

DECLASSIFIED
 Authority: NND 735001
 By: NARA NARA Date: 1973

CUMMING
1265



Classification changed to **RESTRICTED**
 by E. A. BRADUNAS, Lt. Col., AO
 by F. M. MURPHY, Capt., AO
 Date MAR 1 1946

WAR DEPARTMENT
 HEADQUARTERS Army Air Forces
 WASHINGTON

MISSING AIR CRAFT REPORT

This report will be compiled in the reports by each Army Air Forces organization within 48 hours of the time an aircraft is officially reported missing.

1. ORGANIZATION: Location AAF Station F-367; Command or Air Force Eighth
 Group 20th Fighter; Squadron 79th Fighter; Detachment AAF Station F-131
2. SPECIES: Type of Aircraft AAF Station F-131; South
 Intended Destination Les Mureaux; Type of Operation Escort
3. WEATHER CONDITIONS AND VISIBILITY: Time of Day 1015; State of Sky Scattered clouds at 6,000 ft. Visibility unlimited.
4. GIVE: (a) Date 7 Nov 43; Time 1015; Location 15 miles off French Coast
 of last known whereabouts of aircraft South of Beachy Head
 (b) Specify whether (X) last sighting of last contacted by radio;
 () Force down; (X) Seen to crash; or () Information not available.
5. AIRCRAFT WAS LOST, OR IS BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN LOST, AS A RESULT OF: (Check only one) (X) Enemy air craft; () Enemy anti-aircraft; () Other circumstances as follows Attacked by 3 ME 109's - seen to feather right prop and crash in channel. Parachute was seen to open.
6. AIRCRAFT: Type, Model and Series P-38H510; A. F. Serial Number 42-67039
7. ENGINES: Type, Model and Series V-1710-91489; A. F. Serial Number (a) 42-94797
 (b) 42-30193; (c) _____; (d) _____
8. INSTALLED WEAPONS (Furnish below Make, Type and Serial Number)
 (a) IR 410049 Cal:50; (b) IR 410174 Cal:50; (c) 58102 20 MM; (d) M-Guns Frigidaire
 (e) IL 410030 Cal:50; (f) IR 410007 Cal:50; (g) _____; (h) Cannon Oldsmobile
9. THE PERSONS LISTED BELOW ARE BELIEVED TO BE: (a) Battle Casualty X
 or (b) Non-Battle Casualty _____
10. NUMBER OF PERSONS ABOARD AIRCRAFT: Crew 1; Passengers 0; Total 1
 (Starting with pilot, furnish the following particulars: If more than 10 persons were aboard aircraft, list similar particulars on separate sheet and attach original to this form.)

DED	Crew Position	Name in Full (Last Name First)	Rank	Serial Number
1.	Pilot	CUMMING, HERBERT W.	Captain	0-423814
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				
9.				
10.				

11. IDENTIFY BELOW THOSE PERSONS WHO ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE LAST KNOWLEDGE OF AIRCRAFT AND CHECK APPROPRIATE COLUMN TO INDICATE BASIS FOR KNOWLEDGE:
 Check Only One Column

(Last Name First)	Rank	Serial Number	By Radio	Last Sighted	Saw Crash	Saw Landing
1. MEYER, ROBERT J.	1st Lt.	0-659477			X	
2. NICHOLS, MERLE B.	1st Lt.	0-730579			X	
3. OTT, RICHARD L.	Major	0-41633			X	

12. IF PERSONNEL ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE SURVIVED, ANSWER YES TO ONE OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS: (a) Parachutes were used _____; (b) Persons were seen walking away from scene of crash _____; or (c) any other reason (Specify) _____
13. ATTACH AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH, MAP CHART, OR SKETCH SHOWING APPROXIMATE LOCATION WHERE AIRCRAFT WAS LAST SEEN.
14. ATTACH EYE WITNESS DESCRIPTION OF CRASH, FORCED LANDING, OR OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES PERTAINING TO MISSING AIRCRAFT.
15. ATTACH A DESCRIPTION OF THE EXTENT OF SEARCH, IF ANY, AND GIVE NAME, RANK AND SERIAL NUMBER OF OFFICER IN CHARGE HERE _____

Date of Report 9 November 1943

William E. Luntz

665/3258

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By: NARA NARA Date: 1973

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1265

AG 360.33 1st Ind
Hq SQS, ETOUSA, APO 871, 24 December 1943.

RL/jh

To: Commanding General, Army Air Forces, Washington, D.C.
Attention: Statistical Control Division.

Forwarded in compliance with letter, War Department, 23 May 1943,
file AG 360.33 (5-21-43) OB-S-AF-M.

For the Commanding General:



M. W. HUBBLE,
Major, AGD,
Asst Adj Gen.

26 - Incls: n/c (Dups w/d)

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9 November 1943.

S T A T E M E N T

The following statement gives a full account of what I observed in connection with the disappearance of Captain Herbert W. Cumming, O-423814, 79th Fighter Squadron, 20th Fighter Group, on the 7th of November 1943.

1068
We were on an Escort Mission from AAF Station F-131, to German-occupied France. I first noticed Captain Cumming when I observed that he was rapidly losing altitude a few minutes after we left the Target Area. I was the last man in the First Flight and he was leading the Second Flight. I noticed that he pulled away from the Flight and was losing altitude rapidly. The next time I noticed him was when we were over the English Channel and I saw 1st Lieutenant Robert Meyers weaving over him at a lower altitude. I went down with Lt. Meyers. At this time, I saw Captain Cumming had feathered his left propellor and that his right engine was smoking spasmodically. In about three or four minutes, he bailed out. He cleared the ship and the chute opened. I saw the chute go down but I did not see him strike the water nor did I see him again while the chute was in the water. There was a high wind and the chute was blown along the surface of the water at a rapid rate toward the French Coast. The chute remained visible until three or four minutes before I left. I circled for about twenty minutes in all and gave the Air-Sea Rescue Service a fix. The water was very rough and I saw nothing to indicate that Captain Cumming survived.

9 November 1943.

Merle B. Nichols
MERLE B. NICHOLS, O-730579,
1st Lt., Air Corps,
79th Fighter Squadron,
20th Fighter Group.

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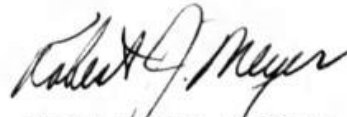
By: NARA NARA Date: 1973

9 November 1943.

S T A T E M E N T

C. 1068
" I was flying on Captain Cumming's Wing on an escort mission made on the morning of 7 November 1943. About five or ten minutes before we got to the target, three enemy fighters jumped us and fired from a 90 degree deflection. Immediately following, Captain Cumming's left engine began to smoke. He continued on his course. A few minutes after we started from the target for home, he suddenly began to lose altitude rapidly, leaving the formation and apparently started directly for home by himself. He went down to about 8000 feet. I followed him down and on reaching that level, noticed that his left propellor was feathered and that smoke was coming from his right engine intermittently. I flew along with him until I was called on the radio and told that enemy aircraft were near my position--which was up-sun from Captain Cumming. I promptly climbed back up to the formation, and I next noticed that Captain Cumming was directly under the bombers. I again joined him. His situation did not seem to have changed; at the time, we were over the water. Another plane joined me in weaving about over him. Almost immediately, he bailed out at an altitude of 3500 feet, cleared the plane, and his chute opened. I circled and called the Air-Sea-Rescue Service on R Channel for a fix. They answered and asked how long I could stay. To this I replied that I was low on gas and could not stay long. Lt Nichols stayed on and gave them a fix. I did not see Captain Cumming strike the water and I did not see him after the chute was down and being blown along the surface of the water. The wind was high and the chute moved rapidly along the surface. I circled twice after the chute was at water level but saw no further signs of Captain Cumming. "

9 November 1943.



ROBERT J. MEYER, O-659477,
1st Lt., Air Corps,
79th Fighter Squadron,
20th Fighter Group.

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S T A T E M E N T

0-1068

I first noticed Captain Cumming's right engine smoking to some extent just before we reached the Target Area. Thereafter, I saw him bail out over the Channel and watched the chute go down to the water. I could not distinguish Captain Cumming as the chute struck the water. The wind was strong and the water was quite rough. The chute was blown along the surface toward the French Coast at a rapid rate possibly for ten minutes before it collapsed in the water. I could not determine whether Captain Cumming was still in the chute harness during this time. After the chute became wet and collapsed, I flew low over the spot and could see no sign of Captain Cumming. I saw nothing that indicated that he survived.

9 November 1943.

Richard L. Ott
RICHARD L. OTT, O-41633,
Major, Air Corps,
20th Fighter Group.

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