

New Guinea C-47s Get New Equipment - - Trinket Boxes

By H. E. PATTERSON
Accredited War Correspondent

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The discovery of a hidden valley peopled by thousands of savage natives, in the mountain fastnesses of unexplored Dutch New Guinea recently led the director of air transport, Col. Ray T. Elsmore, to order a new item of equipment made standard for all Douglas C-47s* flying this region.

The item is very small, a tin box about five inches square and weighing about three pounds, but it may be the means of saving the lives of any C-47 crew and passengers forced down in the jungle wilderness.

Its contents were determined by Allied experts who consulted oldtimers who knew the regions, or rather knew as much as anyone, for there are still parts of Dutch New Guinea that have never known the white man.

Contents Listed

The little tin contains these items:

Six packages of razor blades; one six-inch rope of "Nicki-Nicki," a strong, black trade tobacco; twelve fish hooks; three dozen small Cowrie shells (small sea shells); one trading knife, two blades and a strong punch; fifty feet of fishing line; three dozen plain white buttons; one box of plain white beads about as large as a pea; one box of small beads, white, red and green, and three pieces of spring steel about five inches long, ground down to sharp edges like a knife at each end.

Total cost of these items is

about three dollars, but among the savage tribes four dozen sea shells will buy a pig, the most highly prized treasure of a native—and 40 shells will buy a wife.

The shells are quite common along the coast and a whole hatful can be bought for a few shillings at Pore Moresby, but back in the mountains the shells are rare and highly prized.

In the old days no white man would think of penetrating the jungle without Cowrie shells for trade and barter.

Meet Emergency

The Army figures that if a C-47 were forced down in the jungle or in the mountains the crew would be able to buy food, shelter, guides and everything else they needed with this emergency kit of trade goods.

That is, they would be able to buy their way out if the natives were inclined to be friendly and willing to trade.

The Army experts figure that one razor blade would buy a white man food for at least one day.

This food might be "Kladi," a sort of tare or potato, yams, "Obi Kajoe," a white root

cooked and eaten, similar to carrots, a crown dove, hornbill or cockatoo — the latter very, very good eating, they tell me.

Serve Dual Purpose

The fish hooks and line could be used by the stranded party, either for trading or for catching their own food.

The trade knife would rent a guide and porters and one of the sharpened bits of steel would buy at least one native canoe.

The beads would buy the services of the paddlers and native porters.

The buttons, white because white buttons look very intriguing against black skin, are used by the natives as ornaments.

Air crews forced down in the jungle fastness might be able to find their way out provided they could hire enough guides.

But the Army figures that this little three dollar emergency kit contains enough trade goods to get a party out of the jungle, providing, of course, they are not spend-thrifts and throw all of its wealth away in unwise bargains.

The Cowrie shells are a sort of super bank note, like \$100 bills in a cafeteria, and may be used to drive hard bargains.

You'll notice that while a wife could be purchased for 40 of these shells, the Army only furnishes 36 per kit per plane.

Stick to ration rules and ceilings, shunning all "Black Market" dealings.