

# PHILIPPINE ISLANDS



The U.S. Army Campaigns  
of World War II

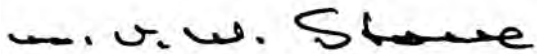
# Introduction

World War II was the largest and most violent armed conflict in the history of mankind. However, the half century that now separates us from that conflict has exacted its toll on our collective knowledge. While World War II continues to absorb the interest of military scholars and historians, as well as its veterans, a generation of Americans has grown to maturity largely unaware of the political, social, and military implications of a war that, more than any other, united us as a people with a common purpose.

Highly relevant today, World War II has much to teach us, not only about the profession of arms, but also about military preparedness, global strategy, and combined operations in the coalition war against fascism. During the next several years, the U.S. Army will participate in the nation's 50th anniversary commemoration of World War II. The commemoration will include the publication of various materials to help educate Americans about that war. The works produced will provide great opportunities to learn about and renew pride in an Army that fought so magnificently in what has been called "the mighty endeavor."

World War II was waged on land, on sea, and in the air over several diverse theaters of operation for approximately six years. The following essay is one of a series of campaign studies highlighting those struggles that, with their accompanying suggestions for further reading, are designed to introduce you to one of the Army's significant military feats from that war.

This brochure was prepared in the U.S. Army Center of Military History by Jennifer L. Bailey. I hope this absorbing account of that period will enhance your appreciation of American achievements during World War II.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. P. W. Stone". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping "S" at the end.

M. P. W. Stone  
Secretary of the Army

# Philippine Islands

7 December 1941–10 May 1942

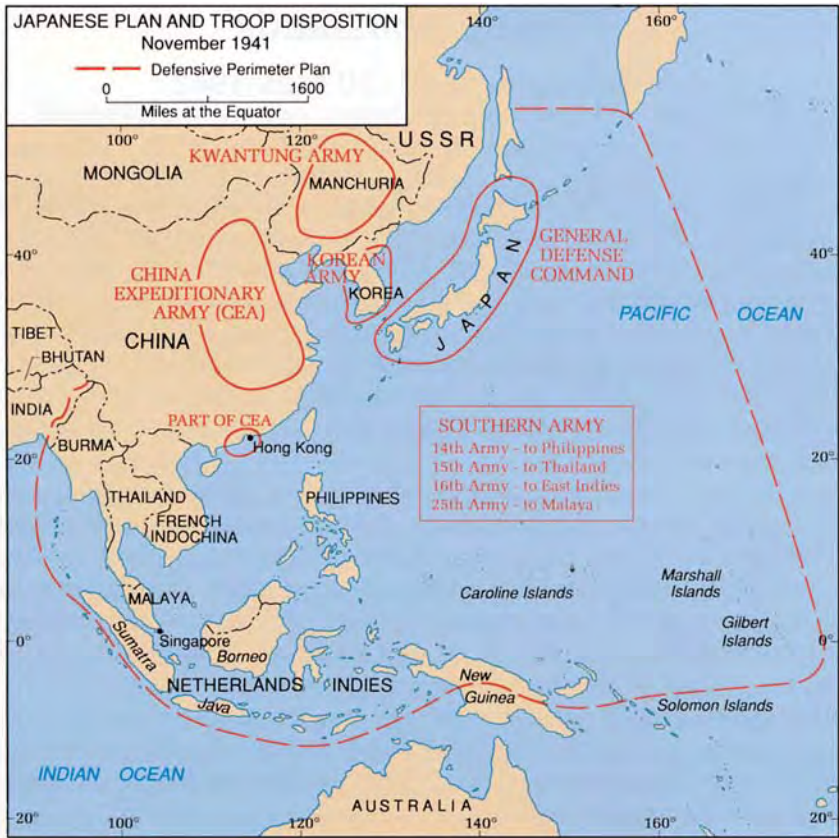
Capture of the Philippine Islands was crucial to Japan's effort to control the Southwest Pacific, seize the resource-rich Dutch East Indies, and protect its Southeast Asia flank. Its strategy called for roughly simultaneous attacks on Malaya, Thailand, American-held Guam and Wake, Hong Kong, Singapore, the Philippines, and Hawaii. Although the aim of the air strike on Hawaii's Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941 was to destroy the U.S. Pacific Fleet in its home port, the others were meant to serve as preludes to full-scale invasion and occupation.

The well-coordinated Japanese campaign, spread across great reaches of the Pacific, progressed with astonishing rapidity. The small U.S. Army and Marine garrisons on Guam and Wake surrendered on 10 and 22 December, respectively, and the British forces in Hong Kong on 26 December. Singapore, the supposedly impregnable British bastion on the Malay Peninsula, capitulated on 15 February 1942. Following lightning amphibious landings in Thailand and Burma, Japanese forces pushed to the northwest, threatening India. Only in the Philippines did the combined U.S.-Filipino units mount a prolonged resistance, holding out with grim determination for five months.

## *The Strategic Setting*

The Philippine Islands, some 7,000 in number, form a natural barrier between Japan and the rich resources of east and southeast Asia. Most Filipinos live on eleven principal islands that account for 90 percent of the archipelago's landmass. Manila, the capital, is located on Luzon, the largest and most populous of the islands. In 1941 the Philippines formed the westernmost U.S. outpost, 5,000 miles from Pearl Harbor and over 7,000 miles from San Francisco. By contrast, Manila is only 1,800 miles from Tokyo.

Defending such a distant outpost against the rising power of Japan would be a formidable task. By January 1941 Japan controlled much of the surrounding territory. Formosa, just to the north, had been under Japanese control since 1895. The islands directly to the east formed part of the territories mandated to Japan by the



League of Nations. To the west Japan occupied eastern China and would soon move into French Indochina. Only the Dutch East Indies directly to the south remained in Western hands.

Although the United States had maintained military forces, including a substantial number of indigenous units, in the Philippines since their annexation in 1898, the islands were largely unprepared for hostilities with Japan. This unpreparedness was the result of several factors. As a signatory of the Washington Naval Treaty in 1922, the United States had agreed, in exchange for limitations on Japanese shipbuilding, to halt construction of any new fortifications in its Pacific possessions. For the Philippines this meant that only the islands near the entrance to Manila Bay, principally Corregidor, were well protected. Similarly, the act to grant the Philippines commonwealth status in 1935—with independence scheduled for 1946—meant that the de-

fense of the islands had to devolve gradually on the Philippine government despite its limited resources. Reflecting these realities, the U.S. Joint Army and Navy Basic War Plan Orange, last updated in April 1941, limited defense of the islands to Manila Bay and critical adjacent areas. If attacked, the U.S. Army garrison was expected to withdraw to the Bataan Peninsula, a tongue of land on Luzon forming the northwestern boundary of Manila Bay, and to the island of Corregidor. The plan did not envision reinforcement or relief of the Philippine garrison. With a small army committed to continental defense and a general agreement that in the event America went to war it would adopt a defeat-Germany-first strategy, the U.S. military had reluctantly concluded that the Philippines must be sacrificed if the Japanese attacked.

On 21 December 1935, the new Philippine National Assembly passed the Philippines National Defense Act that outlined the commonwealth's plan for its self-defense. It envisioned a small force of 10,000 men supplemented by a 400,000-man reserve, large enough to make any invasion prohibitively expensive. General Douglas MacArthur, who had been advising the commonwealth government on defense matters, came to Manila to organize the new Philippine Army after his retirement as Chief of Staff in 1937. A man of considerable presence and vast military experience, MacArthur was destined to play the principal role in the defense of the Philippines as well as their triumphant recovery in 1945.

MacArthur faced a daunting task in creating an army and training the necessary reserves. Operating within a minuscule budget, he suffered a chronic shortage of weapons, transportation, communications equipment, and even housing and uniforms for his men. Moreover, the linguistic diversity of the commonwealth created serious communication problems between the new recruits and their officers and among the soldiers within individual units. The effort to build a cadre was stymied because the schools needed for the training of commissioned and noncommissioned officers did not exist. In dire straits, MacArthur turned to the War Department in Washington, D.C., which was also chronically short of funds, for equipment and supplies.

In addition to the force that MacArthur was trying to build, the U.S. Army maintained Regular units in the islands. Organized in a Philippine Department under the command of Maj. Gen. George Grunert, the regulars included the Philippine Scouts, units of Filipino soldiers led for the most part by American officers. Just over half the 22,532 soldiers in the Philippine Department were scouts. The U.S. forces and the new Philippine Army at first operated independently, but as war grew more likely Grunert and MacArthur increasingly cooperated.



The movement toward war accelerated on 25 July 1941 when Japan, now a member of the Axis coalition, announced that it had assumed a protectorate over French Indochina. President Franklin D. Roosevelt immediately issued an executive order freezing all Japanese assets in the United States, denying to Japan its sources of credit, and cutting off imports of rubber, fuel, and iron. The British and Dutch immediately followed suit. Roosevelt also responded by incorporating the commonwealth forces into the U.S. Army and recalling General MacArthur to active duty as commander of U.S. Forces, Far East (USAFFE). The loss of credit and essential military resources and the threat of a substantial U.S. garrison in the western Pacific brought the Japanese warlords to the brink of war. They set a secret timetable: unless the Allies agreed to lift the embargo on oil and other supplies and to halt reinforcement of the Philippines, they would attack within four months.

While the diplomats continued discussing the matter, General MacArthur again proposed that the U.S. Army cancel War Plan Orange and commit itself to an ambitious program of building a bastion of American power in the Philippines. Chief of Staff George C. Marshall finally approved plans to give top priority to reinforcing and equipping MacArthur's command, a program that MacArthur estimated could be in place by April 1942.

Although the Philippine garrison had been significantly reinforced by 1 December, it remained perilously inadequate for the task at hand. Its strength stood at 31,095 men, a 40 percent increase in four months. Initial National Guard reinforcements from the United States—the 200th Coast Artillery Regiment and the 192d and 194th Tank Battalions—had arrived at the end of September. Although these National Guard units had been hastily mobilized and were insufficiently trained, they brought with them some modern equipment, including 108 M3 tanks, the first to reach the Philippines. But War Department planners gave little consideration to the enormous logistical problems involved in building up and supporting large forces in the far Pacific. The burden placed upon military shipping to carry out the task proved overwhelming, and the critical shortage of cargo space delayed all shipments.

It was the significant development in air power that made an extended defense of the Philippines thinkable. On 3 November Maj. Gen. Lewis H. Brereton had arrived to take command of the newly activated Far East Air Force. By 1 December the Philippine Islands boasted the largest concentration of U.S. Army aircraft outside the continental United States. Many of these aircraft were the best the Army had to

offer, including 107 P-40 fighter aircraft and 35 B-17 Flying Fortress bombers. Yet the Philippines still lacked critical maintenance and repair facilities and enough airfields to permit the proper dispersal of aircraft. Further, an inadequate air-raid-warning service and antiquated anti-aircraft artillery left the growing air forces vulnerable to enemy raids.

By 1 December a majority of the ten Philippine Army (PA) reserve divisions mobilized by MacArthur in September had been incorporated into the U.S. defense forces. These units, which retained their distinctive uniforms, rations, military law, scale of pay, and promotion list, were lacking in everything from boots to artillery. Many were armed with World War I Enfield or Springfield 1903 rifles. Those with serviceable weapons had little ammunition for training.

MacArthur reorganized his growing command into four separate forces. The North Luzon Force, commanded by Maj. Gen. Jonathan M. Wainwright, defended the most strategically important defensive region, which included the most likely sites for amphibious attacks and the central plains, the only suitable area for large-scale military operations. It also included Bataan Peninsula, the designated fall-back position in the event of an American retreat. Wainwright's forces were organized around one regiment of Philippine Scouts (PS), the 26th Cavalry, one battalion of the 45th Infantry (PS), and two batteries of 144-mm. guns and one of 2.95-inch mountain guns. From the Philippine Army, Wainwright had the 11th, 21st, and 31st Infantry Divisions. The 71st Infantry Division (PA) served as its reserve and could be committed only on the authority of MacArthur.

The South Luzon Force, commanded by Brig. Gen. George M. Parker, Jr., was assigned a zone stretching east and south of Manila. Parker had the 41st and 51st Infantry Divisions (PA) and two batteries from the 86th Field Artillery (PS). The Visayan-Mindanao Force under Brig. Gen. William F. Sharp was composed of the 61st, 81st, and 101st Infantry Divisions of the Philippine Army.

The Reserve Force, composed of the Far East Air Force, the U.S. Army's Philippine Division, and the headquarters units of the Philippine Department and the Philippine Army, was stationed just north of Manila under MacArthur's direct command. The Philippine Division's 10,233 officers and enlisted men made it the largest single concentration of regulars. Maj. Gen. George F. Moore's Harbor Defenses forces, which included four artillery regiments, guarded the entrance to Manila Bay.

Japan's ambitious strategic plan and the continuing war in China sharply limited the size of the force available for the invasion of the Philippines. *Imperial General Headquarters* assigned Lt. Gen. Masa-



*General MacArthur (right) confers with General Wainwright. (DA photograph)*

haru Homma, commander of the *14th Army*, the task of conquering the Philippines. In addition to the *16th* and *48th Divisions*, Homma's army contained 2 tank battalions, 2 regiments and 1 battalion of medium artillery, 3 engineer regiments, 5 antiaircraft battalions, and a large number of service units. The 500 aircraft of the *5th Air Group*, commanded by Lt. Gen. Hideyoshi Obata, would support the invasion from Formosa. The Japanese naval forces included the *3d Fleet*, commanded by Vice Adm. Ibo Takahaski, and the *11th Air Fleet*, commanded by Vice Adm. Nishizo Tsukahara.

Japanese commanders finalized their plan of attack in mid-November. On the first day, army and navy aircraft would establish air superiority by destroying American aircraft and air installations. As these attacks proceeded, the army and navy would establish advance air bases on Batan Island north of Luzon, at Aparri, Vigan, and Legaspi on Luzon Island, and at Davao on Mindanao, the large island south of Luzon. Major elements of the *14th Army* would then land along the Lingayen Gulf north of Manila while a smaller force would launch an assault in Lamon Bay to the south. These forces would converge on Manila, where the Japanese expected the decisive battle to take place. *Imperial Headquarters* assumed that the fall of the capital would mean the destruction of the vast majority of U.S. and Philippine forces. Gaining control of the smaller islands could wait



until they were needed. It gave General Homma an exact timetable: conquer Luzon in fifty days. After that, half of his forces would be removed for operations scheduled elsewhere in Southeast Asia.

## *Operations*

The duty officer at U.S. Asiatic Fleet headquarters in Manila first received word of the Pearl Harbor attack at 0230 on 8 December 1941, but a full hour passed before Brig. Gen. Richard K. Sutherland, MacArthur's chief of staff, heard the news from commercial broadcasts. He immediately notified MacArthur and all commanders that a state of war now existed with Japan. MacArthur ordered his troops to battle stations.

Despite this warning, when the Japanese pilots of the *11th Air Fleet* attacked Clark Field nine hours later, they caught two squadrons of B-17s lined up on the field and a number of American fighters just preparing to take off. The first wave of twenty-seven Japanese twin-engine bombers achieved complete tactical surprise and destroyed most of the American heavy bombers. A second bomber strike followed while Zero fighters strafed the field. Only three P-40s managed to take off. A simultaneous attack on Iba Field in northwest Luzon was also successful: all but two of the 3d Squadron's P-40s were destroyed. The Far East Air Force lost fully half its planes the first day of the war.

The Japanese success in the Philippines hours after the attack on Pearl Harbor has sparked controversy with much finger-pointing that has endured to this day. General Brereton later wrote that he repeatedly sought permission before the attack to launch his B-17s against the Japanese aircraft in Formosa, but General Sutherland denied his requests and also denied him access to MacArthur. MacArthur later insisted that he was unaware of Brereton's request, adding that such a move would have been ill conceived anyway because USAFFE lacked intelligence concerning likely targets. For his part Sutherland claimed that he had ordered Brereton to transfer his bombers away from Clark Field to the relative safety of Mindanao to the south; Brereton countered that he could not have fully complied with the order because of the impending arrival of a new bombardment group from Hawaii. Officers stationed at Clark Field later disagreed about whether their installation had even received warning of the approaching aircraft as the attack was about to start.

With air superiority ensured, the first Japanese amphibious landing took place at dawn on the small northern island of Batan on 8 De-



ember. Landings on Camiguin Island and at Vigan, Aparri, and Gonzaga in northern Luzon followed on 10 December. The American commanders correctly interpreted these landings as diversions for the main Japanese attack and refused to commit their forces. Meanwhile, Admiral Thomas C. Hart withdrew most of his U.S. Asiatic Fleet from Philippine waters following Japanese air strikes that inflicted heavy damage on U.S. naval facilities at Cavite on 8 December. Only submarines were left to contest Japanese naval superiority.

The Army Air Forces stubbornly opposed the diversionary landings despite damaging Japanese strikes against Nicholas Field near Manila on 9 December. Two B-17s attacked the Japanese ships off-loading at Gonzaga on Luzon. Other B-17s with fighter escort attacked the landings at Vigan. In this last coordinated action of the Far East Air Force, U.S. planes damaged two Japanese transports, the flagship *Naga*, and a destroyer and sank one minesweeper. These air attacks, however, could not significantly delay the Japanese assault.

By neutralizing U.S. air and naval power in the Philippines in the first forty-eight hours of the war, the Japanese had gained a position never anticipated in USAFFE plans. Defense of the Philippines now relied solely on its ground forces, which at the time had no lines of supply or escape.

The next move came in the south. Early on the morning of 12 December, the Japanese landed 2,500 men of the *16th Division* at Legaspi on southern Luzon, 150 miles from the nearest American and Philippine forces. General Parker sent only token forces from the 41st and the 51st Divisions (PA) to meet the invaders. A few U.S. fighters and bombers harried the enemy. The attack on Mindanao followed on 19 December when, after a day of bombing, Japanese troops staged a night landing that met little resistance as the badly outnumbered 2d Battalion, 101st Infantry (PA), withdrew. A few American planes, including B-17s stationed in Australia, attacked the beachhead on 22 December, but they could do little to delay the Japanese advance.

The long-awaited main attack began early on the morning of 22 December as the 43,110 men of General Homma's *14th Army* entered Luzon's Lingayen Gulf. The *48th Division* and elements of the *16th Division*, with support from artillery and 80 to 100 tanks, landed at three points along the east coast of the gulf. A few B-17s flying from Australia attacked the invasion fleet, and U.S. submarines harassed it from the adjacent waters, but with little effect. General Wainwright's poorly trained and poorly equipped 11th and 71st Divisions (PA) could neither repel the landings nor pin the

# THE PACIFIC AND ADJACENT THEATERS 1942

— Japanese Limit of Advance

0 1600  
Miles at the Equator











*Members of the 26th Cavalry, Philippine Scouts move into Pangasinan Province, Luzon. (DA photograph)*

enemy on the beaches as outlined in USAFFE's defense plan. The remaining Japanese units of the *48th* and *16th Divisions* landed farther south along the gulf, linking up with the other Japanese forces for the march south. The 26th Cavalry (PS), advancing to meet them, put up a strong fight at Rosario but, after taking heavy casualties and with no hope of sufficient reinforcements, was forced to withdraw. By nightfall, 23 December, the Japanese had moved ten miles into the interior of the island. The next day 7,000 men of the *16th Division* hit the beaches at three locations along the shore of Lamon Bay in southern Luzon where they found General Parker's forces dispersed and unable to offer serious resistance. They immediately consolidated their positions and began the drive north toward Manila where they would link up with the forces advancing south toward the capital for the final victory.

MacArthur realized that the USAFFE defense plan had failed. On 26 December he notified his commanders that Plan ORANGE was now in effect, thereby reactivating the old prewar plan to defend only Bataan and Corregidor indefinitely. If nothing else the revival of Plan Orange threw the Japanese off their tight schedule.

MacArthur's task was to move his men with their equipment and supplies in good order to their defensive positions. He charged General Wainwright's North Luzon Force with holding back the main Japanese assault and keeping the road to Bataan open for the use of the South Luzon Force. To achieve this, Wainwright deployed his forces in a series of defensive lines.

Under Wainwright and Parker the American and Philippine withdrawal to Bataan proceeded quickly and in remarkably good order, given the chaotic situation. A particularly precarious phase came when Wainwright's North Luzon Force connected with Parker's South Luzon Force near the town of San Fernando. Here, both forces had to pass through a single intersection and down one narrow road to reach the peninsula. Although the Japanese failed to take advantage of their air superiority to attack the defenders at this vulnerable choke point, Wainwright was alarmed by the slow movement of the retreating South Luzon Force. He ordered his men to stand firm at San Fernando. The tenacity of the 3d Battalion of the 21st Division (PA), in particular, allowed the Americans and Filipinos to hold this defensive line until 30 December before withdrawing to their final defensive position prior to entering the Bataan Peninsula. The bulk of the South Luzon Force had passed through San Fernando by 2 January, and the rear guard of the American forces followed into Bataan on the 6th. Meanwhile, on the night of 24–25 December, MacArthur had moved his USAFFE headquarters and the Philippine government to Corregidor.

The hasty withdrawal forced the retreating units to leave most of their supplies and equipment behind. At this point the awful consequences of the shifts in USAFFE defense plans became clear. To support MacArthur's plan for a defense of the entire island chain, supplies had been dispersed from their original depots in Bataan and Corregidor to support the units of the North and South Luzon Forces. Now with trucks in short supply, roads congested, and time short, resupply of the Bataan and Corregidor strongholds was impossible. The resulting lack of food, ammunition, weapons, and medical supplies would prove to be the critical factors in the subsequent operation.

Japanese Imperial Headquarters intervened at this point, unwittingly giving the defenders a brief respite. At the beginning of January, Tokyo reassigned the experienced *48th Division*, General Homma's best troops, to the Dutch East Indies; it was to be replaced by the recalled reservists of the *65th Brigade*. The substitution came just as the Americans and Filipinos were digging in and preparing to take their stand.

The plan for Bataan called for two defensive lines. The first extended across the peninsula from Mauban in the west to Mabatang in

the east. Wainwright's I Philippine Corps held the eastern sector. His command included the 1st, 31st, and 91st Infantry Divisions (PA); the 26th Cavalry (PS); and a battery of field artillery and self-propelled 75-mm. guns. General Parker commanded the western sector. His II Philippine Corps, including the 11th, 21st, 41st, and 51st Divisions (PA) and the 57th Infantry (PS), numbered some 25,000 men. MacArthur designated the Philippine Division as the reserve force.

Mount Natib, a 4,222-foot-high promontory that split the peninsula, served as the boundary line between the two corps. The commanders anchored their lines on the mountain, but, since they considered the rugged terrain impassable, they did not extend their forces far up its slopes. The two corps were therefore not in direct contact with each other, leaving a serious gap in the defense line.

Plan ORANGE assumed the 80,000 troops and 26,000 civilians in Bataan would resist for at least six months. In such circumstances the search for food quickly became as urgent a problem as resisting the enemy's assaults. All personnel in Bataan were immediately placed on half rations. In an area where a healthy, active man requires 3,500 to 4,000 calories a day, the hardworking defenders were rationed to 2,000.

Japanese attacks along the first defensive line began in earnest on 9 January with a barrage directed against II Corps and followed up with an assault by two regiments of infantry, tank units, and artillery. After eight days of sometimes intense combat, General Parker committed the Philippine Division, but even with the help of the reserve force he could not destroy the Japanese salient at Abucay Hacienda. The fierce battle did, however, produce instances of uncommon valor. 2d Lt. Alexander R. Nininger, Jr., sacrificed his life and earned the Medal of Honor when, armed with only a rifle and hand grenades, he forced his way into enemy foxholes during hand-to-hand fighting, permitting his unit to retake its lost position. A few days later when Japanese shelling and bombing knocked a battery out of commission, Sgt. Jose Calugas voluntarily crossed open terrain under enemy fire and succeeded in putting the gun back into operation. He courageously held his position and was subsequently awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions.

The Japanese also struck I Corps hard, penetrating the Mauban line in several places. It was Japanese infiltration through the supposedly impassable terrain of Mount Natib, however, that fatally split the American defenses. Forced to evacuate their outflanked position on the evening of 22 January, the defenders completed the task in four days. The new defensive line ran from Bagac on the western shore to just south of Orion on the eastern shore of the

**BATAAN**  
January - April 1942

← Axis of Japanese Attack, JAN  
← Axis of Japanese Attack, APR

ELEVATION IN FEET

0 1000 2000 3000 and Above

0 7  
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*"The General Attack on the Bataan Peninsula"* by Japanese artist J. Mukai.  
(DA files)

peninsula. Although they had ceded much ground during this re-grouping, the Americans and Filipinos now occupied a much more defensible position with the two corps in direct contact.

As the Americans and Filipinos established their new position, the Japanese attempted to bypass the defensive line by staging an amphibious landing along the rugged southern coast of the peninsula. Enemy infantry landed in the service command area held only by an assortment of headquarters and service units, the 1st Constabulary Regiment, and the grounded airmen of five pursuit squadrons. Between 22 January and 2 February, in what became known as the Battle of the Points, the Americans turned back successive Japanese attempts to gain a beachhead. The Japanese suffered heavy casualties in these actions, a total of about 900 men, or two full battalions, of the *20th Infantry*. The defenders suffered approximately 750 casualties, about a third of these killed. Two Scout units were particularly weakened: the 3d Battalion, 45th Infantry, lost 60 percent of its effectives; Company B of the 57th Scouts, 40 percent. Such statistics were especially chilling to MacArthur, because where the Japanese could make good their losses, he could not.



The enemy renewed the offensive against the 4,500-yard Orion-Bagac line on 26–27 January, attacking the II Corps' Sector C along Trail 2. Brig. Gen. Clifford Bluemel had organized his defense of the area on the assumption that he would have most of his 31st Division (PA) and what was left of the 51st Division (PA) to put into the line. In the midst of the fighting Bluemel discovered that two of his regiments had been moved to defend Sector A, leaving no defenders east of Trail 2. The Japanese, also severely debilitated by the continuous fighting, failed to take advantage of the situation, and when the attack finally occurred, Bluemel's hastily reorganized force was able to drive the enemy back. The Japanese were more successful in the I Corps area, but they were again unable to exploit the opening. The Americans soon cut off the Japanese salients, eliminating the so-called Big and Little Pockets. In one fiercely fought action, 1st Lt. Willibald C. Bianchi led his platoon forward against two enemy machine-gun nests, silenced them with grenades, and then manned an anti-aircraft machine gun until his wounds disabled him. His bravery earned him the Medal of Honor. With the attack stalled all along the line, on 8 February General Homma ordered a general withdrawal from the 14th Army's forward positions.

Since 6 January the Japanese had suffered 7,000 battle casualties, with another 10,000 to 12,000 men dying of disease. The unexpected tenacity of the American opposition forced him to call on *Imperial Headquarters* for reinforcements. On the other side, the failure of the seemingly invincible Japanese to break through the defenses lifted American morale. Men in the ranks were anxious to pursue the wounded enemy, but MacArthur and his commanders would not permit such a counterattack. A temporary reversal of Japanese fortunes could not alter the dismal strategic situation. U.S. forces were isolated and could expect no relief in the form of men or supplies, while the enemy could be reinforced at will. Any attempt to take the offensive would only consume scarce resources and exhaust the soldiers already weakened by the long period of reduced rations. The Americans and Filipinos directed their waning energy toward digging in and reorganizing for the next, inevitable attack.

In March the Japanese received individual replacements to fill out the *16th Division* and the *65th Brigade* in addition to units of the *4th Division*, just arrived from China. Meanwhile, the defenders' health steadily eroded and with it their morale. Rations, already cut by 500 calories a day, were now further reduced to 1,000 calories. The Bataan jungle and the starvation diet fostered disease, and malaria took a particularly heavy toll on the men. In the hasty retreat, the medical

supplies which could have alleviated the suffering, particularly the quinine required for treating malaria, had been left behind. At the end of March, Parker estimated the combat efficiency of his troops at 20 percent, and Wainwright reported that 75 percent of his men were unfit for duty. The Japanese kept the pressure on the Americans and Filipinos with harassing artillery fire and infiltration raids.

The steady deterioration of the American position forced President Roosevelt to order MacArthur to move to Australia. On 12 March the commander and his USAFFE staff departed Corregidor by submarine, leaving Wainwright in command. MacArthur left behind orders that Wainwright's men were "to fight as long as there remains any possibility of resistance."

The expected Japanese attack finally began on 3 April after a sustained aerial and artillery bombardment. The strongest enemy push, spearheaded by the *4th Division* and the *65th Brigade*, was directed against Sector D on the II Corps' left flank. The exhausted, malnourished, and dispirited defenders soon gave ground, and the entire line began to crumble. In thirty-six hours the Japanese succeeded in breaching the American line. Command and control in II Corps quickly broke down as troops retreated under heavy air attack.

The destruction of II Corps left I Corps outflanked and it too retreated. There was, however, little space left to retreat. General King, the I Corps commander, soon concluded that continued resistance would endanger the hospital and service areas without any tactical gain, and on 8 April he resolved to surrender. King deliberately did not inform Wainwright, whose orders prohibited surrender, of his decision. King met with Maj. Gen. Kameichiro Nagano on 9 April to arrange terms for the whole Luzon force. King was unable to negotiate terms for all of the forces on Bataan, however, and defending units surrendered unconditionally to individual Japanese units. With Bataan completely in their hands, the Japanese turned their attention to Corregidor.

The fall of Bataan gave the Japanese an excellent location from which to shell Corregidor and a staging area for their assault on the island. It also left them with thousands of prisoners to move out of the area to clear the way for future operations. Accordingly, the weakened defenders were force-marched sixty-five miles north through the peninsula to Camp O'Donnell, a former Philippine Army camp. About 600 Americans and between 5,000 and 10,000 Filipinos died on what has become known as the "Bataan Death March." Although extreme malnutrition, disease, and simple bad planning on the part of their captors deserve the major blame, the

deliberate and arbitrary cruelty of some of the guards led to many of the deaths and immeasurably increased the suffering of those who managed to survive.

The forces on Corregidor Island had weathered the blockade better than those on Bataan. They had proportionately more supplies, an extensive tunnel system affording protection from artillery and aerial bombardment, safeguards against enemy infiltrators, and more disease-free surroundings. Nevertheless, by April the defenders were also showing the effects of prolonged siege. Although fortifications and gun emplacements had withstood the bombardment, the island's installations in the open—such as barracks, warehouses, water tanks, and the power plant—were highly vulnerable.

The Japanese began their final assault on Corregidor with a heavy artillery barrage on 1 May. On the night of 5–6 May, two battalions of the *61st Infantry* landed on the northeast end of the island. Despite a strong resistance, they established a beachhead that was soon reinforced by tanks and artillery. Artillerymen and other miscellaneous Army and Navy personnel fighting as infantry joined the 4th Marine Regiment to meet the invasion. The defenders were quickly pushed back toward the island's Malinta Hill stronghold where their position became untenable. President Roosevelt had personally authorized General Wainwright to decide if or when surrender was proper. Late on 6 May, Wainwright broadcast a message to General Homma asking for terms.

Wainwright tried to limit the surrender to his forces on Corregidor, but Homma insisted that surrender include all U.S. forces in the islands. Convinced that the lives of the 11,000 men left on Corregidor would be unusually endangered, Wainwright finally capitulated. On 8 May he sent a message to General Sharp, commander of the Visayan-Mindanao Force, ordering him to surrender. Sharp complied and in turn ordered his scattered forces, then preparing to fight on as guerrillas, to surrender. Some units refused at first to comply, but one by one they followed orders. Many individuals, however, escaped to carry on the fight as guerrillas. By 9 June, almost all commands had surrendered.

## *Analysis*

The valiant defense of the Philippines had several important consequences. It delayed the Japanese timetable for the conquest of south Asia, causing them to expend far more manpower and material resources than anticipated. Probably of equal importance, the

determined resistance against overwhelming odds became a symbol of hope for the United States in the early, bleak days of the war. When surrender came, the image of the self-proclaimed “Battling Bastards of Bataan” inspired the Allied troops to honor such sacrifices by vowing to retake the islands. MacArthur himself became an important symbol of America’s pledge to return to the Far East.

The Philippine Islands Campaign provided the Army with its first extended combat experience since World War I. Routine reports of new enemy tactics and weaponry were not lost on the leaders of the vast new American Army then being formed. Similarly, the stubborn defense provided important battlefield evidence of the effectiveness of the newer weapons available to MacArthur’s troops.

For all the courage and resourcefulness of the Philippine defenders, their fate was sealed when the Japanese crippled the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor on 7 December and virtually destroyed U.S. air power in the Philippines a few hours later. It remains difficult even today to account for such a tremendous loss of aircraft on the ground a full thirteen hours after the attack on Pearl Harbor. The devastation of the fleet left the Philippine forces isolated in the heart of the Japanese-dominated Pacific. With adequate air cover the Allies might have been able to break through the Japanese blockade and at least partially resupply the defenders with convoys from Australia. But without the fleet or covering air units, it was only a matter of time. Cut off from all support and heavily outnumbered by a determined enemy, the American and Filipino units faced annihilation or surrender.

The predictable fate of the Philippine garrison and MacArthur’s stature as the symbol of the resistance, however, should not obscure the mistakes made in the campaign. The decision to defend the whole island chain was questionable from a military standpoint. The United States was committed by mid-1941 to an Atlantic-first strategy and could not pour into the Philippines the resources required to make the islands secure. The prewar Plan Orange that called for a limited defense of the strongly fortified positions around Manila Bay was more in keeping with the global strategy adopted in 1941. MacArthur’s ambitious USAFFE plan and the defense measures that he and the War Department were able to put in place by 8 December perhaps had some value as a deterrent to Japanese aggression, but they were insufficient to meet an invasion when that deterrence failed.

The most damaging effect of MacArthur’s plan was the dispersal of supplies from the Bataan and Corregidor strongholds. Once the invasion came, the resulting chaos and the poor communications

system made it impossible to re-create adequate depots to supply the fighting troops. Although the Philippine garrison held for just short of the planned six months, adequate supplies might have sustained a longer defense and would certainly have eased the suffering of the men on Bataan. Moreover, it is imperative to meet an invasion in the first critical hours before a beachhead is established, but MacArthur held his best troops, the Philippine Division, in reserve in the center of Luzon. The division was consequently unable to reach the landing sites in time to repulse the invaders, although it was in position to assist in the retreat to Bataan.

The position of MacArthur's forces on the eve of battle suggests that he was in a sense trying to follow both his new defensive plan and Plan ORANGE. It could be argued that his orders combined the least compatible elements of both. But in the larger view, neither plan really held out any hope for defeating the Japanese aggressors. The fact that the campaign in the Philippines showed so clearly that the United States was unprepared for war in December 1941 was perhaps its most important lesson.



# PHILIPPINE ISLANDS 1941–1942

## Further Readings

For the Philippine Islands Campaign, the key volumes in the Center of Military History's United States Army in World War II series are Maurice Matloff and Edwin M. Snell, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1941–1942* (1953); Louis Morton, *Strategy and Command: The First Two Years* (1962) and *The Fall of the Philippines* (1953); and Richard M. Leighton and Robert W. Coakley, *Global Logistics and Strategy, 1940–1943* (1955). Other useful official histories include Ronald H. Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun* (1985); John Toland, *The Rising Sun* (1970); Wesley F. Craven and James L. Cate, eds., *Plans and Early Operations, January 1939 to August 1942* (1948), *The Army Air Forces in World War II*; and Samuel E. Morison, *The Rising Sun in the Pacific* (1948), *History of the United States Naval Operations in World War II*. The best biography of MacArthur is by D. Clayton James whose second of the three-volume *The Years of MacArthur* (1975) covers the war period. Also sound are Robert Considine, ed., *General Wainwright's Story* (1946); Duane P. Schultz, *Hero of Bataan* (1981); John J. Beck, *MacArthur and Wainwright: Sacrifice of the Philippines* (1974); Stanley L. Falk, *Bataan: The March of Death* (1962); and James H. Belote and William M. Belote, *Corregidor: The Saga of a Fortress* (1967); but MacArthur's own memoirs, *Reminiscences* (1964), and those of his staff officers Charles A. Willoughby and John Chamberlain, *MacArthur, 1941–1951* (1954), must be handled with care. Some of the many interesting ground-level accounts include Adalia Marquez, *Blood on the Rising Sun* (1957); Edgar D. Whitcomb, *Escape From Corregidor* (1958); and the many personal accounts of the final American stand and its ensuing grim aftermath.

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Cover: *American tank traps on Bataan, 1942.* (DA photograph)

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