



## **My Drift**

**Title: WWII Filipino Soldiers**

**Written By: Jerry D. Petersen**

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### **America's Broken Promises to the Philippines**

During World War II, more than 260,000 Filipino and Filipino American soldiers answered President Franklin D. Roosevelt's call to defend the United States and the Philippines during World War II. The bravery and sacrifice of these soldiers were integral to American victory in the Pacific. Instead of being recognized for their wartime service and sacrifice, the Rescission Act of 1947 revoked the US nationality status of 200,000 Filipino WWII soldiers and their promised compensation.



**No Recognitions**



**No US Citizenship Rights**



**No Veterans Benefits**

### **The long-awaited recognition for Filipino Veterans of World War II and their families**

Despite the injustice, discrimination, and sense of inferiority they suffered after the war, these veterans remained proud, steadfast, and loyal to the United States. In May 2013, the Filipino Veterans Recognition and Education Project (FilVetREP) was formed to create a national campaign to raise awareness through academic research and public education and obtain national recognition of the Filipino-American WWII soldiers for their wartime service to the United States and Philippines from July 1941 to December 1946.

*I will discuss some of FilVetREP's successful efforts later in this article but first let's learn or refresh our memories about what happened in the Philippines during World War II.*

### **A Part of Philippine History (1898–1946) known as the “American Period”**

The history of the Philippines from 1898 to 1946 began with the outbreak of the Spanish–American War in April 1898, when the Philippines was still a colony of the Spanish East Indies, and concluded when the United States formally recognized the independence of the Republic of the Philippines on July 4, 1946.

With the signing of the Treaty of Paris on December 10, 1898, Spain ceded the Philippines to the United States. The Philippines remained a US territory until November 15, 1935, when it became the Commonwealth of the Philippines, intended to be a transitional government in preparation for the country's full achievement of independence in 1946.

### **WWII Events Leading up to the Japanese Attack on the Philippines**

In September 1940, Nazi Germany, Kingdom of Italy, and Empire of Japan had allied under the Tripartite Coalition as the Axis powers. The United States banned the shipment of aviation gasoline to Japan in July 1940, and by 1941 shipments of scrap iron, steel, gasoline, and other materials had practically ceased.

Japan increased pressure on the French and Dutch colonies in Southeast Asia to cooperate in economic matters. Japanese forces occupied the naval and air bases of southern French Indochina on 22 July 1941. The Philippines was almost surrounded. General George C. Marshall, US Army Chief of Staff, stated, "Adequate reinforcements for the Philippines, at this time, would have left the United States in a position of great peril."

A campaign for independence from the US which had been ongoing since 1919 resulted on 17 January 1933 in the passage by the US Congress of the Hare–Hawes–Cutting Act over the veto of President Herbert Hoover. The law promised Philippine independence after 10 years but reserved several military and naval bases for the United States. The impact of this Act on the future defense of the Philippines with the establishment was to prove disastrous. During the 10-year transition period, the Philippine Constabulary was vested with an ever-increasing responsibility for defending the borders of the Philippines. The forces of the US Army were greatly reduced and settled at around 10,000 military personnel.

On 25 July 1941, US Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson requested that US President Franklin D. Roosevelt issue orders calling the military forces of the Commonwealth into active service for the United States. Stimson explained,

**"All practical steps should be taken to increase the defensive strength of the Philippine Islands."**

**The following day President Roosevelt froze all Japanese assets within the United States and issued orders to absorb the forces of the Philippine Army. That same day the War Department created the US Army Forces in the Far East (USAFFE) Command, with jurisdiction over the Philippine Department and the military forces of the Commonwealth. At the same time General Douglas MacArthur was recalled to active duty and designated the commander of the USAFFE.**

**MacArthur ordered the mobilization of the Philippine Army beginning on 1 September 1941. Elements of 10 Filipino reserve divisions were to be called into the service of the United States Army by 15 December. These Battalions were not completely organized by the time of the Japanese invasion on 8 December. However, a force of a hundred thousand or more Filipinos was raised.**

**The Japanese viewed all the lands of Asia to be the rightful property of the Imperial Japanese Government and the Emperor. The seizures of Korea, China, and parts of Soviet Union, which had begun at the turn of the 20th century, had been taking an upswing. The Japanese had been kept from realizing their goal of unifying or dominating the Asian lands by the presence of foreign military forces in the Philippines (United States), Hong Kong, Malaysia (United Kingdom) and the Dutch East Indies. Japan had hoped that they could strike fast and hold off reinforcements long enough to broker a peace accord from a position of strength.**

**Central to the Japanese goals was the taking of all Asian lands. To be successful, US, UK, and Dutch forces were to be attacked simultaneously to prevent their ability to reinforce and aid their Asian possessions. Pivotal to the Japanese decision to attack was a tremendous need for crude oil. The economic sanctions imposed by the United States and the United Kingdom were weakening the Japanese economy. The Japanese leaders were faced with a choice: end the war in China and their plans for Asian conquest or declare war on three large military forces. The current war against Britain, and the Netherlands, and the strain of providing aid by the United States to these countries was seen as an opportunity by the Japanese to extend their "rightful" place as a ruler in Asia.**

**They decided to attack the United States (Pearl Harbor in Hawaii) and the Philippines.**

## **Japanese Attack on the Philippines**

**This Japanese attack didn't occur on the infamous date of December 7, 1941, however, but 10 hours later, on December 8<sup>th</sup> on the other side of the International Dateline. And the target wasn't Hawaii's Pearl Harbor, but the Philippines, which had been an American possession since the 1898 Spanish-American War. Hours after the air raids, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt spoke on the radio to decry the Japanese "bombing our citizens in Hawaii and the Philippines."**



**The Japanese Attack the Philippines**

**After the attacks that drew the United States into World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt pledged to defend the American commonwealth of the Philippines. "So long as the flag of the United States flies on Filipino soil as a pledge of our duty to your people, it will be defended by our own men to the death," he said.**

**At the time of the attack on the Philippine, the US Army Forces in the Far East (USAFFE) consisted of about 100,000 Filipinos and 20,000 American soldiers. Their main task was to perform a delaying action on the mouth of Manila Bay. Despite promises by their commanding general, Douglas MacArthur, that thousands of troops and hundreds of planes were being dispatched, no help ever came.**



**Filipino and American Soldiers Fight the Japanese**

**The Japanese launched the invasion by sea from Formosa, over 200 miles (320 km) north of the Philippines. The defending forces outnumbered the Japanese 3-2 but were a mixed force of non-combat experienced regular, national guard, constabulary, and newly created Commonwealth units. The Japanese used first-line troops at the outset of the campaign, and by concentrating their forces, they swiftly overran most of Luzon during the first month.**

**The Japanese high command, believing that they had won the fight, made a strategic decision to advance by a month their timetable of operations in Borneo and Indonesia and to withdraw their best division and the bulk of their airpower in early January 1942. That, coupled with the defenders' decision to withdraw into a defensive holding position in the Bataan Peninsula and also the defeat of three Japanese battalions at the "Battle of the Points" and "Battle of the Pockets", enabled the Americans and Filipinos to hold out for four more months. After the Japanese failure to penetrate the Bataan defensive perimeter in February the Japanese conducted a 40-day siege. The crucial large natural harbor and port facilities of Manila Bay were denied to the Japanese until May 1942. While the Dutch East Indies operations were unaffected this heavily hindered the Japanese offensive operations in New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, buying time for the U.S. Navy to make plans to engage the Japanese at Guadalcanal instead of much further east.**

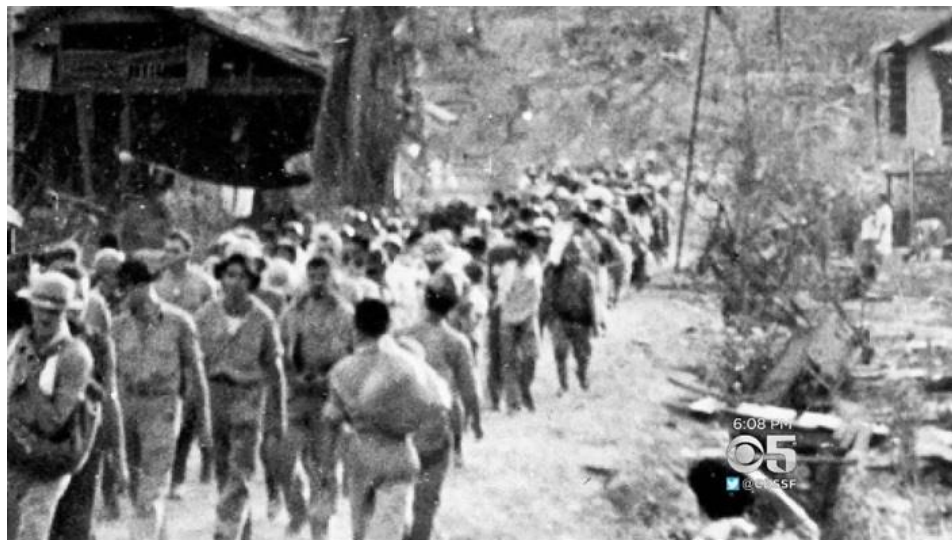
**Japan's conquest of the Philippines on 8 May 1942 is often considered the worst military defeat in US history. About 23,000 American military personnel, and about 100,000 Filipino soldiers were killed or captured.**





**US and Filipino Soldiers Surrender**

Unlike the lightning strike on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese sustained their attacks on the Philippines in the weeks following the entry of the United States into World War II. After staging an amphibious landing, Japanese forces occupied Manila. Under the command of General Douglas MacArthur, Filipinos fought alongside American soldiers in the Battle of Bataan. After the defeat of the Allied forces and the escape of MacArthur to Australia, captured Filipino and American soldiers were forced on a Japan-led, 66-mile “Death March” across the Bataan Peninsula.



**Bataan Death March**

### **Bataan Death March**

The march was 66 miles (106 km) that 76,000 prisoners of war (66,000 Filipinos and 10,000 Americans) were forced by the Japanese military to endure in April 1942, during the early stages of World War II.

Mainly starting in Mariveles, on the southern tip of the Bataan Peninsula, on April 9, 1942, the prisoners were force-marched north to San Fernando and then taken by rail in cramped and unsanitary boxcars farther north to Capas. From there they walked an additional 7 miles (11 km) to Camp O'Donnell, a former Philippine army training center used by the Japanese military to intern Filipino and American prisoners. During the main march—which lasted 5 to 10 days, depending on where a prisoner joined it—the captives were beaten, shot, bayoneted, and, in many cases, beheaded; a large number of those who made it to the camp later died of starvation and disease. About 73,000 prisoners reached the camp; though exact numbers are unknown, some 2,500 Filipinos and 500 Americans died during the march, and an additional 26,000 Filipinos and 1,500 Americans died at Camp O'Donnell.

*If my math is correct, only 45,500 (8,000 American and 37,500 Filipino) survived this ordeal.*

### **The Battle for Manila**

It's hard to imagine that a major monthlong battle from World War II — one that devastated a large city, caused more than 100,000 civilian deaths and led to both a historic war crimes trial and a Supreme Court decision — should have escaped scrutiny. But history has somehow overlooked the catastrophic battle for Manila, capital of the Philippines, in the waning months of the war.

It begins as Gen. Douglas MacArthur, the egotistical military commander of the U.S. colony in the Philippines, was caught woefully unprepared when the war began. Japanese bombers destroyed his planes on the ground and American and Philippine forces were soon overwhelmed. MacArthur famously vowed to return as he was evacuated to Australia.

Three years later, the U.S. Navy had steadily clawed its way back across the Pacific and bombers were already striking Japanese industrial centers. Most commanders saw “no need to risk American lives on a costly invasion of the Philippines” when the fall of Japan appeared imminent. But MacArthur insisted, and by early 1945 his troops were closing on Manila. Convinced the Japanese would abandon Manila, just as he had, MacArthur ordered up a massive victory parade to welcome himself home.



**General MacArthur Returns to the Philippines**

**On Feb. 6, 1945, MacArthur preemptively announced the city's liberation, claiming credit in grandiose terms. Congratulations poured in from Washington, London and elsewhere. But the 29-day battle had only just begun.**

**The Japanese commander, Gen. Tomoyuki Yamashita, had stunned allies early in the war by seizing Malaya and Singapore, capturing a much larger British force. His orders now were to bog MacArthur's forces down in the Philippines and give Japan time to prepare for the expected U.S. invasion. He ordered subordinates to destroy Manila's bridges and port, and then to follow him to the mountains.**

**Once Yamashita withdrew, however, Rear Adm. Sanji Iwabuchi instead ordered his marines to "fight to the last man." They methodically dynamited Manila's business, government, and religious landmarks, obliterating the city's cultural heritage, and torched thousands of wooden homes, sparking a deadly firestorm. Worse, they cruelly tortured and killed thousands of men, women, and children.**

**The frenzy of Japanese massacres defies imagination. Countless women were raped and tortured, their babies tossed in the air and bayoneted. Patients and doctors were stabbed at hospitals, nuns and priests were hanged at churches, and children tossed into pits with grenades. Marauding Japanese troops burned people alive in convents, schools, and prisons. They simply buried others alive.**





### **The Battle of Manila was one of WWII's Deadliest Battles**

**Against them was a U.S. force unprepared for urban warfare. They fired 155-millimeter howitzers at point-blank range to dislodge the enemy and used tanks, flame throwers and bazookas to kill the rest. They fought block by block, house by house, room by room, leveling hundreds of city blocks. U.S. troops rescued, treated, and fed tens of thousands of traumatized and wounded survivors. Estimates of the civilian dead range from 100,000 to 240,000. Iwabuchi, who had presided over one of the most barbaric massacres of the war, apparently committed suicide rather than surrender, although his body was never found.**

**The terrible battle had a curious afterlife. Yamashita finally surrendered several weeks after the war had formally ended. U.S. prosecutors soon charged him with failing to control his troops in the deaths of 62,278 civilians, 144 slain American officers and enlisted men, and 488 raped women and children. Not surprisingly, he was found guilty and sentenced to hang.**

**The Battle for Manila ended on 3 March 1945. The US Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 6 and 9 August 1945, respectively forced Japan into surrendering. On September 2, 1945, World War II officially ended when General Douglas MacArthur accepted Japan's formal surrender aboard the battleship USS Missouri, anchored in Tokyo Bay along with a flotilla of more than 250 Allied warships.**



**The Japanese surrender on board the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay**

*World War II in the Philippines was brutal for Filipino Soldiers and Civilians!! The toll was high: more than a million Filipinos died. I didn't know how bad it was until I did the research for this article. Filipino Soldiers who fought for the United States deserved our countries sincere thanks and everything promised them. But, as we found out, that was not the case. The 1946 United States Congress decided to give these proud Filipino Soldiers nothing and to renege on everything promised them.*



**The USS Missouri Battleship Museum at Pearl Harbor, Honolulu, Hawaii**

## **Filipino Veterans of World War II – Broken Promises**

In July 1941, President Franklin Roosevelt federalized the military forces in the Philippines under American control. Filipinos enlisted in answer to their President's call to serve. Roosevelt promised veteran benefits to them similar to what members of the United States Armed Forces receive.

In August 1943, Roosevelt promised: "I give the Filipino people my word that the Republic of the Philippines will be established the moment the power of our Japanese enemies is destroyed."

On July 4, 1946, the American government fulfilled that promise, when Filipinos celebrated a newly independent Republic of Philippines.

But Congress broke all of President Roosevelt's other promises. With the Rescission Act of 1946, they retroactively annulled the benefits promised to Filipino veterans and their widows and children, enacted February 18, 1946.



**President Franklin  
D. Roosevelt**

### **The Rescission Act of 1946**

Here is the text of the act relevant to Filipino troops.

*Army of the Philippines, \$200,000,000 : Provided, That service in the organized military forces of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Philippines, while such forces were in the service of the armed forces of the United States pursuant to the military order of the President of the United States dated July 26, 1941, shall not be deemed to be or to have been service in the military or naval forces of the United States or any component thereof for the purposes of any law of the United States conferring rights, privileges, or benefits upon any person by reason of the service of such person or the service of any other person in the military or naval forces of the United States or any component thereof, except benefits under (1) the National Service Life Insurance Act of 1940, as amended, under contracts heretofore entered into, and (2) laws administered by the Veterans' Administration providing for the payment of pensions on account of service-connected disability or death : Provided further, That such pensions shall be paid at the rate of one Philippine peso for each dollar authorized to be paid under the laws providing for such pensions : Provided further, That any payments heretofore made under any such law to or with respect to any member of the military forces of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Philippines who served in the service of the armed*



*forces of the United States shall not be deemed to be invalid by reason of the circumstances that his service was not service in the military or naval forces of the United States or any component thereof within the meaning of such law.*

*Here is how I interpret the above text. President Franklin D. Roosevelt attempted to keep the promises he made to the Filipino troops by allocating \$200 million dollars for the Army of the Philippines. However, Roosevelt left office in April 1945 when Harry Truman become president. Basically, the US Congress at that time took away this money along with all the promised rights these brave troops had earned. Why? Who knows why Congress does “dumb” things? Just look at what’s happening in our country today.*

### **Their Last Fight: Filipino Veterans Make a Final Push for Recognition**

The number of WWII Filipino Veterans is declining quickly. Today in 2021, only about 2,900 Filipino WW2 veterans are still alive; 270 over the century mark. Fortunately, the families of many of these veterans are carrying on the fight for the promised recognition. It has been 76 years since the end of the war and finally some of these veterans have received some recognition.



**WWII Filipino Veterans**

Due to the tireless efforts of members of FiVetREP, partners, and sponsors for their grassroots campaign eventually led to the Filipino Veterans of World War II Congressional Gold Medal Act signed into law by President Obama on December 14, 2016.

On October 25, 2017, Former House Speaker Paul Ryan awarded the Congressional Gold Medals to over 600 Veterans and Families at the

**Emancipation Hall at Capitol Hill. After 75 years, the Filipino American WWII veterans finally received the recognition they earned and deserve.**



**Paul Ryan Awards the Congressional Gold Medals to Filipino Veterans**

**Following the congressional presentation at Emancipation Hall, FilVetREP has held its own ceremonies to individually present bronze replicas of medal and a copy of Public Law 114-265 to living veterans or their next of kin.**

**However, there are still many more Filipino veterans across our country who haven't yet been recognized for their sacrifices and we are committed to honor and celebrate their military service and legacy. FilVetREP will continue to add names to the National Registry to ensure that all living veterans and next of kin of deceased veterans will receive their medals.**



**Archbishop Honors Filipino Veterans of World War II**




### **FilVetREP's Next Mission**

FilVetREP's next mission is to develop an online interactive educational program to preserve the historic legacy of Filipino and American World War II veterans. FilVetREP has launched the first phase of this interactive education project, which is replete with incredible and unexplainable stories and facts from living veterans, from families, and discovery of hundreds of historical accounts and artifacts that were filed away at the National Archives, the Library of Congress and family records.

**Faces of Courage:**  
**Untold Stories of WWII Filipino Veterans**

The compelling story of the contributions of Filipino veterans during WWII and their continued efforts for recognition and justice



**Watch & Support**

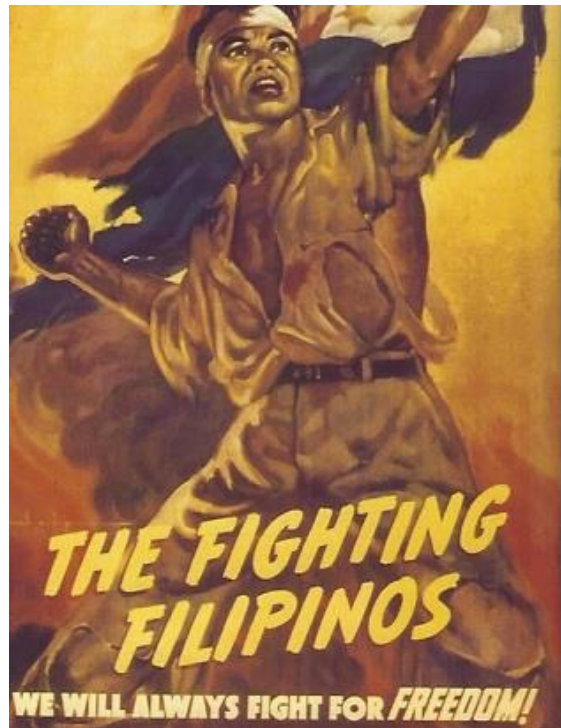
Nov. 11 KFVE 7 p.m.  
Nov. 13 KGMB 6 p.m.  
Nov. 20 KHNL 4 p.m.

All net proceeds raised will benefit the nonprofit **Filipino Veterans Recognition & Education Program**

To donate, visit [MoveMeHawaii.org](http://MoveMeHawaii.org)

**Faces of Courage:** This hour-long documentary was on Honolulu TV recently. Did you see it? “Faces of Courage: Untold Stories of World War II Filipino Veterans,” is a documentary film produced by FilVetREP, explains the history of Filipino contributions in support of the U.S., long before WW II started, and the important role Filipino vets played in helping to win the war in the Pacific.





**AND JUSTICE!!**

**[Bigdrifter44@gmail.com](mailto:Bigdrifter44@gmail.com)**

**[Bigdrifter.com](http://Bigdrifter.com)**