

## B-17F crash site near Corona, NM

DATE April 18, 1944

AIRCRAFT B-17F, A. F. No. 42-30958

GENERAL LOCATION Cibola National Forest, Gallinas Division

PEOPLE ABOARD Pilot (P), Co-Pilot (CP), Flight Engineer (FE) & Radio Operator (RO)

REFERENCES Official AAF Accident Report for above aircraft

### HISTORY

This historical information was extracted and summarized from the official USAF accident report. Refer to that document for more details.

The pilot and crew were ferrying the aircraft from AAF, Walker, Kansas, to AAF, Clovis, New Mexico. They flew into instrument conditions, became lost and ended up WSW of Clovis. At that point, they estimated their position and changed course in an effort to reach the general vicinity of AAF Clovis. After flying in an estimated overcast of 8000 feet with blowing snow, the pilot eventually let down to a 7500 feet elevation. After awhile he saw a mountain ahead of him, made a gradual left turn and began climbing. He hit the upslope of the mountain and the ship carried over the top and hit a big tree on the northern down-slope. The plane exploded and began burning. There were also 20 practice bombs aboard (one of which was found in 2011) that exploded at the same time. These bombs carried small black powder charges, so the total explosive power was small. The FE was killed on impact, the pilot was able to pull the CP out of the wreckage, and the RO crawled out by himself. The CP and RO were both badly burned, but the pilot was able to build a fire to keep everyone warm until the following morning. The pilot then climbed to the mountain top, saw a road in the distance, hiked to it and encountered a Forest Service Maintenance Unit who set up the rescue of the surviving crewmembers. The report lists the FE and RO as fatal and the pilot and CP as having major wounds. There is also a handwritten notation on the report that the CP died several days later.

In 2011, several aviation crash finders visited the area and found crash debris consistent with the description in the crash report. Most of the aircraft had been recovered, but several large pieces remain. It is suspected that large portions of the plane may have been smelted down by aluminum scavengers. While no part numbers were found to specifically identify the debris as that of B-17F, A.F.No. 42-30958, it is believed this is the wreckage from that event.

**WARNING:** Debris found in a national forest that has been there for 50 years or more are considered to be archaeological objects. IT IS ILLEGAL TO REMOVE THEM



Photo of a similar type Boeing B-17F series aircraft involved in the accident