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Thank you for returning the completed Certificate of Kinship concerning your enquiry about LAC R E Giles. I note that his son, Donald Giles has given his permission for you to receive the information directly. I have trawled our records concerning the loss of Dakota KG690 and the following releasable information comes from them.

On 31 July 1944 a Dakota, Serial No KG690 of the recently formed 44 Squadron of the South African Air Force carrying a crew of 5 and 27 passengers, one of which was LAC Giles crashed some 30 miles from Salalah which is on the coast in the Oman. The Squadron was based at Cairo West and undertook transport duties. At 05.52 hours Dakota KG690 land at Riyan airfield in Aden. Prior to take off from Riyan on the last part of a transit flight to RAF Salalah the pilot went into the operations room for a meteorological report for the route Riyan-Salalah. Whilst he was there the officer in charge (OC) of the 8 Squadron detachment based at Riyan asked the pilot what information he had about Salalah. The pilot said that he had not been there before and had neither seen a plan of the airfield or been given any special briefing about the approach to Salalah. The OC of the 8 Squadron detachment showed the pilot of the Dakota photographs of Salalah airfield and told him that it was necessary to approach Salalah on a QDM of between 300° Magnetic (M) and 300M so as to avoid the high ground to the west of Salalah in the area of Cape Risut. The pilot was told that he could get navigational assistance from Salalah and of the facilities available in the USAAF radio range. The navigator was also present when the Dakota pilot was given this information. The OC then handed the pilot a weather report and told him he could expect low cloud starting around Cape Fartak. The OC of the 8 Squadron detachment went out to the aircraft to speak to the Wireless Operator and stressed to him the need to approach Salalah on a course between 300M and 330 M.

The Dakota took off from Riyan at 0655 hours on the morning of 31 July 1944 for Salalah. During the flight Dakota KG690, call sign OLMF was in contact with Salalah and was passed navigational headings which were acknowledged by the aircraft. The Dakota also asked for a weather report which was passed to them and which the aircraft acknowledged at 0752 hours. At 0809 hours the Dakota was asked for an estimated time of arrival (ETA). At 0826 requested a further weather report which was passed to the

aircraft and acknowledge. At 0838 hours the Dakota was asked again for an ETA. This requested was answered at 840 hours and an ETA of 0910 hours was give to Salalah. A series of QDMs were passed to the Dakota between 0840 and 0905 hours, the last acknowledgement of these was for the 0905 hour message. The Signals Cabin staff at Salalah were listening out for the aircraft, aware that it was due to land at 0910 hours. At 0930 hours, when nothing had been heard from Dakota KG690 the duty operator in the Signals Cabin rang Riyan to ask them to listen out on the Dakota's allotted frequency while he search for the aircraft on other frequencies. At 0933 the duty operator in the Salalah Signals Cabin called the Dakota asking for his signal strength and continued to call at intervals until 0945 but there was no reply.

At 1045 hours the OC of the RAF Unit at Salalah signalled HQ British Forces, Aden that the Dakota was overdue . Aden instructed that 2 Wellingtons were to take off at once from Salalah and conduct a search. One Wellington searched back down the route to Riyan and then back to Salalah and the other Wellington searched in the direction of Masirah and back. Both aircraft returned on 1 August having seen nothing but they had found that the visibility along the coast was bad. Early in the morning of 1 August an RAF High Speed Launch (HSL) based at Risut was sent to search the coast from Cape Risut to 40 miles west of that point. The HSL also reported finding nothing.

At about 0900 hours on 1 August 2 Beechcraft which had been sent by HQ British Forces Aden to assist the search arrived at Salalah and were joined some 45 minutes later by an Albacore which had also been despatched to assist by HQ British Forces Aden. Both Beechcraft were sent to search the foothills north of Salalah but both came back having found nothing. The Beechcraft reported that the visibility was very bad and the searches were halted for that day.

At 0345 hours on the morning of 2 August a company of Aden Protectorate Levies was sent out to search. These men were split into 2 parties and sent to search an area 10 miles by 4 miles east of Cape Risut. At 0700 hours a Beechcraft was sent to search the foothills north and east of Salalah. This aircraft returned having seen nothing and reported that visibility was poor and there was low cloud. At 1025 hours the Albacore took off to search the coast from Cape Risut westwards. The aircraft returned at 1200 and reported that a message had been received from one of the ground search parties that the Dakota had been found. Owing to the terrain, bad weather and condition of the remains the search party was unable to recover the bodies.

On 3 August the OC of the RAF Unit Salalah led a party of 40 men to the crash site. They found that the visibility was very bad and this together with the slippery and precipitous nature of the cliff made it impossible to recover the bodies which lay 200 feet down the cliff face and 600 feet above the sea. The Dakota had apparently crashed into the cliff and the petrol tanks exploded on impact. It was considered that all on board had been killed instantly as a result. It was not possible to identify the 21 bodies which were found at the scene of the crash. There were no signs of the other 11 bodies which were presumed to have fallen into the sea from the cliff. Various documents and belongs were found scattered at the crash site but none are listed as belonging to LAC Giles which may indicate that his was one of the bodies lost to the sea. For a number of reasons the decision was made to leave the bodies in situ covered with rocks with the intention of providing proper burial when conditions improved. A funeral service was conducted by an RAF padre at the scene.

In January 1945 the OC of RAF Unit Salalah reported to HQ British Forces Aden that no further action to recover the bodies was possible until after the end of the monsoon

season. During September 1944 a party consisting of the OC and 3 others went to the crash site with the equipment needed to recover the bodies which had been left there and give them proper burial. However, when the site was reached no trace of the bodies could be found. This attempt may account for a report which appears to originate with HQ British Forces Aden that some of the bodies had been buried in a communal grave at spot which was only accessible on foot but there is no information as to the site of this reported grave.

An Inquiry was held into the accident but the state of the wreckage made it impossible to ascertain whether mechanical failure had been responsible for the accident. The Dakota had apparently flown into the cliff in bad visibility.

LAC Giles was on board the Dakota because he had been posted from the Equipment and Supplier Depot at Aden to RAF Salalah. As he has no known grave LAC Giles is remember on the Alamein Memorial which commemorates all British and Commonwealth airmen who lost their lives in Africa and who have no known grave. He is also commemorated in London where his name is inscribed in the RAF Book of Remembrance at the RAF Church of St Clement Danes in the Strand.

I am sorry that the information which I have been able to give you is of such a tragic nature but I hope that it is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely
Mary Hudson
