

ISLAND COMMANDER
SAIPAN, M.I.

DECLASSIFIED
Authority E.O. 12958

A9/A-11/H-10
GMK:gt

Serial: 2970

19 October 1946

From: Commander George M. Keffer, USNR.
To : Commander MARIANAS.
Via : Island Commander, SAIPAN.

Subject: Rescue expedition to ANATAHAN, M.I., 13-15 October 1946 --
Report of.

Enclosures: (A) IsCom SAIPAN serial T-455 of 12 October 1946.
(B) Commander MARIANAS despatch 090853Z of October 1946.
(C) Iscom SAIPAN despatch 130604Z of October 1946.
(D) Photographs.

1. On 13 October, 1946, as directed by Enclosure (A), Commander George M. Keffer assumed command of forces assigned for temporary additional duty by the Island Commander, SAIPAN, in connection with a special mission organized for the purpose of attempting the rescue of such persons, including Japanese, reported to be on the island of ANATAHAN, M.I.

2. PC-1145, Lieutenant (jg) B. L. Hall, USN, commanding, reported for temporary duty in accordance with Enclosures (B) and (C).

3. Personnel reporting for temporary additional duty, as directed by the Island Commander, SAIPAN were:

Lieutenant (jg) Joseph A. BERNIER, (MC) USNR.
HORNER, Paul J., Platoon Sgt., USMC.
SHIROMOTO, Mobua, Staff Sgt., USA, Interpreter.
THOMAS, Frank J., Corp., USMC.
FREDERICK, Robert J., PHOAC2, USN.

4. By order of the Island Commander, Lieutenant Commander Akira Ito, ISN-14J-7022 (NA-IJN) and Captain Salsai Oba, S-4808, IJA were placed in the custody of Commander Keffer, having first volunteered to accompany the mission. Gregorio Sasamoto, Lomolor Giryerme, Olmel (no surname), and Jose Ichihara, interpreter, all natives of SAIPAN were detailed by order of the Island Commander.

5. Loud speakers were obtained and installed on PC-1145, and all material and supplies necessary to the accomplishment of the mission were made available, were checked, tested and put on board on 13 October.

6. All members of the mission were briefed as to the purpose of the mission and conduct expected.

7. PC-1145 departed SAIPAN at 0637 K. 14 October, for ANATAHAN, with Commander Keffer as OTC, in accordance with Enclosure (C)

ENCLOSURE (B)

Serial: 2970

Subject: Rescue expedition to ANATAHAN, M.I., 13-15

DECLASSIFIED

Authority E.O. 11652 f.

8. At 0835 K, 40 and 20 MM guns were test fired and selected men of the crew refreshed in the proper handling of carbines.
9. Prior to approaching ANATAHAN, Condition One - modified - was set. The island was carefully observed as the ship drew near shore for possibility of hostile action.
10. Arrival off ANATAHAN was at 1200 K. 14 October, at a point on the southerly shore, approximately midway between the easterly and westerly extremities.
11. With due regard for possible uncharted shoals, PC-1145 then proceeded slowly on a westerly course parallel with the shore. Sasan to, a native Fisherman familiar with ANATAHAN, pointed out a beach where he said some Japanese had lived. The ship was stopped, the loud speaker activated, and prepared messages ready by Ito and Oba. No persons could be seen on the beach and a party with side arms was put ashore to reconnoiter under cover of guns and arms on the ship. A small thatched hut was found with indications that four persons had recently occupied it. From a pan of decaying food, it was inferred that it had been deserted for a number of days.
12. The ship then cruised inshore covering the party, with intermittent addresses in Japanese over the speakers. Commander Keffer, with a portion of the landing party, proceeded westerly about one thousand yards by small boat to a beach where the American flag had been raised and a proclamation posted during August 1945. The remainder of the party attempted to reach this point by foot but was unable to do so due to dense vegetation and rough terrain.
13. Upon inspecting the beach it was found that the American flag, formerly flown from a pole presumably raised by the initial occupation force had either blown or been pulled down and was in shreds at the foot of the pole. The occupation proclamation was intact and had not been defaced. The remnants of the flag were removed to the ship for proper disposition by Commander Keffer and those with him.
14. The small boat was then returned to the place of first landing and brought the remainder of the party aboard at 1800 K, the ship having anchored at 1757 K close inshore in 15 fathoms with 45 fathoms of chain just to the east of the flag pole beach and in the only suitable place discovered while cruising about the island.
15. Due to the proximity of the shore, a special anchor watch was set, but no difficulty was experienced, the hook holding well.
16. Having failed to attract the inhabitants by loudspeaker, it was decided to prepare a message box and to place it at the foot of the flag-pole the following morning where it could be easily found. The box contained a message in Japanese giving the purpose of the expedition, emphasizing the ending of hostilities and the probable early return to their homeland of all Japanese in the Marianas, and letters addressed to Japanese Naval personnel believed to be on ANATAHAN, which were prepared prior to the departure of the mission under the supervision of the Marine Barracks. These letters were

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19 October 1946

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addressed to Tanaka and Nishino, Seamen first class, by their friends, Yoshitaro Kawaguchi, Koichi Yamada, and Yoshikatsu Kawakami, all prisoners of war. The tenor of these letters and message was that all on ANATAHAN should permit themselves to be rescued and that Japanese and natives are well treated by the Americans. All messages were properly checked for content by the interpreter accompanying the mission. Believing that it would induce the inhabitants to come for these messages, it was decided to include several cartons of cigarettes, a package of matches, bars of soap, about five pounds of rice, a pad of paper and a pencil.

17. At 0620 K. on the 15th, a party was put ashore with the box which was placed near the flagpole where it could easily be seen. A new American flag was raised.

18. Upon return of the party at 0752 K. anchor was weighed and the island was circled in a clockwise direction, with frequent stops for addresses via loud speaker in which reference was made to the box and its desirable contents and inviting the people to open the box and leave a message for the mission from which their intention could be learned.

19. The ship having circled the island, a party was again put ashore at 1115 K to determine if a message had been left. No message was found and the contents of the box had not been taken.

20.8 At 1156 K, the landing party having returned to the ship, course was set for return to SAIPAN which was reached at 1820 K.

21. Decision to return without further delay was based on malfunctioning of the port engine clutch, which gave trouble shortly after arrival off ANATAHAN, and upon the conclusion that some days would need to elapse before the inhabitants could reach a decision to leave. It was felt that it would be unsafe to remain longer with but one engine available for maneuvering.

22. The loud speaker was in almost continuous use while off ANATAHAN.

23. It is recommended that the island be again visited within the next few weeks. The inhabitants are evidently uncertain that hostilities have ceased.

24. The message box left by the present mission should be examined upon arrival to determine if the messages have been removed. An interpreter should be in the party to translate any message left by the inhabitants and to assist in a meeting to arrange evacuation details. It is emphasized that any evidence of belligerence will delay rather than expedite the desired evacuation.

25. The terrain of ANATAHAN is such that an armed expeditionary force should be used as a means of removing the inhabitants. Posters should be placed in the situation, current issues of Japanese newspapers, etc. and should lay the groundwork for voluntary migration.

Authority E-011958
DECLASSIFIED

Serial: 2970

19 October 1946

Subject: Rescue expedition to ANATAHAN, M.I., 13-15 October 1946 - Report of.

A small boat with an outboard motor would be well suited to approaching the various places where landings are possible during calm weather. The boat crew should wear life jackets and side arms and should be supported by a second small boat to lie close inshore.

26. Lieutenant (jg) B. L. Hall, his officers and crew of PC-1145, the Commanding Officer, Marine Barracks - Saipan, the Deputy Chief, Military Government Unit - Saipan, the Supply Officer in Charge, Naval Supply Center - Saipan, are deserving of special mention for their efficient and ready assistance in preparing for the mission. It is noted, also, that Lieutenant Commander Ito and Captain Oba did everything within their power to help attain the desired results.

27. In conclusion, the expedition was adequately equipped and supported, all gear worked well, and conditions, generally, were favorable to success. No rainfall, heavy winds or seas were encountered.

George M. Keffer

