



**MARITIME PATROL AND RECONNAISSANCE FORCE  
HALL OF HONOR**

**LCDR William Tepuni, USNR**

United States Navy

Born on 30 October 1915 in San Francisco, CA, the younger of two sons to immigrant parents, William "Bill" Tepuni was commissioned an Ensign in the Naval Reserve in June 1940. In the autumn of 1941, his squadron, VP-82, transitioned to the Lockheed PBO-1 Hudson. This decision made VP-82 the Navy's first land-based patrol squadron. On 1 March, Ensign Tepuni and his crew spotted *U-656* on the surface roughly 30 nm south of Cape Race, Newfoundland, deployed both MK XVII depth bombs and scored the US Navy's first U-boat kill of World War II. For this action, Tepuni was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

In April 1943, LT Bill Tepuni was transferred to the staff of Commander, Anti-Submarine Development, Atlantic (ASDEVLANT) as a test pilot. During his eight-month tenure with ASDEVLANT, he worked to perfect airborne ASW tactics and improved employment of depth charges and the introduction of 3-inch solid head rockets to the maritime patrol arsenal. Joining VB-128 that fall, LT Tepuni trained the aircrews in the use of these rockets as a stand-off weapon against surfaced U-boats armed with 20- and 37-mm anti-aircraft guns. In September 1944, the squadron (re-designated VPB-128) with LCDR Tepuni now serving as the squadron executive officer was transferred to the Pacific Theater. Flying reconnaissance patrols and bombing missions in preparation for the invasion of the Philippines, the squadron located a Japanese mini-submarine which would have to be neutralized prior to the invasion. On the second strike he led to destroy this threat, LCDR Tepuni's aircraft was shot down by Japanese anti-aircraft artillery, perishing along with his entire crew.

LCDR William Tepuni, USNR credited with the first U-boat sunk by US forces during WWII was qualified in multiple variants of four different maritime patrol aircraft types – both flying boats and land-based. His awards included the Distinguished Flying Cross (two Gold Stars), Air Medal (three Gold Stars), the Purple Heart (posthumous) and the Soviet Order of Glory, 3rd Class for the sinking of *U-656*. After the war, he was interred at the Manila American Cemetery, administered by the American Battle Monuments Commission. VP-30 dedicated Building 846 at NAS Jacksonville as Tepuni Hall in his honor.