

# Guam holds seaside memorial for the SMS Cormoran II

TUMON, GUAM, April 30, 2017 /EINPresswire.com/ -- On Friday, April 7, 2017, the Guam Visitors Bureau (GVB) was joined by local and international dignitaries to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the scuttling of the SMS Cormoran II. The German vessel came to Guam in December 1914, out of coal and desperate to escape pursuit by warships of the Japanese Imperial Navy. The ship and her crew stayed in Guam peacefully for the next two and half years until the United States entered World War I on April 6, 1917.

On that fateful day, Guam's US Navy Governor sent word to Captain Adalbert Zuckschwerdt of the Cormoran that their two countries were now at war. The captain was instructed to surrender his ship and prepare his men to become prisoners of war. Captain Zuckschwerdt agreed to surrender his crew, but not the SMS Cormoran. Instead, the ship was scuttled and sunk to the bottom of Apra Harbor on April 7, 1917.



Guam divers place a 4 ft. x 3 ft. centennial commemorative banner; 12-foot floral wreath; and a replica of the Imperial German Navy flag on the SMS Cormoran II as peace tribute to her 100 years beneath the sea. Photo by Mr. Chase Weir

To commemorate the 100th year anniversary of the scuttling of the SMS Cormoran II, the GVB organized a special seaside memorial service. Attendees of the ocean service were transported to the site of the Cormoran's final resting place by boat. Nearly 120 people participated in the seaside memorial service including two family members representing the crew of the Cormoran. Walter Runck, came for his grandfather Jakob Runch, and Lasia Casil, represented her great-grandfather Paul Grey, who were both sailors on the Cormoran.

The contingent honoring the SMS Cormoran also included Mr. Michael Hasper, Chargé d'Affaires from the German Embassy in Manila, Guam's U.S. Congresswoman Madeleine Z. Bordallo, Captain James B. Pruet Commander of the US Coast, island dignitaries, and the Consul Generals from Japan, Philippines, and South Korea. An international media corps with representatives from Japan, Korea, North America, Russia, Philippines, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China attended to capture the memorial.

The event began at 8:03 a.m., the exact time the Cormoran began to sink a hundred years before, with the chiming of the bell, ringing out seven times in honor of the seven sailors who perished that

day. Their names - Karl Bennerhsansen, Franz Blum, K. Boomerum, Rudolph Penning, Emil Reschke, and Ernes Roose were read out with each toll, followed by a traditional Chamorro blessing performed by Guam's Pa'a Taotao Tano' group. The Chamorro blessing was complimented with a Christian blessing, given by Pale Eric Forbes. Mr. Hasper, Chargé d'Affaires from the German Embassy and Congresswoman Bordallo, each gave remarks to commemorate the over 100-year history of the SMS Cormoran and Guam.

At 8:30 a.m., local deep-sea scuba divers Mitchell Singler, Louis Cabral, Frank Gradyan, Jim Pinson, photographer/diver Chase Weir, and GVB's Director of Global Marketing Pilar Laguaña entered the water and began the descent to 110 feet (34 meters), where the Cormoran lies. The divers carried with them a 12-foot wreath, a centennial commemorative 4-feet x 3-feet banner, and a replica of the Imperial German Navy flag, which were attached to the SMS Cormoran II as peace tribute to her 100 years beneath the sea.

"With my Chamorro and German ethnic background, to carry the Imperial German Navy flag down to the SMS Cormoran II on the morning of its 100th year anniversary was a humbling experience and an extremely special moment. As I approached the ship, I yearned that all could see how magnificent she lies peaceful and so gallant and strong as the flag was rightfully mounted back onto the SMS Cormoran II" stated Ms. Pilar Laguaña.

Divers posed for photos touching the twin shipwrecks of the SMS Cormoran and Tokai Maru, her companion of the last 26 years. The Tokai Maru sunk during WWII and came to lie touching the Cormoran's propeller, creating the only dive site in the world where divers can touch shipwrecks from two different World Wars.

While the divers honored the Cormoran below, aboard the boats, guests listened as local diver and instructor Michael Musto gave a history on the SMS Cormoran II and her place in Guam's history. When the divers returned, the memorial group returned to shore, where preparations were underway at the U.S. Naval Cemetery to honor the seven German sailors who lost their lives 100 years ago. The 100th commemoration of the day the SMS Cormoran II sank is a moment of both pride and dedication to preserve and share information on the history of the SMS Cormoran II and may one not forget the sacrifices made by its crew members. Friendships formed, loyalties tested, lives lost, and a rich part of Guam's history to be remembered.

PHOTO: Dignitaries that attended the SMS Cormoran II 100th anniversary commemoration at sea above the shipwreck sight were, from left to right: Mr. Shinji Urabayashi, Consul General of Japan; Mr. Sangdon Yoon, Head of Mission, Republic of Korea; Mr. Milton Morinaga, GVB Chairman of the Board of Directors; Guam's U.S. Congresswoman Madeleine Z. Bordallo; Mr. Michael Hasper, Chargé d'Affaires, German Embassy in Manila; and Mr. Marciano R. De Borja, Consul General of the Philippines. Photo by Mr. Chase Weir

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