



(Top) One of the bullets recovered from the site and (above) the metal plate from the WW II aircraft. Telegraph pictures

Youth trails lore, finds war wreck

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Itanagar, June 20: A village schoolteacher chasing a folklore and fear of the unknown, unearthed remnants of a World War II aircraft, a skeleton and four-inch bullets on a perilous forested hill in Arunachal Pradesh.

Tani Bagang, a 28-year-old man from East Kameng district, had heard legendary tales of *arre*, an unknown object in Nyishi, that scared his ancestors, and had even performed rituals to deal with the "terror", till he decided to take on the unknown headlong.

He trekked through Lolum, 180km from Seppa, the district headquarters of East Kameng, braving snakes and inclement weather, and stumbled on metal objects strewn across the hills.

Further down, he lifted a veil of foliage that canopied a metal structure lying near a gorge. A little research on the recovered plate, with the inscription, ST 95T6 BLACK HAWK 7.26.1943SPMCO, made Bagang realise that it could be the wreckage of a World War II aircraft that might have crash-landed at the spot.

"My grandfather and father always used to tell me about a mysterious object that scared them all their life. A hunter from our locality, Kasee Bagang, once sighted the remnants from a distance but never mustered courage to go near the wreckage site.

Though many of my family members and relatives tried to dissuade me from visiting this inaccessible wilderness with snakes and wild animals, I made up my mind after performing rituals on June 10. I strayed into another jungle after trekking for five days and again took another route to reach Lolum, where I spotted broken parts of metal on

wreckage of a World War II aircraft until I got a nameplate ST 95T6 BLACK HAWK 7.26.1943SPMCO emblazoned on it. A skeleton, some bones and four-inch bullets were also found on the spot," Bagang told The Telegraph over phone from Seppa.

He carried the metal plates, bullets and bones with him to show the district planning officer, Vijay Sonam.

Deputy commissioner Tope Bam came to know about the discovery and informed chief secretary Tabom Bam about it on June 18.

The skeleton has been sent for DNA test. "We were shown all the remnants of the aircraft, which, after examining, appeared to be wreckage of a World War II fighter plane that might have been lost during operation as another skeleton with parts of jeans was found in Yangfo village near this place way back in the fifties. We thought it to be the corpse of a person who was on board," Sonam said.

Army officials from 5 Mountain Brigade at Tenga of West Kameng district summoned Bagang to ask about the plane.

A US aircraft, B-24 J, nicknamed "Hot As hell" that met with an accident on January 25, 1944, was also found by villagers in East Siang district in 2007.

Several other US fighter planes were found in Dibang Valley, Papum Pare and Lohit districts over the past few years.

More than 430 aircraft and hundreds of crewmen of the US air force went missing in the forests of Arunachal Pradesh since World War II.

Former US Consulate general at Calcutta, Henry V. Jardine, who visited the state in 2008, also announced plans to send a team to search for the wreckage of missing fighter