

Solomon Islands Star
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Private View (Editorial)
Ballale World War II Planes
by Henry Ata Daukakia
State Ridge, Honiara

[Photo - A restored Japanese war plane from Ballale no in a museum in US (this photo is copied from PacificWrecks.com)

What we have witnessed in these recent days could be just a tip of the iceberg.

I know the late Dominic Otuana well. We became like brothers through marriage. Both of us were married to two sisters.

And for a short several years me an my children lived with his family, I saw the struggle that he went through trying to set a WWII Museum.

All those sweat and tears came to nothing when he went through another suffering state fighting for his own life with a certain kind of infection and a heart problem.

He eventually passed away and leaving his world of abundant WWII planes with no museum and an unfulfilled dream.

He dream was a WWII museum that will attract tourists in the Solomons, which will bring in millions if not billions of tourist dollars into the country.

And also to train pilots as well. Compared to what we are seeing now, this is probably just a million dollar maybe that will be drained away in no time leaving the shortland chiefs high and dry and still be the same as it was since WWII.

Because the money will on be paid to a handful of people who claim to act on the best interest of their people.

But with a museum, the benefits will spread all over the place like spinoffs etc. All the surrounding village around Ballale will greatly benefit in terms of entertainments, sight seeing, snorkeling, fishing, yearly carnivals, etc, etc as well as Honiara.

But what we are selling is these middlemen who have nothing to do with heritage would take these planes out from us, sell them to some millionaires.

They will spend around a million dollars to restore one or two planes in flying condition from the 10 - 15 planes they are sending out.

They will then sell the fully restored ones to some museums somewhere for up to tens

of millions of dollars and in the end that country who runs that museum reaps all the benefits from the tourist dollar in the long run.

And in the end all the land owners will still be the same as it was since WWII. What a joke.

Terrible isn't it, really terrible. What I mean is I have seen other countries that have real concern for their tourist dollar. They are so concerned that they have to make law to protect their tourist dollar. For example, in China if a taxi is seen traveling past with its metre turned down with no passenger or tourist in it, that taxi will be reported and will be arrested and will be prosecuted.

Some countries have heavy penalties for littering. I have seen places like Samoa and Vanuatu and have seen their cleanliness. In Samoa they have very clean streets and roads right down to their villages. They even have competitions for the best village. That's how far they can go to protect their tourist dollar.

In Solomons, we have a multi-billion dollar tourist business at hand that is the WWOO plane and war relics. And instead of protecting them, we throw them out and spend much time, energy and resources protecting our political numbers in order to stay on in power.

Why don't we develop it and start benefitting from it rather than conning or poor rural landowners and getting rich overnight with foreign middlemen?

But I am glad that the late Otuana's son is now a mature person himself and has seen a lot of things that can happen to protect these precious heritage and he is doing something positive in place of his father.

Good on you Ninamo. When your late father went through that struggle, you were still very young and you did not understand much. But nevertheless, the truth will remain itself, for the truth will always shine through the darkness.

I also heard that all these planes he is trying to ship out are just free gifts. Free gifts? What a shame, terrible isn't it?

What would tour out to be a billion dollar tourist business are being given to a foreigner as a free gift.

Local authorities, I call on you all to better check if there's no kickbacks involved. Who on this bloody earth would do such an injustice? Come on Solomon Islands Visitors Bureau, where art thou?

Con on Permanent Secretary for Ministry of Tourism, where art thou? Come on National Museum where art thou?

I thought we have a WW2 Relics Act which prohibits any removal of WWII relics. Has that act been scrapped. If not then who gave the license to this person called Craig Turner to have an exclusive right to remove these war planes? Come on Police, arrest this person and make him answer to all these dirty dealings. And I would call for a commission of enquiry on the whole issue as well.

Not very long ago an Australian was also caught somewhere in Vietnam for trying to smuggle artifacts. He was caught and got arrested. Why dont we do the same thing to these WWII smugglers.

Terrible isn't it? God bless Solomon Islands.