

FREDERICK ALLAN GOERNER  
Twenty-four Presidio Terrace  
San Francisco, California 94118

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Mr. Rob Gerth  
TOTAL TV  
1349 Michaels Lane  
Norristown, Pa. 19401

Dear Mr. Gerth:

I have finished my day's writing, and I have about an hour before my wife and I are scheduled to attend a dinner, so I am going to take this time to cover several notes I made from the TIGHAR prospectus you sent to me. I am simply going to pound this out, so pardon any lapses in syntax or spelling.

Page Four (4)---Reaching the sweeping conclusion (based upon the Tom Wilds '55 USNIP article and Mark Peattie's book NANYO) that Japan had nothing to hide in the mandated islands in 1937 is simply misinformed and lacking in the basic research that TIGHAR itself should have undertaken. Professor Peattie sent me a copy of his rough draft of NANYO several years ago for comment, but I did not feel that I wished to share the results of several hundred hours of research, using formerly classified records in various U.S. Records Centers, with an author who appeared to be embracing Japan's post-WWII positions with respect to the violation of the League Of Nations Mandate. U.S. Intelligence knew a great deal more about Japan's activities in the mandates, particularly Saipan, Truk and the Marshalls than has ever been heretofore publicly revealed. The information was gathered from agents who were able to infiltrate the islands, one as late as 1938, and by submarine reconnaissance. The seaplane base on Saipan was begun in 1932. Aslito Field on Saipan was begun in 1933 and was virtually completed in 1935. The Japanese landing field on Eten Island in Truk Lagoon was begun in 1934, and it was well advanced by November 1936. There was a seaplane base at Jaluit by 1937 and IJN activity had begun at Kwajalein. There was, however, no Japanese construction activity at Mili Atoll in the Marshalls at the time of the Earhart flight in 1937, although Mili, Wotje and Maloelap had already been surveyed by the IJN for the construction of bases. Amelia Earhart was not asked by the U.S.N. or U.S. Army Air Corps to overfly the Japanese Mandates in 1937 (although I believed this to be a strong possibility at the time I wrote THE SEARCH FOR AE because NO CLASSIFIED RECORDS OF ANY KIND HAD BEEN RELEASED by 1966).

Through the observations of agents and submarines and the breaking of the Japanese codes and traffic analysis of Japanese IJN radio messages, the U.S. already had more than a fair idea of what was going on with respect to the various islands. To ask Earhart to overfly either the Carolines or the Marshalls was not only too dangerous for a flight that was already marginal, it was also to no purpose. Given the isolationist attitudes of many U.S. Congressmen and Senators, any revelation of such an intelligence endeavor would have spelled disaster to the military and the Roosevelt administration. It took me a lot of digging to finally convince myself of that point. I can only barely begin to discuss this whole matter in these few words, but suffice it to say, TIGHAR has a lot to learn about Japan's pre-WWII activities in the Pacific, and U.S. military intelligence during that period. I'm not saying this to down them, but rather to indicate that they have reached some unsupportable, simplistic conclusions. A full study of all of this will be contained in my new book. One of the most important aspects of Japanese development of the mandated islands was the construction of radio stations with high frequency direction finding capabilities. As Vice Admiral Joseph Wenger told me, "By 1937, Japan had eleven (11) stations in the mandates. They were far better able to track the Earhart plane than we were." Admiral Wenger was an important part of OP-20-G (Naval Intelligence Communications) in the 1930's and during WWII. He later became Deputy director of NSA.

Page Six (6): TIGHAR mentions "alternate destinations". From the very first planning for the world flight, alternates were considered. At one time, Amelia told her friend Eugene Vidal that if she could not locate Howland in the allotted time, she would head for the Gilberts. This was before the flight was provided with a copy of the Navy's just completed Pacific Naval Air Pilot, which indicated that Canton and Enderbury Islands were the logical alternates where her flight to Howland was concerned, given the assumption that she would be fairly close to Howland and not far north of course. Canton and Enderbury were the only two of the Phoenix Islands where the U.S. Navy believed a reasonably safe emergency landing could be made. There were, of course, no land fields yet at either Canton or Enderbury, but there were tidal flats and land areas on both islands where a land plane might set down without destruction. In 1937, Pacific Naval Air Pilot, was a classified, registered document (H.O. 184). Work on this document began in 1925 at the time the USN thoroughly surveyed the Phoenix Islands, and it was first issued to Navy personnel in late 1936. It is a fascinating story of how this document reached the Earhart flight, but it is still not clear whether or not they were required to return the document to the USN after making notes, or if parts or all of the document were carried on the final flight. Some historians believe the Japanese Navy managed to obtain its first copy of Pacific Naval Air Pilot at the time Wake Island was captured. Whenever or however it was obtained by the Japanese, it was a

valuable intelligence prize. I would like to learn, though, what happened to the copy provided to the Earhart flight.

Page Eight (8): TIGHAR stipulates "the conclusion is inescapable that the aircraft was in fact south of Howland." I rather think TIGHAR might better serve itself and potential investors by saying, "the conclusion is inescapable that the aircraft MAY HAVE BEEN south of Howland." I believe this to be a strong POSSIBILITY because of the second weather message indicating stronger northeast winds than had previously been forecasted which was radioed to the Earhart plane after the Lae takeoff but receipt of which was not acknowledged by the Earhart plane, and because of Pacific Naval Air Pilot. There also remains the POSSIBILITY that the Earhart plane was too far NORTH of Howland to use the Phoenix Islands alternates and an attempt to reach one of the Marshalls was made.

I truly believed the north of course theory was the most probable at the time I wrote THE SEARCH FOR AE in 1966, and I chose Mili as the most logical landing place. Through the assistance of Dr. Dirk Ballendorf, who was Deputy Director for our U.S. Peace Corps activities in the Pacific, I was able to disabuse myself of that conjecture by 1969. Dr. Ballendorf assigned a fine young American named Eric Sussman to assist me with the people of Mili Atoll. Mr. Sussman spent nearly two years in Mili as a Peace Corps Volunteer, and he interviewed every Marshallese there who was old enough to remember anything about the pre-WWII years, especially 1937. A story existed about a woman pilot being picked up somewhere in or about the Marshalls in 1937, but Mr. Sussman satisfied himself and consequently satisfied me that Mili HAD NOT BEEN the landing place of the Earhart plane. It is more than a little surprising that Vincent Loomis, Oliver Knaggs, Buddy Brennan, Paul Bryce, Jim Slade and all the other people who visited Mili in the late 1970's and early 1980's and made such extravagant, unsupportable claims, did not even attempt to contact me before they made their "expeditions". It is almost as if they did not want to hear ANYTHING which might not support their conclusions and what they were trying to promulgate to their investors. What was amusing but not surprising was that they were calling each other names and threatening lawsuits against one another within months after their returns to The States.

Page Eight (8): TIGHAR says, "McKean and Gardner Islands must be seen as the most probable alternate destinations for the flight." McKean and Gardner are certainly possible (especially given Fred Hooven's extraordinary work), but one must keep in mind that Canton and Enderbury were the designated alternates, where a reasonably safe emergency landing could be made. Canton is also the largest of the Phoenix Islands and it would be the easiest to find. It is some twenty miles in length. McKean is less than a mile long.



Page Eighteen (18) and Page Twenty (20): In Mr. Bray's article, there is some conjecture and some confusion with respect to the trailing antenna for Earhart's plane and the two telegraph keys. Joseph Gurr (not an employee of Lockheed at any time) was responsible for the radio equipment and he dictated the work concerning radio that was to be done at Lockheed. The trailing antenna was removed at Lockheed (at the time the plane was repaired after the Honolulu crackup). I have the signed work orders and the personal taped and written testimony of Mr. Gurr. Mr. Gurr has in his possession one of Earhart's telegraph keys. The other one was returned to the Bell Labs. The only way Earhart or Noonan could make use of Morse was by depressing briefly the actuation button on the microphone, thus breaking the carrier wave. There have been rumors and conjectures over the years that Earhart left the trailing antenna in Florida or at Lae, New Guinea. All untrue. Mr. Gurr, who retired some years ago as Chief Dispatcher for United Airlines at San Francisco, says no one at Lockheed contacted him before they made incorrect statements about the capabilities of Earhart's radio equipment, and Paul Mantz did not contact him, either, before making widely quoted but totally inaccurate statements to the press and the U.S. Navy and U.S. Coast Guard.

Page Twenty (20): Mr. Bray indicates that a "tire blowout" was responsible for the Honolulu crash. It is not correct to blame a tire blowout for the incident. Harry Manning was in the right-hand co-pilot's seat on the attempted Honolulu takeoff. Manning wrote to me and then told me in tape recordings that the crash was the result of Earhart's jockeying the throttles on takeoff as she was having trouble controlling the takeoff. The blown tire was a result rather than a cause. Manning said, "One second I was looking at the hangars, the next second the water. I was ready to die. It was phenomenal that none of us was injured. She simply lost it. That's all. I decided then and there that was it for me. I'd been ready to leave anyway because of Putnam." Manning, by the way, was a licensed flyer. Noonan was not.

Well, Rob, that's as far as I can go at this moment. My wife is calling me to leave for dinner. If a chance presents itself over the weekend, I'll drop a few more lines to you.

Cordially Yours,



Frederick Allan Goerner  
24 Presidio Terrace  
San Francisco, CA. 94118