

ALLIED GEOGRAPHICAL SECTION
SOUTH WEST PACIFIC AREA

508/7

Ref No: Geo/ 2933

POSTAL ADDRESS:
A.P.O. 500

16 September '43

SUBJECT: Report on ONTONG JAVA IS.

TO : DNI, Dept of the Navy, Melbourne.

Receipt is acknowledged of a report by Sub/Lieut.
A. McCasker, R.A.N.V.R. on ONTONG JAVA ISLAND, with additional
comments by Lieut. D.C.Horton, R.A.N.V.R.

M. J. ...

Lt. Col. —
Commanding Officer,
Allied Geographical Section.

KK:PMB

DIRECTOR OF NAVAL INTELLIGENCE

CONFIDENTIAL NO. 508/7.

BWB
We will have to get
his notes to write with
his notes: but
I think he feels he
has already written
enough
L

SECRET

SECRET.

13 SEP 1943

ONTONG JAVA ISLAND.

A report by Sub-Lieutenant A. McCasker, R.A.N.V.R., on Ontong Java Island from Headquarters USAFISPA, with additional comments by Lieutenant D.G.Horton, R.A.N.V.R., is forwarded for your information.



Director of Naval Intelligence.

TO:
The Commanding Officer,
Allied Geographical Section,
G.H.Q., S.W.P.A.

The Supervising Intelligence Officer,
NORTH EASTERN AREA.

1943 the boys were waiting
in Mac as soon as he arrived.
Sorry if we're still some of your friends

C O N F I D E N T I A L

HEADQUARTERS USAFISPA
Office of the AC of S, G-2
APO #502.



25 August, 1943.

MEMORANDUM:

NEW DATA ON ONTONG JAVA

(Sub-Lt. A. McCasker, RANVR, has supplied the following information on ONTONG JAVA, coral atoll group lying about 150 miles northeast of REKATA BAY. Lt. McCasker was evacuated from ONTONG JAVA on August 20, 1943, after almost nine months there).

Japanese Activity: Enemy search planes, either BETTY or MAVIS, call regularly over ONTONG JAVA. They come in low at an elevation of 50-100' about every other day between 1230 and 1500. Occasionally they are heard going out on search about 1000. Earlier in the year they came during the morning hours. Once a BETTY circled an old cutter which was anchored off LEUANUA for half an hour and then dropped four bombs, strafing the cutter and village. Two of the bombs failed to go off. There were no casualties among the natives although they were there tending their gardens at the time.

In October, 1942, two Japs were washed ashore on the northern part of the atoll. They were picked up some time later when an enemy gunboat put into LEUANUA ANCHORAGE. One hundred Japs went ashore on LEUANUA, knocked down native houses and ransacked the European trader's house, carrying off chickens, pigs and other foodstuffs. They told the natives that they would return in three months, but were never seen again.

It is possible that there may be Jap survivors on some of the western islands at present. Following a recent aerial combat between a BETTY and two B-24's Jap search planes have several times closely searched the islands at tree-level height. Native Police Boys have been unable to locate any Nips, however.

The insignia on the Jap planes which come over have been difficult to distinguish from that of our aircraft. The Rising Sun is often framed square which at a distance may give the impression of a four-pointed star.

At latest report, two months ago, there had been no Japanese in the neighboring TASMAN GROUP, which lies 40 miles north of ONTONG JAVA.

C O N F I D E N T I A L

C O N F I D E N T I A L

New Data on ONTONG JAVA (Cont'd.)

Population: The native population of ONTONG JAVA is about 700 and seems to be increasing. The inhabitants are Polynesian, with considerable Melanesian admixture. They are in general very sympathetic to the Allies and call Americans or Australians "you-me." There are two distinct tribes which occupy the southern and northern half of the group respectively. The southern, or Leuanuia tribe, numbers about 500 and is much the more important of the two.

(1) LEUANUIA -- Mosquitoes and Jap bombs have recently driven these people from LEUANUIA to NUAKAHA, an island lying about three miles north of LEUANUIA. Gardens are still kept on the larger LEUANUIA, however, as well as KILOMA, KEILA, SELEVAA, KUMARA, PELAKO and others of the southern islands. Many of the natives have houses on several of these islands. King Isea rules LEUANUIA as a true monarchy. He owns several of the islands in their entirety and in normal times received the proceeds from the sale of the copra produced there. The Chief Police Boy "Billy", the Second Police Boy, "Eric", and Lt. McCasker's assistant, "Kakoa" are all highly reliable and speak Pidgin English. King Isca also speaks Pidgin. "Kakoa" is an exceptionally smart lad who has spent some time at VILA in the NEW HEBRIDES and speaks English.

(2) PELAU -- The northern tribe, numbering about 200, formerly lived on PELAU but mosquitoes have driven them to AVAHA, the third island south of PELAU (not shown on H. O. Charts). "Bosoi", their chief, is ~~(doubtful)~~ described as a cunning fellow who had been in contact with the Japs. He went aboard the Jap ship when it was at LEUANUIA, receiving presents and perhaps instructions. The two Jap castaways who were picked up by the ship had been sheltered on AVAHA and brought down to LEUANUIA to board the rescue ship. The Chief Police Boy here is "Laumagi", a native of LEUANUIA and brother of "Kakoa". "Laumagi" is a reliable boy.

There are at present no white men on any of the islands of the atoll. Jack Lazurus, Burns-Philp trader here for many years probably knows the group better than any European. He is now in SYDNEY. *He has a half-breed daughter about ten years old on Laumua.*

Geography: All of the islands of the atoll are planted to coconuts and gardens. In former times the natives sold copra, trepangs (sea-slugs) and mother-of-pearl to the traders. Available native foods are coconuts, taro, kakagi (a carrot-like root), avocados, pandanus leaves, turtles, chickens and eggs. The avocados and taro are only found on LEUANUIA and the chickens on NUAKAHA, where eggs are plentiful. A piece of stick tobacco or a few cigarettes is fair exchange for a feast.

The water in the sink-hole in the middle of LEUANUIA is brackish and not fit for consumption. Two cisterns have been installed on NUAKAHA and there are others on LEUANUIA. The receptacles on NUAKAHA have a capacity of about 200 gallons each.

C O N F I D E N T I A L

C O N F I D E N T I A L

New Data on ONTONG JAVA (Cont'd.)

At low tide it is possible to walk from LEUANIUA to NUAKAHA. Several other islands of the group are similarly connected, but most communication between islets is by canoe.

There is an abundance of outrigger canoes, but they are usually small and not very seaworthy. They ordinarily have a capacity of eight men, with five paddling. Most are made from driftwood, as there is almost no big wood on the islands except coconut. Occasionally they visit their relatives in the TASMANS, 40 miles to the north, but they do not venture further.

Mosquitoes are very numerous, but they are day-feeders and are not believed to be Anopheles. The natives generally are healthy. One loper was found in the group. Many have a skin disease known as "backwa" which they treat with oil.

There is ample room within the lagoon for seaplane anchorage. At high tide PBV's landed off NUAKAHA, 300 yards from the beach, in 7-8 fathoms.

Both LEUANIUA and KEILA would lend themselves readily to airfield construction. They are level and well drained and several miles long. LEUANIUA, the largest island of the group, has an average width of 400 yards, while KEILA is only about 150 yards wide (This contradicts previous information which has shown KEILA as the largest member of the group). Prevailing winds would probably make KEILA, with a NW-SE axis, a more desirable site than the N-S. oriented LEUANIUA. Neither are wide enough for plane dispersal areas.

Language: The following words and phrases may be of aid to white men who for one reason or another find themselves on ONTONG JAVA:

I am an American	"Angau Amerik"
I want	"Hihai"
Food	"Noai"
Washing water	"Vai"
Fresh water	"Vai Keer"
Drinking Coconut	"Hengiu Euniu"
Canoe	"Papau"
Ship	"Navaka"
Airplane	"Vailileihe"
Tobacco	"Hepak"
Police Boy	"Heposi"
White Man	"Laipa"

C O N F I D E N T I A L