

O PADU ZRAKOPLOVA B 24 LIBERATOR KOD SELA BRNJICE*



THE CRASH OF THE B 24 LIBERATOR AIRCRAFT NEAR THE VILLAGE OF BRNJICA*

Ovaj se rad bavi događajem od 13. listopada 1944. godine kada se američki bombarder tipa B 24 H Liberator, serijskog broja 41-28866, srušio nedaleko od sela Brnjice u šibenskom zaleđu. Zrakoplov je oštećen djelovanjem njemačke protuzračne obrane iznad gradova Beča i Graza. Budući da pri povratku nije mogao pratiti leteću formaciju s ostalim zrakoplovima iz skupine, pilot je procijenio da se neće uspjeti vratiti u matičnu luku te je odlučio da se posada spasi skokom s padobranima, dok se zrakoplov nedugo nakon toga srušio. Svih 11 članova posade preživjelo je pad. Devetoricu je ubrzo ustaška vojska uhvatila i poslala u Drniš odakle su dalje prebačeni u njemačke kampove za savezničke zarobljenike. Ostala dva člana posade preuzeli su partizani, koji su im previli rane i nakon nekog vremena otpratili do otoka Visa. Do tih podataka došlo se uzimanjem izjava

This paper discusses the events of October 13, 1944, when an American bomber type B 24 H Liberator, serial number 41-28866, crashed not far from the village of Brnjica in the hinterland of Šibenik. The aircraft was damaged by the German anti-aircraft defence over the cities of Vienna and Graz. Since the aircraft could not follow the flying formation of the other planes from the group on the return flight, the pilot estimated that he would not be able to return to the home port, and decided to save the crew by parachuting, while the aircraft crashed shortly after. All 11 crew members survived the crash. Nine were soon captured by the Ustaše army and sent to Drniš, from where they were transferred to German camps for Allied prisoners. The remaining two crew members were taken over by the partisans, who bandaged their wounds, and after some time, escorted

* Ovom prilikom zahvaljujem Radovanu Živanoviću, neumornom istraživaču zrakoplovnih olupina iz Drugog svjetskog rata, te kolegi arheologu Piu Dominesu Peteru na pomoći pri identifikaciji zrakoplova. Također, zahvalan sam i Lauri Caplan na ustupljenoj dokumentaciji te Marku Coffeeu, povjesničaru 499. borbene grupe Zračnih snaga Sjedinjenih Američkih Država. Zahvalnost dugujem i kolegi arheologu Emilu Podrugu iz Muzeja grada Šibenika te povjesničaru Josipu Paviću iz Javne ustanove u kulturi Tvrđava kulture Šibenik.

* I would like to take this opportunity to thank Radovan Živanović, a tireless researcher of aircraft wreckages from the World War II, and fellow archaeologist Pio Domines Peter for their help in identifying the aircraft. I am also grateful to Laura Caplan for providing the documentation and to Mark Coffee, a historian of the 499th Fighter-Bomber Squadron of the United States Air Force. I also owe my gratitude to my colleague archaeologist Emil Podrug from the Šibenik City Museum, and historian Josip Pavić from Public Cultural Institution Fortress of Culture Šibenik.

svjedoka događaja, terenskim obilaskom mjesta pada te analizom pronađenih dijelova zrakoplova. Uz još nekoliko pisanih izvora o tom događaju, najveću ulogu pri identifikaciji zrakoplova i posade imali su deklasificirani dosjei Američkog ministarstva rata, Missing air crew report (MACR) te Escape and Evasion report (E&ER).

Ključne riječi: Drugi svjetski rat; B 24 H Liberator; Brnjica; Mirlović Zagora.

them to the island of Vis. These data were obtained from statements given by the witnesses to the event, a field trip to the crash site, and an analysis of the recovered aircraft parts. Along with several other written sources about that event, the biggest role in the identification of the aircraft and its crew was played by the declassified files of the United States Department of War, the Missing air crew report (MACR), and the Escape and Evasion report (E&ER).

Keywords: World War II; B 24 H Liberator; Brnjica; Mirlović Zagora.

Nakon zauzimanja Italije krajem 1943. godine, savezničke snage koriste Apeninski poluotok za smještaj zračnih snaga odakle se najlakše polijetalo prema ciljevima u središnjoj i istočnoj Europi. Pred kraj 1943., a naročito tijekom 1944. i 1945. godine nad područjem današnje Hrvatske sve su učestaliji letovi savezničkih bombardera čiji su ciljevi najčešće bili u središnjoj i istočnoj Europi, a manjim dijelom na tlu Hrvatske.¹ Gust zračni promet i djelovanje protuzračne obrane imali su za posljedicu na stotine srušenih zrakoplova čiji se ostatci nalaze rasuti na raznim lokacijama diljem Hrvatske.² Zanimanje za istraživanje takve vrste lokaliteta djelomično je potaknuto otkrićima onih podmorskih, gdje su olupine zrakoplova većinom dobro sačuvane. Za razliku od njih, kopneni lokaliteti prepušteni su zaboravu, bez evidencije i zaštite. Zadnjih godina pojavio se pak interes za ovu temu, istraživanje koje zahtjeva proučavanje arhivske dokumentacije, terenske preglede te komunikaciju sa svjedocima, ako takvi postoje s obzirom na protok vremena.³ Jedan takav lokalitet obrađen je u ovom radu, a vezan je za pad savezničkog zrakoplova nedaleko od sela Brnjice, u listopadu 1944. godine. Put me prvo naveo u selo Mirlović Zagoru, gdje sam čuo za ovu priču još u srednjoškolskim danima. Danas

After the occupation of Italy at the end of 1943, the Allied forces used the Apennine peninsula as the base for their air forces from where they could quickly take off and fly towards the targets in Central and Eastern Europe. Towards the end of 1943, and especially during 1944 and 1945, the Allied bombers flew more frequently over the territory of the present-day Croatia, and their targets were mostly located in Central and Eastern Europe, and to a lesser extent, on Croatian soil.¹ The heavy air traffic and anti-aircraft defence operations resulted in hundreds of downed planes whose remains are scattered in various locations throughout Croatia.² The interest in the research of this type of sites has been partly fuelled by the discoveries of underwater sites, where the aircraft wrecks have been mostly well-preserved. In contrast, the land sites are consigned to oblivion, without records and protection. However, the interest in this topic has been rising in recent years; this kind of research requires the study of archive documentation, field surveys, and interviewing witnesses if such exist due to the passage of time.³ One such site is discussed in this paper, and it is related to the crash of an Allied plane near the village of Brnjica, in October 1944. The road first led me to the village of Mirlović Zagora, where I heard about this story back in my high school days. Today, only a few people

¹ Iako je u to vrijeme hrvatsko tlo većinom služilo samo za prelet, ciljani napadi neselektivnim bombardiranjem pojedinih hrvatskih gradova imali su teške i dugoročne posljedice za civilno stanovništvo. O savezničkom bombardiranju Šibenika vidjeti: Bezina 1996; Karakaš Obradov 2008a. O savezničkom bombardiranju na tlu Hrvatske vidjeti: Karakaš Obradov 2008b.

² Pretpostavlja se da se na području Hrvatske nalazi više od 700 ostataka olupina zrakoplova iz perioda Dugog svjetskog rata (R. Živanović, usmeno priopćenje).

³ Zanimanje za ovakvu vrstu lokaliteta u Hrvatskoj prvi je pokazao arheolog Luka Bekić vršeći zaštitna istraživanja na trasi magistralnog plinovoda Pula – Karlovac (Bekić 2007: 197 i d.). Pad savezničkog zrakoplova kod sela Oklaj obradio je Marko Sinobad (Sinobad 2014: 205 i d.), a sličan slučaj kod Ludbrega opisao je Stjepan Kovaček (Kovaček 2018: 167 i d.). Priču vezanu za rušenje britanskog lovca ispred senjske luke objavio je Pio Peter Domines (Peter Domines 2019: 297 i d.), dok je o lokacijama srušenih zrakoplova u Lici tijekom Drugog svjetskog rata pisao Radovan Živanović (Živanović 2021: 29 i d.). O metodologiji i praksi istraživanja zrakoplovnih olupina vidjeti: Daly 2015; Lickliter-Mundon 2018.

¹ Although the Croatian soil was mostly used only in overflights during that period, the targeted attacks by indiscriminate bombing of certain Croatian cities had serious and long-term consequences for the civilians. On the Allied bombing of Šibenik, see: Bezina 1996; Karakaš Obradov 2008a. On the Allied bombing on the Croatian soil, see: Karakaš Obradov 2008b.

² It is assumed that there are more than 700 remnants of aircraft wrecks from the period of the World War II in the territory of Croatia (R. Živanović, in conversation).

³ Archaeologist Luka Bekić was the first to show interest in this type of sites in Croatia by carrying out protective research on the route of the main gas pipeline Pula – Karlovac (Bekić 2007: 197ff). The crash of an Allied plane near the village of Oklaj was discussed by Marko Sinobad (Sinobad 2014: 205ff), and a similar case near Ludbreg was described by Stjepan Kovaček (Kovaček 2018: 167ff). The story related to the downing of a British fighter in front of the port of Senj was published by Pio Peter Domines (Peter Domines 2019: 297ff), while Radovan Živanović wrote about the locations of the aircrafts downed in Lika during the World War II (Živanović 2021: 29ff). On the methodology and practice of researching aircraft wreckage see: Daly 2015; Lickliter-Mundon 2018.

je živo svega nekoliko osoba koje su svjedočile tome događaju. Filip Škaro (rođ. 1933.), tada jedanaestogodišnjak, prisjeća se pilota koji je pao u ogradama zvanim Mezovo te opisuje kako je pilot bio teže ozlijeđen.⁴ Toga je pilota jedan partizan vukao prema selu Grgurice, a djeca su ih pratila i pomagala. Među tadašnjom je djecom bio i naš sugovornik. Nakon što su se domogli sela, odlučeno je da se ozlijeđenog pilota stavi u kuću Ante Grgurice (1908. – 2001.) koji je bio pričuvni pripadnik 15. pješачke domobranske pukovnije stacionirane u Kninu. O pilotu se brinula njegova žena Tonka Grgurica (1920. – 2005.), rođena Štrkalj. Po Škari, Ante Grgurica izabran je zato što je bio imućan i mogao je prehraniti pilota. Točno mjesto pada zrakoplova Škari je bilo nepoznato, no navodno se pričalo da je pao na predjelu između sela Radonića i Pokrovnika. Taj događaj pamti i Marica Nakić (rođ. 1938.), jedino dijete Ante i Tonke Grgurice.⁵ Imala je svega šest godina kada je, čuvajući ovce u vinogradu, na nebu opazila nekoliko padobranaca. Sjeća se i pilota kojeg su njezin otac i majka skrili u „staru kulu“ iza vinskih bačvi. Po njezinim riječima pilot je imao lomove na obje noge, a u početku je i odbijao hranu bojeći se da je otrovana. Nije joj poznato koliko je vremena proveo u njihovoj kući, već da je na kraju zahvalio na gostoprimstvu te ostavio podatke da bi se mogli čuti i nakon rata. Ti papiri danas su zagubljeni.

Informacije o još jednom članu posade dao je Ante Marčić (rođ. 1933. godine).⁶ On spominje pilota koji se prizemljio na predio zvan Bulatove ograde, a kojeg su nedugo nakon pada pronašle ustaše i odvele u nepoznatom pravcu. Njega se sjeća i Jure Topčić (rođ. 1931.) koji živi u zaseoku Sudari.⁷ Po njemu taj isti pilot doveden je ozlijeđen pred župnu kuću u centru Mirlović Zagore gdje mu je časna sestra koja je tu boravila previla

who witnessed this event are alive. Filip Škaro (born in 1933), eleven years old at the time, remembers the pilot who crashed in the fences called Mezovo, and he describes that the pilot was seriously injured.⁴ The pilot was dragged by a partisan towards the village of Grgurice, and the children followed and helped them. Our interviewee was among the children at the time. After reaching the village, it was decided that the pilot should be put in the house of Ante Grgurica (1908 – 2001), who was a reserve member of the Home Guard's 15th infantry regiment stationed in Knin. His wife Tonka Grgurica (1920 – 2005), born Štrkalj, had taken care of the pilot. According to Škaro, Ante Grgurica was chosen because he was wealthy and could feed the pilot. The exact place of the plane crash was unknown to Škaro, but it was rumoured that it crashed in the area between the villages of Radonić and Pokrovnik. Marica Nakić (b. 1938), the only child of Ante and Tonka Grgurica, also remembers that event.⁵ She was only six years old when, while tending the sheep in the vineyard she noticed several parachutists in the sky. She also remembers the pilot that her father and mother hid in the “old tower” behind the wine barrels. According to her, the pilot had fractures on both legs, and at first he refused food, fearing that it was poisoned. She does not know how much time he spent in their house, but that at the end he thanked them for their hospitality, and left information so that they could stay in touch after the war. Today, those papers are lost.

The information about another crew member was provided by Ante Marčić (born in 1933).⁶ He mentioned a pilot who landed in an area called Bulatove ograde, who was found by the Ustaše shortly after the crash, and taken in an unknown direction. Jure Topčić (born in 1931) who lives in the hamlet of Sudari also remembers him.⁷ According to him, the pilot was injured, and he was taken to the parish

⁴ Razgovor s Filipom Škarom obavljen je telefonski 28. listopada 2018. godine.

⁵ Razgovor s Maricom Nakić obavljen je u više navrata tijekom 2019. godine.

⁶ Razgovor s Antom Marčićem obavljen je u njegovoj kući u zaseoku Bulati 28. studenoga 2018. godine.

⁷ Razgovor s Jurom Topčićem obavljen je u njegovoj kući u svibnju 2020. godine.

⁴ The interview with Filip Škaro was conducted by phone on October 28, 2018.

⁵ The interview with Marica Nakić took place on several occasions during 2019.

⁶ The interview with Ante Marčić took place in his house in the hamlet of Bulati on November 28, 2018.

⁷ The interview with Jure Topčić took place in his house in May 2020.

noge. Nakon nekog vremena odveden je u nepoznatom pravcu. Vrativši se na trag gospodina Škare o mogućem mjestu pada na širokom prostoru između sela Radonića i Pokrovnika, prvo sam se uputio u Radonić kod Ante Žaje (1928. – 2020.), koji se dobro sjećao događaja pred kraj rata.⁸ Pričao je da se na cijelom području nalazilo nekoliko vojski pa je tako jednom prilikom na putu prema Šibeniku, od Konjevrate do Tromilje, sreo ustašku i četničku vojsku te partizane koji su strijeljali talijanske vojnike nedaleko od Tromilje. Na pitanje o zrakoplovu odgovara da je došao iz pravca Midenog brda i za sobom ostavljao gusti dim. Točno mjesto pada nije mu bilo poznato, ali pamti da su se dijelovi zrakoplova rasuli naokolo te da su padali i u Pakovu selu. Tako je jedan njegov susjed pronašao nekakav kanistar iz zrakoplova te ga je prepilio i napravio korita. Spomenuo je i da je odmah pri padu zrakoplova došlo do okršaja između ustaša koji su bili smješteni u župnoj kući u Mirlović Zagori i partizana koji su se spustili s Midenog brda. Sjetio se i pilota koji je ozlijeđen odveden u zaseok Grgurice. Po njegovu opisu radilo se o mlađem momku plave kose, visokom i jake građe u posebnoj uniformi i s dva para čizama žute boje. Najpreciznije informacije o mjestu pada zrakoplova ispričao je Ante Aleksić (rođ. 1938.) iz Pokrovnika.⁹ On se toga dana sa svojim ocem Vladom nalazio u polju podno sela. Vidjevši gusti crni dim koji se protezao nebom iz pravca Mirlović Zagore, Vlade je, kao pripadnik ustaške vojske, uzeo pušku te se sam uputio prema mjestu pada zrakoplova. To je ujedno bio i posljednji put da je Ante, tada devetogodišnjak, vidio svog oca. Po priči, poginuo je u okršaju s partizanima koji su se također uputili prema olupini zrakoplova, a njegovo tijelo nikad nije pronađeno. Prema Antinu opisu zrakoplov je pao koji kilometar južnije od skretanja za selo Brnjicu, tik uz cestu koja vodi prema Šibeniku (v. Sl. 1).

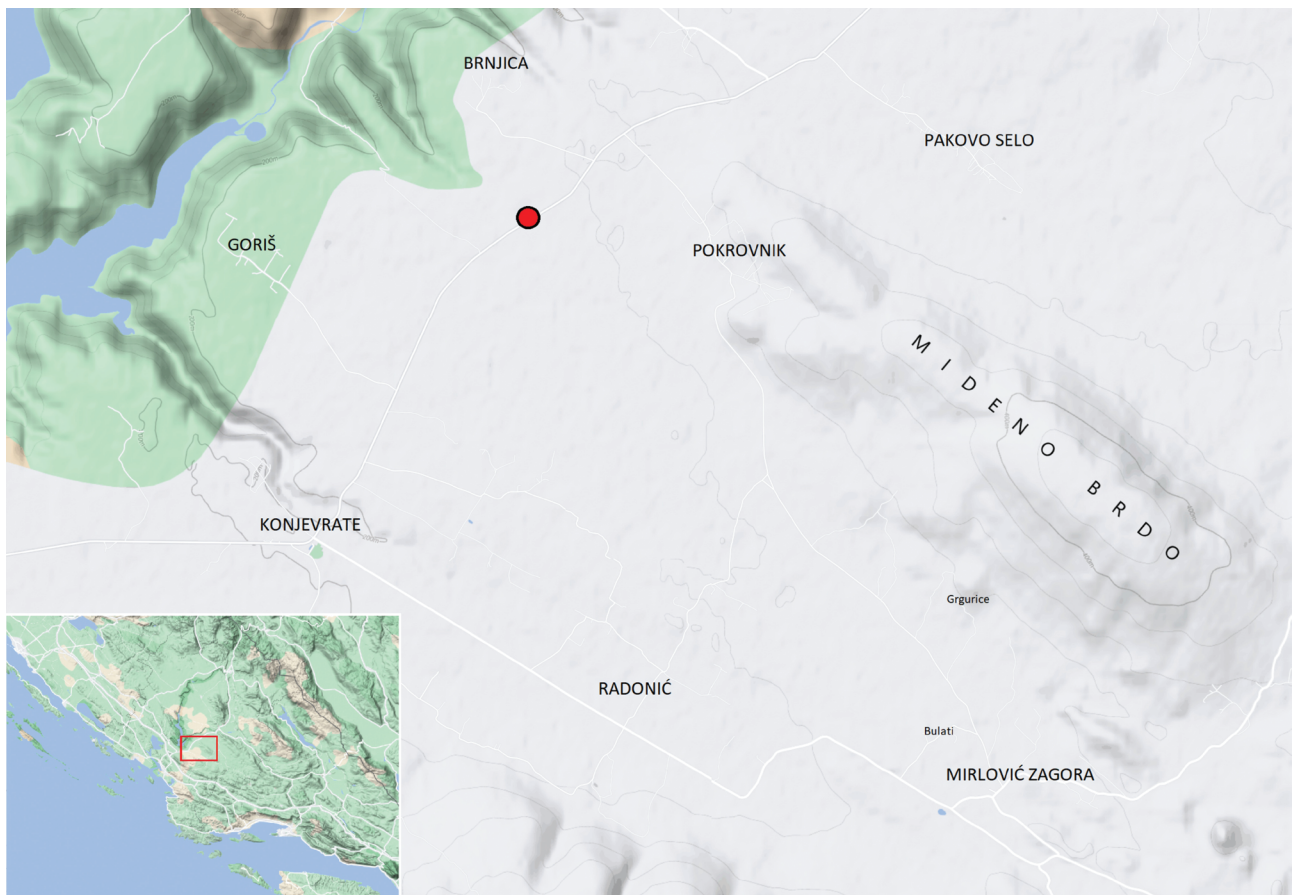
house in the centre of Mirlović Zagora, where a nun that lived there bandaged his legs. After some time, he was taken in an unknown direction. Returning to Mr. Škaro's clue about the possible crash site in the wide area between the villages of Radonić and Pokrovnik, I first went to Radonić to see Ante Žaja (1928 – 2020), who remembered well the events from the end of the war.⁸ He said that there were several armies in the entire area, so on one occasion on his way to Šibenik, from Konjevrate to Tromilja, he met the Ustaša and Četnik armies, and partisans who were executing Italian soldiers not far from Tromilja. When asked about the plane, he said that it came from the direction of Midenog brdo, and it left a trail of thick smoke. The exact place of the crash was unknown to him, but he remembered that parts of the plane were scattered around, and that they also fell in Pakovo Selo. One of his neighbours found a plane canister which he sawed and made troughs from it. He also mentioned that immediately after the plane crashed, there was a clash between the Ustaše who were stationed in the parish house in Mirlović Zagora, and the partisans who came down from Midenog brdo. He also remembered the pilot that was injured and taken to the hamlet of Grgurice. According to his description, he was a young lad with blond hair, tall and sturdy, wearing a special uniform, and two pairs of yellow boots. Ante Aleksić (born 1938) from Pokrovnik offered the most precise information about the crash site.⁹ On that day, he went with his father Vlade into the field beneath the village. Seeing thick black smoke rising across the sky from the direction of Mirlović Zagora, Vlade, a member of the Ustaša army, took a rifle and headed towards the crash site. It was also the last time that Ante, then nine years old, ever saw his father. According to the story, he was killed in a skirmish with the partisans who were also heading towards the plane wreck, but his body was never found. According to Ante's description, the plane fell a few kilometres south of the turn for the village of Brnjica, right next to the road leading to Šibenik (see Fig. 1).

⁸ Razgovor s Antom Žajom obavljen je u njegovoj kući 4. siječnja 2019. godine.

⁹ Razgovor s Antom Aleksićem obavljen je u njegovoj kući u nekoliko navrata tijekom svibnja 2019. godine.

⁸ The interview with Ante Žaja took place in his house on January 4, 2019.

⁹ The interview with Ante Aleksić took place in his house on several occasions during May 2019.



Slika 1. Karta dijela šibenskog zaleđa s označenim mjestom pada zrakoplova (označio: autor).

Tijekom studenoga i prosinca 2019. godine napravljeno je više ciljanih terenskih pregleda tog područja, no bez rezultata. Konačno, 2. siječnja 2020. godine u suhozidu nedaleko od spomenute prometnice pronađena su dva komada aluminijske oplata koja su prepoznata kao dijelovi zrakoplova. Suhozid se nalazi između katastarskih čestica 5131/1 i 5128/2, katastarska općina Konjevrate. Neposredno pokraj suhozida na k. č. 5128/2 primijećeno je i manje uleknuce u zemlji na čijoj je površini pronađena veća količina rastopljenih aluminijskih dijelova. U sljedećih nekoliko navrata na spomenutoj kat. čestici i susjednoj 5128/1 intenzivnim površinskim pregledom pronađeno je 206 dijelova koji su pripadali zrakoplovu (v. Sl. 2).

Najveći dio njih pripada rastopljenim komadima aluminijske legure. Ostali komadi od tvrde aluminijske legure sa zakovicama pripadaju oplati zrakoplova, dok hidrauličkom sustavu zrakoplova pripadaju četiri ulomka cijevi. Na osam ulomaka vidljivi su tragovi tamnozeleno, svjetlozeleno, maslinaste i

Figure 1. Map of a part of Šibenik's hinterland, with the plane crash site marked (marked by: the author).

During November and December 2019, several targeted field surveys of the area were made that yielded no results. Finally, on January 2, 2020, two pieces of aluminium plate were found in a drywall not far from the aforementioned road, which were recognized as the pieces of the aircraft. The drywall is located between cadastral plots no. 5131/1 and no. 5128/2, of the cadastral municipality of Konjevrate. Right next to the drywall on the cadastral plot no. 5128/2, a smaller depression in the ground was also noticed, and a larger amount of melted aluminium parts was found on the surface. During the next several visits to the mentioned cadastral plot, and the neighbouring plot no. 5128/1, an intensive field survey revealed 206 airplane parts (see Fig. 2).

Most of them were melted pieces of aluminium alloy. Other pieces of hard aluminium alloy with rivets came from the airplane fuselage, while four pipe fragments formed a part of the hydraulic system of the aircraft. Traces of dark green, light green, olive and dark blue colours are visible on eight fragments. The four pieces of aluminium alloy tin sheets



Slika 2. Ortofoto mjesta pronalaska dijelova zrakoplova. Zelenom bojom označeno je područje gdje su pronađeni rastaljeni dijelovi, dok žuta boja označava mjesto gdje su pronađeni ostali dijelovi zrakoplova (izrada: Ruina d.o.o.).

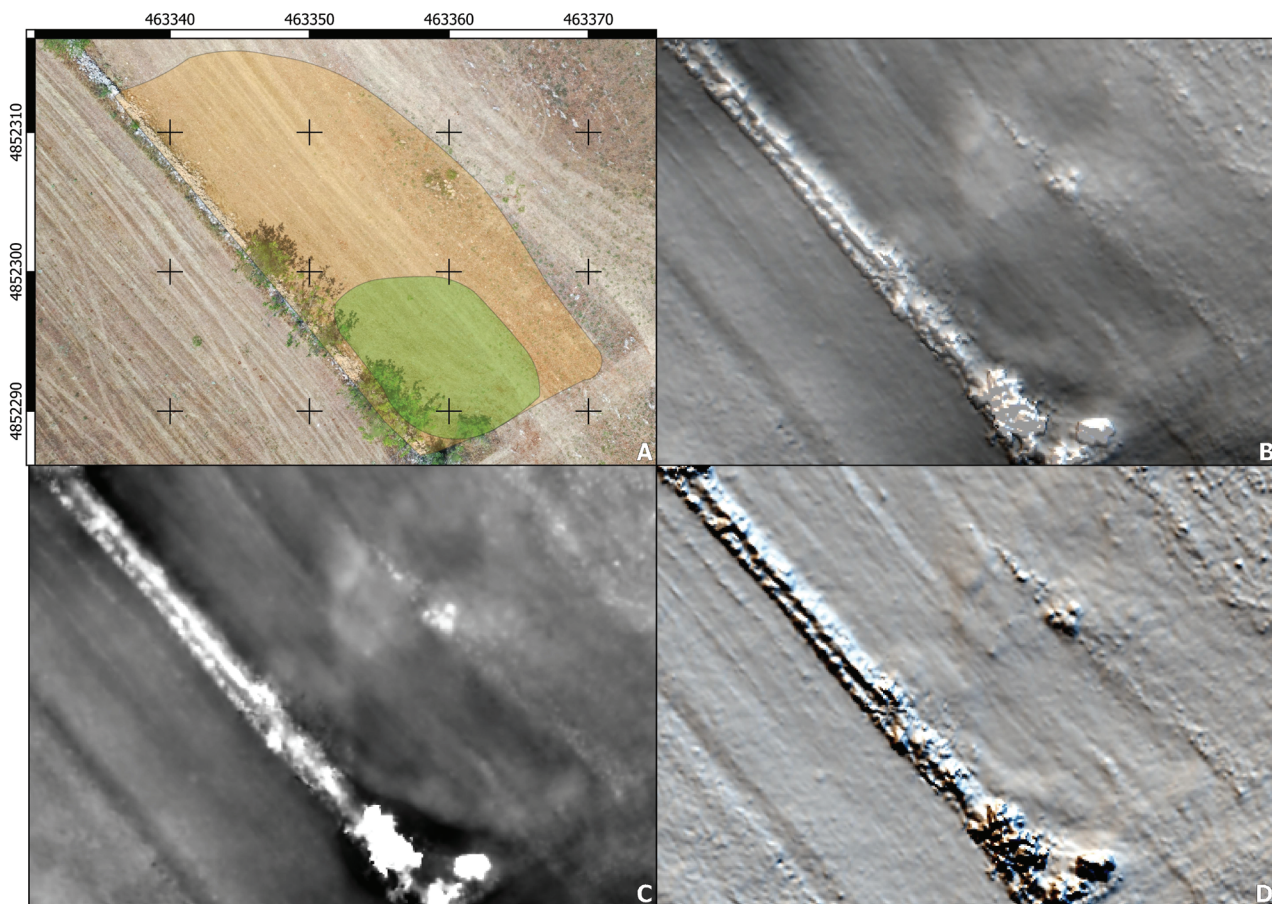
tamnoplave boje. Na četiri komada lima od aluminijske legure utisnut je natpis *TINNERMAN – 4*, koji se odnosi na proizvođača dijelova za električne uređaje.¹⁰ Na većem komadu poklopca od aluminijske legure s unutrašnje strane nalaze jedva vidljivi tragovi pečata proizvođača. Od osam željeznih dijelova daju se prepoznati tek dva članka redenika za

¹⁰ Slični ulomci pronađeni su na mjestu pada bombardera B-24 kod sela Krvavića (Bekić 2007: 200, 201) i sela Oklaja (Sinobad 2014: 210). Zrakoplov B 24 Liberator najproizvođeniji je američki bombarder svih vremena. Od 1939. godine pa do kraja rata za potrebe savezničke vojske proizvedeno je oko 18 tisuća primjeraka u nekoliko verzija. Radi se o zrakoplovu s rasponom krila većim od 33 metra koji pokreću četiri motora od 1200 KS. Zrakoplovom je najčešće upravljala deseteročlana posada, a mogao je ponijeti više od 1800 kilograma bombi te je bio naoružan strojnica Browning kalibra 12,7 mm. O razvoju i upotrebi ovog zrakoplova: O’Leary 2002.

Figure 2. An orthophoto of the location in which the aircraft parts were found. The area where the melted parts were found is marked in green, and the place where other parts of the aircraft were found is marked in yellow (by Ruina d.o.o.).

bear the inscription *TINNERMAN – 4*, which refers to the manufacturer of the parts for electrical appliances.¹⁰ On the inside of a larger piece of the aluminium alloy lid, there are barely visible traces of the manufacturer’s stamp. Of eight iron parts, only two pieces of the 12.7 mm bullet belt can be identified. Five Bakelite fragments were found, and

¹⁰ Similar fragments were found at the crash site of the B-24 bomber near the village of Krvavići (Bekić 2007: 200, 201) and the village of Oklaj (Sinobad 2014: 210). The B 24 Liberator is the most produced American bomber of all time. From 1939 until the end of the war, about 18,000 units in several versions were produced for the needs of the Allied army. The aircraft has a wingspan of more than 33 meters powered by four 1200 HP engines. The aircraft was usually piloted by a crew of ten, it could carry more than 1,800 kilograms of bombs, and was armed with 12.7 mm Browning machine guns. On the development and use of this aircraft see: O’Leary 2002.



Slika 3. Prikaz mjesta pronalaska dijelova zrakoplova; A: fotogrametrijski ortofoto, B: multi scale relief model, C: simple local relief model, D: hillshade 3D model (izrada: Ruina d.o.o.).

Figure 3. Position of the location of the aircraft parts; A: photogrammetric ortho-photo, B: multi scale relief model, C: simple local relief model, D: hillshade 3D model (by: Ruina d.o.o.).

metke kalibra 12,7 mm. Pronađeno je pet bakelitnih ulomaka od kojih su tri manja vjerojatno pripadala dijelovima radijske opreme. Osim komada gumenog crijeva i oplata crvenkaste boje pronađen je i manji komad pleksiglasa koji je vjerojatno fragment kupole za smještaj artiljerca (v. Sl. 3).

U proljeće 2022. godine to je područje snimljeno iz zraka te je napravljen 3D reljef terena.¹¹

three smaller ones were probably radio equipment parts. In addition to a piece of a rubber hose, and a reddish-coloured plate, a smaller piece of Plexiglas was also found, which is probably a fragment of the turret in which the bombardier was located (see Fig. 3).

In the spring of 2022, the area was photographed from the air and a 3D terrain relief was created.¹¹

¹¹ Teren je snimljen tehnikom zračne fotogrametrije gdje se pomoću prikupljenih fotografija i registriranih položaja i orijentacije kamere u trenutku snimanja vrši prepoznavanje zajedničkih točaka koje omogućuju izradu 3D modela. Dobiveni model zatim se georeferencira snimanjem poznatih kontrolnih točaka. Zračno snimanje izvršeno je dronom DJI Mavic 2, dok su kontrolne točke snimljene diferencijalnim GPS prijemnikom. Let dronom obavljen je 19. lipnja 2022. godine, a obradu podataka prikupljenih na terenu obavila je arheološka tvrtka Ruina d.o.o. iz Zagreba.

¹¹ The terrain was recorded by aerial photogrammetry, where the collected photos, marked positions, and camera orientation at the time of recording are used to identify common points which enable the creation of a 3D model. The resulting model is then georeferenced by recording known control points. The aerial photography was done with a DJI Mavic 2 drone, while control points were recorded with a differential GPS receiver. The drone flight took place on June 19, 2022, and the collected field data was processed by the archaeological company Ruina d.o.o. from Zagreb.

Osim zračnog snimanja, GPS uređajem zabilježen je precizni obris lokacije na kojoj su pronađeni rastopljeni dijelovi aluminijske legure te obris šireg prostora gdje su površinskim pregledom pronađeni i ostali dijelovi zrakoplova. Zasebno je snimljena pozicija na suhozidu na kojoj su uočena prva dva ulomka. Rezultati dobiveni zračnom fotogrametrijom reljefne površine na kat. česticama 5128/1 i 5128/2 jasno ukazuju na postojanje plićih uleknuća nepravilnog oblika, iako su parcele naknadno intenzivno korištene u poljoprivredne svrhe, o čemu svjedoče i karakteristični tragovi preoravanja (v. Sl. 4).

Pružanje udubina u tlu poklapa se s područjem gdje su pronađeni dijelovi zrakoplova pa možemo pretpostaviti da su ta uleknuća nastala udarom zrakoplova o tlo. Pritom je došlo do iskrenja te se zrakoplov zapalio, o čemu svjedoče rastaljeni dijelovi aluminijske legure. Također, disperzija krhotina zrakoplova potvrđuje pravac kretanja u smjeru jugoistok-sjeverozapad, kako je svjedok događaja Ante Aleksić i opisao.

In addition to aerial photography, the GPS device recorded a precise outline of the location where the melted parts of the aluminium alloy were found, as well as the outline of a wider area where other parts of the aircraft were also found by field survey. The position on the drywall where the first two fragments were found was recorded separately. The results obtained by aerial photogrammetry of the relief surface on the cadastral plot no. 5128/1 and no. 5128/2 clearly indicate the existence of shallow depressions of an irregular shape, although the parcels were subsequently used intensively for agricultural purposes, as evidenced by the characteristic traces of ploughing (see Fig. 4).

The direction of depressions in the ground coincides with the area in which airplane parts were found, so it can be assumed that these depressions were caused by plane impacting the ground. At the same time, sparking occurred, and the aircraft caught fire, as evidenced by the melted parts of the aluminium alloy. Also, the dispersion of the plane debris confirms the course in the southeast-northwest direction, as described by the witness to the event, Ante Aleksić.



Slika 4. Dijelovi zrakoplova pronađeni na mjestu pada (foto: autor).

Figure 4. Parts of the plane found at the crash site (photo by: the author).

Zapisi o tom događaju pronađeni su u *Dnevniku* Nikole Adžije¹², pod nadnevnkom 13. listopada 1944.: „Danas preko Drniša neprestano prolaze zrakom razni avioni. Oko 15 h na Pakovu selu pao je 1 bombarder. 4 padobranca koja su pala na Pakovo selo – Pokrovnik zarobljena su i dovedena oko 17 h u Drniš u njemačkom kamionu. Da su ih zarobili ustaše (...).“¹³ Već sljedećeg dana piše: „S bombardera tvrđave koji je pao u Pokrovniku Njemci su skinuli sve što je vrijednije, sve aparate, gumene predmete, radio stanice, a drugo poništili. Zarobljeno je svih 11 padobranaca i postavljeni u logor Drniš.“¹⁴ Nesreće savezničkih zrakoplova bilježila je i *Slobodna Dalmacija*, pa tako na trećoj stranici 76. broja tiskanog 6. studenoga 1944. godine stoji: „Pred nekoliko dana prisilno se spustio kod sela Radonića jedan četveromotorni avion tipa Liberator. S aviona je iskočilo 11 članova posade. Oni su pali blizu sela Radonić i Mirlovići. Ustaše iz „postojanke“ u Mirlovićima pohrlili su da pohvataju avijatičare. Neki ustaše, koji su se našli u blizini Radonića, uspjeli su se privući do njih prije naših boraca. Tri naša borca koji su se našli također u blizini Radonića zapucaše na neprijatelje i ovi su ostavili dva ranjena avijatičara, a s ostalima su pobjegli. Naši su borci povili rane spašenim avijatičarima, a seljaci Kraljica preniže ih svojim ladjama.“¹⁵

Ti vrijedni dnevnički i novinski zapisi, kao i rezultati terenskog obilaska mjesta pada i razgovora sa svjedocima, podudaraju se s podacima iz dosjea *Missing air crew report* (dalje u tekstu MACR) Američkog ministarstva rata, koji se u pravilu otvarao 48 sati nakon nestanka svakog aviona. Pod brojem 9317 nalazi se dokumentacija vezana za pad zrakoplova B 24 H, nazvanog *Nancy Jane (II)*, serijskog broja 41-28866, koji

The records about the event were found in Nikola Adžija's *Dnevnik* (eng.: *The Diary*)¹², dated October 13, 1944: “Today, various airplanes constantly fly over Drniš. Around 3 pm, a bomber fell on Pakovo Selo. Four paratroopers who fell on Pakovo selo – Pokrovnik were captured and brought to Drniš in a German truck around 5 pm. If they had been captured by the Ustaše (...).”¹³ The very next day he wrote: “From the bomber fortress that crashed in Pokrovnik, the Germans removed everything that was valuable, all devices, rubber objects, radio stations, and destroyed the rest. All 11 paratroopers were captured and placed in the Drniš camp.”¹⁴ *Slobodna Dalmacija* also recorded the Allied aircraft accidents, so the third page of the 76th issue printed on November 6, 1944 states: “A few days ago, a four-engine Liberator-type airplane made a forced landing near the village of Radonić. 11 crew members jumped out of the plane. They fell near the villages of Radonić and Mirlovići. The Ustaše from the ‘encampment’ in Mirlovići rushed to capture the aviators. Some Ustaše, who were near Radonić, managed to get to them before our fighters. Three of our fighters who were also in the vicinity of Radonić fired at the enemies who then left behind two wounded airmen, and fled with the others. Our fighters bandaged the wounds of the rescued airmen, and the villagers of Kraljice carried them in their boats.”¹⁵

These valuable diary and newspaper records, as well as the results of a field survey of the crash site, and interviews with witnesses, coincide with the data from the *Missing air crew report* (hereinafter: MACR) file of the United States Department of War, which as a rule, was opened 48 hours after the disappearance of each airplane. The documentation related to the crash of the B 24 H aircraft, called *Nancy Jane (II)*, serial number 41-28866, which belonged to the 719th Bomber Squadron

¹² Nikola Adžija (1875. – 1972.) bio je politički i kulturni djelatnik u Drnišu. Prije rata obnašao je funkciju načelnika općine, dok vrijeme okupacije provodi u Drnišu kao politički zatvorenik. Za vrijeme zatočeništva i prvih godina nakon rata kronološki bilježi događaje vezane za Drniš i njegovu okolicu. O tome: Adžija 2005.

¹³ Adžija 2005: 236.

¹⁴ Adžija 2005: 236.

¹⁵ https://arhiv.slobodnadalmacija.hr/pvpages/pvpages/viewPage/?pv_page_id=236882 (pristupljeno 15/10/2021).

¹² Nikola Adžija (1875 – 1972) was a political and cultural employee in Drniš. Before the war, he served as the mayor of the municipality, while he spent the occupation period in Drniš as a political prisoner. During his imprisonment and the first years after the war, he chronologically recorded the events related to Drniš and its surroundings. More on this: Adžija 2005.

¹³ Adžija 2005: 236.

¹⁴ Adžija 2005: 236.

¹⁵ https://arhiv.slobodnadalmacija.hr/pvpages/pvpages/viewPage/?pv_page_id=236882 (accessed 15/10/2021).

je pripadao 719. bombarderskoj eskadrili 449. bombarderske grupe.¹⁶ Posadu su činili:

1. Mealey, Michael C. – pilot, poručnik (serijski broj: 0-705749)
2. Smith, Eben D. – kopilot, poručnik (serijski broj: 0-768715)
3. Lent, Richard W. – navigator, poručnik (serijski broj: 0-717347)
4. Hansen, George W. – bombarder, poručnik (serijski broj: 716728)
5. Anderson, Jesse D. – strojar i artiljerac desnog boka, kaplar (serijski broj: 39272227)
6. Luchsinger, Gilbert W. – pomoćnik strojara i artiljerac gornje kupole, narednik (serijski broj: 37611865)
7. Welch, Eugene H. – radijski operater i artiljerac lijevog boka, narednik (serijski broj: 38465116)
8. Sommers, Thomas W. – artiljerac u repu zrakoplova, narednik (serijski broj: 38522959)
9. Wilhite, Alfred J. – artiljerac okrugle kupole, narednik (serijski broj: 13032701)
10. Mogle, Floyd H. – artiljerac prednje kupole, narednik (serijski broj: 35570779)
11. Caplan, Leslie – kirurg pri zrakoplovstvu, kapetan (serijski broj: 0-413434)

Prema podacima iz dosjea 13. listopada 1944. *Nancy Jane (II)* krenula je na svoj posljednji let iz baze u talijanskom gradiću Grottaglie. Primarna meta bombardera tog dana bila je željeznička infrastruktura grada Beča. Gusta magla poviše Beča natjerala ih je da još jednom okruže grad, no s obzirom na to da se magla nije dizala i nije omogućila bombardiranje, krenuli su prema drugoj meti, gradu Grazu. Još iznad Beča zrakoplov je doživio prva oštećenja djelovanjem protuzračne obrane. Dodatna oštećenja nastala su i iznad Graza, no nitko od posade nije bio ozlijeđen. Na povratku s misije otkazao mu je motor br. 3, ali je donekle održavao formaciju s ostalim zrakoplovima. Ipak, nakon pola sata počeo je sve više zaostajati i gubiti na visini. Prvotni je cilj bio da se domognu otoka Visa na kojem

of the 449th Bomb Group can be found under file number 9317.¹⁶ The crew consisted of:

1. Mealey, Michael C. – Pilot, Lieutenant (Serial Number: 0-705749)
2. Smith, Eben D. – Co-pilot, Lieutenant (serial number: 0-768715)
3. Lent, Richard W. – Navigator, Lieutenant (serial number: 0-717347)
4. Hansen, George W. – Bombardier, Lieutenant (serial number: 716728)
5. Anderson, Jesse D. – Machinist and Right Flank Gunner, Corporal (Serial Number: 39272227)
6. Luchsinger, Gilbert W. – Machinist's Mate and Upper Turret Gunner, Sergeant (Serial Number: 37611865)
7. Welch, Eugene H. – Radio Operator and Left Flank Gunner, Sergeant (Serial Number: 38465116)
8. Sommers, Thomas W. – Tail Gunner, Sergeant (Serial Number: 38522959)
9. Wilhite, Alfred J. – Round Turret Gunner, Sergeant (Serial Number: 13032701)
10. Mogle, Floyd H. – Front Turret Gunner, Sergeant (Serial Number: 35570779)
11. Caplan, Leslie – Air Surgeon, Captain (serial number: 0-413434)

According to data from the file, on October 13, 1944, *Nancy Jane (II)* took off on her last flight from the base in the Italian town of Grottaglie. That day, the bomber's primary target was the railway infrastructure of Vienna. The thick fog above Vienna forced them to circle the city once more, but considering that the fog did not lift, and did not allow for bombing, they headed towards the second target, the city of Graz. Above Vienna, the aircraft suffered first damage caused by anti-aircraft defence. Additional damage was also caused over Graz, but none of the crew were injured. On the return from the mission, the engine no. 3 failed, but the aircraft somewhat managed to maintain formation with other airplanes. However, after half an hour, it

¹⁶ National Archives and Record Administration, Record Group 92, Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, 1774 – 1985, Missing Air Crew Report no. 9317 (<https://catalog.archives.gov/id/91068982>; pristupljeno 15/10/2021).

¹⁶ National Archives and Record Administration, Record Group 92, Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, 1774 – 1985, Missing Air Crew Report no. 9317 (<https://catalog.archives.gov/id/91068982>; accessed 15/10/2021).

su britanski vojnici izgradili uzletno-sletnu stazu. Uvidjevši da to neće ostvariti, u 14 sati i 45 minuta pilot je izdao zapovijed za skok oko 20 milja sjeveroistočno od Šibenika. Sva posada uspjela je iskočiti iz zrakoplova, no pri doskoku na tlo navigator Richard W. Lent slomio je obje noge, dok je artiljerac prednje kupole Floyd H. Mogle ozlijedio zglobove lijeve noge. Ubrzo su im prišle ustaše te ih zarobile, no nakon okršaja s partizanima ustaše su se povukle te ostavile dvojicu ranjenih avijatičara koji se, uz pomoć partizana i lokalnog stanovništva, uspijevaju domoći bolnice u talijanskom gradu Bariju.

Detaljniji opis događaja vezanih za rušenje zrakoplova i neposredno nakon toga iznio je Thomas W. Sommers, artiljerac u repu zrakoplova.¹⁷ Sommers, tada osamnaestogodišnjak, opisuje da su zbog magle napravili dva preleta iznad Beča, što nije bila uobičajena praksa. Već je tada zrakoplov pretrpio oštećenja djelovanjem protuzračnog topa tipa *flak*. On sam se pak nalazio u repnoj kupoli i nije mogao komunicirati putem interkoma jer je i on bio oštećen, dok su ostali članovi posade strahovali od eksplozije spremnika za gorivo. Budući da su se primicali obali Jadrana, odlučeno je da pokušaju sletjeti na morsku površinu. No s obzirom na to da je zrakoplov već bio oštećen, strahovali su da se ne raspadne pri dodiru s morem. Stoga su odlučili krenuti prema kopnu i pronaći najbolje mjesto za skok. U tom trenutku Sommers je iz kupole prešao u repni dio da bi se pripremio za skok kroz otvor za kameru, dok se ostali dio posade

began to fall further behind, and lose altitude. The original goal was to reach the island of Vis, where the British soldiers had built an airstrip. Realising that he could not manage this, at 02:45 pm, the pilot gave the exit order about 20 miles northeast of Šibenik. All crew members managed to jump out of the plane, but during ground landing, navigator Richard W. Lent broke both of his legs, while front turret gunner Floyd H. Mogle injured his left ankle. Soon the Ustaše approached them and captured them, but after a skirmish with the partisans, the Ustaše retreated and left the two wounded airmen who managed to reach the hospital in the Italian town of Bari with the help of the partisans and the local population.

A more detailed description of the events regarding the downing of the plane and its immediate aftermath was given by Thomas W. Sommers, a gunner in the tail of the airplane.¹⁷ Sommers, who was eighteen years old at the time, described that because of the fog, they made two overflights over Vienna, which was not a common practice. The airplane was already damaged by the *Flak* anti-aircraft gun. He was in the tail turret and could not communicate via the intercom because it was also damaged, while the other crew members feared the fuel tank would explode. Since they were approaching the Adriatic coast, they decided to try to land on the surface of the sea. But considering that the plane was already damaged, they feared that it would disintegrate upon contact with the sea. Therefore, they decided to head towards land and

¹⁷ Priča Toma Sommersa dio je knjige koju je Laura Caplan posvetila svom ocu dr. Lesliju Caplanu (Caplan 2004: 145). Doktor Caplan, jedan od jedanaestorice koji se prizemljio u Mirlović Zagori, koristio je letove da bi se bolje upoznao s opskrbom kisika u borbenim uvjetima na bombarderima tipa B 24 Liberator. Ipak, svoj najveći doprinos avijatičarima dao je nakon što je kao njemački zarobljenik stigao u zarobljenički kamp Stalag Luft. 4 u poljskom gradu Tychowo (njem. Gross Tychow) gdje je nesebično pružao medicinsku pomoć stotinama zarobljenih savezničkih avijatičara. Zbog napredovanja Crvene armije, Nijemci su početkom veljače 1945. godine odlučili premjestiti kamp natjeravši zarobljenike u „marš smrti“ dug gotovo 1000 kilometara (Caplan 1945: 12. i d.). Tijekom 87 dana koliko je trajao marš, dr. Caplan je pomogao ranjenim i ozlijeđenim kolegama, a za svoj trud i zalaganje odlikovan je Legijom za zasluge Oružanih snaga Sjedinjenih Američkih Država.

¹⁷ Tom Sommers' story is part of a book dedicated by Laura Caplan to her father, Dr Leslie Caplan (Caplan 2004: 145). Doctor Caplan, one of the eleven who parachuted in Mirlović Zagora, used the flights to become better acquainted with the oxygen supply in combat conditions on the B 24 Liberator bombers. However, he made his greatest contribution to the aviators after being imprisoned by the Germans in the Stalag Luft. 4 prison camp in the Polish town of Tychowo (Gross Tychow), where he selflessly provided medical aid to hundreds of captured Allied airmen. Due to the advance of the Red Army, at the beginning of February 1945, the Germans decided to move the camp, forcing the prisoners to go on a "death march" almost 1000 kilometres long (Caplan 1945: 12 ff). During the 87 days that the march lasted, Dr Caplan helped his wounded and injured colleagues, and for his efforts and commitment, he was awarded the Legion of Merit of the United States Armed Forces.

pripremao za skok kroz otvor za ispuštanje bombi. Odmah pri skoku pomoćnik strojara i artiljerac gornje kupole Gilbert W. Luchsinger ozlijedio je glavu, dok je Sommers pri doskoku slomio lijevu nogu. Po njegovoj procjeni, svi piloti su se spustili na područje jedne kopnene milje. Nakon nekog vremena čuo je paljbu iz pušaka te su mu prišla dvojica ustaških vojnika koji su ga uz prijatnu oružjem dopratili do crkve, gdje mu je časna sestra previla slomljenu nogu. Zatim su se pješice uputili do asfaltirane ceste gdje su se i odmorili u obližnjoj kući da bi ga poslije kamionom prebacili u drniški zatvor, ciglenu trokatnicu opasanu bodljikavom žicom. Ubrzo su mu se priključili i ostali uhićeni članovi posade.

Postupanje prema dvojici članova posade koji su dospjeli u ruke partizana, Richardu W. Lentu i Floyd H. Mogleu, poznato nam je iz dosjeda zvanog *Escape and Evasion report* (dalje u tekstu E&ER) koji je nastao uzimanjem izjava neposredno nakon povratka u vojnu bolnicu u Bariju.¹⁸ Tako Lent opisuje da se nakon neuspješnog pokušaja bombardiranja ciljeva kod Beča krenuli prema Grazu gdje je bila aktivna protuzračna obrana, ali bez vidljivih oštećenja na zrakoplovu.¹⁹ Pri povratku je saznao da im nedostaje goriva zbog problema s napajanjem motora te su kurs usmjerili prema Visu. Motor br. 4 imao je teškoće u radu. Ubrzo je izdana zapovijed da se pripreme za rušenje zrakoplova. U tom su se trenutku nalazili iznad kopna, 20 milja južno od Šibenika.²⁰ Nakon 30 do 45 minuta, kada su motori zrakoplova potpuno ostali bez goriva, izdana je zapovijed za skok. Prilikom doskoka na tlo slomio je obje noge te je tako nepomičan dočekaao približavanje grupe djece i odraslih ljudi od kojih su neki bili naoružani. Njih je prepoznao

find the best place for the jump. At that moment, Sommers moved from the turret to the tail section to prepare for jumping through the camera hatch, while the rest of the crew prepared to jump through the bomb bay. Immediately after the jump, the machinist's mate and upper turret gunner Gilbert W. Luchsinger injured his head, while Sommers broke his left leg during the landing. He estimated that all crew members had landed in the radius of a land mile. After some time, he heard gunfire and two Ustaše soldiers approached him and accompanied him to the church at gunpoint, where a nun bandaged his broken leg. Afterwards they went on foot towards the asphalted road where they rested in a nearby house, and ultimately he was transferred by truck to the Drniš prison, a three-story brick building surrounded by barbed wire. He was soon joined by the rest of the arrested crew members.

The handling of two crew members who fell into the hands of the partisans, Richard W. Lent and Floyd H. Mogle, is known to us from a file called the *Escape and Evasion report* (hereinafter: E&ER), which was created from statements taken immediately after their return to the military hospital in Bari.¹⁸ Thus, Lent described that after an unsuccessful attempt to bomb targets near Vienna, they headed towards Graz, where an anti-aircraft defence was active, but without visible damage to the aircraft.¹⁹ During the return flight, he found out that they were running out of fuel due to a problem with the engine's power supply, so they directed their course towards Vis. The engine no. 4 was experiencing difficulties. Soon the order was given to prepare for emergency landing. At that moment, they were flying over land, 20 miles south of Šibenik.²⁰ After 30 to 45 minutes, when the engines ran out of fuel, the jump order was given. During landing, he broke both of his legs, and so

¹⁸ *Escape and Evasion report* dosje je s dokumentima u formi upitnika za osobe koje su boravile na neprijateljskom teritoriju, a odnosi se i na upotrebu obuke i opreme za bijeg i izbjegavanje neprijatelja.

¹⁹ E&ER za poručnika Richarda W. Lenta i narednika Floyd H. Moglea nalaze se pohranjeni u Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell AFB, Montgomery, Alabama, mikrofilm br. B0566. Ovaj dosje mi je ustupio M. Coffee.

²⁰ Richard W. Lent pogrešno navodi istočnu geografsku dužinu Šibenika te umjesto 43° 44 N - 15° 54 E bilježi 43° 44 N - 16° 54 E.

¹⁸ The *Escape and Evasion report* is a file with documents in the form of a questionnaire for persons who stayed in enemy territory, and it also refers to the use of training and the escape and evasion equipment.

¹⁹ The E&ERs for Lt. Richard W. Lent and Sgt. Floyd H. Mogle are on file at the Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell AFB, Montgomery, Alabama, microfilm no. B0566. This file was made available to me by M. Coffee.

²⁰ Richard W. Lent incorrectly stated the eastern longitude of Šibenik and wrote 43° 44 N - 16° 54 E instead of 43° 44 N - 15° 54 E.

kao ustaše koji su ga htjeli predati Nijemcima. Budući da je bio nepokretan, zamolio ih je da ga nose, što su oni odbili. Nedugo zatim začula se pucnjava nakon čega su se ustaše povukle, a pojavila dvojica seljaka. Oni su ga prenijeli do žene koja mu je previla slomljene noge te ih povezala drvenim oblogama. Tu se susreo s još jednim članom posade zrakoplova nakon čega su se uputili u partizansko selo te prenoćili da bi se ujutro zaprežnim kolima uputili u drugo partizansko selo gdje ga je pregledao liječnik.²¹ Na večer su stigli do jezera i prespavali u obližnjoj staji, a već ujutro primljeni su u partizansko zapovjedništvo nedaleko od Biograda gdje je Lent dobio gipsane obloge na slomljene noge. Sutradan su se uputili u manji grad gdje su prenoćili, a zatim su se prebacili u još jedan grad odakle su ribarskim brodom otplovili na manji otok s bolnicom. Sutradan su partizanskim vojnim brodom prevezeni na Vis, a odakle su stigli u Bari.

Floyd H. Mogle opisuje pak da je motor br. 4 pre-stao raditi još iznad Beča, ali nije bio siguran je li pretrpio pogodak.²² Opisuje da je zrakoplov potom ispao iz zračne formacije, ali je nastavio let prema bazi. Ipak, zbog problema s napajanjem goriva dobili su naredbu za skok. Pri skoku je ozlijedio zglobov na lijevoj nozi, a odmah pri slijetanju zarobile su ga ustaše, zajedno s radijskim operaterom. Ubrzo su se pojavili partizani pa su se ustaše povukle i sa sobom povele i radijskog operatera. S partizanima je krenuo u brda, a putem im se priključio i navigator. Nakon što je prespavao noć, nosilima je premješten u čamac odakle su otplovili do obližnjeg otoka. Ujutro su stigli do manjeg grada gdje je bilo partizansko zapovjedništvo. Nakon što su tu prespavali, brodom su otplovili na otok Vis da bi sutradan, 19. listopada, stigli u Bari. S njim se vratio i Richard Lent koji je od partizana saznao da su ostali članovi posade završili u zarobljeništvu. Nisu bili jedini – tog nesretnog petka 13. 449. bombarderska grupa izgubila je čak 19 zrakoplova. Tri su oborena u

he motionlessly awaited the approach of a group of children and adults, some of whom were armed. He recognized them as Ustaše who wanted to hand him over to the Germans. Since he could not move, he asked them to carry him, which they refused. Soon afterwards, there was a shoot-out, after which the Ustaše retreated, and two peasants appeared. They carried him to a woman that bandaged his broken legs and immobilized them with wooden splints. There he met another crew member, after which they went to a partisan village and spent the night there, and in the morning they went by cart to another partisan village, where he was examined by a doctor.²¹ In the evening, they reached the lake and slept in a nearby barn, and in the morning they were received in the partisan headquarters not far from Biograd, where plaster cast was applied on Lent's broken legs. The next day, they headed to a smaller town where they spent the night, then transferred to another town from where they sailed on a fishing boat to a smaller island with a hospital. The next day, they were transported to Vis by a partisan military ship, and they finally arrived in Bari.

Floyd H. Mogle described that engine no. 4 stopped working over Vienna, but he was not sure if it had suffered a hit.²² He described that the aircraft then fell out of the formation with other aircrafts, but it continued its flight towards the base. However, due to problems with the fuel supply, they received the jump order. During the jump, he injured his left ankle, and immediately upon landing, he was captured by the Ustaše, together with the radio operator. The partisans soon appeared, so the Ustaše retreated and took the radio operator with them. He set off for the hills with the partisans, and the navigator joined them along the way. After sleeping through the night, he was moved on a stretcher to a boat and they sailed to a nearby island. In the morning, they reached a small town where the partisan command was located. After spending the night there, they sailed to the island of Vis and arrived in

²¹ Prema ovom dokumentu Richardu W. Lentu pridružio se artiljerac boka, no kasnije u MACR-u se ispravlja i spominje da se radilo o Floyd H. Mogleu, artiljercu prednje kupole. Do te pogreške moglo je doći jer je to bio prvi (i posljednji) put da je posada u tom sastavu letjela zajedno i dio članova nije se međusobno poznavao.

²² Vidjeti bilješku 19.

²¹ According to this document Richard W. Lent was joined by a flank gunner, but later in the MACR this is corrected and stated that it was Floyd H. Mogle, the front turret gunner. This mistake could have happened because it was the first (and last) time that the crew flew together in this formation, and some of the members did not know each other.

²² See note 19.

zraku, dok je ostalih 16 prisilno sletjelo s ozbiljnim oštećenjima od protuzrakoplovnih metaka. Četiri su avijatičara poginula, pet ih je ranjeno, a ostali su postali ratni zarobljenici.²³

Nakon analize izjava svjedoka i članova posade te uvida u svu pronađenu dokumentaciju, pokušat ćemo rekonstruirati posljednje trenutke leta *Nancy Jane (II)*. Pri povratku s misije oštećeni je zrakoplov pratio pružanje obale i kretao se prema otoku Visu. Iako su vremenski uvjeti toga dana bili su povoljni za letenje, pilot je procijenio da ne može dospjeti do Visa te je zrakoplov usmjerio prema šibenskom zaleđu pokušavajući pronaći najpovoljnije mjesto za prisilno slijetanje.²⁴ U međuvremenu su ostali bez goriva te su se odlučili za skok s padobranima. Prema MACR-u, zadnji radijski kontakt s posadom zrakoplova uspostavljen je u 14 sati i 30 minuta u radijusu od 100 milja od otoka Visa. Ubrzo nakon zadnje komunikacije zrakoplov se pojavio na nebu iznad sela Mirlović Zagore, gdje je posada već počela iskakati.²⁵ Krećući se u pravcu jugoistok-sjeverozapad, zrakoplov se srušio na predio zvan Doci, uz današnju cestu D 33, Šibenik – Drniš – Knin, između sela Brnjice i Pokrovnika. Svi članovi posade preživjeli su pad, a dvojicu koji se nisu mogli samostalno kretati nakon nekog vremena spasili su partizanski vojnici. Radi se o Richardu W. Lentu s ozljedama obiju nogu i Floyd H. Mogleu koji je zadobio frakturu zgloba lijeve noge. Vjerojatno je Richard W. Lent avijatičar kojeg su Ante i Tonka Grgurica primili u svoju kuću jer su mu obje noge bile previjene. Isto tako, iz sjećanja Jure Topčića, možemo pretpostaviti da je Thomas W. Sommers avijatičar kome je časna sestra previla nogu kod župne kuće. On je kamionom prebačen u Drniš gdje su mu se priključili ostali suborci. Kratko su zadržani u Zagrebu, a zatim preko Beča prebačeni u zarobljeničke logore. Pisani trag o posadi tog

Bari the next day, October 19. Richard Lent, who returned with him, learned from the partisans that the other crew members had ended up in captivity. They were not the only ones – on that ill-fated Friday the 13th, the 449th Bomb Group had lost as many as 19 aircrafts. Three were shot down mid-air, while the other 16 were forced to land with serious damage from anti-aircraft bullets. Four airmen were killed, five were wounded, and the rest became prisoners of war.²³

After analysing the statements of witnesses and crew members and reviewing all found documentation, we will try to reconstruct the last moments of *Nancy Jane's (II)* flight. During the return from the mission, the damaged aircraft followed the coastline and was heading towards the island of Vis. Although the weather conditions that day were favourable for flying, the pilot estimated that he could not reach Vis, so he directed the plane towards the Šibenik hinterland, trying to find the most favourable place for an emergency landing.²⁴ In the meantime, they ran out of fuel and decided to parachute jump. According to MACR, the last radio contact with the aircrew was made at 2:30 p.m. within a 100-mile radius of the island of Vis. Shortly after the last communication, the plane appeared in the sky above the village of Mirlović Zagora, where the crew had already started to jump out.²⁵ Moving in a south-east-northwest direction, the plane crashed in the area called Doci, along today's road D 33, Šibenik – Drniš – Knin, between the villages of Brnjica and Pokrovnik. All crew members survived the crash, and after some time two of them, who could not move independently, were rescued by partisan soldiers. They are Richard W. Lent with injuries to both legs, and Floyd H. Mogle who suffered a fractured left ankle. It is likely that Richard W. Lent was the aviator who was taken by Ante and Tonka Grgurica into their house because both of his legs were bandaged. Likewise, from the memory of Jure Topčić, it can be assumed that Thomas W. Sommers is the aviator whose leg was bandaged by a

²³ Više o tome: Coffee 2021: 8–9.

²⁴ Vremenske su prilike opisane kao 2/10. Na toj skali kojom se koristilo američko zrakoplovstvo, oznaka 1/10 odnosila se na potpuno vedro, a oznaka 10/10 na potpuno oblačno vrijeme.

²⁵ U E&ER Richard W. Lent spominje da je visina na kojoj su se nalazili u trenutku skoka iznosila 14.000 stopa, tj. 4267 metara.

²³ More on this: Coffee 2021: 8–9.

²⁴ Weather conditions are described as 2/10. On the scale used by the US Air Force, the 1/10 mark referred to completely clear conditions, and the mark 10/10 to completely cloudy conditions.

²⁵ In E&ER, Richard W. Lent stated that their height at the time of the jump was 14,000 feet, i.e. 4267 metres.

zrakoplova nastao je i u njemačkom tranzitnom logoru za savezničke zarobljenike u gradiću Wetzlaru 23. studenoga 1944. godine. Svih devet avijatičara navedeno je u zapisniku kao dio posade zrakoplova tipa Liberator koji se 13. listopada srušio kod Drniša, a nakon skoka s padobranom uhvaćeni su i odvedeni u Drniš. Tamo stoji da su se već 19. listopada 1944. godine, tjedan dana nakon pada, avijatičari nalazili u Zagrebu gdje su i ispitani.²⁶ Sudeći po zabilježbama u MACR-u, svi avijatičari preživjeli su zarobljeništvo u njemačkim logorima i, osim doktora Leslija Caplana i artiljerca Alfreda J. Wilhita, vratili se obnašanju vojne dužnosti.

Osim što proučavanje ovakvih događaja pridonosi boljem poznavanju lokalnih povijesnih prilika, ukazuje i na važnost i ulogu vojne avijacije koja je prvi put u globalnom sukobu nastupila uz ostale rodove vojske kao ravnopravni nositelj oružane borbe. Osim toga, velika brojnost oborenih zrakoplova na našem tlu potvrđuje da je zračni prostor današnje Republike Hrvatske, spletom povijesnih okolnosti, odigrao važnu ulogu tijekom završnih operacija Drugog svjetskog rata. Za razliku od nekoliko olupina zrakoplova otkrivenih u hrvatskom podmorju, koje uživaju zaštitu kulturnog dobra, ne postoji evidencija kao ni zaštita takvih lokaliteta na kopnu. Razloge možemo pronaći u tome što su takve pozicije dostupnije, a samim tim i dugoročno izložene raznim devastacijama. To je rezultiralo time da su kopnena lokaliteta često u lošijem stanju očuvanosti od onih podmorskih. Na primjeru iz Brnjice vidljivo je da se i pomoću manje količine površinskih nalaza ipak može izvršiti identifikacija zrakoplova i pravac kretanja, a uz arhivske izvore i rekonstruirati posljednji trenutci leta te daljnja sudbina posade na neprijateljskom tlu. Takvi lokaliteta zahtijevaju terenski angažman i u pokušaju pronalaska svjedoka događaja. Budući da vrijeme čini svoje, takvih je sudionika u razgovoru sve manje. U ovom slučaju upravo je razgovor s jednim od svjedoka bio presudan da se

nun at the parish house. He was transferred by truck to Drniš, where he was joined by fellow soldiers. They were kept in Zagreb for a short time, and then transferred to prison camps via Vienna. A written trace of the crew of that plane was also recorded in the German transit camp for Allied prisoners in the town of Wetzlar on November 23, 1944. All nine aviators were listed in the minutes as part of the crew of the Liberator type aircraft that crashed near Drniš on October 13, and after parachute jumping they were caught and taken to Drniš. It states that already on October 19, 1944, a week after the crash, the aviators were located in Zagreb, where they were interrogated.²⁶ Judging by the MACR notes, all airmen survived their captivity in German camps, and returned to military duty except for Doctor Leslie Caplan, and Gunner Alfred J. Wilhit.

In addition to the fact that the study of such events contributes to a better knowledge of local historical circumstances, it also indicates the importance and role of military aviation, which appeared for the first time in a global conflict alongside other military branches as an equal pillar of the armed struggle. In addition, the large number of downed aircrafts on our soil confirms that the airspace of today's Republic of Croatia, due to a combination of historical circumstances, played an important role during the final operations of the World War II. Unlike several aircraft wrecks discovered in the Croatian sea, which are protected as cultural property, there is no record and no protection for such sites on land. The reasons can be found in the fact that such positions are more accessible, and therefore exposed to various devastation processes in the long term. This resulted in land sites often being in a worse state of preservation than underwater ones. The example from Brnjica shows that even with the smaller amount of surface findings, it is still possible to identify the aircraft and its movement direction, and with archive sources, also reconstruct the last moments of the flight, and the forthcoming fate of the crew on enemy soil. Such sites require field work even in an attempt of finding witnesses to the

²⁶ O tome: National Archives and Record Administration, Record Group 242, National Archives Collection of Foreign Seized, 1675-1958, Series: Downed Allied Aircraft Reports, 1943-1945, File Unit: ME-2359 (<https://catalog.archives.gov/id/143485966?objectPage=9>; pristupljeno 15/10/2021).

²⁶ See: National Archives and Record Administration, Record Group 242, National Archives Collection of Foreign Seized, 1675-1958, Series: Downed Allied Aircraft Reports, 1943-1945, File Unit: ME-2359 (<https://catalog.archives.gov/id/143485966?objectPage=9>; accessed 15/10/2021).

locira točno mjesto pada zrakoplova, a pomoću pronađenih dijelova konačno i potvrde podatci iz arhivske dokumentacije.

Srećom, posada bombardera *Nancy Jane (II)* preživjela je pad zrakoplova i dočekala kraj rata, no to se, nažalost, ne može reći za sve posade ostalih zrakoplova koji su u ratnom vihoru Drugog svjetskog rata posljednji put dotakli tlo na području Hrvatske.

event. Since time takes its course, there are fewer and fewer such participants in the conversation. In this case, the interview with one of the witnesses was crucial for locating the exact place of the plane crash, and the discovered parts finally confirmed the data from the archive documentation.

Fortunately, the crew of the *Nancy Jane (II)* bomber survived the plane crash and saw the end of the war, but unfortunately, the same cannot be said for all airplane crews that touched the ground for the last time in Croatia during the whirlwind of World War II.

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