



Above: Remains of the B-17 Flying Fortress, "Blessed Event". Seven crewmen killed; pilot and tail gunners survived. Pilot sustained "major" injuries.

The last page of this document indicates that the crash was "*...undoubtedly contributable to the negligence of the of the South African Air Force authorities in failing to lay a flare path for the emergency landing.*"

Due to the secret nature of the mission, the report was classified until 1982.

7436-0
19-085

REPORT OF AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT

45-11-25-540

(1) Place: INSI, Landing Ground, Arizona, Italy. (2) Date: 25 November 1944. (3) Time: 0315A
 Aircraft: (4) Type and model: B-24-D (5) A/C No.: 41-8001 (6) Station: APO 520, U.S. Army
 Organization: (7) 15th AF (8) 301st Bomb (H) (9) 32nd Bomb (H)
 Command and Air Force: 15 (Group): 301st Bomb (H) (Station): 7436

DEPT	NAME (Last name first)	GRADE	SERIAL NO.	NAME	FUNCTION CLASS	STATUS	AGE YEARS OR MONTHS	REASON FOR REMOVAL	TYPE OF REMOVAL
(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)	(17)	(18)	(19)
P	JOHNSON, VERNON O.	P	0-761112	1st Lt	18	AC	15th	Major	None
P	BOSWELL, BEAUFORD F.	P	0-706887	2nd Lt	18	AC	15th	Fatal	None
A	MOLLOY, EDWARD	AO (S)	0-154826	1st Lt	20	AC	15th	Fatal	None
A	STONE, MOSES D.	AO (S)	0-704564	1st Lt	20	AC	15th	Fatal	None
B	HANLEY, FRANCIS J.	AO (S)	0-762771	2nd Lt	18	AC	15th	Fatal	None
C	JOHNSON, LESTER L.	None	17020854	S/Sgt	38	AC	15th	Minor	None
R	HUMPHREY, MELVIN R.	None	17072060	S/Sgt	38	AC	15th	Fatal	None
G	GUYRE, DAVID M.	None	39339489	Sgt	38	AC	15th	Fatal	None
G	SABO, JOSEPH A.	None	35684618	Sgt	38	AC	15th	Fatal	None
T	RUTKOWSKI, JOSEPH C.	None	33609548	Sgt	38	AC	15th	Minor	None

PILOT CHARGED WITH ACCIDENT

(20) JOHNSON, VERNON (21) 0-761112 (22) 1st Lt (23) 18 (24) AC
 (Last name) (First name) (MOS Initial) (Serial number) (Rank) (Age) (Branch)
 Assigned (25) 15th (26) 301st Bomb (H) (27) 32nd Bomb (H) (28) APO 520, U.S. Army
 (Command and Air Force) (Group) (Squadron) (Station)
 Attached for flying (29) 15th (30) 301st Bomb (H) (31) 32nd Bomb (H) (32) APO 520, U.S. Army
 (Command and Air Force) (Group) (Squadron) (Station)
 Original rating (33) Pilot (34) 5 Dec 43 Present rating (35) Pilot (36) 5 Dec 43 Instrument rating (37) Not applicable.
 (Rating) (Date) (Rating) (Date) (Class) (Date)

FIRST PILOT HOURS:
 (at the time of this accident)
 (38) This type B-17 406:25 (43) Instrument time last 6 months Not applicable.
 (39) This model B-24 295:20 (44) Instrument time last 30 days Not applicable.
 (40) Last 90 days 128:45 (45) Night time last 6 months Not applicable.
 (41) Total 852:55 (46) Night time last 30 days Not applicable.

Props - 2 AIRCRAFT DAMAGE NF

DAMAGE	(48) LIST OF DAMAGED PARTS
(46) Aircraft	Complete destruction of A/C.
(47) Engine(s)	
(48) Propeller(s)	

(50) Weather at the time of accident Visibility poor, owing to a thick ground mist.
 (51) Was the pilot flying on instruments at the time of accident? No.
 (52) Cleared from Base (53) To Base (54) Kind of clearance Operational.
 (55) Pilot's mission High altitude bombing.
 (56) Nature of accident Crash landing.
 (57) Cause of accident Faulty field lighting at A/D at which A/C attempted to make emergency landing.
 (58) Has Form 54 been submitted? No.

I. NARRATIVE:

On 25 November 1944 1st Lt. JOHNSON O. JOHNSON, O-26112, 12nd Bombardment Squadron (H), 301st Bombardment Group (H), was pilot of B-24D #4-244 scheduled for a night intruder mission. The aircraft had a maximum fuel load, a 5,000 lb. bomb load and was believed to be in good condition.

At approximately 0315A hours, as the plane was crossing the northern Adriatic coast, the #4 propeller ran away and the #4 oil pressure dropped to zero. The propeller could not be feathered as Lt. JOHNSON turned back, salvaged the bombs and headed for Ancona. Shortly afterward the #2 propeller ran away and the #2 oil pressure dropped to zero, but the propeller was feathered successfully.

Lt. JOHNSON called the fighter sector control, call sign "Highfield", and was told to land at Iesi. He was able to receive the tower at the latter field but evidently could not be heard by it except once. Lt. JOHNSON was instructed to remain airborne until the flarepath at Iesi could be turned on and it was then that he was heard by the tower to say that he had two engines missing. During this time green flares were shot off by Iesi to denote the field, but Lt. JOHNSON evidently did not see them for he continued circling trying to find the field. He then contacted Falconara and was told that the lights at Iesi were on and to land there. Visibility was hampered by a ground haze.

His altitude was then so low that Lt. JOHNSON attempted to land on what appeared to be the runway, but which turned out to be a road bordering the field. He was given a red flare and was forced to pull up and turn to miss a building. It was then impossible to maintain altitude so he tried to land in what appeared to be a clearing. Just before the plane hit, the #1 engine caught fire, evidently with the surge of power. The right wing struck the ground first and the plane evidently cartwheeled and crashed.

Shortly after the crash the flarepath was lit. It appeared that the generator supplying power for the lights had run out of fuel.

II. CONCLUSION:

The accident resulted in complete destruction of the aircraft. There were seven crew members killed, two others with minor injuries and one with major injury.

III. STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY:

It is the opinion of the Aircraft Accident Committee that the accident was the result of lack of adequate lighting facilities at Iesi at the time Lt. JOHNSON attempted to make an emergency landing. Had the flarepath been lighted, it is felt that Lt. JOHNSON would have been able to make a successful landing. However, it is also believed that Lt. JOHNSON might have been able to maintain more altitude until the flarepath finally was lit.

Leslie W. Hodman
LESLIE W. HODMAN,
Lt. Col., Air Corps,
Investigating Officer.

Signature *William H. B. Thomas*
WILLIAM H. B. THOMAS,
Captain, Air Corps,
Investigating Officer.

842 Robert [unclear]
ROBERT [unclear],
Captain, Air Corps,
Investigating Officer.

- 3 Incis:
- Incl 1 - Flight Reports (AAF Forms 1 & 1a)
- Incl 2 - Witnesses' Statements
- Incl 3 - Medical Officer's Report



Date 13 January 1945.

FLIGHT REPORT.- ENGINEERING

INSPECTION STATUS				SERVICING AT STATION OF TAKE-OFF (CHECK IMMEDIATELY BEFORE TAKE-OFF)												
FLIGHT	DATE OF OR HOURS DUE	INSPECTED TODAY		SERVICE	FUEL (GALLONS)		OIL (QUARTS)								RADIATOR CHECKED	
		BY	STATION		NO. 1	NO. 2	NO. 3	NO. 4	SERV-ICED	IN TANKS	SERV-ICED	IN TANKS	SERV-ICED	IN TANKS		SERV-ICED
FLIGHT	1/24/44	B			SERV-ICED	IN TANKS	SERV-ICED	IN TANKS	SERV-ICED	IN TANKS	SERV-ICED	IN TANKS	SERV-ICED	IN TANKS	SERV-ICED	IN TANKS
DAILY	1/24/44	B	APO 520													
25 HOURS	325:15			1ST	0	2800	0	148	0	148	0	148	0	148	0	148
50 HOURS	350:15			2ND	0	2800	0	140	0	140	0	140	0	140	0	140
100 HOURS	400:15			3RD												
				4TH												
				5TH												

INSPECTION OF AUXILIARY EQUIPMENT			
EQUIPMENT	SYMBOL	INSPECTED BY	STATION
BOMBARDMENT	B	Daron	
GUNNERY	B	"	
CHEMICAL	1	1	APO 520
COMMUNICATIONS	L	Laverdiere	
PHOTOGRAPHIC	S	Sparr	
NAVIGATION	S	Sparr	
OXYGEN	425	Perceel	

STATUS TODAY

1.	2.
3.	4.

EXPLANATION: Comp dus. Radio alt inop, heater inop, Nav oxy press gauge inop.

EXCEPTIONAL RELEASE

WHEN THE "STATUS TODAY" IS INDICATED BY A RED SYMBOL AND AN "EXCEPTIONAL RELEASE" HAS NOT BEEN GRANTED BY AN AUTHORIZED ENGINEERING OFFICER, THE PILOT OF THE AIRPLANE WILL SIGN THIS RELEASE BEFORE FLIGHT.

RELEASED FOR FLIGHT

R.C. Hunter
V.O. Johnson

REMARKS: PILOTS AND MECHANICS - SEE INSTRUCTIONS INSIDE FRONT COVER

Secret and Confidential Equipment installed.

#1 Flight O.K. Flying time 2:20 Hrs

By R.C. Hunter

A TRUE COPY:

~~Walter L. Smith~~
Captain, Air Corps,
Adjutant.

AIRPLANE AND ENGINE TIME RECORD (ENTER IN HOURS AND MINUTES)				
ENGINE	NO. 1	NO. 2	NO. 3	NO. 4
HOURS TO DATE	325:25	325:25	325:25	325:25
HOURS TO DATE				
TOTAL				
OIL CHANGE DUE	478:20	478:20	478:20	478:20
CURD CLEARING DUE	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily
HOURS TO DATE	325:25			
AIRPLANE HOURS TODAY				
TOTAL				

SECRET

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ENGINE DATA	AIRPLANE DATA	AIRPLANE ORG. DATA
<p>R-1690-27</p> <p>SE-016345</p> <p>SE-016415</p> <p>SE-016402</p>	<p>Bomber (H)</p> <p>PR - 170</p> <p>26-0001</p>	<p>16th AF</p> <p>5th B W (US)</p> <p>501st Bomb (H)</p> <p>32nd B.B. (H)</p>
<p>11/24/44</p> <p>APO 520</p>	<p>W/Sgt L.A. Sparr</p>	<p>DATE</p> <p>STATION</p>

THIRTY SECOND BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (H) AAF
Office of the Operations Officer
APO 520 THE ARMY

R/DRE/aa.

19 December 1944.

SUBJECT: Pilot's Statement on Aircraft Accident of A/C 44-8001.

TO : Operations Officer, 301st Bomb Group (H) AAF, APO 520.

1. The following statement was made by 1st Lt VERNON O. JOHNSON, O-761112, relative to aircraft accident of B-17G # 44-8001, on 25 November 1944.

a. Missing over coast, pulling 2250 RPM, 35 inches, # 4 engine ran away, and oil pressure went to zero, engine going out and couldn't be feathered. Turned around and dropped bombs in sea, and headed for Ancon. # 2 went out same as # 4, but was able to feather it.

b. Called Falconair and they referred me to Iesi, and to call them on "C" channel. I could receive them but they evidently couldn't receive me. They said they were turning on the lights, so I circled losing as little altitude as possible, trying to find the field.

c. Altitude was now very low and I saw what I thought was runway, so attempted to land. It turned out to be a road and I had to pull up to miss a building and couldn't hold any altitude, then trying to land in what looked like a clearing. Waist Gunner said # 1 was afire just before we hit.

d. While circling Iesi, I called back to Falconair and they said that Iesi's lights were on and to land there. There was considerable ground haze but not too much to be able to see a lighted runway had there been one.

Vernon O. Johnson
VERNON O. JOHNSON,
1st Lt, Air Corps,
O-761112

Donald W. Ewing
DONALD W. EWING,
Captain, Air Corps,
Operations Officer.

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SECRET

- 5 -

FROM : C.S.O., No. 3 Wing SAAF., C.M.F.
TO : Officer Commanding No. 3 Wing SAAF., C.M.F.
DATE : 26th November 1944.
Ref. : SW/22/4/1/Sigs.
Subj. : Aircraft Crash : Iesi Landing Ground.

In connection with the above accident on the night of November 24th - 26th, 1944, the following extract was taken from the logbook of the S/T operator on duty, No. 35682V A/Cpl. Moore B.J.

"0610. Tried contact aircraft circling field finally contacted aircraft callsign CROWLINE or TOWLINE. 22. Instructed him to remain airborne, after which he reported two engines missing. We were asked by HIGHFIELD to give green aldis or green stars to aircraft. This was done and he was called repeatedly on R/T/ and told to remain airborne until flarepath was ready. Aircraft at that moment was trying to land in main toad from Iesi. I immediately gave him a red, he then took engine and sideslipped into ground at east end of runway at approximately 0315".

2. On taking over watch the relieving W/T operator No. 326835V A/Cpl. Williams L.S. made the following entry :

"0745. Equipment all O.K".

3. All the equipment was examined by the duty wireless mechanic at 0905 hours and found to be in order.

SECRET

J.G. du PREKZ

Major
C.S.O.

Headquarters, No. 3 Wing SAAF.

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A TRUE EXTRACT COPY:

L.W. Griffiths, Jr.
L.W. GRIFFITHS, JR.
Capt, Air Corps,
Asst Adj.

1st Ind.

32ND BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (H) AAF, APO 520, Office of the Operations Officer, 20 December 1944. TO: Operations Officer, 301st Bomb Gp (H) AAF APO 520, US ARMY.

1.. For your information.

Donald W. Ewing
DONALD W. EWING
Captain, Air Corps,
Operations Officer.

RESTRICTED

W. D. Wright

MEMORANDUM END-1 on Aiuslo Durban Ltr. of 8 Oct 1945, Serial L-214-45

RESTRICTED
Serial 143P23

9 NOV 1945

From: Chief of Naval Intelligence.
To : Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, War Department.
Subj: Jesi Airfield, Italy - Fortress crash in November 1944.
1. Forwarded for information.

W. D. Wright
W. D. Wright,
By direction.

Military Intelligence Division, War Department, Washington 25, D. C.,
16 November 1945.

TO: CG, Army Air Forces, War Department, Washington 25, D. C.

Forwarded for information and such action as you may deem appropriate.

FOR THE ASSISTANT CHIEF OF STAFF, G-2:

2 Incl:
Photographs

F. E. Cookson
F. E. COOKSON
Colonel, GSC
Director of Administration

a-2,

BEX-01

RESTRICTED

Incl # 1

~~SECRET~~
 HEADQUARTERS ARMY AIR FORCES
~~RESTRICTED~~
 ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET

TALLY NO.	
FILE NO.	

SUBJECT: Jesi Airfield, Italy - Fortress crash in November 1944.

TO: AC/AS-3, Flying Safety Branch.

DATE 29 NOV 1944

FROM: AC/AS-2, Executive Division, Counter Intelligence Branch.

COMMENT No. 01
 AFBEX-CI
 Maj Tod/jeb/5868

Forwarded as a matter pertaining to your office.

- 1 Incl.
 Miscellaneous communications and photos
 from ONI thru MID re subject.

Thomas D. Craig

THOMAS D. CRAIG
 Lt. Colonel, Air Corps
 Chief, Counter Intelligence Branch
 Executive Division
 Office of Asst. Chief of Air Staff - 2

JLR
 Flying Safety (Washington)

TO: AC/AS-1, Personal Services Division

DATE 12 December 1944

FROM: AC/AS-3, Flight Operations Div, Flying Safety Branch

COMMENT 2
 Maj Folts/fm/2555

- Forwarded for any action deemed necessary.
- Flying Safety Branch has extracted information pertaining to the aircraft crash and has attached a copy of AAF Form 14.
- Your attention is called to the fact that place of occurrence on the AAF Form 14 is indicated as "Jesi Landing Ground" rather than "Jesi Airfield" as stated in basic communication.

- 2 Incls
 Added 1 incl
 2. Form 14 on subj accident
photo w/p in CPO

George C. Price
 GEORGE C. PRICE
 Colonel, Air Corps
 Chief, Flying Safety Branch

If inclosure No. 2 is withdrawn, the classification of this correspondence will be downgraded to Restricted in accordance with paragraph 8b, AR 380-5.

~~RESTRICTED~~
~~SECRET~~

Incl #1

c/c w/B for 1488 R

360.33 - Foreign

23-L

RECEIVED ON: MAIL ROOM

P15/100

EN3-11(DN)/P6-1
Serial No. L-214-45
MW/jrh
RESTRICTED

UNITED STATES NAVAL LIAISON OFFICE

1945 NOV 5 AM 10 03

19 Netherlands Bank Building,
Durban, Union of South Africa.

8 October 1945

RESTRICTED

From: U.S. Naval Liaison Officer.
To : The Director of Naval Intelligence.
Subject: Jesi Airfield, Italy - Fortress crash in November 1944.
Enclosure: ^W_{H DL} (A) Two photographs of subject crashed Fortress.

1. Flight Sergeant E. J. White, S.A.A.F., recently called upon this officer in an effort to secure some word of commendation from American authorities for two of his associates who succeeded in saving the life of a member of the crew of an American Fortress after a crash on Jesi Airfield, Italy, during the latter part of November 1944. An applicable section from No. 3 Wing Headquarter's South African Air Force Routine Order No. 1/45, and dated 28 February 1945, is quoted below: (Written by Col. A.J.M. Mossop)

"77. COMMENDATION.

The Commander-in-Chief, Royal Air Force, Mediterranean and Middle East, wishes to bring to the notice of all ranks the courage and devotion to duty displayed by the undermentioned airmen and directs that an annotation be made on their documents accordingly:

70299 V	F/Sgt. White, E. J.	- No. 3 S.A.A.F. Wing.
999166	L.A.C. Laverack, H.	- No. 3 S.A.A.F. Wing.
1116470	L.A.C. Royle, W. E.	- No. 3 S.A.A.F. Wing.

Recently, a heavy bomber aircraft when approaching the aerodrome to make an emergency landing, crashed about half a mile from the end of the runway and burst into flames. The duty fire-crew, which included the above-named personnel, immediately went to the scene of the crash.

It proved impossible to take the fire tender right up to the burning aircraft, owing to obstructions of barbed wire and trees. Flight Sergeant White, L.A.C. Laverack and L.A.C. Royle therefore proceeded on foot, and by the time they reached the aircraft, two members of its crew had succeeded in extricating themselves. The above-named airmen succeeded in dragging a third member of the crew clear, and then made an examination of the wreckage, but found that the other members had been killed in the crash.

EN3-11(DN)/P6-1
Serial No. L-214-45
MM/jrh
RESTRICTED

UNITED STATES NAVAL LIAISON OFFICE

19 Netherlands Bank Building,
Durban, Union of South Africa.

RECEIVED ON MAIL ROOM

1945 NOV 5 AM 10 03

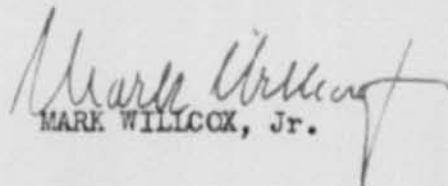
8 October 1945

Subject: Jesi Airfield, Italy - Fortress crash in November 1944. (Cont'd)

This rescue was effected in spite of danger from the continuous bursting of large calibre ammunition and exploding oxygen cylinders. As the airmen concerned were wearing only the normal issue clothing, and were not in possession of special protective clothing for fire crews, there was also very considerable risk of serious injury from the great heat and molten metal."

2. In the course of the conversation with Flight Sergeant White it developed that, in the sergeant's opinion, the crash was undoubtedly attributable to the negligence on the part of the South African Air Force authorities in failing to lay a flare path for the emergency landing. At the time of this incident the American field at Foggia was said to be out of commission because of another accident, and the Jesi Airfield had been named No. 1 emergency field for the American squadron, stated to be the 15th Heavy Bomber Squadron. The South Africans, however, did not prepare for emergency landings and not only was there no flare path, but the ambulances were not properly equipped to take care of injured personnel. Last minute requests to lay hasty flare path when it was evident that subject Fortress would have to crash land were refused by the Control Tower Duty Officer.

3. Enclosure (A) is forwarded for information. These photographs indicate that the Fortress carried the number Y-4800; further identification could not be secured from the informer. Unfortunately, the exact date of the accident could not be remembered, however it was stated to have occurred at 0320. The informant states that he believes that he was transferred to another post immediately following the crash because of his knowledge of the negligence of his superiors and in view of the fact that the American authorities were instituting a thorough investigation to determine responsibility for the loss.


MARK WILLCOX, Jr.