



Charles Darwin Foundation

The slides of Alfred Croneis

- part II -

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Pictures by Alfred Croneis

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Charles Darwin Foundation
Library, Archive and Museum
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Galapagos Islands - Ecuador - 2023

Between late 1941 and 1946, the Galapagos archipelago hosted a U.S. military base. The base was part of a series of regional geostrategic moves to protect the Panama Canal during World War II, and was built following the signing of the *Treaty of Occupation of South Seymour* between Ecuador and the United States on January 24, 1942.

The site was located on Baltra (or South Seymour) Island, a dry, flat islet located north of Santa Cruz Island, across the Itabaca Channel. The native flora and fauna were virtually wiped out, and above their remains were built huts, sheds and other buildings; a harbour for large ships; and the first airport in the territory — now the main arrival point to the Galapagos.

The Americans did not limit their activities to Baltra. They built an aqueduct from El Junco to El Progreso, on San Cristobal Island, to supply drinking water; set up radar stations at Albemarle Point and Webb Cove on Isabela Island and on the south side of Española Island; and located several machine gun nests on the north coast of Santa Cruz Island.

Their presence was recorded in documents now preserved in U.S. military archives, and in the memories, stories and photos of the soldiers who were stationed at *The Rock* — their nickname for that isolated place.

A number of these photos, belonging to Dr. Alfred Croneis and taken in 1943, were donated by his widow, Catherine, to the CDF Library, Archives & Museum. Croneis appears to have served as a medic at the base on Baltra. His collection includes cardboard-framed slides, and the only metal-framed slides preserved in the CDF archive: frames sadly remembered for mismatching projectors with their excessive weight and thickness.

Among the contents are black & white images of life at the base, especially next to large airplanes, and color photos showing aerial views of different parts of the islands (taken from those same planes), and visits by troops to other parts of the archipelago.

The images are significant for showing the social interactions of the troops stationed on Baltra, their aerial reconnaissance work, and their attempts to get to know and relate to the territory and its population, beyond the narrow limits imposed by military life and the local geography itself.

Included herein are all black & white photographs from the Croneis collection, generally associated with activities at the military base. Unfortunately, none of Croneis' slides contains annotated information in the frames. Therefore, one of the research tasks that remains open for the future is to identify all of the characters captured in the snapshots.

The series includes one of the few existing images of the diplomas of the "Order of Baltra". *Ye Ancient and Honorable Order of Goat Whiskered Galapagons* (YAAHOOGWG) was a humorous "Order" created among the military stationed on Baltra. After a comical ceremony (which, as recalled by some survivors, included the ritual consumption of alcohol), its new members were issued a diploma. The "Order" was among the most vivid memories among the last survivors of the Baltra troops, or so their conversations on some old Internet forums indicate. Humor was definitely an essential element to survive the experience of living in the desolate *The Rock*.



23.caja.0125

Croneis, Alfred. [*American soldiers*]. [Slide]. Baltra :
Alfred Croneis, 1943. [N.d.] : col. ill. : 3 x 5 cm. DDC 986.
Well preserved.



To All Who Shall See These Presents
Greetings:

That **DR. CRONEIS**

being of good health and sound mind, and of his own volition, with practically no dress, did pass a period of at least three suns, without the solace of the sex known as women, subjected to the vicissitudes of fickle nature, in constant danger of the most treacherous of flora, the most loathsome of fauna, snagging his fundament on cactaceae, battering his femur on rubble, in close communion with the hermits of these parts.

In so doing does qualify for the fraternity of ~

Ye Ancient and Honorable Order of ~
Goat Whiskered Galapagons

He will be rudely treated accordingly, publicly shunned, and avoided from this day hence

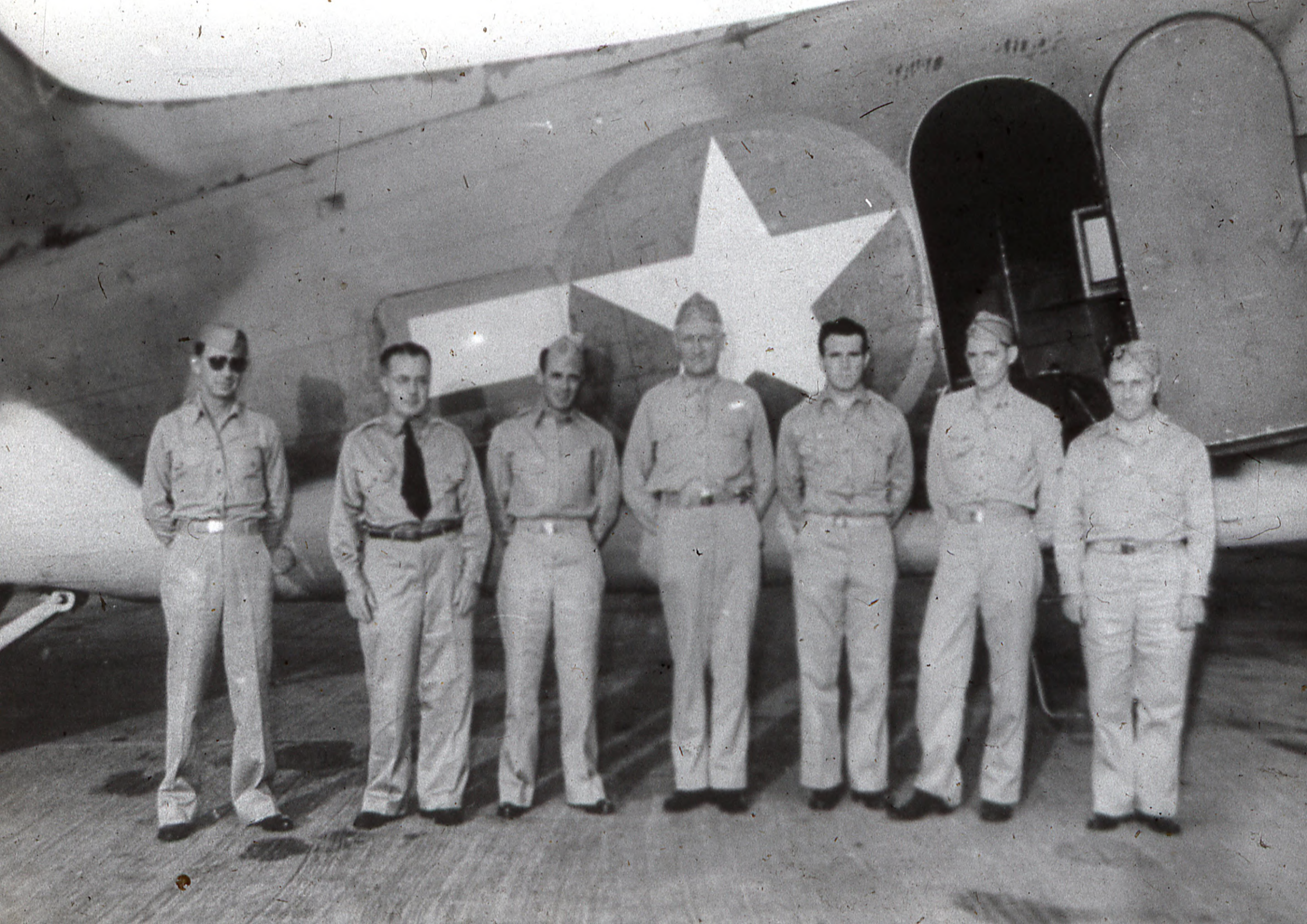
Done by my hand this 10th day of OCT 1943

(Faint signature)
Keeper of the herd

Blouffiel

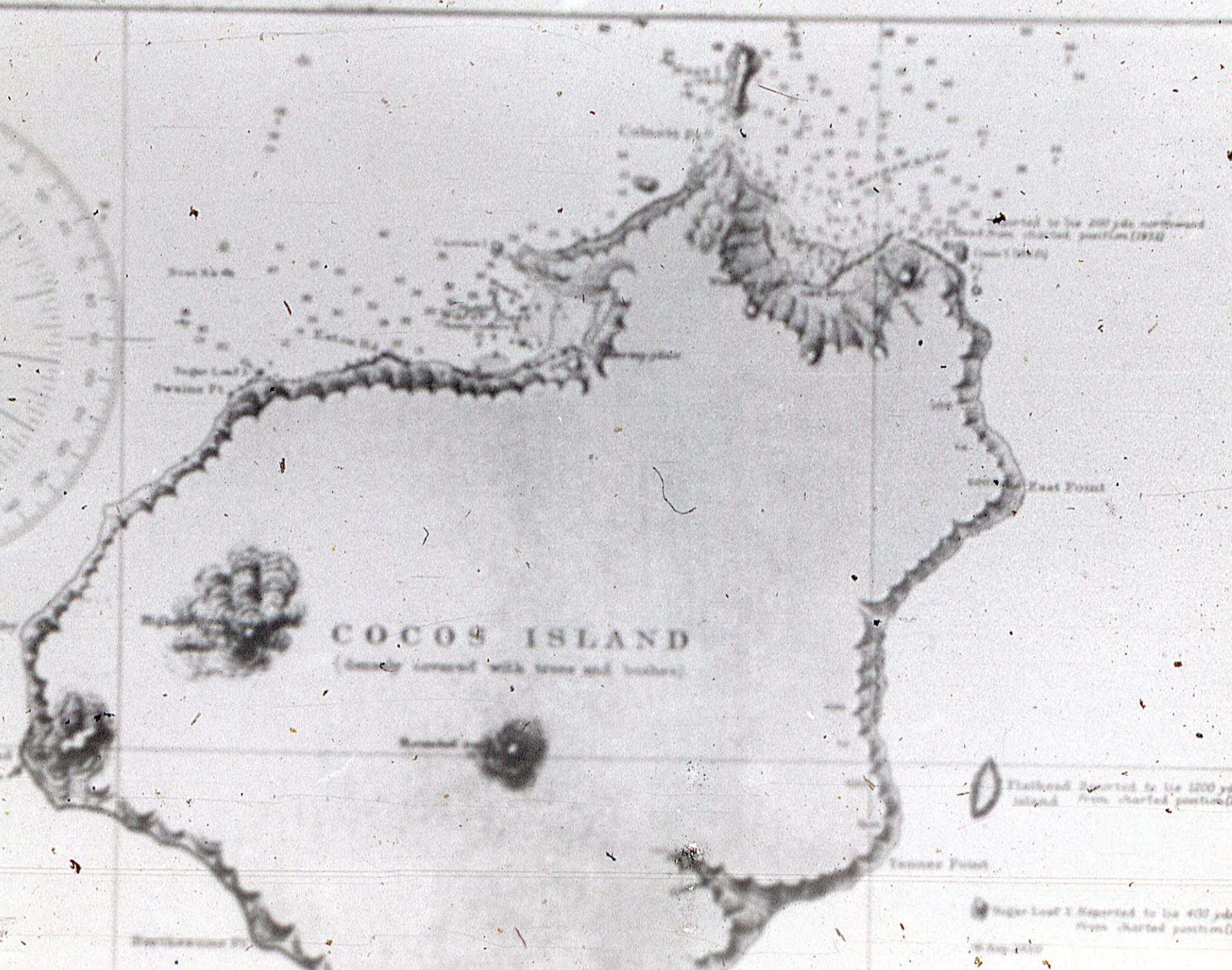
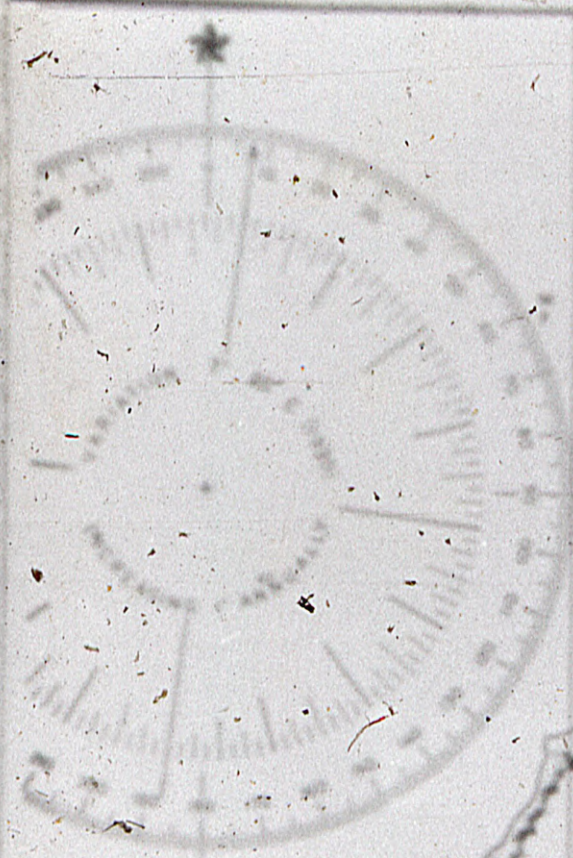
23.19.0117

Croneis, Alfred. [*Diploma of the Order of Baltra*].
[Slide]. Baltra : Alfred Croneis, 1943. [N.d.] : col. ill. : 3 x 5
cm. DDC986. Well preserved.



23.caja.0127

Croneis, Alfred. [*American soldiers*]. [Slide]. Baltra :
Alfred Croneis, 1943. [N.d.] : col. ill. : 3 x 5 cm. DDC 986.
Well preserved.



COCOS ISLAND
(mostly covered with trees and bushes)

Charted to be 200 yds northward
from charted position (1832)

East Point

Charted to be 1200 yds
inland from charted position (1832)

Reported to be 400 yds
from charted position (1832)

1850

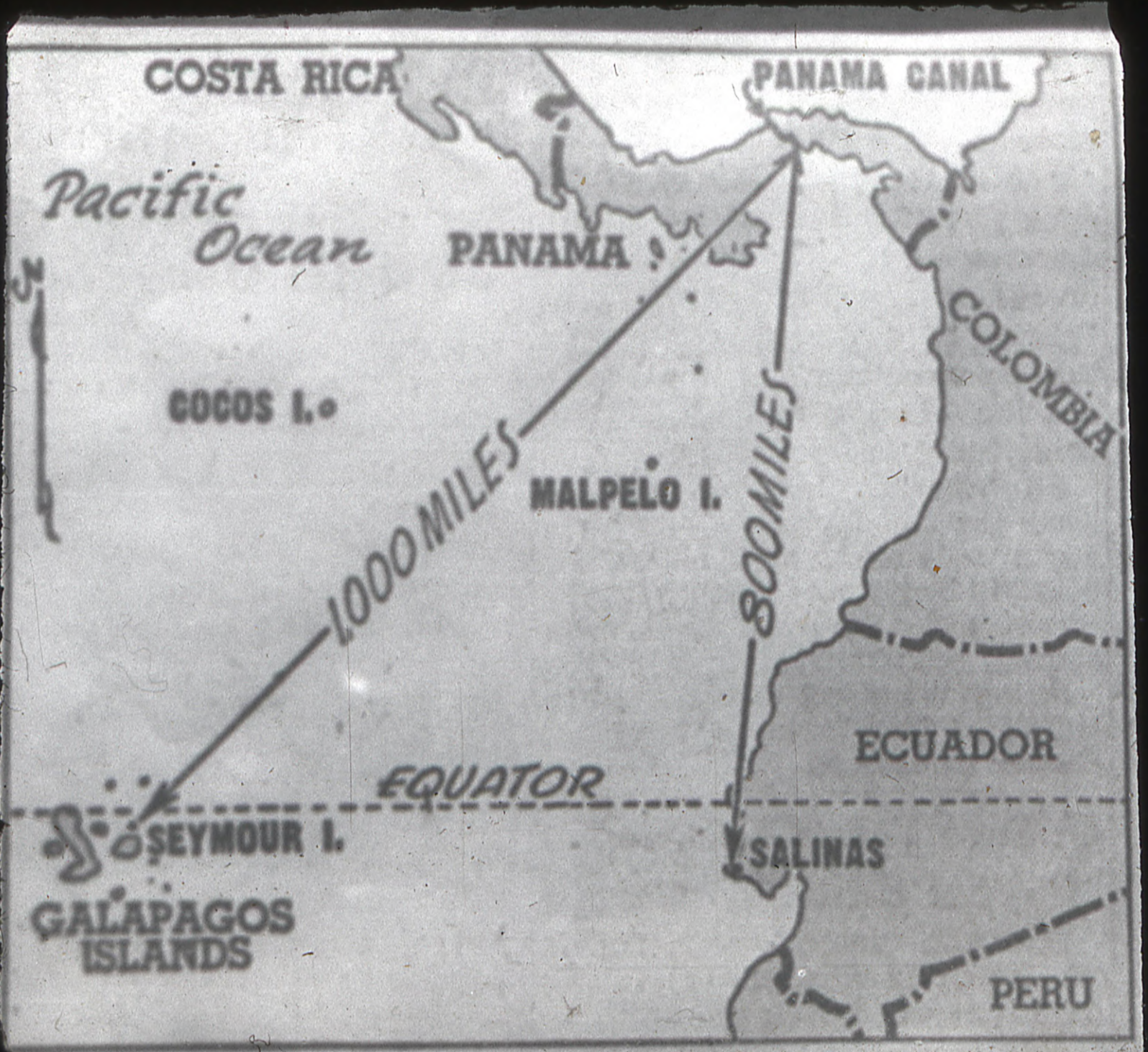
23.caja.0126

Croneis, Alfred. [*Map of Cocos Island*]. [Slide]. Baltra :
Alfred Croneis, 1943. [N.d.] : col. ill. : 3 x 5 cm. DDC 986.
Well preserved.



23.caja.0128

Croneis, Alfred. [*American soldiers*]. [Slide]. Baltra :
Alfred Croneis, 1943. [N.d.] : col. ill. : 3 x 5 cm. DDC 986.
Well preserved.



COSTA RICA

PANAMA CANAL

Pacific Ocean

PANAMA

COLOMBIA

COCOS I.

MALPEÑO I.

1000 MILES

800 MILES

ECUADOR

EQUATOR

SEYMOUR I.

SALINAS

GALAPAGOS ISLANDS

PERU

23.caja.0130

Croneis, Alfred. [*Map of the Eastern Pacific area*].
[Slide]. Baltra : Alfred Croneis, 1943. [N.d.] : col. ill. : 3 x 5
cm. DDC986. Well preserved.



23.caja.0129

Croneis, Alfred. [*American soldiers on a plane*]. [Slide].
Baltra : Alfred Croneis, 1943. [N.d.] : col. ill. : 3 x 5 cm.
DDC986. Well preserved.



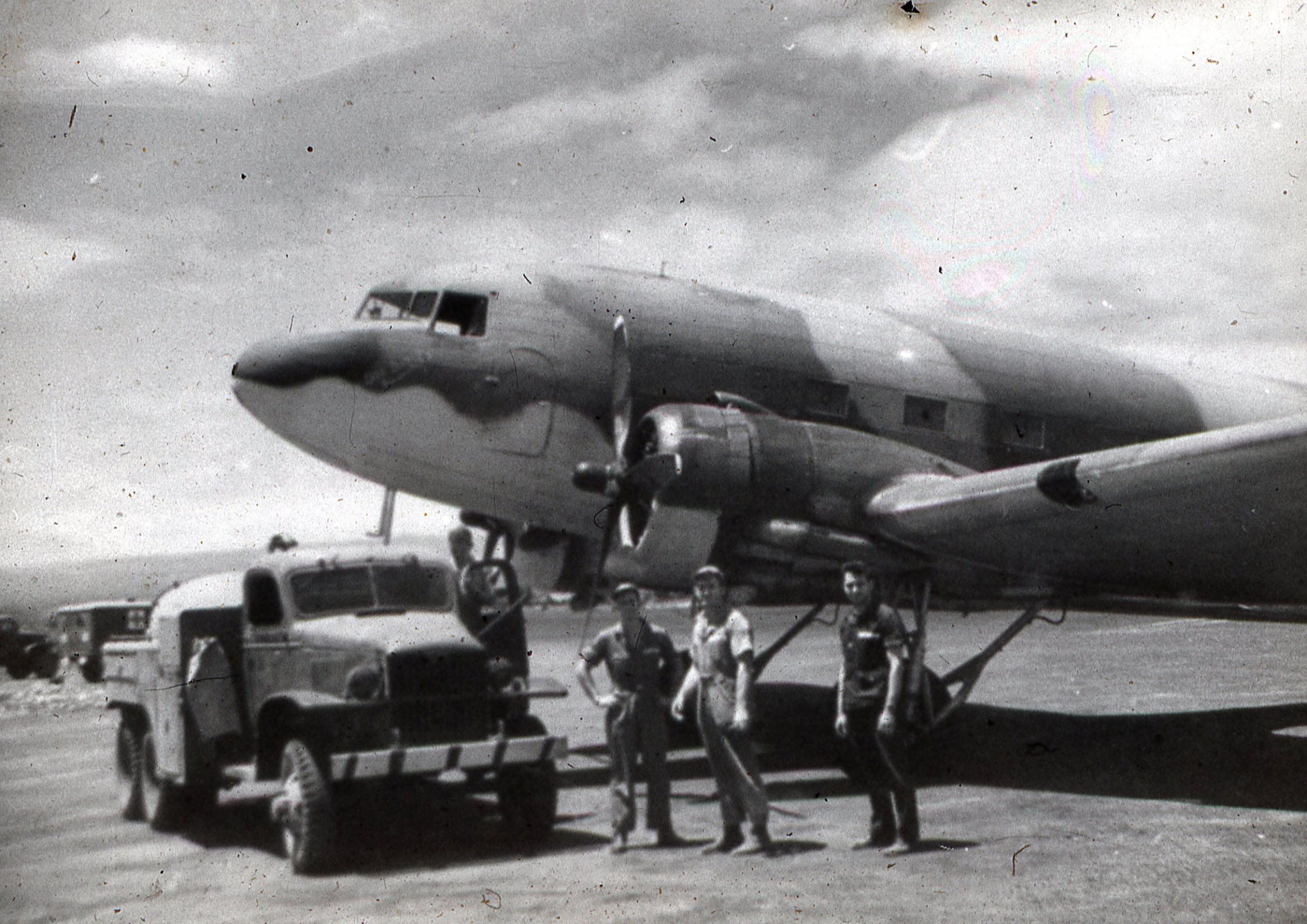
23.caja.0131 + 23.caja.0132

Croneis, Alfred. [*American soldiers*]. [Slide]. Baltra :
Alfred Croneis, 1943. [N.d.] : col. ill. : 3 x 5 cm. DDC 986.
Well preserved.



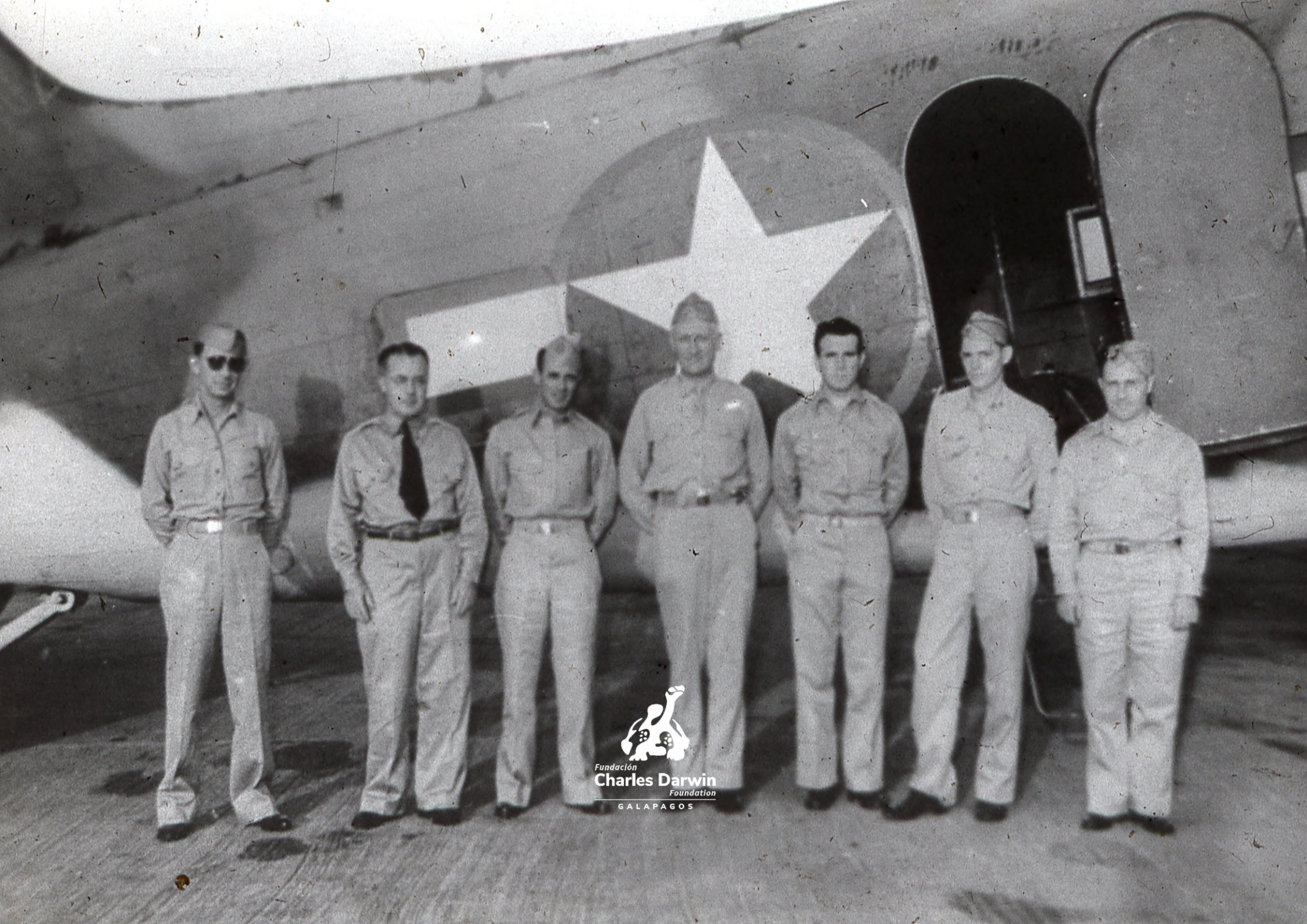
23.caja.0133

Croneis, Alfred. [*Map of the Galapagos Islands*]. [Slide].
Baltra : Alfred Croneis, 1943. [N.d.] : col. ill. : 3 x 5 cm.
DDC986. Well preserved.



23.caja.0134

Croneis, Alfred. [*American soldiers*]. [Slide]. Baltra :
Alfred Croneis, 1943. [N.d.] : col. ill. : 3 x 5 cm. DDC 986.
Well preserved.



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