

Yaeyama Nippo
2019 March 23rd

**The search for the human remains will start in Sonai Ocean,
An American fighter crashed in Iriomote in the end of the war
Mr. McAlonie arrives to the island from New York**

Michael McAlonie from New York (45 years old) and three members from the American groups searching the remains of the war dead started its mission from the 23rd in order to repatriate the remains of a pilot of the US military airplane who crashed off Sonai in Iriomote Island.

The pilot is a 2nd Lieutenant US Marine Corps from Troy, a town in the northern part of the New York State, and his name is John McGrath, 21 years old at that time, who was the high school classmate and close friend of McAlonie's father, Mr. Howard McAlonie, who also served in Navy during the war.

Four U.S. military airplanes flew from Kadena base on July 21, 1945, due to the bombing of Iriomote Island, but the airplane piloted by 2nd Lt. McGrath crashed off the coast of Sonai (the cause is unknown) and lost his life.

McAlonie had been told the story of the pilot by his father from an early age. He anticipated to find the family members in 2000, located a sister by searching through the phone book, and started to take action seriously to find whereabouts of the father's friend.

In September 2017, with the cooperation of Mr. Justin Taylan of NPO group "Pacific Wrecks" based in the United States specializing in crash investigation, McAlonie learned from the military documents that the aircraft crash site was the water in Sonai.

Taylan requested the support from Usan Kurata, Chairman of the US NPO group called "KUENTAI-USA", which conducts research and collection of human remains, and met with Kurata and Yukari Akatsuka, the interpreter, in November last year for the first time.

Kurata reached out to the sister group called "Kuentai" based in Japan to look for the Japanese descriptions about the crash at the Yaeyama Peace Memorial Museum, the National Diet Library etc, and conducted interviews with relevant people to back up the American military documents.

Prior to the research in Iriomote, McAlonie and others visited Taketomi Town Hall in the afternoon of May 22nd and explained the purpose of the visit.

Michael stressed that "It is with great appreciation that after 74 years, we come to discover and document the fate of my father's good friend, not just for me, but for his family and his community" and appreciated the opportunity for the courtesy visit.

Kurata said "There is a record from the US side that the human remains have been recovered, but it has not returned to the family yet. If the parts of the wrecked airplane are found, it will be evidence and pressure to the American government."

Mayor Nishiohomasu replied strongly that "The recovery activity has been conducted only on the main island of Okinawa, but there are some also in Yaeyama, too. It is so natural in our custom to give prayers to those who have died, so we will do whatever we can do to assist your mission".

According to Tylan, two U.S. military airplanes crashed off Ishigaki Island, too, but the human remains were not returned to the family, and they intend to continue their investigations in the future for these cases, too.

The search will be conducted until the 28th.

<http://www.yaeyama-nippo.co.jp/archives/5985>