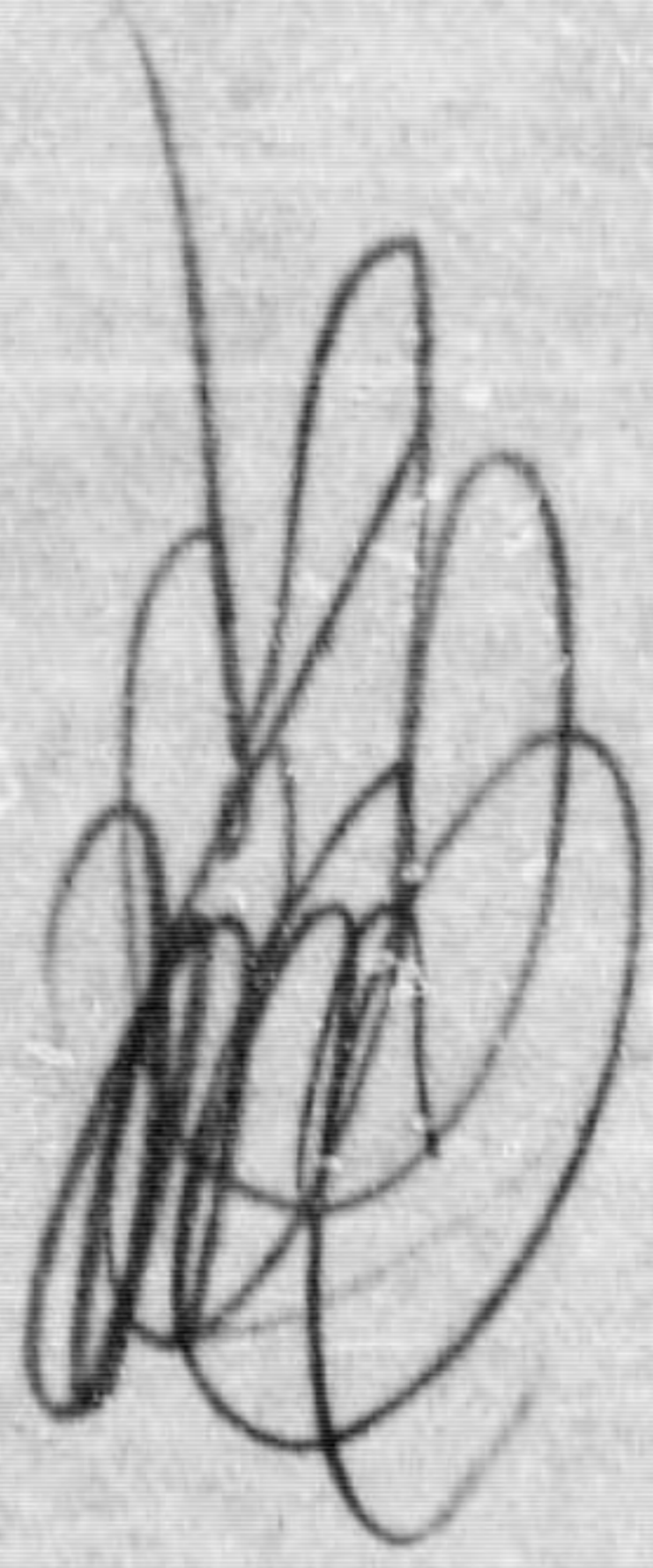


15708



CASE R- 787 . . .

AREA: English Channel near French coast

DATE: 20 December 1942 TIME: 11:00 A.M.

MISSION: Bombing

TYPE OF PLANE: B-17

CREW: On attached sheet of comments.

*Jobu from
SR & D Report
m. Van Buren.*

1st Lt. Orville S. Witt, Jr.	Mr. and Mrs. Orville S. Witt, Sr. 1718 N. E. 15th Street (Parents) Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
1st Lt. Wilmer E. Dyar	Mrs. Wilmer M. Dyar (Mother) 101 East College Avenue Eureka, Illinois
1st Lt. Donald H. Brightbill	Mrs. Charles Brightbill (Mother) 1403 Hampden Boulevard Reading, Pennsylvania
2nd Lt. Francis W. McMurtry	Mrs. Hazel C. McMurtry (Mother) 509 East 1st Street Burkburnett, Texas
T/Sgt. Thomas F. Bachon	Mrs. Esta B. Bachon (Mother) 11822 Sunshine Terrace North Hollywood, California
371 S/Sgt. Warner E. Renner	Mrs. Gladys E. Renner (Mother) Rural Route Number One Canden, Indiana
S/Sgt. Laurence W. Thomas	Mrs. Keosha H. Thomas (Mother) 1166 West Jefferson Street Los Angeles, California
Sgt. Bernard W. Millett	Mr. Joseph Millett (Father) 335 North Calvert Street Baltimore, Maryland
T/Sgt. Lyle C. Woods	Mrs. C. A. Woods (Mother) Box 415 Plankinton, South Dakota
Sgt. Harold A. Kinsey	Mrs. Georgia Holliday (Sister) Route Number Six Greenfield, Indiana

4. It is apparent that the exact location at which this plane went down cannot be accurately determined within many miles. The fact that even the headquarters of the missing plane reported the location differently on three different occasions makes it evident that only the general area of the mishap was known. The reasons for this are understandable in view of the nature of the distance covered in an air battle and the radio silence necessitated by battle conditions. However, an idea of the approximate location may be obtained by an analysis of these conflicting reports. The Service Records of the enlisted men in the crew mention "halfway between Dieppe and Quiberville"; Woods' citation for the Oak Leaf Cluster mentioned him as being on "a combat mission over enemy occupied Continental Europe"; Casualty Message 229021 from London (referred to in Part I, Paragraph 4) in connection with Technical Sergeant Bachom states: "believed to have gone down in English Channel or on the Coast of France near Dunkirk."

All three places mentioned (Dunkirk, Dieppe and Quiberville) are on the French coast. Dunkirk is at the northernmost tip of the French coastline. It lies only a short distance from the point at which the Belgian coastline begins. Dieppe is about seventy miles to the southwest of Dunkirk. Quiberville is a tiny village another seventy or seventy-five miles southwest of Dieppe. The width of the air highway on which the planes were flying home apparently was known to stretch the one hundred and fifty miles or so between Quiberville at the southwest and Dunkirk at the Northeast. The reference to the English Channel is clarified by a glance at the map. The coastline of France between Dunkirk and Quiberville does not run in a straight line from point to point, but dips and turns irregularly. The swing of the land into and out of the English Channel provides many bays and inlets along the coast. A plane might just as easily be surmised to be over the Channel as over land in this area unless its exact location had been reported and was known. Yet in spite of this uncertainty as to whether this ill-fated crew met its death on land or water, it can be said with accuracy that they were lost near the French coast.

5. Twelve months have elapsed since these men became missing in action. No report has been received from any source to indicate that any of this group has been seen or heard from by anyone.

6. During the present war Germany has habitually furnished to this country timely, reasonably complete and accurate prisoner of war reports as well as reports of American fatalities occurring within the borders of Germany or any occupied territory. Most American prisoners of the Germans have usually been reported through the International Red Cross within one to four months after their capture. There seems no reason to suppose that our experience in this respect may not now again be relied upon.

7. In view of the foregoing, a strong presumption of death must be acknowledged.

FACTS: Paragraph 1.

DED9	Witt, Orville S., Jr. ✓	0-436028	1st Lt.	Pilot
DEDS	McMurtry, Francis M., Jr. ✓	0-791051	2nd Lt.	CoPilot
DED2	Brightbill, Donald H. ✓	0-724011	1st Lt.	Navigator
DEDB	Dyar, Wilmer E. ✓	0-724160	1st Lt.	Bombardier
DED	Bachor, Thomas ✓	39019035	T/Sgt.	Radio Opr. & Gunner
DED	Renner, Warner E. ✓ 371	35166487	S/Sgt.	Asst. Radio Opr. & Gunner
DED	Kinsey, Harold A. ✓	15084364	Sgt.	Right Waist Gunner
DED	Thomas, Laurence W. ✓	19081002	S/Sgt.	Tail Gunner
DED	Millet, Bernard W. ✓	6872499	Sgt.	Ball Turret Gunner
DED	Woods, Lyle C. ✓	17037513	T/Sgt.	Engineer & Top Turret Gunner

Paragraph 5.

Prisoner of War report US/407 transmitted through the International Red Cross and received by the Office of the Provost Marshal General on 12 March 1943 (Casualty Message number 072117) lists the name of Staff Sergeant Warner Renner, ASN 35,166,487, among a group of five who were reported by Berlin as "Washed ashore or bdy recovered." (Underlining supplied)

Paragraph 13.

No reports have been received to indicate that any of these persons in question are on duty, are prisoners of war or internees in a neutral country, except for the report from Berlin in regard to Sergeant Renner which was discussed in above Paragraph 5.

CONCLUSIONS:

1. The four officers and six enlisted men enumerated in Part I, Paragraphs 1 and 2 above, filed to return to their base in England from an air combat mission over occupied France on 20 December 1942.
2. It is reasonable certain that these 10 men were all aboard the same bomber in view of the facts that messages which reported them missing in action contained the names of no other persons missing at the same time; that their positions as enumerated in this message fulfill all the requirements of a crew without duplicate or omission; that no other persons are now carried on the War Department records as missing in action in the European Theater of Operations as of 20 December 1942; that the total number of men involved was the usual number for a bomber crew at that time; that the Service Records of the enlisted men still carried as missing contain identical entries describing the circumstances under which they were lost; and that the plane in which each of these enlisted men was lost is shown in the individual Service Records to have had the same serial number.
3. The death of one of the 10 men aboard the bomber became known after his body had been "washed ashore or recovered" by the Germans. This has been considered an official report of death in Sergeant Renner's case, as shown by the visi-card report. Therefore, no review or determination of status is necessary in his case.