

# Goerner-King Letter.

In this letter to TIGHAR's senior archaeologist Dr. Thomas F. King, author Fred Goerner corrects his earlier report about what *Colorado* aviator John Lambrecht had told him about the "signs of recent habitation" seen on Gardner and speculates about possible explanations. Goerner faults Gillespie for not acknowledging an earlier letter and not sharing the information with TIGHAR members (Gillespie, in fact, did both). Goerner also explains that, after consulting with radio expert Frederick J. Hooven, he has changed his mind about Earhart's probable landing place. See Hooven.pdf in the Reports folder.



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February 29, 1992

Dr. Thomas F. King  
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Dear Dr. King:

Please forgive the delay in my replying to your last letter. I have been battling some medical problems.

To answer your question about CIA/Saipan: The head of the NTTU operation there was Robert J. Schmitz (I had to refer to him as Mr. Johnson in THE SEARCH FOR AE).

Mr. Schmitz is retired now and living in Texas. He recently visited my wife and me here in San Francisco for several days.

He told me the training on Saipan was not limited to Nationalist Chinese. The Agency also trained South Koreans and Philippine soldiers in counter-terrorist and guerilla warfare. Bob gave me the details about the size and duration of the operation and the reasons why it was decided to leave Saipan.

Do you want this information? I don't feel I have the right to give it to you without Bob's permission. It should come from Bob himself. Would you like me to ask him if he is willing to correspond with you or speak with you on the telephone? Bob has given to me on a privileged basis his autobiography (which cannot be published for the time being). Perhaps Bob would be willing to provide a copy to you or he would be willing to let me send to you the copy he gave to me. Please advise.

To answer your questions about Gardner (Nikumaroro) Islands and the COLORADO flyers. After your last communication. I went back to the letters of the pilots and the transcripts of our phone conversations. With respect to John Lambrecht, I gave you a bad read in my first letter. John said he saw what appeared to be stone walls or some kinds of old construction on McKean Island. On Gardner, he saw what appeared to be markers of some kind.

It is clear that neither he nor the other pilots saw ANYTHING which would resemble a "survivor's camp" as Gillespie claims. It is unthinkable that if they had seen any indication that Gardner was inhabited that they would not have alerted COLORADO to same and made additional efforts to find out who might be on Gardner.

Since the British Navy surveyed Gardner in 1935, and it was claimed by HMS LEITH in a visit there in February, 1937, a little more than four months before the Earhart flight

(Crewmembers from LEITH placed signs on Gardner claiming it for England and British Pacific Airways), it would seem that Lambrecht and his observer saw those markers.

I sent this information and a great deal more to Gillespie in 1990 in answer to some questions he asked me in February, 1990. He never acknowledged my letter and he never (as far as I can ascertain) shared the information with his TIGHAR colleagues. His has been a very selective research, choosing only that information which might support his conjectures and fund-raising.

I also told Gillespie about the New Zealand survey team which was on Gardner for several months just after Maude's first visit there in October, 1937. The New Zealand and British defense team laid out a landing field on Gardner and put buoys in the lagoon to be used for seaplanes.

Would you like to have this information? If you wish, I'll send a copy of my letter to Gillespie along with the supporting material. I don't know how far your interest goes in this matter at this point.

You asked me how and why Fred Hooven's and my conclusions had changed after 1982. Actually, I presented all the information I had collected about Gardner and McKean to Fred (I had not done so prior to his 1982 report because I wanted him to reach conclusions without consideration of the history of specific islands), and he decided along with me that the Earhart plane had probably gone down on or about five small reefs which lie to the north and west of Gardner and McKean, about half-way between Howland and the northern Phoenix Islands. These reefs were searched for by the COLORADO pilots in 1937, but they did not find them and presumed they did not exist. But they did and do exist. They have been charted (but never landed upon) several times since the Earhart search. Lambrecht, Short and Fox all agreed that rain squalls in the area must have obscured the reefs during the 1937 search. They all recalled that Wilhelm Friedell, the Captain of COLORADO, had not been enthusiastic about sailing his battleship through an area with reefs that might be badly charted or just below the surface of the water.

If you would like to have more on this subject, again, please let me know.

I will be going into the hospital this next week for some surgery, and my recuperation period will be a matter of several weeks. After that I will be happy to press the issue with Bob Schmitz and provide you with such information as you might wish.

With respect and admiration, I am,

Most Cordially Yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Fred Spencer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Fred" on the top line and "Spencer" on the bottom line.