

Press Release

WWII Memorial to be dedicated on Pacific Island of Yap

Yap Island, FSM, June 12th, 2010: The Yap Visitors Bureau (YVB) and the Missing Air Crew Project (MACP) announce the dedication of one of the most unique World War II memorials in the Pacific. The newly constructed site displays the wreckage of a plane flown by Ens. Joseph Cox (from Idaho) and will be dedicated July 27th, symbolizing the tremendous sacrifice and loss of human life near this Pacific Island during WWII. The YVB and MACP have been working together for several years to preserve and remember this very special group of soldiers.

In the historical context of WWII and the Pacific theatre, American losses near Yap (now part of the Federated States of Micronesia) were substantial yet continue to be overlooked even today. Strategically located between the Philippines and Guam, Japanese occupied Yap was targeted almost daily from June of 1944 to August of 1945 at the cost of hundreds of American men, 110 of which remain classified as missing in action (MIA). Pat Ranfranz (from Cameron, WI), founder of the MACP has spent over 20 years researching Yap during WWII and the stories behind each soldier and his mission, hoping to preserve their memories for generations to come. Pat's uncle is among the soldiers that remain MIA.

The memorial to be dedicated on July 27th displays the actual wreckage of an F6F-5 Hellcat flown by Ens. Joseph Cox, one of 36 planes American planes that fell near the island. Joseph's plane was shot down with three other Hellcats from the USS Enterprise on September 6, 1944 and was only recently recovered moderately intact. **"It is truly one of the most unique wrecks and now memorials in the Pacific," explains Pat. "After the war, most of the wreckage throughout the world was picked over and removed. Fortunately in this case, the Yapese have respected the wreckage as grave sites and taken care to preserve them and remember the American men who lost their lives during the war."** Joseph's plane was spared from the expanding Yap landfill in 2008 and relocated to government held land. Displayed on a concrete pad next to an all-weather sign and memorial marker describing the man, the plane, and the mission, the YVB together with the MACP were able to construct one of the finest memorials to American men lost in WWII's Pacific theatre.

Pat Ranfranz is extremely grateful for the work that has been done to make the memorial come together. **"This would not have been possible without the work done by the people of Yap and the Yap Visitors Bureau to save and preserve the American crash sites and wreckage that remained after the war. Too many people have forgotten the men who gave their lives for our freedom during WWII. This memorial and others on Yap Island will help to immortalize the forgotten and bring meaning to their sacrifices."** Attending the dedication will be Yap Governor Sebastian Anefal, US Ambassador Peter A. Prahar and other dignitaries along with the 90 year old brother of the pilot, Ellis Cox of Idaho.

The memorial dedication, open to the press, will take place from 2-4pm near the Public Works building on the Island of Yap. Please contact the YVB for assistance if your organization would like to attend. Both Pat Ranfranz and representatives from the YVB are available for interviews between now and July (see the contact information at the top of this release). Pat Ranfranz will also be available in Tokyo July 19-20th and Guam July 20th while traveling to Yap. For more information about the memorial dedication and Missing Air Crew Project, visit: <http://www.missingaircrew.com> or www.visit Yap.com.

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Additional pictures and information available at: <http://www.missingaircrew.com/yvb/coxpr.asp>.



Peter A. Prahar, U.S. Ambassador, Federated States of Micronesia standing in front of the Ens. Joseph Cox F6F-5 Hellcat Memorial on Yap Island.



Patrick Ranfranz stands next to the Ens. Joseph Cox F6F-5 Hellcat wreckage after it was saved.

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