

## P-MAN XV MISSION REPORT:

### I. P-MAN XV TEAM MEMBERS:

Patrick Scannon, MD, PhD: Team Leader, Medical Officer (California, USA)

Joe Maldangesang: Master Guide, Boat Captain (Palau)

Flip Colmer: Mission Leader (Michigan, USA)

Derek Abbey: Safety Officer (North Carolina, USA)

#### **Daniel T. O'Brien: Navigation (California, USA)**

Casey Doyle: Navigation and Safety Support (Texas, USA and Okinawa)



P-MAN XV Team: Dan, Flip, Casey, Derek, Pat and Joe.

With Permission

## II. INTRODUCTION TO FINDINGS AND EVENTS

The P-MAN XV mission was primarily an extension of our P-MAN XIV mission, with the major focus on continued ocean floor searches for American aircraft and associated MIA aircrews. This extension of our last mission was made possible by the expanded collaborations with Scripps Institution of Oceanography (SIO), University of Delaware (UDEL) and the Stockbridge High School Advanced Robotics team.

Malakal Harbor and the deep waters immediately outside the western part of that harbor, including around Arakabesan (to the north) and Western Lagoon (off northwestern Ngeruktabel just south of the southern pincer of Ngeruktabel ) were all anchorages for Japanese shipping during WWII and were the points of attack for at least two major aerial battles in 1944 by US Navy (USN) forces in March (Operation DESECRATE ONE) and July (Operation SNAPSHOT), as well as recurring attacks during multiple independent missions by US Army Air Force (USAAF) and US Marine (USMC) aviation units **throughout 1944 until the war's end in September 1945.**

In the Malakal/Arakabesan/Western Lagoon/Ngeruktabel (MAWN) area (but not north of Arakabesan), at least fifteen known US aircraft remain missing along with their air crews, including fourteen USN aircraft (24 aviators) and one USAAF B-24 (8 airmen). Some of these American aircraft listed below, and possibly others such as two known night patrols, crashed unwitnessed. This area was heavily defended not only by enemy fighter squadrons (at least through early September 1944) but also by multiple Japanese anti-aircraft artillery batteries on Malakal, Arakabesan, Koror and southern Airai. After their surrender to US forces **at war's end, Japanese military** cited to American interrogators multiple American crash areas in this general area; records of this have been found in both US and Japanese archives. To make this more complex, several Japanese combat aircraft were reported to have been shot down **in these areas. As part of these airmen's missing status,** what is not known is whether these aircraft crashed on land or water.

Within this large ocean area, we have previously conducted side scanning sonar (SSS) searches during P-MAN XIIIa (2011) and P-MAN XIV (2012). In addition, during P-MAN XIV, we created a preliminary collaboration with Dr. Eric Terrill, SIO and Dr. Mark Moline, now at UDEL, which was extended after the P-MAN XIV mission to include more combined searches during our P-MAN XV mission. The P-MAN XV team also continued its collaboration with the SHS robotics team in conducting selected ROV searches.

The SIO/UDEL joint team was a combined oceanographic group conducting research in Palau from two universities (Scripps Oceanic Institute/University of California at San Diego with a team of seven directed by Eric Terrill, PhD and University of Delaware, with one team member directed by Mark Moline, PhD: hereafter referred jointly as SIO/UDEL). The P-MAN XV team established a joint collaboration with the SIO/UDEL teams over the past year in which SIO/UDEL agreed to commit a certain amount of its research efforts exploring the ocean floors of Palau in areas of interest to the BentProp Project. This permitted SIO/UDEL to acquire new oceanographic data while also permitting our WWII ocean floor searches to occur in an unprecedented manner: all four search areas described below, RT-1, 2, 3, 4, were selected for having overlapping individual interests from BentProp, SIO and UDEL. Jointly, SIO/UDEL provided the P-MAN XV team with a suite of underwater search technologies including: a) two Autonomous Underwater Vehicles (AUV, aka REMUS), a boat-mounted echoscope with a phased array system for searching from the ocean surface, an underwater Remote Operated Vehicle (ROV), an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) and an underwater portable sonar for local site detection under poor visibility conditions.

As always for our missions, the BentProp Project recognizes that we are working within the independent and sovereign boundaries of the Republic of Palau. We are diligent in completing all required correspondence and attaining authorization and permits for all of the activities we pursue, from the President and his staff, government offices, state and local officials, landowners, and tribal authorities. This preparation was done prior and during the P-MAN XV mission. Follow-up courtesy visits to key individuals and offices were made for verification and updates concerning permits both upon arrival and during PMAN XV. It is with our gratitude that the BentProp Project continues to work with and share the information from our missions with the people and leadership of Palau.

As seen in our Vision and Mission statements, the primary goal of the BentProp Project is locate Americans missing in and around Palau since World War II [NOTE: specifically designated as Missing-in-Action (MIA), Body Not Recovered (BNR), including Prisoners-of-War (POW)] so that they will ultimately be identified and repatriated back to the United States. As a result of this goal, we report our findings and coordinate our activities within Palau to the Bureau of Arts and Culture and the Office of the President. We also report our findings with the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC), the U.S. Naval History and Heritage Command (NHHC), the U.S. Air Force Historical Research Agency (AFHRA), and the Embassy of the United States of America in Palau. Each of the above Palauan and American offices receives a full report of our findings. These official reports are available upon request by other appropriate agencies. The BentProp Project makes every effort to share information in support of our mission of locating these long lost Americans, but we also understand the sensitivity of much of the information gathered and maintain that information in a confidential/for official use manner. Any public material appearing on the [www.bentprop.org](http://www.bentprop.org) web site has been redacted of such confidential information. BentProp team members also hold such information as confidential beyond these reports.