

THE TAIWAN OPERATION and Related events

It was a quiet Sunday morning, the day before Labor Day 1958. The ETs from BJU-1 had volunteered to help me paint my house for a feast of fried chicken, hamburgers, hot dogs, potato salad, baked beans, which my wife had prepared and of course cold beer.

It was around 0900 and the events of the day were just getting started when the telephone rang and to my surprise it was the Commanding Officer asking if I knew where my ET's were this week end. My answer was, of course, yes, and I can seem most of them from where I'm standing.

After explaining to him what the situation was the CO stated he was in his office and had a message which I should read and suggested I come in, but for the moment leave the ET's doing what they were doing.

I explained my departure to my crew and left for the base.

The message (Secret) was from CINCPACFLT directing BJU-1 to send a detachment "immediately" to WESTPAC and report to COM7THFLT in support of the Taiwan situation. The CO said he wanted me to go with this detachment and select the most qualified men available.

We worked out the team composition and I called my ET's back to the base

to prepare equipment for transport and to immediately get the necessary "shots" from the dispensary. This team consisted of ET's and RM's.

Departure was set for Monday, Labor Day, with a flight from North island to Travis AFB. With all preparations completed the ET's and myself returned to my home for the food. [The paint was still in the cans 6 weeks later when I returned]

On arrival at Travis our equipment, 1 - ENS and 1 -RM1 c was assigned to a Flying Tigers cargo flight to Tachikawa along with the OINC of the detachment who would be stopping in Pearl for a briefing by CINCPACFLT OPS. (CAPT O'Brian) This flight left immediately. The next morning I, with the rest of the team boarded a passenger flight to Tokyo via Pearl where we picked up the OINC.

On our arrival at Tokyo International we were met by the Navy ATCO who informed us that our cargo flight had crashed on approach and all aboard were killed.

We were taken to Atsugi Air Station where the OINC made arrangements for himself and the team to be flown to Taiwan and for me to proceed to Yokuska and report to COMNAVFORJAPAN for salvage operations. As it turned out no equipment was salvageable and I spent at least two days convincing the local ONI that none of our cargo was classified, only how we used it. That taken care of and the Army in charge of the remains of our team members, I proceeded to "work my way" to Taiwan.

While the OINC of Det Hotel was working under COM7THFLT I had been assigned directly to ADM Blackburn (COMTIAWANPATFOR) aboard the USS Pine Island (AV-12).

Immediately after the crash of our cargo plane CINCPACFLT arranged for a cargo flight out of North island where one of our Vans were loaded, along with replacement personnel and flown directly to Taiwan where we were based out of a Chinese Hostel near Kaohsiung.

On orders, directly and personal, from Admiral Blackburn I loaded the Van aboard a small cargo ship for transportation to BoKoKo Harbor to board the USS Ft. Marion (LSD-22). On arrival I reported aboard Ft. Marion and was greeted by the XO who informed me "You are not bringing that thing aboard this ship". I politely ask him if he was in voice communication with Admiral Blackburn so I could ask Admiral Blackburn himself where next he wanted me to put my "box". With that he backed down and we were soon aboard and set up on the helo deck.

The next few days we were off the islands of Matsu and Camoy. monitoring

CHICOM transmissions where we had recruited a CHINAT officer aboard Ft.

Marion to interpret for us and to assist in our intelligence gathering.

On our return to Kaohsiung and after a conference with Admiral Blackburn and 7THFLT Staff members it was determined that our equipment was inadequate and the lack of language capabilities in a team put us “behind the eight ball”. This was reported to CINCPACFLT and I received orders to report to CINCPACFLT OPS [Capt O’Brien] ASAP. On arrival at Pearl Capt O’Brien set us a series of presentations for me to various elements of CINCPACFLT staff and to CINCPAC Intelligence Officer at Camp Smith.

[Capt Woods, who turned out to be an old shipmate from my destroyer days in 1939].

As a result of these briefings Capt O’Brien directed me to return to San Diego, terminate my present travel orders and that he would send COMPHIBPAC a message directing them to send me to OPNAV/BUSHIPS to continue the briefings I had given to CINCPACFLT with a request for newer and more sophisticated equipment.

On 19 October 1958 I preceded to WASHDC for a series of briefings.

OPNAV (OP-922Y) decided it was time that BJU be given SI clearance and I received mine at OPNAV followed by the CO at FIRSTFLT.

On 2 January 1959 LCDR Hazlewood and CWO Clark was directed to report to CNO for a week of conferences which resulted in further equipment and personnel revisions.

This was a turning point in BJU operations and the start of obtaining better equipment.

Curtis Clark