Mindoro and Lingayen Liberated

Mindoro and Lingayen Liberated:

The Deliverance of the Philippines from the Japanese in WWII

By

Bob East

Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing

Mindoro and Lingayen Liberated:
The Deliverance of the Philippines from the Japanese in WWII

By Bob East

This book first published 2021

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-5275-6677-3
ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-6677-4

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Part One: Mindoro Liberated

Introduction

Chapter One. Section A. Planning

Chapter One. Section B

Part Two: Lingayen and its Environs Liberated

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following persons, or organisations—in alphabetical order not rating of importance—are thanked for the assistance given to the author in this production.

All photographs used in this publication are available on the public domain unless acknowledged separately.

Australian War Memorial (AWM).

Bustin, Steven, 2007.

Kerrie East. For her expert computer help.

Elks, Dr Eric. ASM. Whose diligence and dedication to proofreading this book was, and always is, greatly appreciated.

Hickmann, Kennedy, 2018.

Perry, Mark, 2014.

The Lonely Planet: Philippines, 2006

FOREWORD

To successfully research the early attempts of the Allies—the U.S. in particular—to liberate the Philippines from Japanese occupation it became apparent, apart from the initial "invasion" of Leyte in October 1944, which was led by General Douglas MacArthur—see below—that two crucial U.S. liberation battles in Luzon—the northern geographical region of the Philippines sphere—in late 1944 and early 1945 were inseparably linked. It was these two battles that paved the way eventually for the complete liberation of Luzon following on from the protracted Battle of Luzon. However, to do justice to these battles it was necessary to give each a separate part in publication of this book—namely Part One and Part Two. The last section of Part Two is also devoted to the Japanese war criminals who participated in war crimes—or who had knowledge of them—during the occupation of the Philippines from 1941 to 1945 inclusive. Some also had the dubious honour of being involved in war crimes in other theatres of war in the War in the Pacific.

General Douglas MacArthur: in brief. Douglas MacArthur—born in January 1880 and died in April 1964—was a five-star general in the United States Army and a field marshall in the Republic of the Philippines. He graduated—number one in his class—from the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York, in 1903. He won the United States Medal of Honour for his action in the Philippine campaign. His father, Arthur MacArthur also won the United States Medal of Honour. General Douglas Macarthur saw action in the following campaigns:

- **The Mexican Revolution.**
- **The United States occupation of Veracruz.**
- **WWI: Champagne-Marne Offensive, Battle of Saint-Mihiel and the Meuse-Argonne offensive.**
- **WWII: The Philippine Campaign (1941-1942), the New Guinea Campaign, the second Philippine Campaign (1944-1945), and the Borneo Campaign (1945).**
- **The Korean War: the Battle of Inchon, the United Nations Offensive of 1950 and the United Nations offensive of 1951.**

Although he had retired from active duty in 1936, he was recalled to duty in 1941, when it appeared the United States would become involved in World War II.

The invasions in question: In 30 days—mid-December 1944 to mid-January 1945—two crucial Allied "invasions" in Luzon turned the tide in America's favour in its attempt to liberate the Philippines from Japanese occupation. One involved Mindoro Island—south of Manila, the other involved Lingayen Gulf and its environs—on the west coast of Luzon, and north of Manila. That is not to say the battle of Lingayen Gulf would not have been successful without the assistance of the newly completed air facilities on Mindoro, but it just made the battle at Lingayen Gulf a little easier to succeed for the Allies. Both Mindoro and Lingayen Gulf are in Luzon, the northern most populous island group of the three major groups in the Philippines. The other two groups being Mindanao—southern Philippines and the Visayas—central Philippines.

Fig. F.1.A **Fig, F.1.B** **Fig, F.I. C**

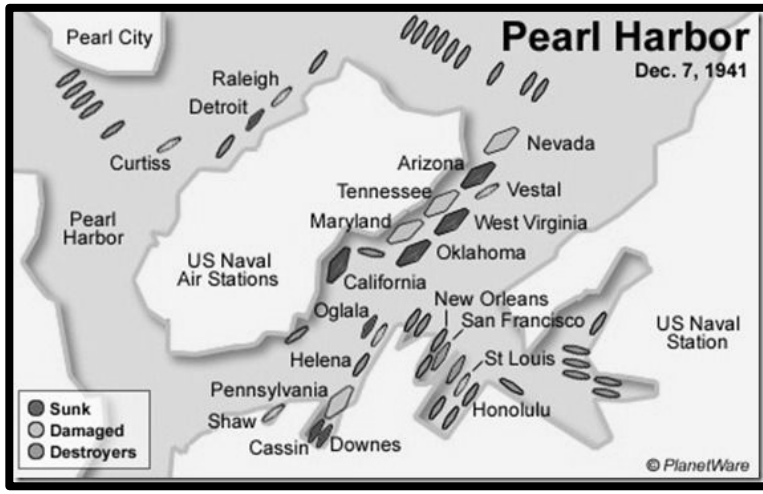
Fig. A. Luzon in red, associated islands in maroon
Fig. B. Mindanao in red, associated islands in maroon
Fig. C. The Visayas in red

To understand where Mindoro and Lingayen Gulf are, both in Luzon—Mindoro is shown in maroon, and Lingayen is shown in the red area in **Fig. A**—To fit into the picture of the defeat of the Japanese forces in the Philippines, it is important to recall how the Philippines became involved in the War in the Pacific, and in turn the War in Europe—enter Pearl Harbor 08 December 1941.

Pearl Harbor

The United States and the Philippines enter the War in the Pacific

Early in the morning—approximately 3 a.m. Philippine time—on 08 December 1941, the commander of the United States Armed Forces in the Asia-Pacific (Far East) region, General Douglas MacArthur—who was stationed in the Philippines at the time: please see above—was awoken by a telephone call advising him Japanese aircraft had attacked the United States naval base at Pearl Harbor, Honolulu, Hawaii. The map below reconstructs what Pearl Harbor looked like the day before the Japanese attack on it.



Of interest, the Japanese attacking force was known as the Imperial Japanese Naval Air Service (IJNAS)—the air arm of the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN), which had been established in 1912. The air arm of the IJN may have been established in 1912, however the IJN was formed in 1868 during the Boshin War—Japanese Revolution. The IJN was dissolved in 1945 after the surrender of Japan in the War in the Pacific.

The United States was a neutral country at the time of the Pearl Harbour attack but did support the Allied forces against Germany and Italy with weapons and equipment and much needed financial assistance—in the way of long-term financial loans. Japan had aspirations of "cleansing" Southeast

Asia of European and United States colonialism. And with the United States Navy—and its accompanying aircraft—being severely mauled and reduced in strength, Japan's task would be made all that much easier—or so it was believed.

The attack on Pearl Harbor had been meticulously planned and executed. The attacking force was coordinated and led by 39-year-old Commander Taisa Mitsuo Fuchida, under the direction of Fleet Commander Vice Admiral Chūichi Nagumo. (Commander Taisa Fuchida survived the war and lived to be 74 years-old, whereas Fleet Commander Chūichi Nagumo committed suicide—harakiri or seppuku— after Japan's defeat at the Battle of Saipan—Mariana Islands, western North Pacific Ocean—in July 1944.)

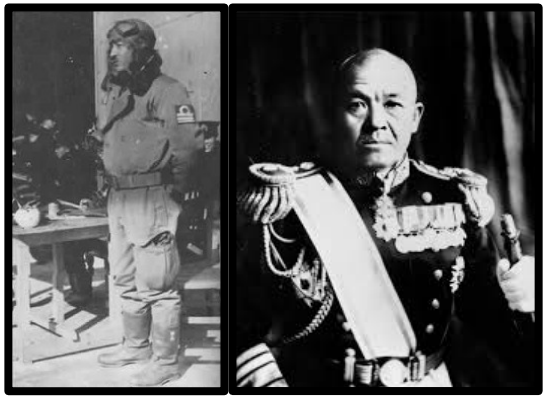


Fig. PI. 1. Taisa Mitsuo Fuchida. Circa. 1941. Fig. F P1. 2. Chūichi Nagumo. Circa. 1944

The Japanese Naval Air Service that attacked Pearl Harbor consisted of dive bombers and level bombers, as well as torpedo planes, fighters, and midget submarines. All were assembled on six large Japanese aircraft carriers. (*Akagi, Hiryu, Kaga, Shokaku, Soryu,* and *Zuikaku*). All-in-all 353 aircraft attacked the unsuspecting Pearl Harbor naval base. The result was unprecedented and devastating in the extreme. The entire contingent of U.S. battleships was damaged—eight being sunk. The largest loss was the sinking of the *Arizona*—hit by four armour-piercing bombs. The *Arizona* lost 1,177 men dead—the *Oklahoma* also lost 429 men dead. As well as the battleships damaged or sunk, three cruisers, three destroyers, a minelayer and an anti-aircraft training ship were either badly damaged or indeed sunk.

The total number of U.S. aircraft destroyed was 188. When it came to U.S. human losses or casualties, the numbers were just as devastating—2,403 killed and 1,178 wounded. Miraculously, or perhaps by design, Pearl Harbor's infrastructure including the power station and buildings were left intact. It would appear that the main targets were ships and planes—which were capable of mobility—rather than sedentary infrastructure. There may also have been the possibility that should Japan choose to "invade" Hawaii, there was already an airfield and associated infrastructure in place and available for immediate use.

Japanese losses at Pearl Harbor were minuscule compared to U.S. losses. According to the New Orleans National WWII Museum—designated in 2003 by the U.S. Congress as America's official National WWII Museum—Japan's military hardware losses at Pearl Harbor were 29 aircraft and five midget submarines. In addition, 129 Japanese servicemen were killed. One Japanese member of the Imperial Japanese Navy, 23-year-old Kazuo Sakamaki, an officer—rank of ensign—in one of the midget submarines that was sunk, was taken prisoner.

Of interest, Sakamaki became the first Japanese prisoner-of-war (POW) captured by U.S. forces in WWII. He spent the remainder of the war in various POW camps in *Continental United States.* (Excludes Hawaii and unincorporated U.S. territories). After Japan formally surrendered in September 1945 Sakamaki was repatriated home to Japan. He became committed to the cause of pacifism in his later life and died at age 81 years.

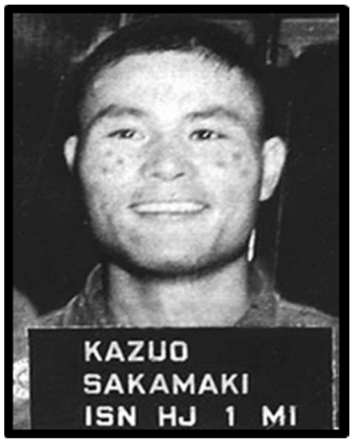


Fig. PI. 3 Kazuo Sakamaki as a POW

Japan formally announced a "declaration of war" on the U.S. on the same day it attacked Pearl Harbor. The next day, 08 December 1941 Eastern Time, the U.S. Congress retaliated by declaring war on Japan. Australia declared war on Japan on 09 December 1941 EST—Eastern Standard Time. The United Kingdom declared war on Japan on 08 December 1941 GMT—Greenwich Mean Time.

Meanwhile, Japanese air-attacks were coordinated against the Philippines, Guam, and Wake Island. And the British territories of Malaya, Singapore and Hong Kong were also attacked on the same day. Australia—being part of the greater Southeast Asian region—did come under Japanese air attack, but it was approximately 10 weeks later. Darwin, the capital of the Northern Territory in northern Australia was bombed on 19 February 1942 with the loss of almost 300 lives. (During 1942 and 1943 Darwin was bombed a number of times). Many ships and infrastructure were also damaged, but unlike Pearl Harbor no vessels were sunk in the initial Darwin raid—vessels were sunk at later attacks. There were other Japanese air attacks on northern Australian towns and cities during the Pacific War including—in alphabetical order: Broome, Horn Island, Kathryn, Mossman, Port Headland, Townsville and Wyndham. En passant, three miniature Japanese Ky-hyoteki class submarines entered Sydney Harbour on 31 May 1942—two were destroyed. (Below: Miniature Japanese submarine raised from Sydney Harbour 01 June 1941).

Japanese miniature submarine being raised from Sydney Harbour.

Nine hours after the devastating Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, almost 200 Mitsubishi bombers and fighters attacked Clark Field in Luzon

which was the main U.S. military airbase in the Philippines. (Clark Field was named after a Major Harold Clark who saw action in World War I in a military aviator regiment. He was killed in 1919). The time of this attack on Clark Field by the Japanese was around noon—Philippine time—on 08 December 1941. Clark Field is still in existence today but is now used as both an international and domestic terminal. It is called the Clark International Airport. Situated about 80 kilometres north-west of Manila—capital of the Philippines—it was the main U.S. defence centre in the Philippines, and housed hundreds of U.S. planes of all makes and models.

Fig. PI .4. Clark Air Base in relation to Manila. Tuguegarao and Legazpi, shown here, were both attacked also in early December 1941

Having been made aware that Pearl Harbor had been attacked and severely damaged by a Japanese air attack only some nine hours before, it begs the question why the U.S. Clark Field did not disperse its planes to other nearby airfields or make Clark Field ready for a possible Japanese air attack.

The original plan of the Japanese military hierarchy was for Pearl Harbor and Clark Field to be attacked at the same time—or at least on the same day. That is, it was hoped that two of the main U.S. military air and naval bases in the Pacific Region would be either destroyed or incapable of stopping the Japanese military thrust south toward New Guinea and eventually, it was hoped by the Japanese, to include Australia. However, the Japanese bombers

and fighters that were supposed to attack Clark Field were delayed by unforeseen weather conditions—not unusual in this region which is known for typhoons. This delay, coupled with the knowledge Pearl Harbor had been attacked, should have given the senior U.S. commanders in the Philippines—in particular General Douglas MacArthur, and his air commander, Major General Lewis Brereton—time to prepare for the attack or intercept the Japanese attacking aircraft.

At that particular time General Douglas MacArthur and General Lewis Brereton did not enjoy a good rapport with each other. General MacArthur's Chief of Staff—General Richard Kerens Sutherland—had a much closer working relationship with his superior general, Douglas MacArthur. After hearing Pearl Harbor had been attacked General Brereton sought permission from General Sutherland to attack the Japanese base on Taiwan—it was refused, the reason for this is unknown. Eventually, after talking to General Douglas MacArthur permission was given to General Brereton to despatch his B-17s to Taiwan. However, it was all too late because the 200 plus Japanese planes had already left Taiwan and were headed for the Philippines. As the huge B-17s and accompanying U.S. fighters were refuelling to fly to Taiwan, the Japanese attacked Clark Airfield. The result was a maelstrom of the first degree. (What is hard to comprehend—indeed understand—is how a fleet of over 200 Japanese large bombers and fighters could have travelled over 560 kilometres—distance from the top end of Luzon to Clark Airfield taking upward of two hours without being either seen or reported to U.S. military authorities).

Of the remaining force of B-17s at Clark Airfield, almost half had been dispersed to northern Mindanao—the largest southern island in the Philippines—prior to 08 December 1941. This occurred in September 1941. The airstrip chosen was Del Monte Field. It was chosen for two reasons. First of all was the weather, necessary during the May to October wet season of the southern Philippines. Second Del Monte Field was capable of landing B17 Flying Fortress heavy bombers.

When Clark Airfield was attacked on 08 December1941, 12 of the remaining B-17s Fortresses were completely destroyed, and four more were badly damaged, whilst most of the P-40 fighters had been completely destroyed on the ground. As well, 50 older aircraft were either destroyed or badly damaged. The final result was over half of the U.S. air fleet in the Philippines had been completely destroyed. Japanese aircraft losses, as with Pearl Harbor were miniscule—seven aircraft shot down. Inter alia, Clark Airfield was overrun and occupied by Japanese military forces in the first

week of January 1942. (The landing of Japanese forces in the Philippines is addressed in the next section).

Fig. PI .5. Destroyed P-40 U.S. Fighter

Japanese land attack in the Philippines

On the same day that Clark Airfield was attacked, that is 08 December 1941, Japanese forces—stationed in Formosa—invaded Batan Island. Batan Island is the largest island in the Batanes Archipelago Province in northern Luzon—as mentioned one of the three principal geographical divisions of the Philippines. The other two being the Visayas and Mindanao. This was the first landing on U.S. territory in WWII by a foreign power body of men—if one discounts the unfortunate capture at Pearl Harbor of Kazuo Sakamaki in the previous section. It was not a large force consisting of approximately 500 naval combat troops and a smaller number of air corps troops. The intention was to secure and convert the small airfields in the Batanes archipelago for future use by the Japanese Airforce. This initial landing of attacking Japanese forces in the Philippines was followed by landings in Aparri, Vigan, and Legaspi—all in northern Luzon—and Davao and Jolo Island—in Mindanao. No landings were made in the geographical division of the Visayas. The map below shows the various invasion forces and the dates and where they originated from. (Legaspi is in southern Luzon although it appears to be in the Visayas).

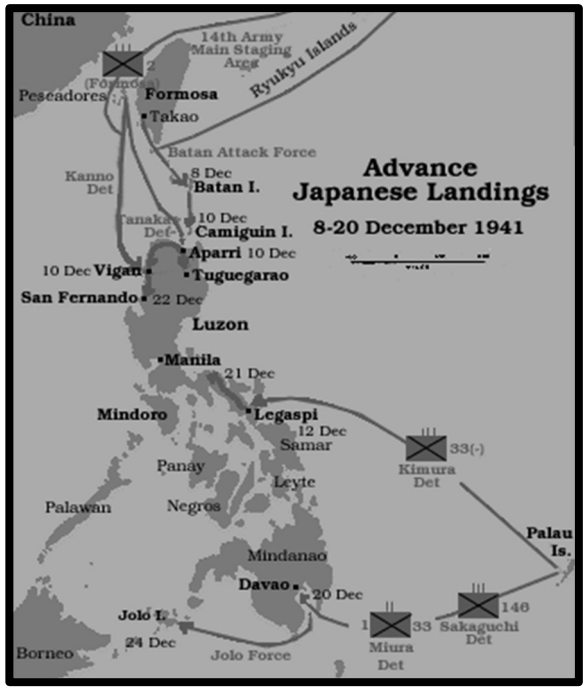


Fig. PI. 6. Map showing the various invading forces and dates. Note the forces attacking the Philippines came from both the north and south

On 10 December 1941 the Japanese forces that had landed on Batan Island left this island—for a number of reasons including Batan's airfield not being suitable for large Japanese planes—and continued south for approximately 160 kilometres to Camiguin Island. The Camiguin airstrip, although being small, was more suitable than the airstrip on Batan Island. As well, Camiguin was only 70 kilometres from the northern Philippine city of Aparri—Aparri sits on the Cagayan River, the longest river in the Philippines.

Coinciding with the invasion of Camiguin Island on 10 December 1941, Japanese forces, also from Formosa, attacked Aparri and Vigan. Aparri, with a population at that time of just over 25,000, was an important seaport and, as mentioned, was at the mouth of the Cagayan River. The force that attacked Aparri consisted of about 2,000 men of the 48th Division's Formosa Infantry Regiment under the broader command of Lieutenant General Masaharu Homma. His men did not encounter any opposition from U.S.

forces—or indeed Philippine forces. Four days after the assault on Aparri, Homma's troops moved south and secured the airfield at Tuguegarao—12 December 1941—which was about 80 kilometres away—again with no resistance from U.S. or Allied forces. Tuguegarao was of some significance to the invading Japanese forces. It had a well-designed and functional airfield. The airfield at Tuguegarao is still in use today and services the northern part of Luzon.

Lieutenant General Masaharu Homma was the supreme commander of the Japanese 14th Army. It was the Japanese 14th Army that was mainly responsible for the invasion of the Philippines. Formed on 06 November 1941 its specific purpose for its formation was later revealed to invade and occupy the Philippines—this was before the Pearl Harbor attack. The Japanese 14th Army was formed from the 16th, 48th, and 56th Divisions.

Immediately after the invasion of the Philippines General Homma took up the position of the Governor-General of the Philippines—although it was more correctly called "Military Governor". General Homma held this office from 03 January 1942 to 08 June 1942. (He was succeeded by Generals Shizuichi—08 June 1942-28 May 1943, Shigenori Kura—28 May 1943-26 September 1944, and Tomoyuki Yamashita—26 September 1944 -02 September 1945—the last Military Governor the Philippines ever had.

Immediately after General Homma left the office of Military Governor the infamous POW Bataan Death March took place—09 April 1941. The total distance of the Bataan Death March was just over 110 kilometres. Such was the ferocity of the Japanese guards that it is estimated somewhere between 5,000 and 18,000 Philippine POWs were killed, and between 500 and 600 U.S. POWs met a similar fate.

The Bataan Death March in brief: It was a forced transfer by the Imperial Japanese Army of up to 80,000 U. S. and Filipino POWs. The transfer and march began on 09 April 1942, after the three-month Battle of Bataan and subsequent surrender. 09 April is the official staring date of the march, but it took 48 hours for the thousands of POWs to actually start the infamous journey. The total distance from Saysain Point to San Fernando was approximately 100 kilometres—a huge distance given the heat and condition of many of the men who were suffering from an inadequate diet and various illnesses—including malaria—leading up to the surrender.

The march itself—according to some reports—began peaceful enough with orders from General Homma to treat all POWs with respect. However,

it soon degenerated into a situation where any straggling prisoners were shot or bayoneted to death. In one particular brutal episode a Colonel Masanobu Tsuji[9]— ordered approximately 350 to 400 Filipino officers and NCOs who had surrendered during the march to be were summarily executed at the Pantingan River. This was known as the Pantingan River massacre. Colonel Tsuji also gave orders for all U.S. officers to be executed—an order that was only partly obeyed. Colonial Tsuji escaped prosecution after the war and "disappeared" in 1961. (Covered in Part Two of this publication).

When the surviving prisoners arrived at San Fernando, they were herded into unbearably hot metal box cars. The trip to the Capas POW camp lasted for one hour. When the prisoners did stop at the Capas railhead they had to walk a further 15 kilometres to the camp. Of the almost 80,000 POWs at the beginning of the march, it is estimated only 54,000 made it to the POW camp at Capas—the remainder were killed en route. However, some did escape and joined up with Philippine guerrillas.

Fig. PI. 7. The route went from Saysain Point in the Mariveles, Corregidor to San Fernando—Pampanga—and then by train to the Capas POW camp in Tarlac.

After the war finished in September 1945, General Masaharu Homma was deemed responsible for the deaths although he denied any knowledge of the atrocity. He was subsequently tried for war crimes—being the commanding officer it was stated by the prosecution he should have been privy to what his subordinate staff were indeed doing. He iterated at his trial he "truly" had no idea of what crimes were being committed by his troops on 09 April 1942 on the Allied POWs between Mariveles, Corregidor, and Capas in the province of Tarlac. His defence lawyer, Robert Pelz, wrote in

his diary at the time, “I truly believe Homma had no idea of the things that occurred”. One could expect a defence lawyer would say this during court proceedings, but to privately record his thoughts in a diary entry adds substance to the claim.

In spite of the brilliant defence of Robert Pelz, Homma was found guilty of war crimes and subsequently executed by firing squad in Manila on the morning of 03 April 1946. Although Homma’s wife appealed directly to General Douglas MacArthur for clemency it was refused. The one concession given to Homma was his death by firing squad and not hanging. This was deemed to be a more honourable death than hanging. (Covered in full in Part Two of this publication).

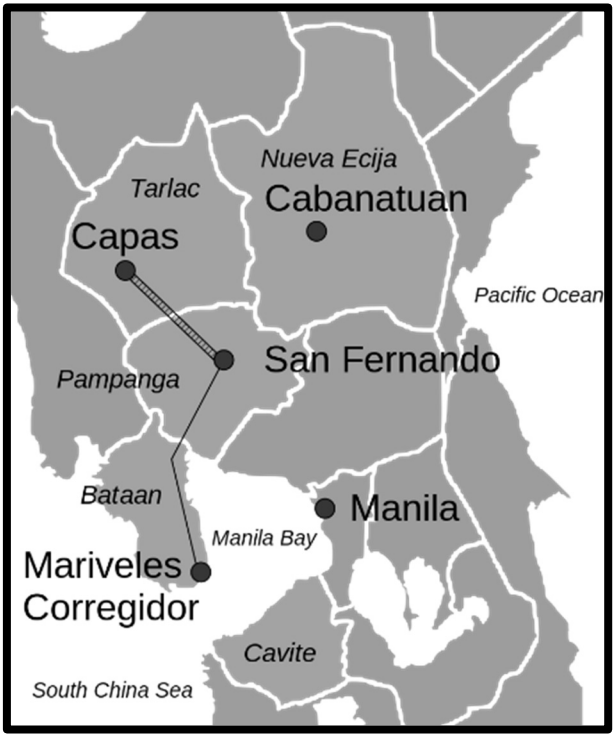


Fig. PI. 8. The route taken by the Allied POWs in the Bataan Death March. The last section between San Fernando and Capas saw the surviving Allied POWs transported by rail.

Fig. PI. 9. Lieutenant General Masaharu Homma. In the role of Governor-General—Military Governor—of the Philippines. Circa early 1942.

Vigan, which was attacked on 10 December 1941 is about 350 kilometres north of Manila. The Japanese troops, also under the command of General Homma, and part of the 48th Division, and numbering around 2000, were also supported, and/or despatched by destroyers, light cruisers, mine sweepers, anti-submarine craft and transports—a formidable array of force. Vigan itself is about five kilometres from the coast—South China Sea—so the troops were let off at the Port of Pandan. Theoretically, Vigan was defended by General Wainwright's North Luzon Force. In truth, U.S. troops were sparse and once the Japanese had landed, General Wainwright's men retreated south toward Manila. General Douglas MacArthur was informed of both invasions but there was little or nothing he could do about the situation. It must be remembered that just two days before, the majority of the U.S. Air Force in the Philippines had been destroyed at Clark Field.

Ten days after the taking of Vigan by the Japanese, the large city of San Fernando was in Japanese hands. Again U.S. and Philippine forces fled southward to the ill-fated Bataan peninsula.

Vigan very briefly: Today, the city of Vigan is a tourist drawcard. In 1999 it was listed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as "the best-preserved example of the 16th Century Spanish colonial towns in Asia". At one time Vigan was an island, however due to extensive silting of the Mestizo River, it is now joined to the mainland.

Before the Spanish came to the Philippines in the 16th Century, Vigan was a trading post that attracted many Chinese traders. The Chinese would exchange goods they had bought from Asian ports with indigenous people of the Cordillera region—a mountainous area in central Luzon. The indigenous people of the Cordillera region specialised in gold products and natural organic products such as beeswax. Beeswax has been used for thousands of years for candles, lubricating and waterproofing.

While all these attacks were taking place in northern Luzon, General Homma was preparing to land troops in southern Luzon which would enable an attack and occupation of the Philippine capital of Manila. The area chosen for the Japanese landing was the Bicol Peninsula, and this in turn would enable an assault on the city of Legaspi. At the time Southern Luzon was held by Philippine forces—two divisions—under the command of U.S. General Parker.

Major General George Marshall Parker, Jr. in brief: Born into a military family in April 1889, Parker was the chief officer in charge of the garrison in Manila. He also held the position of being the commander of the Southern Luzon Force. The Southern Luzon Force was made up of the 41st and 51st Divisions and a battery of the 86th Field Artillery Regiment of the Philippine Scouts. When General Douglas MacArthur realized the Japanese forces that had landed in northern Luzon may eventually be joined by Japanese forces landing in southern Luzon he ordered General Parker to occupy Bataan—this plan he called "War Plan Orange". After activating War Plan Orange, General Douglas MacArthur converted the Southern Luzon Force into the Philippine II Corps.

General George Marshal Parker received the following decorations:

- Army Distinguished Service Medal
- Mexican Border Service Medal

- World War I Victory Medal
- American Defense Service Medal with Foreign Service Clasp
- Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal w/ two Service Stars
- World War II Victory Medal
- Philippine Defense Medal with Bronze Star

Fig. PI. 10. Major General George Marshall Parker Jr. circa 1946

The attack on Legaspi—sometimes spelt Legazpi—occurred on 12 December 1941 under the command of Major General Heitaro Kimura. (En passant, Legaspi come from the Basque words "gravel or pebbles". Legaspi is situated near the active volcano, Mount Mayon—the most perfectly symmetrical volcano in the Philippines).

Briefly, Major General Heitaro Kimura: After the war, General Kimura was found guilty of war crimes committed in Burma—specifically the infamous Burma Death Railway—and subsequently hanged in 1948. It is of interest to note that General Kimura did not arrive in Burma until late 1944, which by that time the Burma Railway had been finished—it was constructed in 1942 and 1943 by thousands of Allied POWs—as well as thousands of local labourers. Below is a table of POW numbers and death rates—courtesy Marcello, Ronald E. 1992.

Prisoner of war workers and deaths on the Burma Railway, 1942–1945 [13][24]			
Country of origin	**POWs**	**Number of deaths**	**Death rate**
UK, British India or crown colony	**30,131**	**6,904**	**23%**
Netherlands or Dutch East Indies	**17,990**	**2,782**	**15%**
Australia	**13,004**	**2,802**	**22%**
United States	**686**	**133**	**19%**
Total	**61,811**	**12,621**	**20% approx.**

Fig. PI. 11. Major General Heitaro Kimura—circa 1943. Hanged for war crimes on 23 December 1948 at Sugamo Prison, Tokyo, Japan. More in Part Two of this publication.

General George Parker's forces were completely outclassed by General Kimura's forces in the Legaspi attack and fled northward toward Manila. Once secured, Legaspi was used as a staging post for an all-out assault on Manila.

Meanwhile Japan had now set its sights on securing strategic positions in Mindanao—the largest of the three geographical divisions in the Philippines. Two landings were achieved, one at the capital of Mindanao—Davao—and one on Jolo Island, the overwhelmingly predominately Muslim island of the Sulu Archipelago, on the western side of Mindanao.

On 20 December 1941, a force of over 5000 Japanese troops, assisted by dive bombers and fighters, attacked Davao and the immediate surrounding areas. The defending Philippine forces consisted of approximately 2000 members of the ill-prepared Philippine Commonwealth Army's 101st Infantry Regiment. (The Philippine 101st Commonwealth Army was active from 1941 to May 1942 when it surrendered after the fall of Corregidor).

Although assisted by some U.S. airpower it was inevitably a one-sided affair. Within 24 hours Japanese forces-controlled Davao. Three days later a small force of Japanese troops left Davao and sailed west to the Sulu archipelago. On the morning of 24 December 1941 these troops landed on Jolo Island unopposed even though there was a token force of 300 members of the Philippine Constabulary on Jolo Island. Jolo, Basilan, and Tawi-Tawi, the main island groups in the Sulu Archipelago were now under Japanese jurisdiction.

Japan may have been successful in their air attack on Clark Airfield on 08 December 1941 and their subsequent land attacks at Aparri, Vigan, Legaspi, Davao, and Jolo Island, but it took another five months before U.S. troops, and in turn Philippines troops, surrendered on 08 May 1942. Although the U.S. and Philippine military outnumbered the Japanese invaders (approximately 151,000 to 129,000) they were not as well trained, and as such, the main region attacked—Luzon—was all but under Japanese control by early to mid-January 1942. (Mindoro, being part of Luzon was included also). The exception to this was the Bataan Peninsula—including the island of Corregidor—where anywhere up to 100,000 U.S. and Philippine troops were making a final stand against General Homma's forces.

General Douglas MacArthur leaves the Philippines

By February 1942, the U. S. President, Franklin D. Roosevelt was only too aware that the surrender of the Philippines was imminent. He was also aware that if the U.S. forces surrendered—which they would have no choice but to comply with—then General Douglas MacArthur would be made a POW. A huge physiological advantage to Japan and a humiliation to the U.S. Accordingly, President Roosevelt ordered General Douglas

MacArthur to leave Corregidor and make his way to Australia. He was to be accompanied by his family and a number of his high-ranking staff.

Although a submarine was made available for his transport to Mindanao—where he would then fly to Australia—General Douglas MacArthur chose to go by a PT (patrol and torpedo) boat. On the evening of 11 March 1942, the evacuees boarded four PT boats for the 35 hour and 900-kilometre trip to Del Monte, in northern Mindanao. It was an arduous trip, avoiding mines and Japanese watercrafts. The fleet of four PT boats was commanded by a John D. Bulkeley who eventually went on to receive the Medal of Honor, the Navy Cross and the Distinguished Service Cross and other high awards. John Bulkeley, who graduated from the United States Naval Academy in 1933 and subsequently went on to become a Vice-Admiral earning eternal thanks and admiration from General Douglas MacArthur. Upon reaching Mindanao it was reported that General Douglas MacArthur said to Bulkeley "*You have taken me out of the jaws of death. I shall never for a get it*."

Five days after landing on Mindanao General Douglas MacArthur and his family boarded a B-17 Flying Fortress and eventually landed in Australia outside Darwin—capital of the Northern Territory. The official Darwin airfield was not used for the landing because it had been damaged by a large-scale Japanese bombing attack the month before (19 February 1942). It was only one of many such bombings during the War in the Pacific that Darwin would suffer.

Once in the Northern Territory another aircraft took the party to a city on the east coast of Australia—more than likely Townsville, a large city in northern Queensland—and they then took a long train trip to Melbourne—or as some reports put it a small town to the west of Melbourne. The train ride was quite tedious and complex. The eastern states of Australia—Queensland, New South Wales, and Victoria had three different railway gauges, and this would have involved travelling on three different trains. As well, the security for General Douglas MacArthur would have been a prime consideration also.

Ten days after he left the southern Philippines, General Douglas MacArthur and his family, and entourage, arrived in Melbourne—the date being 21 March 1942. The next day the "United States Armed Forces in the Far East" (USAFFE) ceased to exist. In its place was substituted "United States Forces in the Philippines" (USFIP). Its commander was Lieutenant General Jonathan Mayhew Wainwright IV. Shortly after General Wainwright took charge of the U.S. forces remaining in the Philippines—USFIP—General