

EARHART'S FAMOUS "281 MESSAGE" CRACKED?

We believe that Earhart's mysterious "281 Message" connects the dots to Mili Atoll. It was Earhart and Noonan's only attempt to transmit in Morse code and has been the *elephant in the room* for the past 76 and half years. The famous message was firmly believed to be from the missing Earhart when it was first intercepted by the U.S. Navy Radio at Wailupe, Oahu. The transmission was heard between 1130 and 1230 GMT and read:

TWO EIGHT ONE NORTH HOWLAND CALL KHAQQ BEYOND NORTH DON'T HOLD WITH
US MUCH LONGER ABOVE WATER SHUT OFF

There is only one part of the message, as stated, that makes any sense at all: *TWO EIGHT ONE NORTH HOWLAND CALL KHAQQ*, the rest has been disregarded as undecipherable since it was first heard on July 5, 1937.

When the message was first received the US Navy sent the *Itasca* and every other ship in the area *281 miles* north of Howland Island to search the open sea. This was before they knew that Amelia couldn't transmit if the *Electra* was floating. She had to be able to run the right engine in order to recharge the battery; otherwise she could only use the radio for a very short time. That meant she *had* to have landed wheels down on land or in very shallow water. Later the *281 degree bearing* from Howland Island was searched, but again all they found was open water. With all this in mind we began to analyze the 281 puzzle and finally came up with the method which we feel was successful.

To give full credit to the radio operators at Wailupe, Oahu they were professional telegraphers who were accustomed to listening to other professional telegraphers. Neither Earhart nor Noonan were experienced key operators. In fact, they knew nothing about it. This is evident because they left their telegraph key back at Miami, Florida.

Morse code, a system of dots (.) and dashes (_), depends on the operator to pause slightly between letters and words so the message makes sense. We, as well as others, think that Amelia and Fred first wrote out their message and then translated it into dots and dashes. Next, they keyed their microphone to "break squelch" with long and short keying. A good idea in light of the circumstances, but *the best laid plans of mice and men*- you know the rest. They were not consistent with their dots and dashes so the operators at Oahu had a very difficult time making heads or tails of their message.

Also note that the transmission was weak and kept fading in and out. These factors made it virtually impossible for the operators to decipher what was being sent. This meant that only part of the message could be heard and much less understood.

For example the following was received: [_ _ . _ _ _ _ _ . . .]

The operators interpreted it to be [_ . . / . / _ . _ _ / _ _ _ / _ . / _ . .] By putting the spaces in that string of dots and dashes the word becomes BEYOND.

We simply rearranged the *spaces* and got this [_ . . / . . _ / . / _ . _ _ / _ _ _ / _ . . _ / . .] This works out to DUE TO QS. Still not clear? Let's add a dot and make it 3 dots after the Q. Then we add some spaces and get DUE TO QS. We admit that you are still at a disadvantage not being able to see the entire message.

How about this:

TWO EIGHT ONE NORTH HOWLAND CALL KHAQQ DUE TO QSY TR 6 _ . . 9M. . 2 E N LATI 6 . / A . .
MUCH LONGER PIT GEA WETTER . . . / IS AM GENER

We have put spaces where we thought the words broke. Still clear as mud? We went through the alphabet (Morse Code that is) and came up with the most logical dots and dashes to fill in the existing letters on the front and back of each set of words.

TWO EIGHT ONE NORTH HOWLAND CALL KHAQQ DUE TO QSY TR 6 **89** M **72E** N LATI 6 **LAS**
MUCH LONGER PIT GEA WETTER **HIS** AM GENER.

Letters and numbers in *green* indicate our best interpolation with what we had to work with.

We selected the letters and numbers in green by a process of elimination. The green **8** was relatively easy. The only number that ends in a dash followed by two dots is 8. The green **7** took more thought. The numbers 5, 6, 7, and 8 all end in two dots. But it is fairly clear that the numbers are followed by an E and then N LATI 6 so the Longitude should be a **7**? In that part of the world Longitudes in the 170's are the only logical choice. The green **L** and **S** were also indicated according to the words that followed. It isn't a real stretch to think that if the missing word was LAST, then the dot before the A would indicate an **L** which ends in a dot and the third letter was an **S** which starts with two dots. The same is true of the green **H** since the word that precedes AM (Morning abbreviation) was most likely **THIS**.

Now we will take some license by filling in the blanks with what, we believe, are the most likely words. TWO EIGHT ONE **MB** NORTH**WEST** HOWLAND CALL KHAQQ DUE TO QSY T/R 6 **889** M **172** E N LATI 6 **RADIO CAN'T LAST** MUCH LONGER **COCKPIT GEAR** WETTER **THIS** AM GENER**ATOR**.....

At this point we filled in more letters and words in *red* to make the message more logical.

The *green* letters are interpolated because we had existing dots or dashes.

The *black* letters are the words that we can be pretty sure of.

We have a few more words about parts of the message that might be unclear to some.

The abbreviation QSY refers to a radio acronym for CHANGE FREQUENCIES.

The fragment that reads DUE TO QSY TR 6 is probably a complete line. They most likely would change from their night frequency of 3105 (the frequency this message was heard on) to the daytime frequency of 6210 at 0600 and 1800 to coincide with night and day.

TR would probably mean T/R which would be TRANSMIT/RECEIVE. In those days there were two separate radios, one to transmit and one to receive so it was necessary to specify which one you would be transmitting on and which one you would be listening on. We really wish we knew what happened to or about the GENERATOR. Possibly she is referring to the dynamotor in the radio that was located under the copilot's seat. From the eye witness testimony the aircraft was lower on the right side and the right wing was separated. When the tides came in, very possibly the copilot's seat was underwater and she was concerned that the water would ruin the radio set. It is also possible that the generator on the right engine was getting wet because of the high tide. If that generator failed they couldn't recharge the batteries. That could be the reason there aren't many transmissions after this one, but that is speculation.

For easy Google Earth access, try using Enajet, an island on Mili Atoll in the Marshall Islands, at 06 degrees 02 minutes 26.40 seconds North Longitude and 171 degrees 59 minutes 01.77 seconds East Latitude. It is *very* close to 172 N and 6 E and Mili Atoll lies 860 miles on a true heading of 295 degrees from the 1937 published position of Howland Island!! Oh! You caught the 295 *degrees* from Howland, did you?

You forgot what we believe the people back in 1937 forgot. When they looked on a 281 degree *true bearing* from Howland the line passes between the islands of Butaritari and Taburoa in the Gilbert Island chain. Those islands were administered by the British Empire and were thoroughly searched by the US Navy. The 281 course is a *magnetic course*; in order to get a *magnetic course* you must subtract the *magnetic deviation* from the *true course* and you arrive at a 284 degree *magnetic bearing*. We have no idea if the abbreviation MC (Magnetic Course) or MB (Magnetic Bearing) was included in the message. A 284 magnetic course from Howland passed about 60 miles south of Mili Atoll and hits Jaluit Atoll in the Marshall Islands on its southern tip 1006 miles from Howland Island.

IF THE MESSAGE HAD BEEN TRANSLATED CORRECTLY IN 1937, THEN THEY WOULD HAVE KNOWN THAT THE ONLY POSSIBLE LOCATION FOR THE DOWNED AVIATORS WAS MILI ATOLL IN THE MARSHALL ISLANDS!

The course and mileage errors can be explained by the fact Noonan had no charts for that far north and his clocks hadn't been calibrated for at least 4 days before he took the readings.

We have always tried to lend equal attention to the Mili Island landing theory and TIGHAR'S Gardner Island landing theory. But in light of this revelation and other mistakes we have caught in TIGHAR's writings we now must withdraw our support of TIGHAR's theory. This message translation puts an entirely new face on the argument.

Please check out our research paper in this section titled "TIGHAR'S Bearings Questionable". It deals with a TIGHAR article by Bob Brandenburg that analyzed the radio bearings taken by the Navy and Pan Am's listening stations on Wake, Midway and Oahu Islands. We feel it is badly flawed.

We welcome an open discussion and look forward to your comments and ideas; yes, even if they differ from ours.