

RELEASE IN PART
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From: Campbell, Kurt M <CampbellKM@state.gov>
Sent: Friday, February 17, 2012 10:32 AM
To: H; Sullivan, Jacob J
Subject: Fw: TIGHAR research update

Madame Secretary -- I think I told you that we have been working with a group that has been searching for Amelia Earhart in the Pacific. I think we may have assisted them in a big new development. In short I think we may have found the plane location. Will follow up accordingly. Huge news if true. Best from Biden land. Kurt

----- Original Message -----

From: Loi, James L
Sent: Friday, February 17, 2012 10:12 AM
To: Campbell, Kurt M
Subject: Fw: TIGHAR research update

Fyi - perhaps a break
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----- Original Message -----

From: Ric Gillespie [mailto:]
Sent: Friday, February 17, 2012 09:46 AM
To: Loi, James L
Subject: TIGHAR research update

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Hi Jim,

Perhaps you can pass this confidential update along to Dr. Campbell.

Thanks,
Ric

Dear Kurt,

You will recall that one of the most interesting pieces of evidence in the Earhart case is a photograph taken of the western shoreline of Gardner Island (Nikumaroro) in October 1937 - three months after the disappearance. The photo was taken by Colonial Service Officer Eric Bevington during a British expedition to the uninhabited island to assess its suitability for future settlement. At the left-hand side of the frame there is an object sticking up out of the water. TIGHAR's forensic imaging specialist, Jeff Glickman, has determined that the object is consistent with the wreckage of a Lockheed Electra main landing gear assembly. We wanted a second opinion and, at our request, you arranged for photo analysts at the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research to examine the image.

On November 15, 2011 I met with the Bureau Chief, Lisa Dyer, Senior Analyst Dan Miller, and two junior analysts. Mr. Miller had a 20 year career in photo analysis with the USAF before coming to work at the State Department and is experienced in finding aircraft wrecks through photo analysis.

Mr. Miller told me, "My colleagues and I have spent time with this photo and have also done some background research. We feel that what you have here may well be what you think it is - the landing gear of a Lockheed Electra."

They see the same things in the photo that Jeff Glickman sees - the strut, the mud flap, the worm gear, possibly the tire. What puzzles Miller is that the assembly seems to be not only damaged but upside down. "The gear cannot still be attached to the airplane or we'd see more of the plane."

He said, "In this business we have three levels of certainty - Possible, Probable, Confirmed. That this photo shows the landing gear of a Lockheed Electra is somewhere between Possible and Probable."

The principal reason he was that cautious was not anything about the photo but the fact that we don't have the original negative. "What are the chances that the print you photographed was made from a negative that had been doctored sometime between the time the photo was taken in 1937 and when you photographed the print in 1992?" In other words, if something seems to be too good to be true, maybe it's not true.

Further research has allayed that concern. The photo was one of many in Bevington's photo album and was of no special interest to him. The negative was lost along with Bevington's other personal effects and papers when the Japanese took Tarawa in 1941. He escaped with the clothes on his back. The prints and the journal of his trip to Gardner in 1937 survived only because he had sent them home to his father in England.

Since our meeting in November we have also been able to find photographic documentation that, in the course of the accident in Hawaii that ended Earhart's first world flight attempt, one of the main landing gear assemblies separated from the airframe and came apart in such a way as to give the impression that the assembly is upside down. In other words, the object on the reef appears to be an Electra landing gear that failed in the same way it did in the Hawaii accident.

About our Earhart Project in general, Dan Miller had this to say:

"You have a strong circumstantial case. You're not trying to sell anybody a bill of goods. You're doing good work but you've chosen a tough mission." His only criticism of TIGHAR is that we call the anomaly Nessie. "You're selling yourself short. Nessie was a fraud."

Regarding attribution, he said,

"What we've given you is our opinion as private individuals. The U.S. Government does not offer opinions on things like this."

We, of course, respect his wishes and have not said anything publicly about the Bureau's involvement.

Ric