

# ***Aviators, Adventurers and Assassins***

## Excerpt

I am Commander Gregory Thompson, United States Navy. I am a Special Duty Officer, Intelligence Specialist. My current assignment is in the Office of the Director of Naval Intelligence in Washington, D. C. Today's date is 2 May 1944. I've written this treatise today because I have orders to report to Admiral Mark Michener aboard the aircraft carrier USS Franklin in the mid-Pacific to serve as his staff intelligence officer. I've placed this manuscript in my safety-deposit box and have tasked my son to have the Naval Institute publish it shortly after that Marine in his dress blue uniform blows "Taps" over my flag-draped coffin. After you've read this narrative, you may conclude that I am a conspiracy freak. Fair enough, that's your prerogative. Read on if you please. If not, close this account, toss down an adult beverage, and forget all the above. To those of you who continue reading, I suggest you have a detailed map of the central Pacific handy to follow my narrative coherently.



Amelia Earhart

Amelia Earhart, the famous aviatrix, and Fred Noonan her navigator, disappeared on 2 July 1937 when her Lockheed Electra aeroplane ran out of fuel and crashed-landed somewhere in the Pacific Ocean northwest of Howland Island—so it has been reported.

I remember that fateful day clearly. I was at my son's eighth birthday party on Wicks Drive in San Antonio when the radio blared the shocking news of Amelia Earhart's disappearance. The female aviation icon had failed to find and land her Lockheed Electra on Howland Island—the next-to-last stop on

her record-setting, around-the-world flight at the Equator. Howland is a tiny speck of an island two miles long and one mile wide, and its highest point is ten feet above sea level. The nation was shocked at first, then relieved when we heard that the Coast Guard cutter *Itasca* was searching the area. The *Itasca* was the on-station ship at Howland, and its task was to provide Earhart with radio communication, radio directional beacon signals, and weather information. The next day, President Roosevelt ordered a Navy task force from Pearl Harbor to join the search. Included in the task force were the battleship USS *Colorado*, the aircraft carrier USS *Lexington* and her eighty aeroplanes, three destroyers, and several support ships. The task force arrived on station in three days and began its extensive search.

Surely, our Navy would find Earhart. No doubt about it, I surmised. Unfortunately, there was no trace of her or the *Electra*: no life raft, no oil slick, no scrap of clothing. Nothing! Lockheed engineers speculated that the empty fuel tanks would keep the *Electra* afloat for days. Nonetheless, the days slipped by without results. After sixteen days of an unsuccessful search covering 140,000 square nautical miles,<sup>2</sup> the Navy Department recalled its task force to Pearl Harbor and concluded that Amelia Earhart and Fred Noonan were lost at sea.

To this day, that's the official story. I'm not convinced. There's too much mystery surrounding the last days of Earhart and Noonan. Too many unanswered questions. Too much technical chicanery. Too much government involvement (dare I say "sponsorship?"). For instance, why was President Roosevelt so closely involved? Why was the U.S. Navy so interested and involved in this flight and in the search? On the surface, Earhart's around-the-world flight had no tactical or strategic interest to the Navy. There are just too many unanswered questions, and too much cover-up that leaks volumes.

Permeating this tragedy is the official deathly silence regarding the Imperial Japanese Navy's expansion in the 1920s into Micronesia and their fortification of several key mandated islands. Of little note, and not reported, was that the Japanese oceanographic ship *Kamoi Maru* was in the Howland area and searched in secret for Amelia Earhart. We have no records that they found her, and the Japanese government denies any involvement.

As a naval intelligence officer, I have an inherent curiosity; and over the years these questions beclouding Earhart's flight gnaw at my soul. Finding the answers became a compulsion. On the eve of World War II, I've written this corrected last chapter to Amelia Earhart's biography because I am compelled to tell you what I know and surmise about her disappearance. I've based this narrative partly on hard intelligence, some on logical and credible inferences I cannot confirm, and some on apocryphal information. Accordingly, my conclusion is best described as an educated conjecture.

My research into this project is based on my access to highly classified intelligence information and government documents that I found buried in various archives, captured Japanese naval logbooks, technical analysis of Earhart's flight, oceanographic and weather conditions at the time, and plain ol' horse sense.