



THE DEPARTMENT OF  
THE PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET

CANBERRA, A.C.T. 2600

TELEPHONE: (06) 271 5111  
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10 OCT 1994

Colonel G.K. Mackenzie ED (Retired)  
Vice President  
Z Special Unit Association (NSW) Inc  
PO Box 944  
PENRITH NSW 2751

Dear Colonel Mackenzie

Thank you for your letter of 3 September 1994 to the Prime Minister about the wreckage of the B24 Liberator "Beautiful Betsy".

Your comments and suggestions have been noted and referred to the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, the Hon Con Sciacca, MP who has portfolio responsibility for this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'T. Tint', written over a horizontal line.

T. Tint  
Ministerial Officer



THE HON CON SCIACCA MP

MINISTER FOR VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Colonel G K Mackenzie  
Vice President  
Z Special Unit Association (NSW) Inc  
164 Dora Street  
HURSTVILLE NSW 2220

Dear Colonel Mackenzie

I refer to your letter to the Prime Minister concerning the B24 Liberator "Beautiful Betsy" found near Biloela, Queensland.

The letter was referred to me as the Minister responsible for the *Australia Remembers 1945-1995* Program. However, as the recovery of the wreckage was undertaken by the Department of Defence, I have arranged for your request to be considered by my colleague, the Minister for Defence.

I would like to add that I found your description of the tests carried out using this aircraft interesting. Media reports of the discovery of the wreckage did not convey this aspect, which provides additional depth to the history of your unit during World War II. It is this type of detail that *Australia Remembers* seeks to capture during the year of commemorations of the 50th anniversary of the end of the War.

I hope you will continue to participate in the events of *Australia Remembers* during 1995 as the communities of Australia seek to recognise the contributions of veterans such as those of Z Special Unit.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Con Sciacca', written in dark ink.

CON SCIACCA

December 1994

23rd





Office of the  
Minister for Defence

Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
Telephone: (06) 2777800

Colonel G K Mackenzie (Retd)  
Vice President  
Z Special Unit Association (NSW) Inc  
PO Box 944  
PENRITH NSW 2751

29 DEC 1994

Dear Colonel Mackenzie

I refer to your letter of 3 September 1994 to the Prime Minister concerning the acquisition of items from the wreckage of United States Army Air Force Liberator B-24D 42-40387 '*Beautiful Betsy*' and a commemorative ceremony to remember those who lost their lives when the aircraft crashed during World War II. This matter falls within the portfolio responsibilities of the Minister for Defence who has asked me to reply on his behalf. I apologise for the delay in replying to your letter.

In regard to the items of equipment referred to in your letter, Air Force Office records suggest that all specialist equipment related to parachute trials had been removed from the aircraft at the time of the crash. After service as a trials aircraft in 1943, it was stripped of all unnecessary equipment and converted to use as a transport aircraft.

You may not be aware that the wreckage of the aircraft remains the property of the United States Government, while the site in which the wreckage is located is controlled by the Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage (QDEH). I am advised that QDEH intend leaving the site in an undisturbed state to preserve its historical significance and to prevent damage to the delicate environment surrounding the remains of the aircraft. I understand that QDEH intend seeking an amendment to the Cultural Records (Landscapes Queensland and Queensland Estate) Act 1987, as a means of fulfilling this objective.

In relation to ceremonies commemorating the loss of the aircraft and crew, Air Force Office have advised that there is no plan to hold special services. No Australians were on board the aircraft when it crashed and the remains of those killed have been repatriated to their home countries. United Kingdom and United States authorities have indicated that they do not wish to hold commemorative services in Australia.

The Minister is sorry that he is unable to be of assistance on this occasion but wishes the Z Special Unit Association every success with its endeavours.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K B' followed by a flourish.

KAREN CLARK  
Senior Adviser



**Department Of Defence**  
(Air Force Office)

TELEPHONE:

(06) 265 5487

A-8-08

PO Box E33

Queen Victoria Terrace  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

IN REPLY QUOTE

9 September 1994

AF 94/23012 Pt1 (56)

Colonel G.K. Mackenzie ED (RL)  
Vice President  
Z Special Unit Association (NSW) Inc  
164 Dora Street  
HURTSVILLE  
NSW 2220

Dear Sir,

I refer to your letter to the Air Commander Australia of 3 September 1994. In his response on behalf of Air Vice Marshal Beck, Wing Commander Riches rightly indicated to you that my appointment in Air Force Office was responsible for matters connected with the discovery of wreckage of the USAAF Liberator 'Beautiful Betsy'. Therefore, I offer the following in response to your query regarding items of wreckage.

Our records suggest that after employment as a trials aircraft in 1943, B-24D 42-40387 was converted to use as a transport aircraft. All armament was removed and the defensive machine gun positions were faired over. The evidence suggests that all specialist equipment related to the parachute trials were removed at this time.

As Wing Commander Riches correctly mentioned in his letter, the aircraft wreckage remains the property of the United States Government. Additionally, the Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage (QDEH) also claim ownership over the site of the wreckage. QDEH intend leaving the site in an undisturbed state to preserve its historical significance and to prevent damage to the delicate environment in which the wreck is located. Indeed, the QDEH have advised that they will be seeking amendment to the Cultural Record (Landscapes Queensland and Queensland Estate) Act 1987 as a means of fulfilling this objective.

Accordingly, at this point, the opportunities for removing items of wreckage appear remote; nevertheless, should the possibility of obtaining a relic from Beautiful Betsy arise in the future, then your request for its inclusion in the Z Special Unit exhibit in the Australian War Memorial will be fully considered.

I regret that I am unable to be of more assistance regarding your enquiry.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B.W. Hudson'. The signature is stylized with a large initial 'B' and a long, sweeping horizontal stroke at the end.

**B.W. HUDSON**  
Wing Commander  
for Chief of the Air Staff





## ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE

TELEPHONE: (047) 39 7013

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Air Headquarters  
RAAF Base  
GLENBROOK NSW 2773

7 September 1994

IN REPLY QUOTE.....

AHQ 12/2/AIR

Colonel G.K. Mackenzie ED (RL)  
Vice President  
Z Special Unit Association (NSW) Inc  
164 Dora Street  
HURSTVILLE NSW 22201

Dear Sir,

Air Vice-Marshal Beck has asked me to thank you for your recent letter in which you sought his assistance in securing an item from the wreckage of the B24 Liberator "Beautiful Betsy" for the Association's exhibit in the Australian War Memorial and help with the provision of transport to the commemorative service, should one been planned.

Unfortunately, Air Vice-Marshal Beck is not in a position to assist you with acquiring an item of the wreckage as it is the property of the United States Government. Nevertheless, I have referred your request to the Department of Defence (Air Force Office) which is responsible for liaising with the United States Government on the recovery operation. Wing Commander B. Hudson, telephone (06) 265 5487, will respond to you in due course.

With regards to assistance with transport to a commemorative service, Air Vice-Marshal Beck can approve your travel in RAAF aircraft but would do so on an opportunity basis only. You should note, however, that at this stage there are no known plans to hold a commemorative service.

I trust I have answered your concerns, but should you need any further assistance please contact me.

Yours faithfully,

J.D. RICHES  
Wing Commander  
for Air Commander Australia