

# **A Letter to All Guerrilleros: Unifying the Mindanao Resistance Movement and Unconventional Warfare**

**A Monograph  
by  
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This monograph begins with an overview of theories of cooperation and resistance that describe common factors that motivate and deter people from joining or supporting guerrilla groups. These factors are then compared with successful and unsuccessful attempts to build a resistance movement using case studies taken from the Philippine Islands during World War II. Finally, the historical record is compared to current United States policy and doctrine for unconventional warfare to explain the importance of gaining support for resistance movements and ways in which unconventional warfare can compliment conventional campaigns.

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## **Abstract**

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United States Special Forces have established a well-deserved reputation as experts in direct action operations to kill or capture high-value targets over the course of the Global War on Terror. In doing so, they have neglected their core mission of unconventional warfare. This monograph uses history, theory, and doctrine to study the successful guerrilla operations conducted in the Philippines against occupying Japanese forces and provides lessons in motivating individuals or groups to join or support guerrilla movements that can be applied to current or future unconventional warfare scenarios to support United States' operational objectives.

This monograph begins with an overview of theories of cooperation and resistance that describe common factors that motivate and deter people from joining or supporting guerrilla groups. These factors are then compared with successful and unsuccessful attempts to build a resistance movement using case studies taken from the Philippine Islands during World War II. Finally, the historical record is compared to current United States policy and doctrine for unconventional warfare to explain the importance of gaining support for resistance movements and ways in which unconventional warfare can compliment conventional campaigns.

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## Introduction

United States Special Forces have used unconventional warfare with varying degrees of success since their creation following the end of World War II. However, after nine years of fighting the Global War on Terror, Special Forces are better known for their capability in conducting unilateral direct action operations against terrorist cells. By relying almost exclusively on this direct action capability, Special Forces has gravitated away from its traditional and core mission of conducting unconventional warfare, a mission set that only Special Forces is specifically trained and organized to carry out. This unique Special Forces capability is now at risk of deteriorating and as a result Lieutenant General John Mulholland, commanding general of United States Army Special Forces Command (USASFC), has issued guidance to the Special Forces community to re-emphasize this capability in both training and practice.<sup>1</sup> One way to emphasize the importance of unconventional warfare as an operational tool is to study the successful guerrilla operations conducted on the island of Mindanao in the Philippines to find common motivational factors that led people to join or support the guerrilla fighters and unify the resistance movement under a collective cause. The successful guerrilla operations conducted in the Philippines against occupying Japanese forces provides lessons in motivating individuals or groups to join or support guerrilla movements that can be applied to current or future unconventional warfare scenarios to support the United States' operational objectives.

This paper will approach the topic of unconventional warfare using history, theory, and doctrine as a means of empirical investigation. This analytic narrative approach will combine research from specific cases with a more general model capable of producing generalizations about future cases of unconventional warfare. This technique is useful in highlighting the complexities found in the case studies and also provides enough analytic rigor to construct

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<sup>1</sup> Lieutenant General John Mulholland, "Memorandum on Remainder of FY 10-FY12 Command Training Guidance," Department of the Army 24 May 2010.

reasonable explanations that are consistent with the evidence provided.<sup>2</sup> The narrative will investigate the Filipino guerrilla movement during the Japanese occupation of the Philippine Islands in the World War II timeframe. The case study of the guerrilla movement on Mindanao is singled out for its simplicity, as it reflects the general trends that occurred throughout all of the islands. However, this example stands out because of its effectiveness and the amount of primary source material available for research. Future studies should look at the island chain as a whole to discover advantages as well as difficulties in consolidating several competing groups into a larger unified resistance movement.

## **Theories of Cooperation and Resistance**

Peter Senge's systems thinking approach provides a framework for seeing interrelationships between actors and events, recognizing patterns created between them, and simplifying complex situations for the purpose of understanding.<sup>3</sup> Human interactions like those found on the Philippine Islands during the Japanese occupation turn difficult problems into dynamically complex situations. One way to better understand these situations is through the systems thinking process -- observing the "structures" that underlie complex situations and recognizing points of leverage that can stabilize or change the system.

These leverage points can be influenced through positive and negative feedback, or actions that increase or decrease the rate of change within a system. By capitalizing on the momentum created by these feedback processes, actors can work to change the system or to maintain a status quo against change, if they are able to manipulate these levers in their favor.<sup>4</sup> Japan introduced a force of change into the existing system of the Philippines and the guerrilla

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<sup>2</sup> Margaret Levi, *Consent, Dissent, and Patriotism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 5-6.

<sup>3</sup> Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of a Learning Organization* (NY: Currency Doubleday, 1990), 68.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 69-92.



forces resisted this change through unconventional warfare. When introduced into a system of conflict, unconventional warfare can function as the lever that produces change or maintains balance within the system. Guerrilla leader Wendell Fertig took further advantage of the leverage provided by unconventional warfare by consolidating several guerilla groups under his leadership, uniting them and linking them to the populace through material support provided by General Douglas MacArthur and moral support from Philippine President Manuel Quezon. Fertig's guerrillas on the island of Mindanao, as well as the guerrilla forces throughout the islands, used this principle of unconventional warfare to their advantage by preventing Japan from securing their control over the population, attriting the Japanese forces, and preparing the islands for MacArthur's return. These actions slowed the momentum of change in the system caused by the introduction of Japanese forces and helped to swing the momentum back towards its stasis point. MacArthur's conventional forces provided the added weight that finally balanced the system back into its original stable state.

During these times of trouble the Filipino population was cut off from its usual outlets for expression. Normally societies are able to express their hopes and fears through speech and other discourse. When the Filipinos' freedoms were cut off from these outlets of expression because of the Japanese tyranny, the people felt threatened and resorted to violence to restore their society and rebalance it towards its ordered state. Guerrilla groups formed to battle for their freedoms and liberties within a society.<sup>5</sup> This battle over public space, and thus the accepted version of societal order, became a battle for control over the population. Battling for control of the population indicates that if the Japanese had been successful in dominating the South Pacific they would have brought about revolutionary changes in Filipino society. According to theorist Stathis

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<sup>5</sup> Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (NY: Viking Press, 1963), 1-11.

Kalyvas, control has a decisive impact on the population's collaboration with one side or the other during a civil war.<sup>6</sup> These same factors are at work in unconventional warfare.

Unconventional warfare differs from civil wars and revolutionary wars in that it is a type of warfare that can be used to exploit opportunities anywhere along the spectrum of conflict -- from the fringes of stable peace to general war.<sup>7</sup> But, there are similarities in the social upheaval and politicalization of war that are found in civil wars, revolutionary wars, and unconventional warfare. Kalyvas defines civil war as "armed conflict within the boundaries of a recognized sovereign entity between parties subject to a common authority at the outset of hostilities."<sup>8</sup> Revolutionary war is harder to define, partly because revolutions are harder to identify; revolutions can only be identified if they are successful and signs of success may not be as dramatic as envisioned or hoped for by the revolutionaries.<sup>9</sup> These two types of conflict are close to the nature of unconventional warfare in that they are intertwined with two intellectual traditions; the concept of stasis and public discord found when discussing conflict within groups and the concepts of sedition and rebellion that emerge at the macro level between groups.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 111.

<sup>7</sup> United States Army Field Manual 3.0, *Operations* (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, Department of the Army, February 2008), Figure 2-2, "The Spectrum of conflict and operational themes," 2-5.

<sup>8</sup> Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, 5.

<sup>9</sup> John Shy and Thomas Collier discuss revolutions as a social phenomenon. In describing the Nazi invasion of Eastern Europe they describe a situation that resembles Japan's invasion of the Philippines. "Under the twin shocks of the collapse of familiar government and the installation of an alien and antagonistic regime, many citizens of the defeated nations were shaken loose from their normal lives. Some turned to resistance as a way of expressing their new uncertainties, fears, and hopes using whatever specific strategies became available in their particular part of Europe. Two general strategies actually developed--one conservative, the other revolutionary." The conservative strategy called for reestablishing the government while the revolutionary strategy would replace the government. Peter Paret, ed., *Makers of Modern Strategy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 833. Also see Crane Brinton, *The Anatomy of Revolution* (NY: Vintage Books, 1965) for a discussion on uniformities common in revolutions.

<sup>10</sup> Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, 18.

Just where the dividing line lies between revolution, civil war, and unconventional warfare is unclear since they all may overlap with one another from time to time or a conflict could shift from one form into another during its existence. However, one characteristic unconventional warfare shares with these other types of war is the struggle over the population and, in turn, the tension placed on the population by the tug of freedom and liberty on one side against tyranny and oppression on the other.<sup>11</sup> Another commonality shared between revolution, civil war, and unconventional warfare is that they all tend to devour their own children. People are forced to choose between one side or the other, and in the end, the losers must suffer the consequences.<sup>12</sup> A third factor they share is that society must often be destroyed for the sake of rebuilding it in a new image that is chosen in great part by the victors.

## **Historical Overview for Unconventional Warfare in the Philippines**

The quest for territory, resources, and power first came to the Philippine Islands in 1521 with the arrival of captain Ferdinand Magellan's small fleet. Prompted by the Portuguese's expansion and success in claiming the rich Spice Islands, Magellan raced westward under the flag of the Spanish King, Charles I, to claim and pacify as much profitable land as possible for his patron.<sup>13</sup> Upon landing on the Philippine island of Cebu, Magellan was undeterred from his mission when he found that the Portuguese had already established close alliances and trading relationships there. He argued to the native king that the Spanish crown was clearly more powerful than the Portuguese, distributed token presents made of silk and glass, and began

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<sup>11</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, 21-28. See Roger Trinquier's *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency*, Mao Zedong's *On Guerrilla Warfare*, David Kilcullen's *Counterinsurgency*, United States Army and Marine Corps Field Manual 3-24: *Counterinsurgency* and others, regarding population as the center of gravity in unconventional warfare.

<sup>12</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, 51.

<sup>13</sup> Walter A. McDougall, *Let the Sea Make a Noise... A History of the North Pacific from Magellan to MacArthur* (NY: Harper Collins, 1993), 26.

converting the island king and queen to Christianity. Soon the native tribe submitted to Magellan's combination of military might and coercive persuasion and swore its loyalty to the king of Spain. Once the Cebu royalty were cowed into submission, Magellan prepared to attack neighboring tribes to expand his hold on the islands.

These other tribes, however, felt threatened and resented a foreign force invading their islands to take both their resources and their freedoms. These tribes united to establish a stiff resistance against the invaders. For his efforts, Magellan was cut down in battle and the small Spanish fleet was forced to take sail.<sup>14</sup> Since then, the Filipino people have replayed this act of uniting against foreign incursions, first against Spain and then the United States. By the time Japanese forces invaded the Philippine islands almost four hundred years after Magellan, the Filipinos were prepared to defend their freedom and liberty against yet another group of foreigners who came to the islands looking for wealth and power. However, like the original tribes scattered throughout the island chain, the Filipino's efforts at resistance were at first unorganized and ineffective. The critical element in driving Japan out of the islands would depend on unifying the resistance movement to support the overall unconventional warfare campaign.

To understand the Filipino resistance against the Japanese invasion it is important to understand the pretext of events and conditions leading up to World War II. These issues include the social contract on the islands between the population and its relationship with the Catholic Church, the *illustrados* or educated elites, and the role of the central government. These factors were further refined by the United States and the pseudo-colonialism following the Spanish-American War. Finally, these experiences fermented a nascent Filipino nationalism that was very reactive in response to Japanese incursions.

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<sup>14</sup> Hugh Thomas, *Rivers of Gold: The Rise of the Spanish Empire, from Columbus to Magellan* (NY: Random House, 2003), 505-506.

The pre-World War II atmosphere in the Philippines was marked by tension, competition, and power struggles. Even as the United States worked to unite the islands with the purpose of turning control over to an independent Filipino government, internal competition prevented unification. Stresses within Philippine society worked to polarize groups away from the authority represented in the combined American-Filipino government. Some, like the Irreconcilables, wanted to press for independence at any cost. Some, such as the Communist Party of the Philippines, resented the wealth and power of elites. Others, who later conspired with the Japanese occupiers, had more selfish motives and desired to gain more status for themselves. At the same time, outside pressures from the United States and regional powers like Japan put further strain on the system.

The Irreconcilables remained active for years after the surrender in hopes of driving out the Americans and gaining independence from the colonizers. This caused the United States to work to mollify resistance among Filipinos in the years following the Philippine-American War (1899 – 1902) and prepare the Philippines for eventual independence.<sup>15</sup> President Theodore Roosevelt issued full and complete pardons to all Filipino participants fighting against the United States three days after the cessation of hostilities.<sup>16</sup> These pardons were an initial step in resolving the conflict and drawing the two sides closer together, but other social issues retarded the unification process. However, this conflict produced cracks in traditional Filipino society that grew and remained unpatched until the end of the Huk Rebellion (1946 - 1954). During this period of unification the Roman Catholic Church, a traditionally powerful force in Filipino society, was disempowered and a considerable amount of church-held land was redistributed

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<sup>15</sup> Stanly Karnow, *In Our Image: America's Empire in the Philippines* (NY: Ballantine Books, 1990), 227-228 and Rene R. Escalante, *The Bearer of Pax Americana: The Philippine Career of William Howard Taft* (Quezon City, Philippines: New Day Publishers, 2007), 48-54.

<sup>16</sup> "General amnesty for the Filipinos; Proclamation issued by the President," *The New York Times*, July 4, 1902.

under the Philippine Organic Act.<sup>17</sup> Other attempts to control and Americanize the Filipinos included the mandatory use of the English language in education. At least five hundred teachers were shipped to the islands to help enforce this policy.

Years of suppression under Spanish rule chafed the peasant class and the instability created during the Philippine-American war offered the peasants a chance to better their standing. Landlord-tenant relations were eased by reforms brought on by the Americans, however, increased education brought increased social awareness. At the same time, landlord-tenant relations began to change with the introduction of a more capitalistic economy brought on by new tariff policies, cash crops, and American produced consumer goods flooding the Filipino market which stifled production and diversity in the Filipino economy.<sup>18</sup>

The disruption to Filipino society caused by capitalism and colonialism prompted the peasant class and their supporters to form the Communist Party of the Philippines as a way to force societal trends back towards their traditional relationships between landlords and tenants. Groups such as the Hukbalahap movement, or Huks, represented the military arm of the Communist Party of the Philippines.<sup>19</sup> As a result of this trend towards capitalism, landlords moved away from their traditional role of supporting their tenants with guarantees of basic food and shelter allowances and the tenants became more reliant on their own labor for survival. Most peasants, however, made a smoother transition into the new and expanding free market system.

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<sup>17</sup> This Act, passed by the American Congress in 1902, also established the Filipino Bill of Rights and appointed two Filipinos to represent the Philippines in the United States Congress though without voting rights.

<sup>18</sup> Benedict J. Kervliet, *The Huk Rebellion: A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1977), 23.

<sup>19</sup> The communist movement grew in the years leading up to the Japanese invasion of the islands. As the group gained more notoriety and support they became more militant and a challenge to the Filipino government. The Huk movement surged again after the Second World War until it was finally put down in 1954 by Filipino President Ramon Magsaysay. See Kervliet's *The Huk Rebellion: A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines* and "The Guerrilla Resistance Movement in the Philippines- 1944," *Intelligence Services, Volume I* (General Headquarters, United States Army Forces in the Pacific, 1948), 12-16, [www.scribd.com/doc/28655061/The-Guerrilla-Resistance-Movement-in-the-Philippines-1944](http://www.scribd.com/doc/28655061/The-Guerrilla-Resistance-Movement-in-the-Philippines-1944) (accessed 12 March 2011).

This transition did not take place immediately and in the meantime many peasants still looked to the traditional upper class *illustrados* for social guidance and, at times, economic support.

A normalcy of sorts developed in the Philippines through the 1920s and 1930s. Filipino attitudes leaned towards acceptance of the American presence and an expectation of independence. However, an undercurrent of competition between groups remained because no one knew how power would be shared once the United States granted independence to the Philippines. Many Filipinos looked to Americans as both guides leading them towards self-rule and as protectors sheltering them from outside aggression. The Constabulary force was one uniting force in Philippine society that the United States used to coax the Philippine government towards independence. Established in 1901 by the United States, the Philippine Constabulary worked to assist military forces in combating revolutionaries, restoring order, and controlling banditry. Originally officered by Americans with Filipinos filling the ranks, control of the organization was eventually turned over to the Philippine government to work alongside the Philippine Army.<sup>20</sup> However, that did not stop General Douglas MacArthur, acting military advisor to the Philippine military, from working to unite Filipino and American military efforts to strengthen the defense of the islands.<sup>21</sup> Later, as the clouds of war approached in mid 1941, MacArthur formed the United States Army Forces in the Far East (USAFFE), which integrated American and Filipino forces under one command.<sup>22</sup>

This history of partnering together from the Constabulary's inception through the Japanese invasion helped to foster a sense of trust and reliance between the militaries of both the United States and the Philippines. This relationship would continue even after the surrender at

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<sup>20</sup> Brian McAllister Linn, *Guardians of Empire: The U.S. Army and the Pacific, 1902-1940* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 14, 19, 24-29.

<sup>21</sup> D. Clayton James, *The Years of MacArthur, Volume I, 1880-1941* (Boston, MA: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1970), 535.

<sup>22</sup> Linn, *Guardians of Empire: The U.S. Army in the Pacific, 1902-1940*, 182-183.

Corregidor. But, the invasion of the Philippine Islands by Japan on December 8, 1941, turned an already unstable environment into a chaotic one. These many factions, facing a power vacuum created by the Japanese after the invasion, eventually began to turn against one another in a fight for power and dominance. As the Filipino society fractured due to invasion, individuals had to choose sides.

## The Invasion

As the tenuous position of the United States in the Philippine Islands began to collapse under the weight of the Japanese 14<sup>th</sup> Army led by Lieutenant General Masaharu Homma, Filipino President Quezon and General MacArthur, acting commander of the combined United States and Filipino forces, were forced to into a tough situation. The entire island chain was too large of a geographic area for MacArthur's forces to effectively defend, numbering just over 31,000 United States and Filipino soldiers.<sup>23</sup>

More importantly, these forces were poorly equipped. Many soldiers were still armed with World War I era Enfield rifles and the divisions only fielded twenty percent of their field artillery requirements. Some units were not especially well trained due to lack of equipment and training facilities as well as difficulties in overcoming the language barrier.<sup>24</sup> The combined United States Forces in the Far East forces were at a disadvantage, especially when facing the battle-tested invasion force. As his forces began to fall back towards the Bataan Peninsula, MacArthur and President Quezon moved out of the capital city of Manila on Christmas Eve 1941 and established their headquarters at Corregidor. Though these actions were in line with War Plan ORANGE, MacArthur was left with few options beyond these tactical maneuvers. With most of

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<sup>23</sup> See Table 4- Strength and Composition of U.S. Army Troops in Philippine Islands, 30 November 1941, in Louis Morton, *United States Army in World War II, The War in the Pacific, The Fall of the Philippines* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 1953), 40, for more detailed information concerning United States troop numbers and disposition of units in the Philippines prior to World War II.

<sup>24</sup> James, *The Years of MacArthur, Volume I, 1880-1941*, 501-503, and Morton, *United States Army in World War II, The War in the Pacific, The Fall of the Philippines*, 35-36.



his forces concentrated at Corregidor, he could hold out against waves of Japanese assaults, but only for so long. MacArthur depended on the aid and reinforcements coming from the United States that were called for in the war plan. Unfortunately, that aid was not coming.<sup>25</sup>

MacArthur commanded the defense at Corregidor for three more months while waiting for America to muster a response. In the mean time, President Quezon lobbied Washington to release monies held in various accounts for the Philippines in the United States.<sup>26</sup> The Japanese began to consolidate their gains on the islands and the defenders at Corregidor, along with a handful of outposts scattered throughout the islands, grew weaker each day. Eventually, under orders from United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt, MacArthur withdrew to Australia in March, pledging his return to the Philippines. Quezon, too, chose to evacuate and established the Commonwealth government in exile in Washington, D.C. He left a parting message to his people, calling on “every Filipino to keep his courage and fortitude and to have faith in the ultimate victory of our cause.”<sup>27</sup> Major General Jonathan Wainwright, who was left in charge as the Allied commander in the Philippines, surrendered Corregidor on May 6, and, just over one month later, the last of the Allied forces surrendered to the Japanese.<sup>28</sup>

MacArthur had foreseen the use of guerrilla warfare as a possibility that would bridge the gap between America’s capabilities in War Plan ORANGE and the reality of resourcing the plan, for it could take some time for the United States to muster aid for the Philippines. The rapid advance of the Japanese invasion forces prevented MacArthur’s staff from fully organizing a

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<sup>25</sup> Carol Morris Petillo, *Douglas MacArthur: The Philippine Years* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1981), 202, and D. Clayton James, *The Years of MacArthur, Volume II, 1941-1945* (Boston, MA: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1975), 13.

<sup>26</sup> H.W. Brands, *Bound to Empire* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1992), 190-191, Morton, *The Fall of the Philippines*, 35-36, Linn, *Guardians of Empire*, 244-245, and James, *The Years of MacArthur, Volume II, 1941-1945*, 25-26.

<sup>27</sup> Carlos P. Romulo, *I Saw the Fall of the Philippines* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., 1943), 231.

<sup>28</sup> James, *The Years of MacArthur, Volume II, 1941-1945*, 148.

resistance movement. That did not stop other Americans or Filipinos from forming guerrilla units from the broken remnants of the Filipino forces or organizing agents to infiltrate Japanese held areas and report on their movements. Several Americans who were cut off from their parent units decided that surrender was not for them. Colonel John P. Horan, Captain Walter Cushing, Captain Walter Praeger, and Major Everett Warner all established guerrilla camps on northern Luzon while Colonel Claude Thorpe organized partisans in central Luzon. MacArthur also directed Major General William Sharp to prepare for guerrilla warfare on Mindanao. MacArthur hoped that improvised guerrilla warfare would wear away at Japanese defenses and pave the way for his return. However, the plan for guerrilla warfare was never fully developed and the loose infrastructure that was in place collapsed soon after the surrender.<sup>29</sup>

## Mindanao

The breakdown of Philippine social order that was started by the Japanese troops assaulting beachheads on Luzon and Mindanao continued as the defending forces and government crumbled upon surrender. Disruption from the invasion caused ripples that reached all aspects of Mindanao's society. On Mindanao, refugees moved in both directions up and down the roads because no one was sure where to go. Governmental ministers as well as local leaders went into hiding. Schools closed. Merchants began marking up their prices as worried shoppers hoarded food and other essentials. At the same time banks refused to extend credit or honor personal checks. Law and order was non-existent as the Japanese disbanded police forces, but could not replace their capabilities due to manning shortages.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Russell W. Volckmann, *We Remained: Three Years Behind the Enemy Lines in The Philippines* (NY: Norton, 1954) 29-35, and David W. Hogan, Jr., *Special Operations in the Pacific* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army Center for Military History publication 70-42, 1992), 65-67.

<sup>30</sup> Virginia Hansen-Holmes, *Guerrilla Daughter* (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 2009), 30.

Filipino families withdrew from the markets and other gathering places. While the Japanese had dictated that all American and Filipino service members, along with any other Americans on the islands, turn themselves in to the authorities, many American and Filipino soldiers, along with other United States' citizens and their families who were working in the islands, felt it their duty to continue to fight.

Stories of atrocities committed in China as well as other areas conquered by the Japanese reached Mindanao in conjunction with the invasion. American businessmen and their families who had decided to remain on the islands rather than departing for home did not want to find out if these rumors were true. Charles Hansen worked as the superintendent at the East Mindanao Mining Company. He knew that surrendering his family to the Japanese was not an option, therefore he made arrangements through local friends and contacts to secure his wife and daughters while he and his three teenage sons volunteered their service to the United States for the "duration of the war."<sup>31</sup> His last acts before abandoning the mining facility he ran included destroying its machinery and collapsing the mineshaft.

Churches, especially the Catholic Church which rooted itself in Philippine society during the Spanish colonial period, remained open for as long as possible on Mindanao to provide shelter to the refugees and minister to their flocks. Father Edward Haggerty, teaching at a college in northern Mindanao, saw to it that his pupils were returned to their families and distributed all of the school's supplies to local families. He then opened all of the office drawers and safes before carefully locking the doors behind him. He left the keys in the locks so that no one would have to break the doors down before leaving on a back trail with a few supplies to the jungle covered mountains' in the interior.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Virginia Hansen-Holmes, *Guerrilla Daughter*, 31-33.

<sup>32</sup> Edward Haggerty, *Guerrilla Padre in Mindanao* (NY: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1946), 13.

As the Japanese maneuvered to consolidate their control across the archipelago the few remaining sailors and soldiers began their withdrawal to the designated surrender points, burning and destroying anything of value as they fell back. Navy Lieutenant Iliff David Richardson served on a motor torpedo boat until it was sunk from under him the day before surrender. Stuck ashore on Mindanao, he found himself caught up in burning warehouses full of stores to keep them from the enemy's hands. By increasing the disorder in an already unstable environment, they were denying the Japanese a physical place to control and burdening them with the task of rebuilding order. With the Japanese landing on the beaches and the town burning around him, Richardson gathered a few cans of food and a .45 pistol before setting off for the hills with a buddy. The city continued to burn behind him.<sup>33</sup>

Another civilian, Wendell Fertig, was working on the islands as an engineer and also held a reserve commission in the United States Army. He was called to active duty shortly before the war broke out to construct airfields for the Corps of Engineers.<sup>34</sup> Like MacArthur and President Quezon, he too spent time on Corregidor Island holding back the Japanese. But, just before the surrender, he was sent to Mindanao to oversee airfield construction projects there. However, Lieutenant Colonel Wendell Fertig never reached Major General William Sharp's command post on Mindanao. After safely reaching the island, Fertig was cut off from Sharp's position. Fertig moved cautiously to link up with Sharp, but he sensed that the fight was over. All along the road he witnessed Filipino soldiers moving in small groups, each man carrying a miniature Rising Sun flag as a sign of surrender. Fertig and his small party, not wanting to surrender and wanting even less to be captured, took to the jungle and relied on the kindness of the locals for support.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Ira Wolfert, *American Guerrilla in the Philippines* (NY: Simon and Schuster, 1945), 25-29.

<sup>34</sup> *Intelligence Activities in the Philippines During the Japanese Occupation, Documentary Appendices (II), Volume II, Intelligence Series* (General Headquarters: United States Army Forces, Pacific, 10 June 1948), "G2 Staff Study of the Philippine Islands Situation, 25 February 1944," Appendix XV, 6.

<sup>35</sup> John Keats, *They Fought Alone* (NY: J.B. Lippencott and Company, 1963), 9-10.

Over the next few months that Fertig remained in hiding he began to tap into the “bamboo telegraph” of rumor and information to learn of other service members who refused to surrender and he began to puzzle out what was happening on the island. Fertig knew from his past work experience on the islands that the Philippine people were quite comfortable with their relationship with the United States as their protector from outside aggression. Indeed, they looked at the Americans as their big brother who would look out for their best interests. However, since the shocking success of the Japanese invasion, the Filipinos were uncertain if they could really trust in their big brothers.<sup>36</sup> Fertig wondered if there was any chance to regain their trust. He also heard not just of individuals who were still evading capture, he heard of groups forming guerrilla bands.

Even though he was able to recognize these two trends early on, it took Fertig a longer time to foresee opportunity in them. Though the islands had technically been self-governing since 1935 and were scheduled for official self-rule by 1945, there was little feeling of nationalism among the disparate villages, cities, islands and religious groups that made up the Philippines. Filipino society is marked by the tradition of social obligation, known as *utang na loob* (an internal debt of gratitude) and is counter-posed by the fear of being labeled as shameful (*walang hiyu*). Examples of these relationships can be seen within the family and community constructs of the Philippines. Filipinos are expected to show more loyalty to their close family members than to their distant relations and to their local community over a distant province. This pattern of allegiances places great importance on the character of individuals as reliable within relationships. A Filipino’s loyalty started with his own family and extended outwards, but rarely reached beyond his own barrio.<sup>37</sup> Many so called guerrilla groups were started as neighborhood

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<sup>36</sup> Brands, *Bound to Empire*, 65-66 and 91.

<sup>37</sup> David Joel Steinberg, *Philippine Collaboration in World War II* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1967), 4-7.

militias that were responsible for protecting homes from bandit gangs that sprang up as social disorder increased. Some of these militias, too, turned into raiding parties as competition for scarce food and supplies increased. Even those groups with a more patriotic bent who were determined to continue the fight against the Japanese found themselves competing against each other for supplies and recruits.<sup>38</sup>

## Japanese Occupation

For their part, the Japanese did not have a particularly sophisticated pacification plan prepared for the islands after the main fighting subsided and there is no mention of what is today termed “stability operations” in Japanese military doctrine.<sup>39</sup> This lack of control kept the Philippines in a state of disorder. The Japanese disbanded the Philippine Constabulary Forces, which contributed to the chaotic atmosphere and left the population without a layer of protection from banditry and lawlessness. The Japanese soldiers on occupation duty were also too few in numbers to effectively protect the population and their behavior contributed to the problem. Following the same trends they took in China, Burma, Malaysia and other areas they conquered, the Japanese suppressed the Philippine population through terror. Rape, savagery, and murder occurred in every country Japan occupied. The looter’s cage, hangings in conspicuous public

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<sup>38</sup> Michael Anthony Balis, “The American influence on the Mindanao resistance during the Second World War,” (M.A. Thesis, Old Dominion University, 1987), 23-24, and Keats, *They Fought Alone*, 85-86.

<sup>39</sup> For example, a translation of a 1938 Japanese army tactics manual lists several tasks regarding attack and defense, but stops short of advising Japanese commanders on what they are to do with the civil populace after the fighting stops. Another report issued in 1943 by the U.S. Board of Economic Warfare delves into techniques used by the Japanese to manage civil affairs in occupied territories, covering topics from establishing a government and legal system to organizing and economy and emplacing social controls. However, it seems that a gap existed in Japan’s strategy between fighting and governance. See *Applied Tactics Japanese Army*, Translation of “Oyo Senjutsu No Sanko,” Revised 1938, a Reference Manual on Applied Tactics adopted for use in the Japanese Military Academy, Translated by Pacific Unit, Military Intelligence Division, Washington, D.C. October, 1943, available online at the Combined Arms Research Library Digital Library World War II Operational Documents collection and *Japanese Techniques of Occupation: Key Laws and Official Documents*, Volume II- Manchukuo compiled by the Board of Economic Warfare, Reoccupation Division in cooperation with the Enemy Branch, June 1943, also available online at the Combined Arms Research Library Digital Library World War II Operational Documents collection.

places, and executions were common ways of terrorizing the Filipino populace into subservience.<sup>40</sup>

The policies of both the Japanese government and army were deliberately directed at brutality, exploitation, and murder of civilians and prisoners of war. The Japanese army's treatment of civilians ranged from ill disciplined to inhumane -- killing over 200,000 Chinese in Nanking and commonly killing smaller groups on a regular basis.<sup>41</sup> Military prisoners were treated with even more contempt and less care due to the Bushido code of the warrior. Fear of Japanese atrocities caused distrust to build across Filipino communities. Residents in Japanese garrisoned districts and the local officials came to be branded as ipso facto pro-Japanese.<sup>42</sup> The Japanese control over these areas, based on their occupation, led the greater Filipino population to believe that the Filipinos in that area supported the occupying army.

Anxiety grew throughout the islands as Japanese advances into the Pacific became more pronounced causing some Filipinos to question their loyalties. Japanese businessmen spent large sums of money on officials and businessmen to counterbalance anti-Japanese fears. Businessman and "Japanophile" Pio Duran was convinced that, "no other recourse was open to the Filipinos

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<sup>40</sup> Charles Parsons, Lieutenant Commander, United States Naval Reserve, "Report on Conditions in the Philippine Islands as of June 1943," *Intelligence Activities in the Philippines During the Japanese Occupation- 1943* (General Headquarters, Southwest Pacific Area, Military Intelligence Section, General Staff, June 1943), 1.

<sup>41</sup> Saburo Ienaga, *The Pacific War, 1931-1945* (NY: Random House, 1978), 186-187, and International Tribunal for the Far East Judgment, Hyper War Foundation at <http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/PTO/IMTFE/IMTFE-8.html> (accessed 27 February 2011). Also see Robert Ross Smith, *The Approach to the Philippines* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 1953) for other descriptions of Japanese treatment of civilian populations in the Southwest Pacific.

<sup>42</sup> Elmer Lear, *The Japanese Occupation of the Philippines, Leyte, 1941 – 1945* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1961), 27-28. During interviews with former guerrillas, Lear found, "Lot's of guerrillas told me: 'Tacloban people, pro-Jap. They do not fight Jap, they live in Jap town, therefore, they pro-Jap. If I catch Tacloban man, I kill him.'"

than to side with their Japanese brothers of the North and help them preserve Asia for the Asiatics.”<sup>43</sup>

Others foresaw that Japan could pose a threat to the Philippines after they gained their independence from the United States and initial Japanese successes during the invasion helped to influence some to ally themselves with the winning side. To consolidate their gains, Japanese commanders issued Order Number 1, which formed a puppet government on the islands that was reliant upon Filipino leaders who were recently deposed by the Japanese. Manila mayor Jorge Vargas issued a statement saying, “Personally, this confirms my confidence and trust in the true and benevolent intentions of the Japanese Imperial Forces, and I am glad I have been given the opportunity to cooperate and work with them.”<sup>44</sup> By wooing Filipino businessmen and compelling leaders to collaborate with them, Japan expected Filipinos would believe in the propaganda and rally to build a new order in the east, which they labeled the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.<sup>45</sup>

The Japanese attempts to control the population met with limited success. Japan’s authority and that of the puppet government extended only as far as the military was able to reach. Thus large areas remained physically out of Japanese control while the population contested areas that were occupied by the Japanese. The propaganda of co-prosperity also failed to influence most of the population due to the obvious disparity in economic repression and treatment of the Filipinos by the occupation forces. Treatment of the civilian population grew more vicious as United States forces drew closer to the islands.<sup>46</sup>

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43 Pio S. Duran, *Philippine Independence and the Far East Question* (Manila: Community Publishers, 1935), 125.

44 *Manila Tribune*, January 23, 1942, 1, cited in Steinberg, *Philippine Collaboration in World War II*, 36.

45 Steinberg, *Philippine Collaboration in World War II*, 44.

46 Hogan, Jr., *U.S. Army Special Operations in World War II*, 69.



## Building Resistance on Mindanao

As society broke down under pressure of the invasion, one guerrilla leader who was also a former junior lieutenant in the Philippine Constabulary, Luis Morgan, rose to prominence on Mindanao. Like other guerrilla groups, his was formed around a core of constables who withdrew into the hills once they realized organized resistance had collapsed. Morgan collected stragglers and volunteers on his way into the mountains so that by the time he reached a safe area and set up his camp near the village of Baroy he had assembled a guerrilla group numbering almost 500 former soldiers and police.<sup>47</sup> Initially Morgan's guerrilla band protected the village area, which was made up mostly of Christians, from marauding Moros. Once established as a powerbroker in the region, Morgan took advantage of his status and began to consolidate his power by absorbing smaller guerrilla bands into his fold. Morgan also promoted himself to the rank of captain in order to better command his growing unit.

However, as the size of his unit increased, it also attracted other Filipino officers who challenged Morgan's assumed status as commander. Instead of fighting the Japanese, the rival guerrilla groups began fighting one another as they positioned for dominance. Personal gain outweighed any obligation to protect the population or to fight back against the Japanese. Out of desperation Morgan looked to Fertig (or more precisely, to Fertig's rank and status as an American officer) as a solution to this problem. Placing an American senior ranking officer in charge of the group would, in Morgan's mind, end this infighting as well as keep open the possibility of retaining his own power and status that went along with leading the guerrilla group. Fertig would be the figurehead that could rally the separate guerrilla units while Morgan kept the

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<sup>47</sup> Keats, *They Fought Alone*, 84-85.

power and status that went along with field command.<sup>48</sup> For their part, the Japanese were content to let the guerrillas kill each other off because it saved them the trouble.

Morgan's emissary approached Fertig with an offer to cede command of his guerrilla organization to the higher-ranking American, with the caveat the Morgan could retain tactical command in the field. Morgan also concocted, as part of his scheme to hold onto his power, a story that Fertig would play the part of a General Officer sent to the Philippines by MacArthur via clandestine submarine to not just represent MacArthur and the aid he promised to the islands, but to lead a guerrilla resistance movement.<sup>49</sup>

As bombastic as this plan sounded, it presented Fertig with an idea and an opportunity. His idea, based on the news of guerrilla infighting, was to unite them all under one command so as to direct their actions and movements to disrupt the Japanese and challenge their control of the islands. The opportunity he had been waiting for also presented itself. The Filipinos, who had lost faith in their American big brothers, were now looking for the experience and leadership Americans could provide to the guerrilla effort. When he first went into hiding, Fertig knew that he, as an American, could not start a resistance movement on the islands because of the loss of face that followed MacArthur to Australia. It was possible that an American could lead them, but the motivation must come from the Filipino people.<sup>50</sup> Now that motivation presented itself to Fertig.

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<sup>48</sup> Hogan, *U.S. Army Special Operations in World War II*, 71.

<sup>49</sup> This version of the truth is retold in the semi-biographical work on Wendell Fertig by John Keats. Some speculate that Fertig concocted this story about a General's rank to displace the blame he was sure to take from the War Department for promoting himself without authorization. Colonel Clyde Childress, who served as a battalion commander in the Philippines during the invasion and became connected with Fertig's resistance movement on Mindanao, became adamantly outspoken on this point after the war. See Clyde Childress' opinions in his review of Keats' work, "Wendell Fertig's Fictional Autobiography: A Critical Review of *They Fought Alone*," for more insight, [ahcf.virtual-asia.com/html/pdf/123\\_Wendell\\_Fertig\\_s.pdf](http://ahcf.virtual-asia.com/html/pdf/123_Wendell_Fertig_s.pdf) (accessed 12 January 2011).

<sup>50</sup> Keats, *They Fought Alone*, 84-86.

Fertig weighed his options and decided that American leadership could bind the several guerrilla groups into a greater resistance movement. Though he was quite interested in leading a Filipino guerrilla movement against the Japanese, he knew he had to play his cards right so as not to appear too anxious or desperate for the position. Any sense on the guerrilla's part that Fertig was not a capable and confident leader could easily shatter the motivation that he depended on to support his authority as commander. Before taking Morgan up on his offer to lead the group, Fertig made a command inspection of the unit and several others in the area to assess their potential and get a feel of whether uniting the groups could be possible. He was not overly impressed with what he saw. The average guerrilla was eager to fight, but whatever discipline these men had as soldiers or constables was gone.<sup>51</sup> There was no staff organization or structured vision for the groups and, more importantly, there was no popular support for them either. Knowing that many challenges had to be overcome in building a guerrilla organization, Fertig accepted command of Morgan's troops, commissioning the officers into the United States Army under his authority as the senior American serviceman on the islands.<sup>52</sup>

Next, Fertig issued an announcement and had it distributed throughout Mindanao. It read:

*Letter to all guerrilleros, as senior United States officer in the Islands, Lieutenant Colonel Wendell W. Fertig, CE, AUS, assumes command of the Mindanao-Visayan Force, USFIP, with the rank of brigadier general. All organized units resisting our common enemy are invited to serve under this command. Unified resistance is the key to success.*

*W.W. Fertig, Brigadier General, Commanding*<sup>53</sup>

The response was mixed. Some were drawn to the symbolism embodied in Fertig's assumed rank and the accompanying story of his mission from Australia. Others were skeptical of

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<sup>51</sup> Ira Wolfert, when he first observed Morgan's men, noted they were a "dirty, ragged, unshaven, cutthroat-seeming crew." Wolfert, *American Guerrilla in the Philippines*, 122.

<sup>52</sup> Balis, "The American influence on the Mindanao resistance movement during the Second World War," 55, Haggerty, *Guerrilla Padre in Mindanao*, 244-245, and Keats, *They Fought Alone*, 100.

<sup>53</sup> Keats, *They Fought Alone*, 122, (emphasis from the original).

the story in itself and others were envious of Fertig's position and resentful that they were supposedly passed over by MacArthur to lead a guerrilla movement. For his part, Fertig knew that he was walking a fine line in assuming command of the Philippine guerrilla movement and promoting himself to the rank of general officer without authorization. He felt that the risk was worthwhile, though, in order to unify the movement. He gambled that Filipino officers would not challenge his position and that he could deal with other Americans separately if anyone raised the issue. He also sensed that he could justify his new rank to General MacArthur by stating the case that the Philippine resistance movement was large enough to be divided into several military districts and a ranking general officer was needed to oversee the movement. He could fulfill this position as the senior ranking officer representing American interests in the Philippines since all of the other general officers had either surrendered, been captured, or escaped to Australia.<sup>54</sup>

Second order effects from Fertig's announcement were unexpected. Guerrilla activity all over the island of Mindanao increased dramatically. Some commanders, who wanted to impress the American general, worked hard to show the effectiveness of their guerrillas. Others, especially some Filipino leaders who were looking beyond the end of the war to position themselves for political office, increased their efforts to show that they did not need any help from the Americans. Fertig did gain their attention, though, and slowly began to unite smaller groups into a coordinated and organized guerrilla movement.<sup>55</sup> Fertig had the rank he needed to lead the disparate guerrilla groups, but he did not have all of the ingredients to unite them into a successful resistance movement.

Fertig also needed to gain the support of the populace, to unite them behind the guerrillas in the same way that he was uniting the many guerrilla groups. He next started on a campaign to

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<sup>54</sup> Keats, *They Fought Alone*, 192-193.

<sup>55</sup> Keats, *They Fought Alone*, 123-125, and Balis, "The American influence on the Mindanao resistance movement during the Second World War," 56-60.

win the support of the islanders. The three pillars of Filipino society -- the social leaders, government officials, and clergy -- were reluctant to join the guerrilla movement, which until this time they associated with banditry and warlordism. If he could sway these social influencers to his side the bulk of the population would follow. Fertig had to show some sort of legitimacy as a military organization. There was tension between the upper-class *illustrados*, who had lost much of their power and authority in society after the invasion, and the up and coming guerrillas made up of peasants, Muslims, and other minorities. Former leaders and elected officials of the Filipino government did not yet trust the guerrillas enough to form a shadow government under their protection. The Catholic Church was trying to maintain its neutrality for the benefit of the population and did not want to lose what little ground they still had with the Japanese by becoming associated with outlaws.<sup>56</sup> The rest of the population was also distrustful of the guerrilla groups because they were often preyed upon to provide food, shelter, and at times, protection to the guerrillas. And, all of these groups also had to worry about facing Japanese reprisals for aiding a resistance movement.

For the most part, Fertig's attempts to persuade any of these groups to support him fell on deaf ears. The Japanese, too, received little cooperation from the population and the cooperation that did take place was merely a means of survival. The populace was determined to wait out the occupation, but kept their bolo knives sharpened, waiting for the right opportunity to make use of them.<sup>57</sup> To win them over, Fertig needed to recruit allies representing the educated upper social class, which still symbolized leadership to the Filipino peasants, members of the government who

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<sup>56</sup> For example, priests had to walk a thin line when providing funeral rites to guerrillas and their supporters without being accused of inciting rebellion by the Japanese. A Dutch priest on Mindanao explained that "I have the population to think of as well as my own conscience." See Wolfert, *American Guerrilla in the Philippines*, 78-79.

<sup>57</sup> *Intelligence Activities in the Philippines, Vol. I* (General Headquarters: United States Army Forces, Pacific, 10 June 1948), 7.

represented authority, and the clergy because of their strong religious ties throughout the islands. Fertig accomplished this by creating and emphasizing the legitimacy of the guerrilla movement.

Charles Hansen, the mining superintendent who fled with his family to escape the approaching Japanese, received orders from Fertig's headquarters designating him as procurement officer with the authority to collect and distribute fuel, food, and other supplies for the movement.<sup>58</sup> Coming in the form of "official orders," Hansen's authority to requisition supplies for the resistance brought with it the responsibility to account for them. Looting, robbing, and banditry on behalf of the guerrillas virtually stopped. This had a cascading effect on the other social pillars. Father Haggerty, who at first had argued that it was not the clergy's place to "sway people to begin armed guerrilla," threw the support of the church behind Fertig's movement once it became clear the island's population would rather resist the Japanese than live as conquered people.<sup>59</sup>

Fertig also issued scrip to restart Mindanao's economy and formed crude processing factories that made soap, tuba beer from coconut milk and tuba alcohol that could be used in place of gasoline to run engines and machinery.<sup>60</sup> These efforts helped to lessen the burden on the island's populace by providing goods that were no longer available in the marketplace and currency that could be used in place of bartering.<sup>61</sup> Fertig made initial progress through the fall and winter of 1942 by organizing a skeletal governmental system and restoring prewar mayors and province governors to their previous positions who would work in the shadow of the puppet government imposed by the Japanese. Through Fertig, the civil government was able to hold prices at prewar levels so that the average peasant could afford to purchase enough rice or corn to

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<sup>58</sup> Hansen-Holmes, *Guerrilla Daughter*, 75.

<sup>59</sup> Haggerty, *Guerrilla Padre in Mindanao*, 53-54.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>61</sup> John E. Sandroock, "The Philippine Guerrilla Notes of Mindanao Island," *The International Bank Note Society Journal*, Volume 50, Issue 1, 2011.

feed his family. By March 1943 areas that were controlled by the resistance functioned almost as well as they did prior to the war.<sup>62</sup> These steps created inroads to the population, but did not yet realize the uniting effect that Fertig was looking for.

Fertig took a further step in formalizing his command in the eyes of the public by announcing the reestablishment of United States and Filipino Commonwealth authorities. The proclamation read in part:

In [sic] behalf of the United States of America, the Philippine Commonwealth government is re-established in those regions [of Mindanao] under the military authorities. All civil laws and regulations will be followed except in those cases they conflict with Military Laws. In such cases Military Laws will prevail.<sup>63</sup>

This proclamation officially instituted the guerilla bands into a structured and sanctioned military unit subject to Philippine laws and regulations. Within the ranks, this announcement created a unified force, fighting under a common command. To the populace, it transformed the bands of militia and brigands into soldiers and helped to solidify the bond of trust between Fertig's military operations and the build up of civil infrastructure and governance.

## **Material and Moral Support to Unconventional Warfare on Mindanao**

The impetus to resist the Japanese now smoldered throughout islands, but Fertig needed some type of accelerant that would unite the small resistance brush fires into an inferno. General MacArthur had always represented America's commitment to the Filipinos and could possibly reignite the fire if he was able to signal his intentions and provide some type of support to the islands. Both Fertig and MacArthur were thinking along these lines. Beginning in October 1942

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<sup>62</sup> Balis, "The American influence on the Mindanao resistance movement during the Second World War," 37, and "The Guerrilla Resistance Movement in the Philippines- 1944," Intelligence Services, Volume I, 335-367, [www.scribd.com/doc/28655061/The-Guerrilla-Resistance-Movement-in-the-Philippines-1944](http://www.scribd.com/doc/28655061/The-Guerrilla-Resistance-Movement-in-the-Philippines-1944) (accessed 12 March 2011).

<sup>63</sup> Hansen-Holmes, *Guerrilla Daughter*, 66.

MacArthur's headquarters began to receive weak and irregular radio messages in Morse code from Captain Ralph Praeger in northern Luzon and other attempted radio contacts from Lieutenant Colonel Macario Peralta also on Luzon. These spotty contacts, along with the testimony of a few survivors who were able to reach Australia by boat, gave MacArthur an estimate of the resistance movement and its potential to wage guerrilla warfare and gather intelligence for planning future operations.<sup>64</sup> By early 1943, Fertig sent two emissaries on a small fishing boat, outfitted with both sails and an outboard motor, to Australia so that they could describe the situation on Mindanao to MacArthur. He was also able to piece together a crude radio to make contact with Australia and request support from MacArthur.<sup>65</sup>

Since leaving the Philippines in 1942, General MacArthur was determined to return as soon as possible. He favored a direct approach that would take him from Australia to New Guinea to Mindanao. Advancing through the Central Pacific by way of the Marshall Islands would be too time consuming and costly.<sup>66</sup> After several planning conferences the Joint Chiefs of Staff declared that the Pacific strategy would include a reinvasion of the Philippines and directed that Mindanao be the target for invasion.<sup>67</sup> Mindanao became a significant objective for the Southwest Pacific Area forces and MacArthur began to set the conditions for his invasion by reinforcing the guerrillas and gathering intelligence.

Recognizing the potential to solidify the resistance movement, MacArthur sent a submarine, the *USS Tambor*, to Mindanao. Filled with arms, a dozen radio sets with generators, and a few tons of supplies the sub arrived at Fertig's position on March 5, 1943. Lieutenant Commander Charles "Chick" Parsons and Captain Charles Smith escorted the cargo. MacArthur

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<sup>64</sup> James, *The Years of MacArthur, Volume II, 1941-1945*, 509.

<sup>65</sup> "Philippine Island Monitoring Mission, 1942-1944," Messages Between U.S./Philippine Guerrilla Forces and HQ, SWPA (December 1942-November 1943), Volume I, 2-5, and Keats, *They Fought Alone*, 171-187.

<sup>66</sup> Smith, *The Approach to the Philippines*, 3-4.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.



sent these two men to the islands as his trusted agents to link up with Fertig, assess the situation, and report back to him on the best prospects for leadership. As the two men traveled to different guerrilla districts throughout the islands they also established coast watcher stations to report on Japanese shipping traffic. Though the arms and communication equipment were needed to fight the Japanese, some of the best things that MacArthur sent to Fertig on the first submarine were matchbooks with his picture on them and recent copies of *Life* magazine -- each readily recognizable symbols of MacArthur's pledge to return and America's commitment to the islands.<sup>68</sup>

Fertig's radio connection to the outside world provided more than material support from MacArthur, it also brought moral support from President Quezon. Once the Japanese consolidated their control, the islands had essentially been cut off from the rest of the world. Almost no news came from the outside and the little that did was always suspected as planted rumors and misinformation by the Japanese. Communication with the Philippine government in exile was needed to strengthen the morale of the civilian population who "had been denied the truth of world news" since the Voice of Freedom radio went off the air when General Wainwright surrendered his forces on Corregidor.<sup>69</sup>

President Quezon, who had been active since his departure from Manila in drumming up American aid for the islands, was ready to send what support he could to his people. Almost as soon as reliable communications were established on Mindanao, Quezon began providing guidance on printing money for distribution amongst the population and to reinforce the Free Philippine shadow government with the power of the presidential office and his executive authority. Quezon sent the following message to authorize funding from the Filipino treasury:

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<sup>68</sup> James, *The Years of MacArthur, Volume II, 1941-1945*, 510, and Haggerty, *Guerrilla Padre in Mindanao*, 93-95.

<sup>69</sup> WYY to KFS, 17 FEB 43, Messages Between U.S/Philippine Guerrilla Forces and HQ, SWPA (December 1942-November 1943), Vol. II, 0084.

FINANCIAL SITUATION COLON PERMISSION TO ACT WITH AUTHORITY FROM PI GOVT TO ISSUE EMERGENCY CIRCULATING MONEY PRINTED AND ADVANCED TO US FIP CMA UNDER SAME CONDITIONS AS PRIOR SURRENDER THREE THOUSAND PESOS MONTHLY PD FUTURE PLANS DASH WILL ISSUE PROCLAMATION CANCELLING AUTHORITY GRANTED CURRENCY BOARD OF OTHER PROVINCES MINDANAO TO PRINT EMERGENCY NOTES PD<sup>70</sup>

President Quezon's message to his civilian representatives implied that Mindanao was the center of resistance for the islands. He also granted Fertig control over the finance board as well as the power to officially print government notes, which further established Fertig's influence over the resistance movement in the eyes of the civil populace and strengthened the legitimacy of the guerrilla force.

President Quezon also sent messages of support to the government and military officials who were operating shadow governments as part of the resistance movement on the islands. These messages were meant to boost the moral of individuals, but more importantly, they were meant to sustain the hopes of the islands' populace through word of mouth and circulation along the "bamboo telegraph." Often, the messages conferred Quezon's pride and gratitude in the people's efforts to resist Japanese occupation and promised that he and General MacArthur would not forget their suffering. America's inevitable conquest and victory against the Japanese were other common themes.<sup>71</sup> Many of Quezon's messages carried a similar message:

I HAVE WATCHED THE HEROIC AND UNRELENTING STRUGGLE THAT YOU AND YOUR FELLOW PATRIOTS ARE WAGING TO MAINTAIN ALOFT THE TORCH OF LIBERTY... PD A BRILLIANT CHAPTER [IS BEING WRITTEN] IN PHILIPPINE HISTORY [BY] LIBERTY LOVING PATRIOTS... WHO ARE RESISTING THE SHACKLES OF

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<sup>70</sup> WYZB to KFS, 16 MAR 43, Messages Between U.S./Philippine Guerrilla Forces and HQ, SWPA (December 1942-November 1943), Vol. V, 1448-1449. By the end of the month Fertig had disbanded the old board, claiming that they were under enemy control, and seated a new one that was filled with members that were sure to be loyal to him. See WYZB to KAZ, 30 MAR 43, Vol. V, 1504-1505.

<sup>71</sup> KAZ to WZK, 9 APR 43, Vol. II, 0235, KAZ to WYZB, 5 SEP 43, Vol. V, 1860-1861, KAZ to WZE, 27 MAY 43, Vol. II, 0389, WYZB to KAZ, 29 JUL 43, Vol. V, 1732, Messages Between U.S./Philippine Guerrilla Forces and HQ, SWPA (December 1942-November 1943).

ENEMY OPPRESSION PD CONVEY... MY HEARFELT GRATITUDE AND MY FERVENT PRAYER [THAT] THE ULTIMATE AND COMPLETE DESTRUCTION OF JAPANESE MILITARY POWER IS AS INEVITABLE AS THE DAY FOLLOWS NIGHT PD<sup>72</sup>

These messages had a reinforcing effect on unification of the resistance effort. People identified Quezon and MacArthur as their liberators and therefore military commanders like Fertig, who controlled radio communications, gained prestige as their representatives on the islands. A great majority of the population wanted MacArthur to throw the Japanese off of the islands and therefore also threw their support behind the guerrilla movement.<sup>73</sup>

### **Leading Unconventional War on Mindanao**

President Quezon's moral support, combined with MacArthur's material support had a unifying effect on the population, but neither was enough to ignite the flame of united resistance. The material and moral support were only the fuel for the fire. Fertig needed one more spark, the spark of leadership to ignite the movement. In one of the earliest messages sent to MacArthur, Fertig requested guidance on the issue of overall command of the resistance movement. Part of the message reads:

TO MAINTAIN ORDER AND DISCIPLINE RANK OF BRIGADIER GENERAL WAS ASSUMED AS CG OF REORGANIZED MINDANAO DASH VISAYAN FORCE OF US FIP STOP CONFIRMATION OF RANK NEEDED TO CLARIFY COMMAND SITUATION<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> KAZ to WZE, 16 JUL 43, Messages Between U.S/Philippine Guerrilla Forces and HQ, SWPA (December 1942-November 1943), Vol. III, 1041-1044.

<sup>73</sup> Various U.S. guerrilla leaders estimated civilian support for MacArthur at 99% on Luzon, 100% on Cebu and over 90% on Mindanao. See WZE to KAZ, 15 APR 43, Vol. II, 0248, WYZB to KAZ, 7 APR 43, Vol. V, 1519, WYZB to KAZ, 29 AUG 43, Vol. V, 1842-1843, Messages Between U.S/Philippine Guerrilla Forces and HQ, SWPA (December 1942-November 1943).

<sup>74</sup> KFS to WYZB, 8 MAR 43, Messages Between U.S/Philippine Guerrilla Forces and HQ, SWPA (December 1942-November 1943), Vol. II, 0103.

MacArthur's headquarters had only the dimmest picture of the resistance movement on the islands, but agreed with Fertig that a united front would be more productive and easier to control. They could also piece together from the reports that they were getting that several of the guerrilla groups were in competition with one another and that the leaders, too, would be hesitant to subjugate their authority to anyone. MacArthur wanted the strongest leaders possible to establish his authority so that others would not question his supremacy. A short list of Fertig's competition included U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel James Grinstead who came to the islands with General Leonard Wood in 1926 to strengthen the Philippine Constabulary and suppress Moro outlaws on Mindanao, now commanding the guerrilla 106<sup>th</sup> Division; U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel Ernest McClish, an officer in the 61<sup>st</sup> Infantry commanding the guerrilla 110<sup>th</sup> Division; U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel Robert Bowler, who served with the 38<sup>th</sup> Division before escaping to the hills and assuming command of the guerrilla 109<sup>th</sup> Division; Philippine Army Lieutenant Colonel Ciriaco Mortera, previous deputy governor of Cotabato, who led the guerrilla 105<sup>th</sup> Division; and Philippine Army Lieutenant Colonel Alejandro Suarez, a well educated and connected Constabulary officer who had been a Provincial Commander and deputy governor before the war broke out.<sup>75</sup> MacArthur's choice was not an easy one.

From his headquarters in Australia, MacArthur sent out two messages that would buy him some time to think the matter of guerrilla command over. First he sent a message designating his station, KAZ in Australia, as the net control station for all Philippine communications, but added instructions that radio traffic should be routed through Fertig's station on Mindanao.<sup>76</sup> Along with this tacit nod towards Fertig, MacArthur sent another message to all stations:

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<sup>75</sup> *Intelligence Activities in the Philippines Volume I, Appendix XV*, "G-2 Staff Study of Philippine Islands Situation, 25 February 1944," 13-16.

<sup>76</sup> KAZ to WYZB, 4 MAR 43, Messages Between U.S./Philippine Guerrilla Forces and HQ, SWPA (December 1942-November 1943), Vol. II, 0108.

SITUATION AND PERSONALITIES INVOLVED NOT YET  
SUFFICIENTLY CLEAR TO DETERMINE COMMAND JURISDICTION  
STOP PENDING COMMAND DESIGNATION ADVISE LOCAL LEADERS  
AVOID INTERNAL FRICTION CMA ABSTAIN FROM OVERT ACTS AND  
COOPERATE IN ESTABLISHMENT INTELLIGENCE NET<sup>77</sup>

MacArthur's decision to hold off on naming a guerrilla commander took months, due in part by his decision to send a scouting party, made up of Lieutenant Commander Parsons and Captain Smith, to the islands to assess the situation and report back to MacArthur on the best prospects of leadership. This delay also had an interesting side effect on the guerrilla force commanders, regardless of MacArthur's admonishment to cooperate. Knowing that MacArthur was the kingmaker, competing guerrilla leaders turned into cooperating guerrilla leaders to show good faith in MacArthur's decision, whatever that decision would be. This seed of cooperation had further benefits as well. Since all of the potential leaders had strong military backgrounds, either in the United States military or in the Philippine Army, they could all grasp the importance of unity of effort and unity of command on the battlefield. The influential civilian groups that Fertig needed support from also caught onto this idea of cooperation that was backed by MacArthur's pledge of material support and President Quezon's moral support. Eventually Fertig was promoted to the rank of Colonel in the United States Army, and to alleviate some of the disappointment Fertig felt for not having his Brigadier rank confirmed, MacArthur also sent orders awarding Fertig for his service:

IN RECOGNITION OF YOU MERITORIOUS SERVICES AS DISTRICT  
COMMANDER AND EXTRAORDINARY HEROISM IN ACTION... I HAVE  
AWARDED YOU THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS PD  
CONGRATULATE AND COMMEND YOU ON THE DISTINGUISHED  
SERVICE TO YOUR COUNTRY AND TO THE FILIPINO PEOPLE PD<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> KAZ to WZE, 16 MAR 43, Messages Between U.S./Philippine Guerrilla Forces and HQ, SWPA (December 1942-November 1943), Vol. II, 0152.

<sup>78</sup> KAZ to WYZB, 21 AUG 43, Messages Between U.S./Philippine Guerrilla Forces and HQ, SWPA (December 1942-November 1943), Vol. V, 1810-1811.

Fertig was grateful for his selection to command the 10<sup>th</sup> Military District on Mindanao, but could sense that MacArthur was in no hurry to designate a supreme guerrilla force commander to lead a united resistance movement after being put off on his requests on the issues of rank and command. Fertig had established himself as the unchallenged leader on Mindanao and most other guerrilla force leaders on the other islands would at least defer to him as long as they did not stand to lose position vis a vis other commanders. But, if Fertig was not going to get the rank and command authority he thought he needed to consolidate the entire guerrilla movement he would instead use his connections with Australia to control and distribute the aid that was sent. Controlling the aid would prove to the others that he was the trusted agent of MacArthur and by forcing them to come to him for support, they would also be forced to follow his command.

MacArthur understood this argument for what it was, a weak attempt at a power grab by Fertig, and agreed to the arrangement in exchange for intelligence on Japanese activities, which he considered vital for planning and conducting a re-invasion of the islands. MacArthur would provide the resistance movement with weapons, ammunition, and medical supplies, in limited quantities, in exchange for reports on enemy troop strengths, their movement, shipping traffic, and information regarding the puppet government set up by the Japanese. All of this information was fed through the intelligence directorate at MacArthur's headquarters in Australia in preparation for the re-invasion of the Philippines.

For his part, MacArthur had several competing interests to manage between arguing with the War Department over his plans to retake the Philippines or fighting with the Navy for limited resources, while at the same time maintaining a tenuous alliance with the Australians, Dutch, and

British and fighting against the Japanese.<sup>79</sup> Fertig's rank and command status had much lower priorities for MacArthur. Even Fertig's argument that there should be one commander over the Philippines rather than a "swarm of lieutenant colonels" failed to persuade MacArthur.<sup>80</sup> Instead, MacArthur reasoned that separate commands over each of the islands could prolong the resistance. The Japanese would be forced to defeat each one in series while surrender of the islands would be impossible with the overall commander, MacArthur, sitting in Australia.<sup>81</sup>

MacArthur's material support to Mindanao led to an increase in guerrilla activity throughout the islands, not just because of more aid, but because the incoming aid represented MacArthur's assurance that he was coming back to the Philippines. Favorite tactics used by the guerrillas included ambushes, hit and run raids, and "other actions calculated to disturb the peace" and draw Japanese forces out followed by enveloping attacks with a main force.<sup>82</sup> However, Fertig found himself facing a conundrum that was brought on by his success. The increase in guerrilla activity also drew more attention from the occupying Japanese forces. Fertig needed the material support that was coming in so as to gain the trust and confidence of the populace and to build the overall resistance movement. But, he also needed to attack the Japanese to maintain their trust and confidence, proving that the resistance was a viable movement. Attacks against Japanese patrols and outposts grew in numbers as the guerrillas' stockpiles of arms and ammunition increased. More and more people were drawn to the resistance as they perceived the

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<sup>79</sup> James, *The Years of MacArthur, Volume II, 1941-1945*, 710-720, and Keats, *They Fought Alone*, 376.

<sup>80</sup> Keats, *They Fought Alone*, 187.

<sup>81</sup> James, *The Years of MacArthur, Volume II, 1941-1945*, 141-142.

<sup>82</sup> Allied Translator and Interpreter Section, G-2, GHQ, SWPA, Enemy Publications, No. 359, Part I, 28 Apr 45, p. 7.

material support and physical attacks taking their toll on the enemy. But, MacArthur demanded intelligence from the resistance. Killing Japanese was not their purpose.<sup>83</sup>

For all of his efforts, Fertig found himself cursed by his success. By December 1943 the resistance movement on Mindanao caused a backlash of Japanese reprisals against the population as well as a concerted anti-guerrilla campaign.<sup>84</sup> Fertig reported:

ENEMY LANDED AT TUCURAN AND AT CLARIN SIMULTANEOUSLY  
PD TWO BOATS FIVE HUNDRED TONS EACH SIGHTED AT TUDELA  
BEACH PD ENEMY HAS LANDED AND OCCUPIED TUKURAN AND  
MISAMIS X LANDING MADE IN FORCE AND INDICATIONS ARE THAT  
GARRISONS ARE TO BE MADE PERMANENT X EXPECT PUSH NORTH  
AND SOUTH X NO NEWS FROM OCCUPIED TUKURAN PD RADIO NET  
INTACT PD PARSONS CUT OFF NORTH OF MISAMIS PD<sup>85</sup>

By landing at multiple points along the coast and converging at areas located further inland the Japanese could pinch the resistance and cut the guerrillas off from the population and suitable submarine rendezvous points. By November 1944 over 43,000 Japanese troops, under the command of Lieutenant General G. Morozumi, held onto key towns and ports at Davao, Malaybalay, Cagayan, and Zamboanga.<sup>86</sup> Fighting a slow retreat, Fertig and his guerrilla army were pushed deep into the jungles of the interior while the coast watchers were kept on the run. With his food and fuel supplies running low, Fertig's resistance movement teetered on the brink

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<sup>83</sup> "The Guerrilla Resistance Movement in the Philippines- 1944," *Intelligence Services, Volume I* (General Headquarters, United States Army Forces in the Pacific, 1948), 526-528, [www.scribd.com/doc/28655061/The-Guerrilla-Resistance-Movement-in-the-Philippines-1944](http://www.scribd.com/doc/28655061/The-Guerrilla-Resistance-Movement-in-the-Philippines-1944) (accessed 12 March 2011), Balis, "The American influence on the Mindanao resistance during the Second World War, 54, Keats, *They Fought Alone*, 173-201.

<sup>84</sup> Keats, *They Fought Alone*, 349-350.

<sup>85</sup> WYZB to KAZ, 26-28 JUN 43, *Messages Between U.S./Philippine Guerrilla Forces and HQ, SWPA* (December 1942-November 1943), Vol. V, 1696-1698.

<sup>86</sup> Samuel Eliot Morison, *History of the United States Naval Operations in World War II, Volume 13: The Liberation of the Philippines- Luzon, Mindanao, Visayas- 1944-1945* (University of Illinois Press, 2002), 240.



of collapse until flights of B-24 Liberator bombers began pounding the Japanese back from the guerrillas' hideouts.<sup>87</sup>

Once United States' forces landed at Mindanao, guerrilla forces poured out of the hills to greet them at the beaches and the guerrilla units were soon absorbed under the command of General Robert Eichelberger and the Eighth Army.<sup>88</sup> MacArthur's investment in the resistance movement proved valuable when he did make his return to the Philippines on October 20, 1944. By this time Fertig had organized his command on Mindanao of the 10<sup>th</sup> Military District into a force of six divisions and grown the resistance movement to over 33,000, with 16,500 of them being armed.<sup>89</sup> To support MacArthur's invasion, Fertig's guerrillas marked and secured beaches for the Eighth Army's amphibious assault. Once the troops were ashore they served as scouts, guides, and combat troops to augment the Eighth Army's offense.<sup>90</sup> In total, the combined forces of guerrillas and soldiers accounted for over 47,000 Japanese soldiers killed or taken prisoner on Mindanao.<sup>91</sup>

More importantly, Fertig had denied the Japanese any practical benefit from their conquest of Mindanao and provided invaluable intelligence reports that led to the naval victory at Leyte Gulf and guided MacArthur's invasion of the islands. Occupying Mindanao became a drain on Japanese resources and over 150,000 soldiers were tied up in an unsuccessful attempt to crush the resistance movement.<sup>92</sup> In the end, Fertig's resistance movement and the existence of guerrilla

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<sup>87</sup> Keats, *They Fought Alone*, 402-408.

<sup>88</sup> Morison, *History of the United States Naval Operations in World War II, Volume 13: The Liberation of the Philippines- Luzon, Mindanao, Visayas- 1944-1945*, 216-217, and James, *The Years of MacArthur, Volume II, 1941-1945*, 746-747.

<sup>89</sup> Robert Ross Smith, *Triumph in the Philippines* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 1963), 586. James' estimate for Fertig's guerrilla force is slightly higher at 38,000, *The Years of MacArthur, Volume II, 1941-1945*, 506.

<sup>90</sup> Smith, *Triumph in the Philippines*, 593-597.

<sup>91</sup> James, *The Years of MacArthur, Volume II, 1941-1945*, 748, and Smith, *Triumph in the Philippines*, 647.

<sup>92</sup> Keats, *They Fought Alone*, 389.

forces all over the Philippines became the dagger that was held to Japan's back while MacArthur's South West Pacific Area forces "thrust at the Japanese breast."<sup>93</sup>

## Significance of Unconventional Warfare

The literature on unconventional warfare is broad, ranging from Special Forces doctrine and policy, to arguments over Special Forces as a strategic force, to historical accounts and documents from the Philippine's guerrilla movement. It is important to understand the discourse currently revolving around doctrine and policy because it makes the case that Special Operations Forces in general, and Special Forces in particular, have not been used to their fullest capacity in fighting the Global War on Terror. This argument and an understanding of the strategic purpose of Special Forces, sets the stage for the future force structuring, training, and resourcing for Special Operations Forces, as well as the roles and limitations of Special Forces.

United States military doctrine lays the groundwork for how Special Forces operate in the unconventional warfare environment and provides a reference point of common understanding, and defines several key aspects for understanding the strategic role of Special Forces. Field Manual 3-05, *Army Special Operations Forces*, is the keystone manual that describes the strategic environment, fundamentals, core tasks, capabilities, and logistical support for Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF), which includes Special Forces, Rangers, Special Operations Aviation, Psychological Operations, and Civil Affairs, as well as the Sustainment Brigades.<sup>94</sup> Army Special Operations Forces are specifically organized, trained, and equipped to execute a set of eight core tasks: unconventional warfare, foreign internal defense, direct action, special reconnaissance, counterterrorism, psychological operations, civil affairs operations, and counter-

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<sup>93</sup> Keats, *They Fought Alone*, 377.

<sup>94</sup> United States Army Field Manual 3-05, *Army Special Operations Forces* (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 20 September 2006), v.

proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.<sup>95</sup> Special Forces are unique in their capability to conduct unconventional warfare while supported by other Army Special Operations Forces, Department of Defense forces, or other governmental agencies. FM 3-05 provides a basic understanding and background information concerning the roles and capabilities of Special Forces. It also emphasizes unconventional warfare involving the cooperation of indigenous or surrogate personnel and their resources and advises weighing the costs and benefits of conducting unconventional warfare before employing forces.<sup>96</sup>

Unconventional warfare, defined as “activities conducted to enable a resistance movement or insurgency to coerce, disrupt, or overthrow a government or occupying power by operating through or with an underground, auxiliary, and guerrilla force in a denied area,” is further discussed in Field Manual 3-05-130, *Unconventional Warfare*.<sup>97</sup> Of note are several planning factors that are essential for understanding who the agents of influence are in an unconventional warfare environment, who they target, and how to influence them.<sup>98</sup> Creating an area command that consists of guerrilla forces, an auxiliary support network, and an underground organization that is capable of drawing support from the mass base are key organizational factors in unconventional warfare.<sup>99</sup> Building rapport and legitimacy among the indigenous population is crucial for maintaining their support. This manual advises Special Forces personnel to establish rapport with indigenous leadership by “demonstrating an understanding of, a confidence in and a

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<sup>95</sup> United States Army Field Manual 3-05, *Army Special Operations Forces* (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 20 September 2006), 2-1.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-1 – 2-2.

<sup>97</sup> This is the current and approved definition of unconventional warfare, though not yet available in doctrinal manuals. See, Mark Grdovic, “Developing a Common Understanding of Unconventional Warfare,” *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Issue 57 (2d Quarter 2010): 136-138 and David Witty, “The Great UW Debate,” *Special Warfare* (March-April 2010), Volume 23, Issue 2.

<sup>98</sup> United States Army Field Manual 3-05.130, *Army Special Operations Forces Unconventional Warfare* (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, Department of the Army, September 2008), 4-1.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-6 – 4-8.

concern for the group and its cause.”<sup>100</sup> Later, the Special Forces commander is reminded to establish a sound command relationship with indigenous forces in order to better develop cooperation between advisors and irregular forces.<sup>101</sup> This manual again provides sound doctrinal advice in conducting unconventional warfare and growing support for an indigenous resistance movement.

*A Leader’s Handbook to Unconventional Warfare*, written by Lieutenant Colonel Mark Grdovic and distributed by the United States John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, helps to flesh out the skeleton of unconventional warfare found in United States Army doctrine by providing a frame of reference that describes the organization of resistance movements.<sup>102</sup> Here, the role of Special Forces is to act as trainers and advisors, who also provide critical logistics, which serves as a catalyst in igniting a smoldering resistance into a potential guerrilla force.<sup>103</sup> By conducting a feasibility assessment, Special Forces personnel are able to better determine the possibility of developing viable resistance forces, assess the capabilities of potential resistance leaders and their agendas, as well as evaluate their chances of influencing a resistance leader to cooperate with United States’ efforts.<sup>104</sup> This advice to leaders is somewhat more specific than that found in doctrinal manuals and ties the concept of unconventional warfare to the practice of unconventional warfare. This handbook also highlights a tendency of Special Forces units to take a direct approach to operations at the expense of an indirect approach and unconventional warfare.

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<sup>100</sup> United States Army Field Manual 3-05.130, *Army Special Operations Forces Unconventional Warfare* (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, Department of the Army, September 2008), 4-8.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-3.

<sup>102</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Mark Grdovic, *A Leader’s Handbook to Unconventional Warfare* (Fort Bragg, NC: United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, November 2009), 10.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

Addressing the United States Congressional Armed Services Committee over the last three years, Special Operations Command (SOCOM) commander, Admiral Eric T. Olson, highlighted the growing trend across the Special Operations community to focus on direct action operations. Beginning in his 2008 Posture Statement, Admiral Olson began to include an indirect approach, which would address the underlying causes of terrorism, to complement the direct approach afforded by direct action to the ongoing Global War on Terrorism.<sup>105</sup> The following year, Admiral Olson again addressed Special Operations Command's fixation on direct action missions against terrorists and insurgents and broached the idea of full-spectrum irregular warfare; Special Forces would become 3-D Operators, prepared to shift across the direct and indirect approaches through Diplomatic, Development, and Defense activities.<sup>106</sup> In his 2010 address, Admiral Olson clearly stated that emerging security challenges would require Special Operations to become even more agile and adaptive in dealing with enemy threats so that direct and indirect approaches would become even more carefully balanced.<sup>107</sup> One reason for this shift in focus has to do with the allegedly large numbers of civilian casualties and collateral damage caused by Special Operations' direct action missions in Iraq and Afghanistan. Though these missions have reportedly been highly successful, there is also a concern that Special Operations Forces are not being used to their fullest capacity.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Admiral Eric T. Olson, "Special Operations Command 2008 Posture Statement" (presented to the Senate Armed Services Committee on the Posture of Special Operations Forces, Washington, D.C., 04 March 2008).

<sup>106</sup> Admiral Eric T. Olson, "Special Operations Command 2009 Posture Statement" (presented to the Senate Armed Services Committee on the Posture of Special Operations Forces, Washington, D.C., 2009).

<sup>107</sup> Admiral Eric T. Olson, "Special Operations Command 2010 Posture Statement" (presented to the Senate Armed Services Committee on the Posture of Special Operations Forces, Washington, D.C., 04 March 2010).

<sup>108</sup> Andrew Feickert, "U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF): Background and Issues for Congress," *CRS Report for Congress*, Congressional Research Service, 16 July 2010.

An ongoing discourse in the Special Operations community, not mentioned in the official reports to Congress, revolves around the purpose and employment of Special Forces. As the argument goes, killing terrorists by itself will not win a war against an ideologically motivated enemy.<sup>109</sup> The undercurrent of this argument began as Admiral Olson recognized the need to intermix the direct and indirect approaches towards irregular warfare. Analyst Max Boot proposed that critical indirect tasks were being short-changed in favor of the direct action style raids, while Chairman of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Terrorism and Unconventional Threats, Representative Adam Smith (D-Wash), argued that Special Operations Command (SOCOM) was forced into its direct action role due to the heavy combat missions in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>110</sup>

But this idea that Special Forces has become over-focused on direct action dates back farther than the Global War on Terrorism to the event that helped create Special Operations Command. The 1980 Eagle Claw mission to rescue the American hostages held by Iran not only helped to create Special Operations Command, it also provided the impetus for the past twenty-three years to make surgical direct action missions a national priority. The Global War on Terrorism has actually helped to reverse this trend and swing the pendulum of Special Forces missions back towards its original mission set of unconventional warfare.<sup>111</sup> Nevertheless, the debate that Special Forces has strayed too far from its traditional mission of training indigenous forces in favor of the more glamorous direct action missions continues.<sup>112</sup>

The recent trend of Special Forces overusing its direct action capabilities at the expense of unconventional warfare and other mission sets reflects a deeper trend in the misuse of Special

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<sup>109</sup> Richard Lardner, "Spec ops leaders want return to fundamentals," *Army Times*, 28 June 2007.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Sean D. Naylor, "Support grows for standing up an unconventional warfare command," *Armed Forces Journal*, November 2007.

<sup>112</sup> Sean D. Naylor, "Special ops 'surge' sparks debate," *Army Times*, 20 December 2008.

Forces. Typically, United States' conventional military forces use a direct approach and annihilation strategy in warfighting. As a strategic asset Special Forces' potency comes from the indirect approach it takes in linking its tactical capabilities to its strategic ends. Hans Delbruck and other strategists have identified two competing strategies in the context of warfare -- strategies of annihilation and strategies of attrition.<sup>113</sup> These separate approaches place a different emphasis on the material and moral dimensions of warfare.<sup>114</sup> Confusion over attrition arises though when looking at it from either the tactical or the strategic level. For example, tactically attriting enemy personnel and equipment on the battlefield via a direct approach can have longer-term strategic affects by wearing down the enemy's will to resist and continue the fight. At the same time, tactically annihilating pieces of the enemy's force can have the same demoralizing effects at the strategic level.<sup>115</sup> However, these two approaches are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but instead can become complimentary towards one another when conventional and unconventional forces balance their respective approaches under a common campaign plan.

Admiral Olson's balanced approach to irregular warfare attempts to bring equilibrium to Special Operations Command's campaign plan to combat global terrorism through unconventional warfare and the indirect approach.<sup>116</sup> Empowering resistance movements in this respect benefits both the United States in achieving its strategic goals and the resistance movement by giving the group control over their own destiny. These mutually beneficial outcomes underpin Special Forces' ability to not only live as the locals do, but also to understand

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<sup>113</sup> Gordon A. Craig, "Delbruck: The Military Historian," in *Makers of Modern Strategy*, Peter Paret, ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 341-343.

<sup>114</sup> James D. Kiras, *Special Operations and Strategy: From World War II to the War on Terrorism* (NY: Routledge, 2006), 58.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>116</sup> Admiral Eric T. Olson, "A Balanced Approach to Irregular Warfare," *The Journal of International Security Affairs*, No. 16 (Spring 2009).

and respond to their concerns so that Special Forces teams can build trust within the group and establish common motivational factors that will help lead the guerrilla fighters to victory.<sup>117</sup>

## **Analysis of Mindanao's Resistance Movement**

To explain the use of violence to control a population, Kalyvas identifies six mechanisms that can change control into collaboration: shielding, “mechanical ascription,” credibility of rule, the provision of benefits, monitoring, and self-reinforcing by-products. As suggested by these labels, control over a portion of the population can shield them from outside influences, provide a monopoly on control, reinforce the controlling body’s credibility, provide benefits to supporters, and becomes self-reinforcing through monitoring and control of the population.<sup>118</sup> Fertig’s unconventional warfare campaign mirrored these six mechanisms, while the Japanese counterinsurgency campaign more closely followed Kalyvas’ model of violence as a means of control. By first protecting the population from Japanese brutality and other lawlessness and then providing benefits in the form of economic stimulus and governance, Fertig created order in a disorganized system and drew the population into a united resistance front.

Part of Fertig’s success in uniting the guerrilla bands and population into a coherent resistance movement was based on the fear that the population under occupation and coercive control felt towards the occupying Japanese army. These fears were fueled by real and threatened acts of coercive violence by the Japanese. But fear does not breed loyalty, either internally or externally to a group. Fertig was able to use this opportunity created by fear of the Japanese to germinate the seeds of resistance into mutual cooperation in an unconventional warfare environment.

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<sup>117</sup> Admiral Eric T. Olson, “U.S. Special Operations: Context and Capabilities in Irregular Warfare,” *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Issue 56 (1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2010): 64-70.

<sup>118</sup> Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, 124-129.



While Kalyvas' theory is useful for its perspective on violence, it centers on control of a population at the expense of gaining compliance, either through loyalty, coercion, or some other method. Kalyvas' theory postulates that violence should be used in a limited and logical manner because indiscriminant violence decreases control over a population and instead drives them into the arms of the resistance movement. This theory is borne out, for the most part, in Japan's counterinsurgency tactics. But, Fertig was able to gain the support of, versus control over, the population without relying on violence. He then turned this support into an island-wide resistance movement that included the three components of unconventional warfare -- an underground arm, and auxiliary arm, and a guerrilla force.

Instead of discussing control over a population, other theorists look at ways to build support within groups, how individuals determine which sides they will support, and how smaller groups converge into larger groups. These theories can help determine whether groups have the potential for cooperation in an unconventional warfare environment and can be used to help understand which groups and leaders may have the potential to support and build capacity within a guerrilla movement.

Margret Levi discusses compliance and non-compliance as a result of multiple motivations in an individual's decision making process. Like Kalyvas, she assumes some compliance comes from coercion, sanctions, or incentives, but also includes the idea that some compliance comes from a "belief in the rightness of the policies and of the trustworthiness of the government actors implementing them."<sup>119</sup> Her model of contingent consent is based on four positive or negative variables that revolve around consent and rational choice. Levi's first variable, habitual obedience, is contingent upon conformity to a habit of obedience or disobedience. Her second variable measures support for or opposition against ideology. Third,

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<sup>119</sup> Levi, *Consent, Dissent, and Patriotism*, 18.

opportunistic obedience weighs the benefits of compliance over the costs of compliance, while disobedience values the costs over the benefits. Finally, trust in the government leads to ethical reciprocity, while distrust led to little ethical reciprocity.<sup>120</sup> These same variables apply to an unconventional warfare environment when looking at potential support for building a guerrilla movement and they played a vital part in the Philippine resistance movement.

Filipino society had developed a culture of habitual obedience towards authority. This obedience was reinforced through traditional customs of loyalty to the family along with a class system that connected the peasants to the *illustrados* and the church. Obedience also played a role in the Philippines' relationship with the United States that allowed the Filipinos to consolidate their nationalism and test their self-rule under the protection and guidance of the United States. The Japanese invasion disrupted these relationships to a large extent, but Japanese civil and military authorities were never able to sever the habit of obedience that tied the Philippine society together or commandeer this habit for their own purposes.

Habitual obedience also helped to build support for the budding Filipino nationalism and opposition against Japanese ideology. Filipinos were much more willing to wait out the Japanese occupation in support of American forces returning to the islands than they were to reorganize their entire social order. This increased sense of Filipino nationalism, as well as anticipated independence, helped to draw the resistance movement together. The idea of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere in itself appealed to many Filipinos, but the obviousness of its inequality and Japan's suppression of the Catholic faith caused most Filipinos to turn away from Japanese ideologies.

Fertig's biggest hurdle in uniting the resistance movement was overcoming opportunistic obedience by making the benefits of unification greater than the costs of independent action. He

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<sup>120</sup> Levi, *Consent, Dissent, and Patriotism*, 19.

did not have to entice the people away from the Japanese because the Japanese made control of the population contingent upon compliance, and as previously discussed they accomplished control through fear. Instead, Fertig had to create a system in which the benefits of a united resistance movement were much higher than not being a part of the movement. His initial attempts led to mixed results because they relied on Fertig's rank, Fertig's reputation, and Fertig's leadership. He was only able to gain broad support across Mindanao through the two figureheads that represented freedom, hope, and a better future for most Filipinos -- MacArthur and Quezon. They offered people a better choice by maintaining the pre-war social system in which most everyone could maintain or increase their status and livelihood as opposed to the subjugation offered by the Japanese. Fertig's challenge was bringing evidence of support from MacArthur and Quezon to Mindanao to show groups on the island who had competing interests that they would achieve greater benefits under his leadership. From General MacArthur, Fertig could show tangible evidence in the form of submarines and the material support that they brought. From President Quezon, Fertig relied on the moral strength of his messages.

With MacArthur and Quezon behind him, Fertig was then able to develop ethical reciprocity across the resistance. He first established trust in the guerrilla movement by legitimizing the guerrillas through regulations, policies, and developing a subordinate command structure. Later he joined the three pillars of Filipino society with the guerrilla force and formed a combined resistance movement that was responsible to the Filipino people. Almost the entire population on Mindanao benefitted from this arrangement and reciprocated their trust to the resistance and the functioning government, which Fertig put together.

## **Conclusions**

An unstable political atmosphere marked the Philippine Islands prior to the Japanese invasion in 1941. Both internal and external tensions laid the framework for future power struggles. Groups of Filipinos polarized around pro-Western clusters that favored both the

protection and sponsorship offered by the United States. Other groups of Filipinos formed around pro-independence movements and pro-communist factions. These groups could be further divided into religious, racial, or nationalistic sub-groups. Externally, states and nations confronted each other over the Philippines. The United States and the Philippines established an agreement that the islands would be granted independence in the near future and the Filipinos, for the most part, were content to follow this arrangement. However, outside pressures caused by Japanese aggression in China, Korea, and other nearby areas pushed the Filipinos closer to America, whom they viewed as their protector. The United States was also aware of Japanese aggressions, as well as the possibility of Japan expanding further into the Pacific to seize territory and resources. The Philippine Islands were a volatile place on the eve of war.

After the collapse of conventional military forces the fight against the Japanese invasion relied on a united resistance movement that took an indirect approach to warfighting and centered on the needs of the population. Fertig's approach to unconventional warfare was successful on Mindanao because of his vision for a unified resistance movement combined with a little bit of luck. The dynamics of social relationships on the island were not universal, but were interrelated enough to draw society together, rather than driving it apart. These social links helped Fertig bring different social groups, ranging from the peasants and *illustados* to Catholics and Moros, together to fight against a common enemy. These internal relationships were further reinforced by the collision of cultures between the Filipinos and the Japanese. Fighting the alien presence helped to advance sentiments of nationalism and the goal of self-governance.

The geography of the Philippine archipelago also worked against Japanese occupation by dispersing Japan's forces and providing sanctuary to the resistance. Consisting of over 7,000 islands and 300,000 square kilometers of land area, the island chain was simply too large for

Japanese troops to secure.<sup>121</sup> The isolation provided by the separate islands worked in the resistance movements' favor in another way. The larger islands, such as Mindanao and Luzon, were large enough to sustain a viable guerrilla force on their own to fight the Japanese without having to form a pan-island alliance of guerrillas. This cellular type structure on the macro-level meant that the resistance movements could continue across the islands independently of what was happening on one particular island. Therefore a Japanese success in one area would not lead to the downfall of the entire movement.

The Japanese also misjudged the Filipino's will to resist. While other conquered areas across southeast Asia and the southwest Pacific were controlled under the thumb of Japan, the growing sense of nationalism and anticipation of self-governance in the Philippines created a much different atmosphere. Japan's counterinsurgency campaign relied on overwhelming military force and harsh population control measures. These tactics, when combined with a sluggish response to local conditions, meant that Japan's imperial political goals of controlling the Philippines and capturing its resources were undercut by the military tactics used to reach those goals. Like Magellan, the Japanese were eventually defeated and forced to withdraw from the Philippines.

While all of these factors worked in favor of Fertig's vision for unification none of them were individually decisive and did not guarantee any kind of success. Fertig's operational approach to unconventional warfare harnessed the momentum created by the invasion to bring order back to the disorganized environment. With his understanding of Filipino demography, cultures, taboos and beliefs combined with his leadership abilities and limited military experience Fertig set the conditions for unity of command over the guerrilla forces on Mindanao. Curiously enough, the first route he took using a purely leadership approach to organizing the resistance was

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<sup>121</sup> CIA World Factbook, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rp.html> (accessed 20 February 2011).

not enough to draw the popular movement and the guerrilla movement together. Creating an area command on Mindanao required Fertig to link popular support to the guerrilla movement and in turn reciprocate the guerrilla's support back onto the population. This would allow for a build up of forces, a supporting network to sustain operations, and the coordinated employment of forces.

However, like most other successful resistance movements, Fertig needed to gain outside support to coalesce the resistance movement. This included material support from General MacArthur to sustain the fight and moral support from President Quezon to sustain the will to fight. The cohesion that Fertig was able to create when combining leadership with material and moral support became the center of gravity for the resistance movement on Mindanao. Fertig no longer had to worry about the survival of the organization or decisively defeating the Japanese on Mindanao once the resistance became a united effort with external sponsorship, he only had to maintain pressure on the Japanese to contest their control of the islands until General MacArthur returned to the islands to pick up the conventional fight from the guerrillas. The conventional strategy and unconventional strategy for the Philippines were mutually supporting.

The Japanese invasion destabilized Filipino society and turned an unstable situation into a chaotic situation as each group struggled to gain advantage and power over the others. The invasion presented opportunities for each group, created new arrangements for power sharing, realigning loyalties, and coalition building. The Japanese invaders and their collaborators wanted to use the momentum caused by the invasion to push Filipino society towards a new version of society with altered social relationships and governance, whether that be back towards colonialism or in some other direction. The United States and most of the Filipino population wanted to maintain the status quo social and political arrangements that existed before the invasion. Fertig's unconventional warfare strategy halted the momentum caused by the invasion and pulled Filipino society back to the theoretical center it existed in before the arrival of the Japanese soldiers. Like their ancestors reacting to Magellan's invasion of their homeland and way

of life, most Filipinos fought to maintain their freedoms and liberties in their attempt to expel the invading Japanese force.

In uniting the Filipino guerrillas into a broader resistance movement Wendell Fertig, with material support from General MacArthur and moral support from President Quezon, played a crucial role in stemming the tide of chaos caused by these destabilizing factors of invasion and social unrest. They helped to anchor Filipino society in its pre-war form, remained connected to the exiled Filipino government, and united society under a common cause. These three factors not only helped to restore order to the islands, they also present learning points on how social actors are motivated in their decisions for compliance and non-compliance in unconventional warfare. These lessons from the Japanese occupation of the Philippine Islands during World War II can be applied to help the United States achieve its desired operational objectives in current or future unconventional warfare scenarios.

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