



THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

DEC 22 2011

The Honorable Leon E. Panetta
Secretary of Defense
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Mr. Secretary:

It is my honor to forward the enclosed memorandums nominating Mr. Joseph Keli'ihananui and Mr. Richard Whaley for the posthumous award of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Medal of Valor. These two men are deserving of this award for their services rendered in performance of their duties during the December 8, 1941 attack on Howland Island by the Japanese.

According to fellow Colonist Elvin Matson, Mr. Keli'ihananui and Mr. Whaley died while attempting to execute the camp plan to take cover in the interior of the island if attacked. After their deaths, the two men were covered with rocks in a bomb shell crater. Their bodies were removed from Howland Island and reinterred at Schofield Barracks, Hawai'i, in 1954.

By way of background, Executive Order 7368, issued by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on May 13, 1936, proclaimed the United States' jurisdiction over the islands of Howland, Baker, and Jarvis. These equatorial islands, positioned approximately half-way between Hawai'i and Australia, were seen as vital to maintaining the United States' hold over the Pacific. Of particular concern was the fact that the Japanese and the British might attempt to compete against the United States for these islands.

The U.S. Navy had originally proposed they maintain jurisdiction over the islands by stationing military personnel there. However, the U.S. State Department informed the Navy and the President that in order for the United States to annex these islands and maintain jurisdiction under international law, civilian colonists would need to be placed on the islands. It was then that the colonists program was born.

The Navy recruited the original colonists from Kamehameha Schools, a private institution dedicated to educating Native Hawaiians and where the young men were all part of the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps. Mr. Keli'ihananui and Mr. Whaley were among the colonists to serve in the program. To conceal the Navy's involvement, the U.S. Department of Commerce and then the U.S. Department of the Interior took over administration of the colonization program. The Administration also publicly announced that the purpose for the United States colonizing the islands was the commercial development of guano mining and commercial air routes through the Pacific. However, according to documents from the Departments of Defense, Interior, and Commerce, the classified purposes of the project were to prevent other nations from securing those islands and to provide strategic weather reports to the U.S. Fleet in the Pacific.

Despite increasing hostilities in the Pacific and the threat posed to the colonists, the United States saw the need to continue to place men from Hawai'i on the islands. On December 8, 1941, two waves of Japanese aircraft and a Japanese Imperial Submarine bombed and shelled the islands of Howland and Baker.

On Howland Island, nearly all the facilities, including the three landing strips, and a majority of the supplies were destroyed in the early attacks. The remaining colonists were forced to hide during the day and scavenge for food and drink at night to avoid the Japanese bomber patrols. They survived thus for nearly 6 weeks before they were rescued by the U.S. Navy destroyer USS Helm (DD388) on January 31, 1942. Howland Island was subsequently manned by a battalion of Marines and known as the Howland Naval Air Station until May of 1944.

Like others in history who fought to protect our country's freedom, Mr. Joseph Keli'ihananui and Mr. Richard Whaley gave their lives seeking to do their small part in the building of the American franchise through the colonization of Pacific lands. They did not shrink from the dangers presented by manning a remote island of strategic value during a time when hostilities with Japan were growing. They did what we expect of every American in times of trouble. They did their duty.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my nominations. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ken Salazar". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ken Salazar

Enclosures

MEMORANDUM FOR ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, LABOR AND MANAGEMENT
EMPLOYEE RELATIONS DIVISION, HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTORATE,
WASHINGTON HEADQUARTERS SERVICES

SUBJECT: Nomination for the Office of the Secretary of Defense Medal for Valor

1. In accordance with Administrative Instruction 29, I strongly recommend
Mr. Joseph Kealoha Keli'ihanamui for the Office of the Secretary of Defense Medal for
Valor. The following information is provided in support of the nomination:

- a. Name: Joseph Kealoha Keli'ihanamui
- b. Position, Title, and Grade: Colonist and Student Aerologist
- c. Organization and Location: U.S. Department of the Interior
performing tasks for the U.S. Navy.
Howland Island, U.S. Equatorial Islands
- d. Proposed Presentation Date: February 9, 2012
- e. Basis for Nomination:

(1) Executive Order 7368, issued by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on May 13, 1936, proclaimed the United States' jurisdiction over the islands of Howland, Baker, and Jarvis. These equatorial islands, positioned approximately half-way between Hawai'i and Australia, were seen as vital to maintaining the United States' hold over the Pacific. Of particular concern was the fact that the Japanese and the British might attempt to compete against the United States for these islands.

(2) The U.S. Navy had originally proposed they maintain jurisdiction over the islands by stationing military personnel there. However, the U.S. State Department informed the Navy and the President that in order for the U.S. to annex these islands and maintain our jurisdiction under international law we would need to place civilian colonists on the islands. It was then that the colonists program was born.

Enclosure 1

(3) The Navy recruited the original colonists from Kamehameha Schools, a private institution dedicated to educating Native Hawaiians and where the young men were all part of the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps. To conceal the Navy's involvement the U.S. Department of Commerce and then the U.S. Department of the Interior took over administration of the colonization program. The Administration also publicly announced that the purpose for the United States colonizing the islands was the commercial development of guano mining and commercial air routes through the Pacific. However, according to documents from the Departments of Defense, Interior and Commerce, the classified purposes of the project was to prevent other nations from securing those islands and to provide strategic weather reports to U.S. Fleet in the Pacific.

(4) Despite increasing hostilities in the Pacific and the threat posed to the colonists, the United States saw the need to continue to place men from Hawai'i on the islands. On December 8, 1941, two waves of Japanese aircraft and a Japanese Imperial Submarine bombed and shelled the islands of Howland and Baker. On Howland Island, two Hawaiian colonists-- Joseph Keli'ihananui and Richard Whaley--died of shrapnel wounds. According to fellow Colonist Elvin Matson, Mr. Keli'ihananui and Mr. Whaley died when attempting to execute the camp plan to take cover in the interior of the island if attacked. After their death, the two men were covered with rocks in a bomb shell crater. Their bodies were removed from Howland Island and reinterred at Schofield Barracks in 1954.

(5) On Howland Island, nearly all the facilities, including the three landing strips and majority of the supplies were destroyed in the early attacks. The remaining colonists were forced to hide during the day and scavenge for food and drink at night to avoid the Japanese bomber patrols. They survived thus for nearly six weeks before they were rescued by the U.S. Navy destroyer USS Helm (DD388) on January 31, 1942. Howland Island was subsequently manned by a battalion of Marines and known as the Howland Naval Air Station until May of 1944.

2. Like others in history who fought to protect our country's freedom, Joseph Keli'ihananui gave his life seeking to do his small part in the building of the American franchise through the colonization of Pacific lands. He did not shrink from the dangers presented by manning a remote island of strategic value during a time when hostilities with Japan were growing. He did what we expect of every American in times of trouble. He did his duty.

3. No other award for this employee is pending and no other previous award has been made for the service described herein.

AUTHORITY LINE:

(Signature Block)

MEMORANDUM FOR ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, LABOR AND MANAGEMENT
EMPLOYEE RELATIONS DIVISION, HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTORATE,
WASHINGTON HEADQUARTERS SERVICES

SUBJECT: Nomination for the Office of the Secretary of Defense Medal for Valor

1. In accordance with Administrative Instruction 29, I strongly recommend *Mr. Richard Whaley* for the Office of the Secretary of Defense Medal for Valor. The following information is provided in support of the nomination:

- a. Name: Richard Whaley
- b. Position, Title, and Grade: Colonist and Student Acrologist
- c. Organization and Location: U.S. Department of the Interior
performing tasks for the U.S. Navy,
Howland Island, U.S. Equatorial Islands
- d. Proposed Presentation Date: February 9, 2012
- e. Basis for Nomination:

(1) Executive Order 7368, issued by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on May 13, 1936, proclaimed the United States' jurisdiction over the islands of Howland, Baker, and Jarvis. These equatorial islands, positioned approximately half-way between Hawai'i and Australia, were seen as vital to maintaining the United States' hold over the Pacific. Of particular concern was the fact that the Japanese and the British might attempt to compete against the United States for these islands.

(2) The U.S. Navy had originally proposed they maintain jurisdiction over the islands by stationing military personnel there. However, the U.S. State Department informed the Navy and the President that in order for the U.S. to annex these islands and maintain our jurisdiction under international law we would need to place civilian colonists on the islands. It was then that the colonists program was born.

Enclosure 2

(3) The Navy recruited the original colonists from Kamehameha Schools, a private institution dedicated to educating Native Hawaiians and where the young men were all part of the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps. To conceal the Navy's involvement the U.S. Department of Commerce and then the U.S. Department of the Interior took over administration of the colonization program. The Administration also publicly announced that the purpose for the United States colonizing the islands was the commercial development of guano mining and commercial air routes through the Pacific. However, according to documents from the Departments of Defense, Interior and Commerce, the classified purposes of the project was to prevent other nations from securing those islands and to provide strategic weather reports to U.S. Fleet in the Pacific.

(4) Despite increasing hostilities in the Pacific and the threat posed to the colonists, the United States saw the need to continue to place men from Hawai'i on the islands. On December 8, 1941, two waves of Japanese aircraft and a Japanese Imperial Submarine bombed and shelled the islands of Howland and Baker. On Howland Island, two Hawaiian colonists—Richard Whaley and Joseph Keli'ihananui—died of shrapnel wounds. According to fellow Colonist Elvin Matson, Mr. Keli'ihananui and Mr. Whaley died when attempting to execute the camp plan to take cover in the interior of the island if attacked. After their death, the two men were covered with rocks in a bomb shell crater. Their bodies were removed from Howland Island and reinterred at Schofield Barracks in 1954.

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2. Like others in history who fought to protect our country's freedom, Richard Whaley gave his life seeking to do his small part in the building of the American franchise through the colonization of Pacific lands. He did not shrink from the dangers presented by manning a remote island of strategic value during a time when hostilities with Japan were growing. He did what we expect of every American in times of trouble. He did his duty.

3. No other award for this employee is pending and no other previous award has been made for the service described herein.

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