

INFORMATION PAPER

ATMH-FPS
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SUBJECT: Filipino Military Service in World War II

1. **Purpose:** To provide a summary of Filipino military service in World War II.

2. **Categories of Filipino military service in World War II.**

- Members of the Philippine Army (PA) and the Philippine Constabulary (PC) called into the service of the U.S. Armed Forces in accordance with President Roosevelt's Military Order of 26 July 1941 and released from such service in accordance with President Truman's Military Order of 29 June 1946.
- Filipino members of the Philippine Scouts raised in accordance with pre-war Army regulations.
- Philippine nationals who served in the Army of the United States (AUS).
- Members of guerrilla forces formed after Japan's invasion of the Philippines.

3. **Philippine Army.**

The Philippine Commonwealth Act No.1 in 1935 established the Philippine Army. The PA consisted of a small full-time force and a large reserve force. The already existing Philippine Constabulary, a national para-military police force, was part of the PA from 1935 to 1938. Starting in July 1941, when the PC was called into the service of the U.S. armed forces, the PA resumed control of the Constabulary.

The Philippine Army was organized into arms and service paralleling those of the U.S. Army. Similarly, PA tactical units were organized along U.S. Army lines, albeit on a much smaller scale. For example, a PA triangular infantry divisions in 1941 was authorized some 7,500 troops as opposed to over 15,000 in a U.S. Army division. Both American and Filipino planners intended that the PA's

equipment would be modernized by 1946. By the time Japan invaded the Philippines in 1941, however, the modernization program had made little progress and all PA units were seriously deficient in arms and equipment.

All male Filipinos between the ages of 21 and 50 were liable for military service. Starting in January 1937, two classes of 20,000 men each year were inducted for a period of active duty basic training, after which the men reverted to reserve status. Some PC officers transferred to the PA, as did some Filipino junior officers and senior noncommissioned officers from the U.S. Army's Philippine Scouts. These men usually rose rapidly to senior officer rank in the PA. Obtaining qualified junior officers and noncommissioned officers for the PA remained a constant problem. The most promising men in each basic training class were selected for an additional noncommissioned officer training course. The best men in this course were sent to officer candidate school. Additional lieutenants were commissioned from officer training programs at colleges and universities. These brief training courses and the absence of active duty experience for reservists produced a generally low level of leadership in PA units.

Mobilization of the PA's ten reserve divisions began in September 1941 with one infantry regiment and cadres from the other units in each division. Early in November, the second infantry regiment of each division was called up, joined before the end of the month by the division headquarters and the service elements. When war came, however, not a single division had been completely mobilized and not one was at full strength. As of 18 December 1941, the active strength of the Philippine Army was approximately 120,000 officers and enlisted men. Roughly 76,750 of these troops were on Luzon; the other 43,250 were stationed on the islands to the south of Luzon.

Under the new training program implemented by U.S. Army Forces in the Far East (USAFFE) in 1941, each mobilized PA reserve division was assigned about forty U.S. Army officers and twenty American or Philippine Scouts noncommissioned officers who served as instructors. The officers were usually attached to division and regimental staffs; the enlisted men served in battalions and companies. Training facilities and equipment were almost nonexistent.

There was a serious shortage in almost all types of equipment. The army's commissioned and noncommissioned officer leadership deficiencies remained a constant problem. As the war progressed it became necessary to replace many of the Filipino regimental and battalion commanders with American officers, and in other units an American instructor was the de facto commander.

After the withdrawal to Bataan in January 1942, there were nine PA divisions deployed on the peninsula, while other Philippine Army personnel were in non-divisional units. Shortages of food and clothing created serious health problems; malnutrition, vitamin deficiency, malaria, dysentery, and dengue fever affected both PA and U.S. units equally. By the time the final battle began in April, almost all PA and U.S. units were down to less than 25 percent of combat efficiency. That month, USAFFE strength on Bataan stood at approximately 78,100. While exact figures are not available (and never will be), this total may reasonably be broken down as 60,000 from the PA, 6,300 from the Philippine Scouts, and 11,800 Americans.

With the preponderant strength on Bataan, the Philippine Army undertook the preponderant burden of the fighting and suffered the preponderant number of casualties, both from combat and disease. This is not to say that all the undertrained and underequipped PA units fought well. But in general PA units learned in combat and improved their performance within the limits imposed by materiel shortages and declining health. Filipino and American forces on Bataan surrendered on 9 April 1942. Little sustained fighting took place in the southern islands except on Mindanao. The last formal surrenders of USAFFE forces in the Philippines occurred on 9 June 1942.

Following the surrender of the forces defending Bataan, the Imperial Japanese Army singled out Filipino soldiers for abuse. The Japanese were enraged that the Philippine Army's stand had cost them far more time and casualties than planned. On 12 April, Japanese soldiers murdered about 400 Filipino prisoners of war from the 91st PA Division. This atrocity was followed by the notorious death march from Bataan. During the march, Japanese brutality toward Filipino prisoners far exceeded that meted out to American prisoners. Of

some 60,000 Filipinos (including members of the Philippine Scouts) who began the death march, between 5,000 and 10,000 died during the trek. Of some 9,925 Americans in the march, approximately 625 died. At the Camp O'Donnell prisoner-of-war compound, the Japanese separated the Filipinos and the Americans, and made every effort to prevent contact between the two groups. Again the treatment differed. In the first six or seven weeks at the camp some 1,600 Americans died, while at least ten times that number of Filipinos succumbed to deliberate brutality, starvation, and disease. Finding that their hostility toward Filipino prisoners served largely to alienate all Filipinos, the Japanese occupation authorities later reversed their attitude and released the Filipino prisoners. For this purpose the Japanese organized a rehabilitation and indoctrination program, but program generally failed and many released Filipino soldiers either overtly or covertly supported resistance to the Japanese.

4. Philippine Scouts.

The Philippine Scouts had been part of the U.S. Army's regular establishment since 1901, although Filipino enlisted men were paid less than their American enlisted counterparts. By the start of the war, the Scouts fielded almost all units of the Philippine Division, as well as an infantry regiment, a cavalry regiment, two field artillery regiments, two coast artillery regiments, and several service units. Nearly all officers in the Scouts were Americans. Filipino strength of the Scouts was about 35 officers and nearly 12,000 enlisted men in December 1941. As units of the U.S. Army, the Scouts were well trained, well equipped, and well led. Their performance during the campaign was generally outstanding. The Japanese, as they did with members of the Philippine Army, brutally treated Scouts captured in 1942 before eventually releasing the survivors.

The War Department in July 1942 authorized General Douglas MacArthur to discharge enlisted men of the Scouts "for the convenience of the government" and immediately reenlist them in the same grade in the Army of the United States. (The AUS consisted of individuals serving in the Army during the war who were not members of the Regular Army, the Army National Guard, or the Army

Reserve.) Initially, this authority applied to Scouts who were out of the Philippines when USAFFE surrendered or who subsequently escaped from the Philippines. The intent of this authority was to permit these men to draw sufficient pay--the AUS scale--to live in a decent style outside the Philippines. Upon the return of his forces to the Philippines in 1944, MacArthur used this authority to transfer surviving enlisted Scouts into the AUS. The reasons for this decision are not clear from readily available sources, but they probably involved MacArthur's desire to have the recovered enlisted Scouts paid on the AUS scale instead of the prewar Scouts scale. MacArthur asked the War Department in August 1945 for authority to continue enlisting recovered Scouts enlisted men into the AUS until 31 December 1945 because many such men were still coming in from remote areas of the islands. The War Department approved this request. By the end of this program approximately 6,700 former Scouts had enlisted in the AUS.

5. Army of the United States Filipino Units.

On 21 December 1941 Congress amended the Selective Service and Training Act to permit enlistment of non-citizens. Because the U.S. Army did not segregate Filipinos, they could serve as individual soldiers in a wide variety of units. During 1942-1943, the Army organized units comprised of men from Axis occupied areas—the Philippines, Norway, Greece, and Austria—for operations in those nations. In April 1942 the War Department activated the 1st Filipino Battalion in California as a separate infantry battalion. The number of Filipino citizens and Americans of Filipino ancestry who volunteered for the battalion far exceeded its authorized strength, so the Army in July 1942 disbanded it and used its soldiers as the nucleus for the 1st Filipino Regiment. Also joining the unit were members of the Philippine Army and the Philippine Scouts who had been in the continental United States when USAFFE surrendered. The 2d Filipino Regiment was activated in November 1942.

In December 1942, General MacArthur's General Headquarters Southwest Pacific Area (GHQ SWPA) began dispatching ad hoc teams of Filipino and American personnel to make contact with guerrilla organizations in the

Philippines. To provide a dedicated organization for this mission, GHQ SWPA activated the 5217th Reconnaissance Battalion at Camp Tabragalba, Australia, in October 1943. Most of the battalion's troops were volunteers from the 1st and 2d Filipino Regiments. The battalion trained teams for this mission and managed radio communications with them once they were in the Philippines. The teams assessed guerrilla groups, arranged for delivery of supplies to them, aided them in their intelligence gathering efforts, and passed the collected intelligence to MacArthur's headquarters using the team's radio. In November 1944, the battalion was redesignated as the 1st Reconnaissance Battalion, Special. By April 1945, with much of the Philippines liberated, many of the battalion's men were assigned to civil affairs duties. In August 1945 the battalion was inactivated.

By early 1944, after the levy for the 5217th Reconnaissance Battalion, it became clear that there were not enough Filipino soldiers physically fit for combat service to maintain two infantry regiments at full strength. Some soldiers from the 2d Filipino Regiment were transferred into the 1st Filipino Regiment to bring it up to strength before deployment. In March 1944, the 2d Filipino Regiment was disbanded and the regiment's 1st Battalion was concurrently reorganized and redesignated as the 2d Filipino Battalion (Separate).

The 1st Filipino Regiment arrived in New Guinea in April 1944. The 2d Filipino Battalion (Separate) arrived in New Guinea in July 1944. Eight Philippine Civil Affairs Units were activated in New Guinea in 1944 using men transferred from the two Filipino infantry units. While in New Guinea, the 1st Filipino Regiment provided area security and continued training. It moved to the Philippines in February 1945. There it participated in the reduction of remnant enemy forces on Leyte and in the liberation of Samar. The regiment returned to the United States in March 1946 and inactivated on 10 April 1946. The 2d Filipino Battalion (Separate) moved to the Philippines in 1945 where it supported the Philippine Civil Affairs Units. The battalion inactivated in Manila on 21 December 1945.

6. Filipino Guerrilla Units.

The guerrilla resistance movement in the Philippines commenced even before USAFFE surrendered. On Luzon, guerrilla activity began with Filipino and American soldiers cut off by the rapid advance of the Japanese invaders to Bataan. In the southern islands, where the Japanese initially landed only light forces, preparations for guerrilla warfare were well along when the surrender came. At the time of the surrender, most American troops became prisoners, but a number either refused to comply with the surrender order, escaped during the Bataan Death March, or later escaped from prisoner camps. Officers and enlisted men from the PA did likewise and formed the nucleus of many guerrilla organizations. A substantial number of additional men came to the guerrillas when the Japanese reversed their policy of brutal treatment of Filipino prisoners and released the survivors.

Initially, most of the scattered and isolated groups operated for months on their own without contact or direction from GHQ SWPA due to lack of radio equipment, the absence of a centralized guerrilla command structure, the difficult terrain, and the extreme distances from Australia. During much of 1942 and early 1943 organizational and supply problems, coupled with overly-aggressive moves against Japanese forces, hampered the development of an effective guerrilla movement. The too-overt guerrilla operations brought down Japanese retaliation that resulted in the disorganization of some guerrilla units.

As MacArthur's headquarters became aware of the guerrillas, it established a recognition policy, which it used as leverage to organize their activities. Beginning in July 1942, GHQ SWPA gradually established contact with some of these groups and began to officially recognize those that accepted the authority of and followed the orders from GHQ SWPA. With recognition came the promise of pay and benefits, "in due course of time," as well as military equipment and supplies once GHQ SWPA could establish lines of communication to the guerrillas. In October 1942, GHQ SWPA created a Philippine Subsection of the Allied Intelligence Bureau to monitor events in the islands, form intelligence nets, open channels of communication with resistance and guerrilla groups, provide escape routes, and organize propaganda and subversive activities on the

islands. General MacArthur's ambitions, however, went beyond intelligence gathering. He wanted an army in being that would be ready, when the time came, to rise and assist Allied forces in liberating the Philippines. GHQ SWPA accordingly instructed the guerrillas to reorganize themselves along the lines of military units and districts of the pre-war Philippine Army under commanders appointed by MacArthur. In February 1943, MacArthur re-established USAFFE as an administrative headquarters and GHQ SWPA designated recognized guerrillas as USAFFE forces.

For the moment, however, MacArthur wished to restrain the guerrillas. He instructed them to avoid offensive action against Japanese forces. Instead, they were to concentrate on reorganization, intelligence gathering, and reporting on Japanese military capabilities. Some guerrilla group leaders followed these instructions while others, for a variety of reasons, chose to go their own way, often fighting among themselves as well as engaging Japanese forces. GHQ SWPA considered these unauthorized activities as counterproductive because they provoked Japanese reprisals and caused unnecessary suffering for Filipino civilians. GHQ SWPA withheld recognition of these independent guerrilla groups.

The Filipino population provided the guerrillas significant financial and material support. Popular support also allowed the guerrillas to obtain intelligence on Japanese forces and movements while denying the Japanese the same intelligence on the guerrillas. Counter-guerrilla expeditions were sometimes successful in disrupting or even destroying guerrilla groups, but Japanese occupation forces were too small to effectively control all of the Philippines.

When U.S. forces landed on Leyte in October 1944, USAFFE assumed direction of guerrilla recognition policy and placed recognized guerrilla units under the operational control of the Sixth Army. Independent guerrilla groups also lent their services to advancing U.S. forces, and some Sixth Army units, contrary to USAFFE policy, tried to extend recognition to these independent groups. Philippine Commonwealth President Sergio Osmena also complicated matters by issuing executive orders seeming to promise recognition for all guerrillas that joined in the liberation. In November 1944, USAFFE created the

Philippine Army Section in its headquarters to handle the mission of reorganizing and equipping recognized guerrilla units to become units of a new Philippine Army. MacArthur envisioned its missions as mopping up remaining Japanese forces on the islands and providing security for the country, thereby freeing American combat forces for the invasion of Japan. The USAFFE mission of fielding PA units became more important in the winter of 1944-45, when the War Department diverted combat units and replacements intended for the Pacific to Europe to replace American combat casualties. In late December, Filipino guerrilla units working with American forces came under the operational control of Eighth Army when it assumed responsibility for operations against the remaining Japanese on the southern islands.

The guerrilla recognition program expanded in scope and size following the Sixth Army landings on Luzon in January 1945. Filipino guerrilla forces in contact with GHQ SWPA had already begun large-scale military operations against Japanese forces prior to the U.S. landings. They subsequently came under Sixth Army's operational control during the Luzon campaign. Numerous independent guerrilla groups on Luzon also assisted U.S. forces.

In late February, USAFFE developed a formal process to recognize previously independent guerrilla units and authorized the Sixth and Eighth Armies to recommend recognition for units operating with their forces. In April, USAFFE established a Training Group to recover former USAFFE personnel, mostly Filipino soldiers, and to assist in organizing and training the Philippine Army. In May, USAFFE formed a Guerrilla Affairs Section under this group to process recognized guerrillas into the Philippine Army and to evaluate independent guerrilla forces for recognition. When MacArthur gained administrative as well as operational control of most of the U.S. Army forces in the Pacific in May 1945, GHQ SWPA became Army Forces in the Pacific (AFPAC) and assumed direction of recognition policy. In June, the Training Group transferred to this new headquarters. The Army Forces in the Western Pacific, a subordinate command of AFPAC, assumed some of the functions of the inactivated USAFFE. Sixth Army, preparing for the invasion of Japan, transferred operational control of its

attached guerrilla units on Luzon to Eighth Army in July. These units were still helping conduct mop up operations when Japan surrendered in August.

On 28 October 1944, President Osmena issued Executive Order No. 21, designating all "recognized" guerrilla units and personnel as part of the PA. By this time, MacArthur's recognition program was already well along and the pace of such recognitions speeded as American forces gained control over more areas of the Philippines. As the campaign progressed, MacArthur called into the service of the U.S. Armed Forces most (if not all) of the recognized guerrilla units, in accordance with the continuing authority of President Roosevelt's Military Order of 26 July 1941. Thus, by President Osmena's Executive Order No. 21 and MacArthur's directives, the bulk of the guerrilla organizations became organic elements of the PA in the service of the U.S. Armed Forces. Many of the guerrilla organizations retained their guerrilla designations until disbanded; others were redesignated as elements of the rebuilding PA.

In addition to the effective combat roles played during the liberation of the Philippines by some guerrilla forces, the guerrilla forces called into the PA and the service of the U.S. Armed Forces effected huge savings of U.S. Army manpower during the campaign. Such units furnished guides; supplemented the efforts of U.S. Army supply agencies, provided guards for roads, bridges, and all types of U.S. Army installations; and formed the nucleus of the Military Police Command, established to maintain law and order during the transition period to Philippine independence in 1946. Without the combat and support contributions of the guerrilla forces, both before and after the re-entry of U.S. forces into the Philippines in October 1944, the task of liberating the islands would have been vastly more costly to the United States in terms of time, money, manpower, and casualties.

In early October 1945, AFPAC established criteria for guerrilla unit recognition using earlier USAFFE policies. AFPAC intended the so-called Five Points as a guide for determining recognition, rather than as absolute rules. It realized that few previously recognized guerrilla units would have met all requirements. These basic requirements were: 1) Maintaining the unit in the field and materially

contributing to the defeat of the Japanese; 2) Establishing a definite military organization with unit records; 3) Providing adequate control by the unit commander; 4) Sustaining continuity of activity since formation; and 5) Keeping up full time efforts by members. This policy remained in effect through the end of the recognition program in June 1948 and it guided all decisions on recognition. The guerrilla recognition program ended on 30 June 1948, the date established by Congress for final liquidation of U.S. funds appropriated in 1946 to support the Philippine Army. A total of 1,277,767 claims for recognition of guerrilla service were received and 260,715 were approved.

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