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APPROVED FOR RELEASE
DATE: 03-21-2011

12 January 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, Security Staff, Station D

FROM : Deputy Chief, Security Staff

SUBJECT : Accident, Dutch 125

1. On 5 January 1967 at 1555 hours the Security Office was notified via the secondary emergency net that Dutch 125, piloted by Mr. Walter L. Ray, had declared a routine emergency due to low fuel reserve. At 1601 hours the Command Post informed the emergency net that Mr. Ray had ejected and Dutch 125 was down in the area of Caliente, Nevada. At this time [redacted] immediately left for the Command Post and the undersigned notified four security guards to standby for any rescue operation.

2. At approximately 1620 hours [redacted] called and requested that three guards and one shift captain be prepared to move out with him on a search and rescue operation. Two four wheel drive crew cabs equipped with extra gasoline, water, spare tires and emergency radio communications were provided. Extra food was ordered from the mess hall. The personnel departing were equipped with such cold weather gear as thermal underwear, parkas, gloves, boots, hats and sleeping bags. It was anticipated that the temperature in the area would be from 0° to 10° above. All of this gear was ready for issue from standby emergency recovery kits specially packed for the Security Office. At approximately 1715 hours [redacted] and guards departed for the crash area.

3. At approximately 1800 hours [redacted] Chief, Security Staff, OSA was contacted at his home and apprised of the situation and what steps were being taken. He advised that we should keep him advised of the situation and that we should call the office as he would have personnel on duty during the night.

4. At approximately 1830 hours Col Richard Dayton, CO 903rd Aerial Refueling Squadron, Beale AFB, was contacted at his home, informed of the situation and requested he initiate a holddown on any discussion. We were particularly interested in Lt Col Thomas crew in that they possibly heard Dutch 125's conversation on SSB. Col Dayton assured us he would take action immediately.

5. Steps were taken at this time to get together records etc., such as next of kin, and addresses to be prepared for any

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eventuality. At 2300 hours it was learned that the security team had reached the area and were establishing an area of operations for the search. At this time there had been no report of the location of Dutch 125, only the general locale where it went down.

6. On 6 January 1967, early morning, there was still no report as to the location of either Dutch 125 or the pilot, Mr. Ray. At this time steps were taken to brief contractor personnel on all departing aircraft, i.e. Connies and F-27 as to the security holddown on any discussion of the crash. This was accomplished during the day as aircraft departed. At 0641 hours a UH1F Helicopter, #657963 from Indian Springs AFB, Nevada arrived in the area to assist with search operations. The crew was given an on the spot Redlight briefing by the Deputy Security Officer and signed a memorandum of understanding.

7. At approximately 1000 hours Lt Col Barrett, DCO contacted the undersigned and stated he was proceeding to Nellis AFB where he was to contact a Major Rhodes, CO of the Air Sea Rescue Squadron from Hamilton AFB, California. Major Rhodes was to coordinate the search procedures. Col Barrett stated he wanted a senior security officer to accompany him, not to brief Major Rhodes but to impress on him the security aspects of the search. Col Barrett also added he would probably be at Nellis for several hours. I informed him that I was the only one available and felt I should not leave during this critical time. I then informed him that I would contact Mr. William O'Donnell, SAC of the OSI office at Nellis. I added that Mr. O'Donnell was O-3 cleared and briefed and felt he would lend more evidence to the security cover for the search than a regular AF civilian. Col Barrett agreed and I contacted Mr. O'Donnell, explained the situation and he stated not to worry he would take care of it. Col Barrett later stated that Mr. O'Donnell had handled the matter very well.

8. At approximately 1015 hours word was received from Headquarters that a news release would be made by USAF to the effect that an SR-71 was missing and presumed down in Nevada Northeast of Las Vegas. That the aircraft was from Edwards AFB on a routine test flight and the pilot was missing. It was reported later that a local Las Vegas radio station had made a news broadcast at 1100 hours during which they gave the news release. It was as stated except the aircraft was attributed to Beale AFB.

9. At 1525 hours the wreckage of Dutch 125 was sighted by a helicopter in the search fleet. The information was relayed to the Security/Medic team in the area. This information was relayed to Headquarters along with the fact that there was no evidence of the pilot or seat on a fast look at the area. The crash scene was noted as being approximately 5 miles northwest of Leith, Nevada. Reports from the crash site indicated that the aircraft was demolished and spread in small pieces over a large area. Word received from the security rescue team verified that the pilot was still missing. A base camp would be set up at the

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crash site and the search for the pilot would continue.

10. During the evening of 6 January 1967 I assisted Mr. [redacted] Deputy/DCS with making plans for vehicles and supplies to go out early the next morning to the crash site. Arrangements were also made to have off duty guard personnel standing by in the event they were needed in the morning.

11. On 7 January 1967 the undersigned briefed the first group to leave for the crash site at 0400 hours. The second and third groups were briefed as they departed later. In the briefing it was stressed just what the news release had stated. That the aircraft was an SR-71 from Edwards AFB. Contractor personnel were, if pressed, state they were from Edwards AFB, also if they stayed in a motel they would upon registering list their employer as LAC or PW. They were also informed to list their home addresses as California. Military and Staff personnel residing in the Las Vegas area were briefed that if they were recognized by a local person or pressed for an answer they simply answered they as AF personnel were assisting Nellis AFB in the search and recovery operation.

12. During the morning guard schedules were revised in order to have coverage at the Base and personnel on standby for any eventuality. We were also informed by Headquarters that a news release would be made from USAF at 1700 hours local time giving the name of the missing pilot.

13. At approximately 1400 hours word was received from Col Slater, Station CO that he wished to put more personnel into the search area and would like some assistance from Security. We immediately arranged for four guards and Mr. Robert Bennett to draw gear and prepare to move to the search area. They departed the area at 1450 hours.

14. At 1500 hours word was received from the CP that the body of the pilot had been sighted on a 6,000 foot peak approximately seven and one half miles from the aircraft impact area. A helicopter had arrived at the scene and reported that the pilot was dead. It had been decided earlier in the day if the pilot was found and injured he would immediately be taken to Nellis AFB by helicopter; however, if the pilot was dead he would not be disturbed until the coroner arrived. The death occurred in Lincoln County but the coroner could not be located so it was agreed to remove the body to Nellis AFB Hospital by helicopter. Dr. Make, Flight Surgeon, left immediately for Nellis Base Hospital via the Cessna 210 to await the arrival of the body.

[redacted] Security representative was contacted and informed of current events. He was requested to meet Dr. Dake

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at the hospital, retrieve the pilots pressure suit and have it returned to the Area next day. During the course of my conversation with [redacted] it was suggested that Mr. O'Donnell accompany him to preclude any question of his [redacted] obtaining the suit.

15. At approximately 1700 hours Dr. Dake called from the office of Lt Col James H. Stuteville, CO Nellis Base Hospital, O-3. He stated that Col Stuteville had contacted the Lincoln County Coroner and explained that while the body was found in Lincoln Co., it was on a 6,000 foot peak, daylight was nearly gone and the helicopter low on fuel therefore they had ordered it picked up. The Lincoln Co. coroner stated not to worry about that, frankly he was glad he had not been involved and he would contact the Clark County Coroner to transfer jurisdiction to him. (As you know from previous experience the Lincoln Co. Coroner is elective and the present coroner is not a medical man). At this point Dr. Dake wanted to know if it was alright to use the pilots true name. He was informed that it was alright. His name was to be released to the newspapers at 1700 hours. (We had been informed by Hqs that a relative of Mr. Ray had released his name to a Palmdale newspaper at 1300 hours this date.)

16. At this time Dr. Dake stated that he would like to have an autopsy performed. At this point I did not feel this was as much a security matter as an administrative decision due to the fact it would involve an expenditure. I contacted Mr. [redacted] Acting DCS who said to go ahead with the autopsy. Dr. Dake was informed and he stated the autopsy would be performed by a Dr. Greyson, retired AF Surgeon who was also a consultant on the AF Board of Pathology. It should be noted at this time that from this point on most actions were either security matters with admin overtones or vice versa, and all during this time [redacted] and I worked closely together in nearly all matters.

17. After talking to Dr. Dake we were informed it would be necessary to obtain Mrs. Ray's signed approval before proceeding with the autopsy. Col Slater and Dr. Barran, LAC Medical Officer discussed the matter and decided she would not be asked to sign until the next day as she was upset enough at this time. It was agreed that Dr. Barran would obtain the release next morning, send a telegram to [redacted] who delivered it to Palm Mortuary where the autopsy would be held.

18. At this point the undersigned proceeded to PE where in the presence of SMSgt Clem Francis the personal clothing of Mr. Ray were placed in a locked box, sealed with a notation that it would be opened only by the Deputy Security Officer and the keys were retained. The box was removed to the Security Office and steps were taken to seal Mr. Ray's room in House 5. A complete inventory will be made of all Mr. Ray's personal effects and equipment.

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19. Just as a point of interest, when it was announced that the body had been found the dispatcher was asked to keep track of the number of telephone calls in and out of the office. For the period of 1500-1800 hours we had a total of 274 calls in and out.

20. On 8 January 1967 at 0645 hours the Cessna 210 piloted by Dr. Dake arrived in the area. [] had placed the pressure suit aboard. This was retrieved and brought to PE for inspection by the Investigation Team from Norton AFB. At 0945 hours [] called and stated he had received the telegram authorizing the autopsy and was delivering it to the Palm Mortuary.

21. At approximately 1600 hours a call was received from Dr. Dake reporting that the autopsy was completed and who was going to pay Dr. Greyson. Frankly I was at a loss for words. Immediately [] was contacted and it was agreed the Base would pay Dr. Greyson. We instructed Dr. Dake not to say this to Dr. Greyson but simply inform him someone would be in contact with him the next day. He was to impress on Dr. Greyson that Mr. Ray was a civilian and that his company would arrange payment, not the Air Force. He agreed to do this then asked when we were going to notify Palm Mortuary of funeral arrangements. Knowing nothing about them he was informed not to worry that we would take care of it.

22. After talking to Dr. Dake I called [] in L.A. to see if he knew of any arrangements for the funeral. I was informed by [] was at Ken Collins house. A call was placed person to person to [] at Ken's house. Ken answered, and said [] had left. I then asked to speak to Ken. He was informed the autopsy was over and was asked if he knew anything about the funeral arrangements. He expressed surprised that the autopsy was finished as Dr. Barran had informed him it would not be completed before noon the next day. This not being the case he stated that a Mr. William Ray (no relation to Walt) who was a very close friend of Walt's knew Mr. Knause, Director of the Palm Mortuary. He would arrive in LA at 2230 hours that night and would then contact Mr. Knause with the arrangements. Ken did say that the funeral was scheduled for Tuesday 10 January 1967 at a church in Palmdale, Calif.

23. [] was contacted and requested to contact Palm Mortuary and explain that Mr. Ray would be in contact with Mr. Knause either tonight or first thing in the morning. He was also requested to contact Dr. Greyson in the morning. He would explain that he was acting for Mr. Ray's company and if he would send the bill to him he would see it was paid. [] stated he would do this and let me know the results.

24. At approximately 2230 hours a call was received from Mr. [] who stated he had information that the AF was in the act as far as arrangements for Mr. Ray's funeral were concerned. Even to the extent that they had picked out the casket. Col Slater was contacted

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and he requested that Palm Mortuary be contacted to see what was going on. He further stated that the AF should be keeping completely out of it. A Mr. Forte was contacted at Palm Mortuary. He stated he knew of no arrangements being made for Mr. Ray. A call was placed to Major Pearson, Mortuary Officer for Nellis AFB. He stated that no arrangements were being made by Nellis. He realized that Mr. Ray was a civilian. He did offer a possible explanation. After the autopsy was completed Nellis had been contacted by Palm as to disposition of the body. They were informed at this time that Mr. Ray was a civilian who had simply been picked up by an AF helicopter and processed through the Nellis Hospital before being sent to Palm. [redacted] was contacted and the situation was explained to him.

25. On 9 January 1967 the search centered around finding Dutch 125's canopy. It was hoped that the two instrument cameras attached to the canopy could be found and much needed information obtained for the Investigation Team. A group of ground searchers was being organized and Security was asked to assist. At this point I informed the CP that due to the long hours and extra commitments over the weekend, there were just barely enough to cover the regular shift. They were informed that we would have men available the next day.

26. At approximately 0930 a call was received from [redacted] who stated he had been informed that the Clark County Coroner had refused to release the body. I couldn't understand where this information was coming from and [redacted] stated that Mr. William Ray had been informed by Mr. Knause of the Palm Mortuary. A call was placed to Palm Mortuary where a Mr. Bailey was contacted. In this case the explanation was that Dr. Greyson had completed the autopsy Sunday afternoon, therefore he had not been able to get the death certificate to the coroner. The certificate was now in the coroner's hand, Mr. Ray was all prepared, they were gassing the hearse and planned to be on the way to Palmdale within the hour. This information was relayed to [redacted]

27. At 1300 hours Col Slater convened a staff meeting regarding attendance at the funeral. Col Slater requested that [redacted] be contacted to send flowers. A discussion was held regarding a card and it was agreed that it would not bear Col Slater's name or the Squadron number. It was very innocuous, saying from friends and "fellow workers". Guidelines in keeping with Hqs cable were laid down for those attending the funeral. These included no uniforms, no signing of guest register etc.

28. On 10 January 1967 at 0830 hours a briefing was given to the 22 AF personnel who were attending the funeral. Arrangements had been made through [redacted] office to have five rented vehicles available at the Burbank Terminal. The F-27 departed the area at 0900 hours.

29. Later in the day arrangements were made to transport a shift captain and two guards to the crash site to relieve those on

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duty there. Also, in keeping with suggestions from Hqs arrangements were made to have the trucks transporting the parts of Dutch 125 back to Base arrive here after dark with a surveillance to assure they were not followed. This was accomplished with no incidents.

30. On 11 January 1967 arrangements were made to supply three security personnel for two days to the search party looking for the canopy cameras. The canopy has been found but so far no sign of the cameras.

31. 12 January 1967. It is anticipated that all parts will be picked up at the crash site and security and pick-up crew personnel will return late tonight. The crew looking for the cameras will continue sweeping the area.

32. Attached are clipping taken from local newspapers available to us.


Deputy Chief, Security

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