



ROLLING THUNDER[®], INC
CHAPTER 2 OF ILLINOIS
P.O. Box 394
Round Lake Beach, Illinois 60073



“MISSION COMPLETE”

Capt Joseph Olbinski

Capt Joseph Olbinski, an Army Air Force C-47 pilot with the 4th Troop Carrier Squadron, was reported MIA on 23 MAY 1944. His aircraft - what little there is left of it - was found in north Burma a few years ago. Joe's brother Edwin, age 82, lives in Marengo, IL. He had another brother (Robert) but he died last year. Bob also was a pilot in WWII, for a B-17 rather than a C-47, but was reportedly shot down on his first mission, and spent the war in a German POW camp. Edwin was too young for service in WWII, and exempt in Korea due to his brothers' service.



MISSING: In the spring of 1944, American, British, and Chinese forces launched a major ground offensive to wrest control of Myitkyina, Burma from the Japanese. However, by the beginning of May, Merrill's Marauders, laying siege to the city, faced critical supply shortages. According to one estimate, "on 20 May Rangers (Merrill's Marauders) had three days' rations on hand, very little mortar ammunition, and only 350 rounds of 75-mm. shells." Due to the unforgiving terrain and crude roads, U.S. Army Air Force (AAF) cargo planes based in India became a lifeline to the soldiers fighting across northern Burma.

In May 1944, Capt Olbinski's C-47A # 42-23510 attempted to fly a resupply mission in weather with a 100 ft ceiling and ¼ mile visibility from Dinjan, India to Myitkyina, Burma. After one routine radio call, the plane and crew were never heard from again. Search and rescue units based in the China-Burma-India Theater carried out several operations in an effort to find any sign of the four-man crew, their three Army Ranger passengers, or their aircraft, without success.

One detailed and voluminous account of search and rescue operations in the China-Burma-India Theater observed that as Allied forces advanced into Burma in the spring of 1944, mounting "losses in operational sorties that required rescue action" compelled the 10th Air Force to scramble to activate search and rescue units. However, despite the dogged efforts of search and rescue teams, they lacked "the power to requisition supplies and necessary equipment, either to carry on operations at a more efficient rate or to expand their activities to meet the Tenth Air Force's and the Troop Carrier's rising need for this work." The disappearance of C-47 #42-23510 nevertheless prompted the 10th Air Force to dispatch several search and rescue teams. Unfortunately, all failed to locate the downed aircraft or any sign of the crew. "No information available as yet," one officer dryly noted. Another AAF officer indicated that the flight path took the cargo plane "over a mountainous area." He described the likelihood that the aircraft crashed "in some inaccessible place" as "quite probable."

After careful consideration of the facts and the conditions on the ground, the War Department reached a finding of death in 1946. Army officials declared the remains nonrecoverable in 1948.



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RECOVERY: Beginning in 2001, the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) received a string of reports regarding the discovery of wreckage, identifying media, and possible human remains in an area west of Myitkyina. In March 2001, Central Identification Laboratory-Hawaii (CILHI), received an e-mail message from the Air Attaché attached to the U.S. Embassy in Rangoon, Burma, reporting that he received a call from a priest in Kachin State, Myanmar (Burma) regarding possible "wreckage of a C-47 about 15 miles west of Myitkyina." The debris field, according to the priest, contained "human remains, 4 pistols and lots of old ammunition" along with ID media with the following inscriptions: **Joseph M. Ordinski, O-433725, T43AC**. On 22 February 2002, JPAC received an envelope containing a letter, two photographs of possible wreckage, and a small data plate.

The Kachins are an ethnic minority in Southeast Asia who inhabit parts of northeastern India, southern China, and are most heavily concentrated in northern Burma, including Kachin State. During World War II, US Army intelligence regarded the Kachin people as friendly. One intelligence bulletin described them as generally "loyal and most helpful." Over the last few decades Kachin nationalist insurgents, including the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and the Kachin Independence Union (KIU) have been engaged in a tense, armed standoff with the central government over issues like ethnic autonomy and the use of Kachins as slave laborers by the military government. One source called the KIA "one of the best organized armed opposition groups in Burma." Officially, a precarious truce between the military junta of Burma and the Kachin rebels has prevailed, however, according to one observer, "Kachin State remains economically underdeveloped and serious infrastructure, social, and health issues loom, which may yet cause cracks in the veneer of political stability." In the first decade of the new century, an atmosphere of suspicion and fear pervaded the Kachin regions after some guerrillas "resumed the insurgency in early 2000. Any assistance from local Kachins in recovering remains from Capt Olbinski's, C-47A # 42-23510 was still tenuous.

In January 2003, JPAC investigators deployed to Burma in order to survey the site and conduct interviews. One local resident unilaterally turned over possible human remains, material evidence and identifying media including an ID tag for Joseph M. Olbinski, identification bracelets with the names and army serial numbers for 1st Lt Anderson and T Sgt Frantz. One bracelet included the "CBI crest" to denote service in the China-Burma India Theater.

REPATRIATION: On 2 MAR 10, Lt. Col. Rodd Lewis, the current commander of the 4th Airlift Squadron which is the current day designation of Joe's unit, came to Marengo to present the only personal effect discovered from the missing aircraft that clearly belonged to Joe - one of his ID tags. There were other belongings and personal effects for the other three crew members, and for the three passengers, Privates, who were replacements for what was then "Rangers" in the Burma region, but this ID tag is all that could be positively identified as belonging to Joe.





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This was the only planned event to honor this particular Soldier individually. Since there is little in the way of identifiable human remains, a "group" interment will be at Arlington National Cemetery in late May or June 2010.

Normally an event like this would be held in the privacy of the NOK's home. However, Mr. Olbinski has been kind enough to share this moment with other veterans, the youth and the interested public, sort of as encouragement to show that even 65 years after being reported MIA, our Soldiers are not forgotten. This is a "good news" story, and Eddie, a very understanding fellow, is letting us be part of it.

The American Legion, VFW, and several members of Rolling Thunder Inc. Chapter 2 of Illinois as well as the Marengo high school students, plus the community leaders from and around Marengo gathered with Capt Olbinski's family at the American Legion Post 192 in Marengo to honor this fallen Soldier and comrade.

On behalf of Rolling Thunder, the Chapter presented the family with a Chapter 2, Challenge Coin, in honor of Capt Olbinski's service. The coin symbolizes a "test of our metal" in supporting the on-going efforts to ensure the remaining 80,000 plus servicemen, servicewomen, and civilians, unaccounted for, are returned to our Country and to their loved ones. Each member of our Chapter carries a coin as a reminder of our continuing mission.

Despite the 65+ years of being MIA, the ceremony brought a sense of closure to his family, comfort to his friends, warmth to his fellow Americans, and pride to his Veteran brothers and sisters.

We will "Never Forget" Captain Joseph Olbinski.