

Fatal drop zone survey investigation results released

JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM, Hawaii – Pacific Air Forces released the results of its investigation into a drop zone survey where an U.S. Air Force officer died in Indonesia, April 22, 2024.

On 22 April 2024, U.S. Air Force Major William Walker, assigned to the 3d Air Support Operations Squadron, Fort Wainwright, Alaska, led a drop zone survey team to assess the viability of a proposed drop zone location in the vicinity of Bandung, Indonesia in support of exercise Super Garuda Shield, scheduled for 26 August - 6 September 2024. The team assessed whether the area was safe for parachuting because there was no recent evaluation of the site to identify hazards and ensure the safety for personnel participating in the future exercise.

During the inspection, the team split up into two survey teams to cover more ground. Walker and one of these teams later further split up at which point he proceeded alone to survey the eastern boundary of the drop zone. At approximately 1315, Walker texted the survey teams that he would not continue the survey and directed them to return to the rally point where he would meet them.

After not hearing from Walker for approximately an hour and a half, the survey teams conducted a brief search of the area before notifying the U.S. Embassy and a search party was organized. Walker was found unresponsive at approximately 0040 on 23 April and declared deceased by medical personnel. An autopsy later determined the cause of his death to be exertional heat injury with acute renal insufficiency.

In accordance with AFI 51-307, Aerospace and Ground Accident Investigations, this Ground Accident Investigation Board conducted a legal investigation to inquire into all the facts and circumstances surrounding this Air Force ground accident, prepared a publicly releasable report, and obtained and preserved all available evidence for use in litigation, claims, disciplinary action, and adverse administrative action.

A copy of the full report may be viewed at www.afjag.af.mil/AIB-Reports/.