

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD
to the
Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee
Hearing on the Fiscal Year 2019 Budget for Veterans' Programs
and Fiscal Year 2020 Advance Appropriations Requests

By

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AMERICAN PRISONERS OF WAR OF JAPAN
PROTECTING THE HISTORY OF WORLD WAR II

Chairmen Isakson, Ranking Member Tester, and Members of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, thank you for allowing us to present the unique concerns of veterans of World War II's Pacific Theater to Congress. The American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor Memorial Society (ADBC-MS) represents surviving POWs of Japan, their families, and descendants, as well as scholars, researchers, and archivists. Our goal is to preserve the history of the American POW experience in the Pacific and to teach future generations of the POWs' sacrifice, courage, determination, and faith—the American spirit.

Today, I want to speak to you about how integral the American POW history with Japan is to our greater understanding of how we need to care for and remember all our veterans. These veterans had the highest rate of post-conflict hospitalizations and psychiatric disorders of any generation. Their traumas have had multi-generational consequences. Their history of perseverance and patriotism speaks to the need for the civic remembrance of our country's veterans.

Our history

April 9th will mark the 76th anniversary of the Bataan Death March. By March 1942, Imperial Japanese Armed forces had destroyed the U.S. Asiatic Fleet and the U.S. Far East Air Force. On May 6, 1942, all the Philippines fell. These were the greatest military setbacks in American history and all happened in Asia where Imperial Japan started WWII for the United States.

On December 7, 1941, Imperial Japan attacked not only Pearl Harbor but also the Philippine Islands, Guam, Wake Island, Howland Island, Midway, Malaya, Singapore, Thailand, Hong Kong and Shanghai. Three days later, Guam became the first American territory to fall to Japan. Although the aim of the December 7th surprise attack on Hawaii's Pearl Harbor was to destroy

the U.S. Pacific Fleet in its homeport and to discourage U.S. action in Asia, the other strikes served as preludes to full-scale invasions and military occupation.

Only in the Philippines did combined U.S.-Filipino units mount a prolonged resistance to Imperial Japan's invasion. They held out for five months. On April 9, 1942, approximately 10,000 Americans and 70,000 Filipinos became POWs with the surrender of the Bataan Peninsula. April 9th also marked the beginning the 65-mile Bataan Death March. Thousands died and hundreds have never been accounted for from the March and its immediate aftermath.

By June 1942, most of the estimated 27,000 Americans ultimately held as military POWs of Imperial Japan had been surrendered. If Filipino soldiers, who were released before the end of 1942, and American civilians in Japan and throughout the Pacific are also counted, this number is closer to 36,000. By the War's end, 40 percent or over 12,000 Americans had died in squalid POW camps, in the fetid holds of "Hell ships," or as slave laborers for Japanese corporations.

Surviving as a POW of Japan was the beginning of new battles: that of acceptance into society and living with then-nameless mental and physical ailments. In the first six years after the war, deaths of American POWs of Japan were more than twice those of the comparably-aged white male population. These deaths were disproportionately due to tuberculosis, suicides, accidents, and cirrhosis. In contrast, 1.5 percent of Americans in Nazi POW camps died (as noted above this number was 40 percent as POWs of Japan) and in the first six years after liberation Nazi POW camp survivors deaths were one-third of those who survived Japanese POW camps.

Meet the special needs of all veterans

As the representative of veterans with the highest rate of post-conflict hospitalizations and psychiatric disorders, we encourage Congress to fight for adequate medical care, disability benefits, housing, and job training. We are especially supportive of the DAV's efforts to expand access to the VA's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) to severely disabled veterans.

And we applaud the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee for approving S. 2193, the Caring for Our Veterans Act of 2017 that extends caregiver benefits, which includes provisions to improve and phase in expanded eligibility for the VA's Comprehensive Program for family caregivers. We also recognize Chairman Roe for his leadership in the House to address this inequity and encourage him to introduce companion legislation.

The VA's current rule of granting benefits only to families of veterans injured on or after September 11, 2001 is plainly dismissive of members of our Greatest Generation, those veterans of WWII. Surviving POWs of Japan know well that their caregivers—their families—were instrumental in their reintegration into their communities and their ability to achieve the highest levels of recovery and quality of life. Family caregivers are critical members of every veteran's health care. The American POWs of Japan and their families know intimately the difficulty of re-incorporation into civil society with little support as well as the toll PTSD and war-related illnesses takes on the entire family.

My members would welcome opportunities to discuss with you their caregiving experiences so that Senators and Members of Congress can better understand the importance of expanding caregiver assistance to all generations of veterans.

Progress Toward Remembrance, Reconciliation, and Preservation

An important aspect of showing respect and acceptance to returning servicemen and women is to ensure that they are not forgotten. This is the primary mission of the ADBC-MS. To this end, we have had a number of significant achievements in the last decade.

In 2009, the Government of Japan, through its then-Ambassador to the U.S. Ichiro Fujisaki, and again in 2010, through its then-Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada, issued an official apology to the American POWs of Japan. These Cabinet-approved apologies, first established as a Cabinet Decision on February 6, 2009, were unprecedented. Never before had the Japanese Government apologized for a specific war crime, nor had it done so directly to the victims.

The Japanese Government in 2010 initiated the “Japan/POW Friendship Program” that sponsors trips for American former POWs to visit Japan and return to the places of their imprisonment and slave labor. Thus far, there have been nine trips, one each in the fall of 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, and two in 2015, one in 2016 and 2017. In 2016, due to the advanced age of surviving POWs, only widows and children participated in the program. In all, 46 former POWs, all in their late-80s or 90s, as well as nine widows and five children have made the trip to Japan. A number of the caregiver companions to the POWs were wives, children, and grandchildren.

In 2017, one POW was able to participate in the trip: Henry Chamberlain, 95, of Washington state. He was an Army surgical technician in the field hospitals on Bataan. He witnessed many atrocities including the Japanese shelling of the hospitals and the gang rape of an American volunteer nurse by Japanese troops. He served as a medic in POW camps in the Philippines, but was sent to Japan in 1944 to mine lead and zinc. His trip to Japan in 2017 included an emotional visit to the site of the mine in Sendai owned by Mitsubishi Materials Corporation (MMC) where he was their slave laborer. He graciously and tearfully accepted their apology.

The year 2015, the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, was particularly significant. Our last National Commander, the late Dr. Lester Tenney, was invited to witness Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s address to a joint meeting of Congress and to join at his celebratory gala dinner at the Smithsonian, where the Prime Minister offered his personal apology. Significantly, that day, April 29th, was also the reinstated birthday holiday of the wartime Emperor Hirohito. Later that year, Dr. Tenney was a guest of President Barack Obama at the White House’s annual Veterans Day breakfast.

On July 19, 2015, the Mitsubishi Materials Corporation (MMC) became the first, and only, Japanese company to officially apologize to those American POWs who were used as slave laborers to maintain war production. The historic apology was offered to those who were forced to work in four mines operated by Mitsubishi Mining, Inc., the predecessor company of MMC. This apology was followed by a \$50,000 one-time donation to the National American Defenders of Bataan & Corregidor (ADBC) Museum, Education & Research Center in Wellsburg, West Virginia.

The leaders of both Japan and the United States acknowledged the American POWs and their contribution to the steady relationship between two countries in their war anniversary speeches. In his September 2nd VJ day statement, President Obama echoed President Harry Truman and remembered “those who endured unimaginable suffering as prisoners of war.” Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in his war anniversary statement on August 14th recognized “the former POWs who experienced unbearable sufferings caused by the Japanese military.”

On May 27, 2016, President Barack Obama journeyed to Hiroshima, the site of the first atomic bombing, to become the first American president to mourn the dead and grieve with the living. There, the President was photographed embracing a survivor who had dedicated the greater part of his life to discovering the identities and honoring the memory of twelve American POWs who perished in Hiroshima.

In November 2016, another former POW of Japan, Airman Dan Crowley of Connecticut was a guest at President Obama’s Veterans Day breakfast. On December 28th, the ADBC-MS vice president Nancy Kragh and I were guests of the President to witness Prime Minister Abe’s condolences at Pearl Harbor.

As you can see, the American POWs of Japan are recognized as integral to the history of America’s war in the Pacific.

To remember all our veterans

The 115th U.S. Congress and the new Administration, however, appear to have forgotten this legacy. The ADBC-MS was dismayed last year when none of the 75th anniversaries of historic battles at the beginning of World War II was officially recognized by the whole of Congress. Surprisingly, December 7, 1941, “a date that will live in infamy,” has not been commemorated with a Congressional resolution for decades. Nor have the April 9, 1942, Fall of Bataan and the start of the infamous Bataan Death March been remembered. This was the largest surrender in U.S. military history.

Our effort last year to have resolutions pass in the House and Senate commemorating April 9th, H. Res. 261 and S. Res 168, which is National Prisoner of War Remembrance Day as well as the 75th anniversary of the start of the Bataan Death March found little support in Congress, and no resolutions were adopted. This was a curious oversight in a year that saw the award of the Congressional Gold Medal to Filipino veterans of World War II for their service and sacrifice. The majority of the 85,000 soldiers on the Death March were Filipino, all under the command of American officers.

Part of this amnesia may be from the loss of the language of the War. My organization has found itself campaigning to protect the words that uniquely describe the POW experience with Imperial Japan. Too often, we find the word “death” removed from the historic designations of the Bataan “Death” March and the Thai-Burma “Death” Railway. There is also no other label for “Hell ships”—unmarked boats that held POWs in lower holds with little food, water, ventilation, or sanitation—other than “Hell ship.” The majority of American POWs died on these ships or from their sinking. For Allied POWs the number of deaths on the “Hell ships” was second to those

who perished building the Thai-Burma Death Railway. These vessels of inhumanity were far removed from being troop transports and should never be dignified as such.

This battle over language is not a theoretical problem. Over the course of this past year, my organization has had a prolonged and painful dialogue regarding a memorial stone we want to install at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Hawaii. This tablet is to explain that the 20 graves of 20 unknowns each at the Cemetery are for the 400 POWs killed aboard the Hell ship *Enoura Maru* that was bombed on January 9, 1945 in Takao Harbor, Formosa by American planes off the USS *Hornet*. Their remains had been retrieved in 1946 and moved to Hawaii.

Cemetery administrators objected to the use of “Hell ship.” They felt it might offend some tourists. We were astonished that a term used since the Revolutionary War to describe vessels that held prisoners of war would be so easily dismissed. Fortunately, Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs of the Department of Veterans Affairs Randy Reeves agreed with us. My Congressman, Mike Bost, who is chair of the Veterans’ Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs, encouraged his decision.

Thus, we thank both Under Secretary Reeves and Congressman Bost for their help. The memorial stone will identify the *Enoura Maru* as a “Hell ship” and the POWs as “human cargo.” We hope that both men will be able to join us in August for the dedication ceremony in Hawaii.

Success should encourage more action

The benefits of Japan’s long-awaited acts of contrition have been immeasurable for former POWs and their families. The visitation program is a great success. It has given the participating veterans a peace of mind and their families a connection to their fathers’ challenges. For the Japanese people touched by these visits there is a new perspective on the War.

But we are concerned for the future. There is no formal agreement between the U.S. and Japan to continue the visitation program, and Japan’s Foreign Ministry must request annually a line-item in the budget for it. We know that despite the tens of millions of dollars being expended by Japan on “Takehashi” exchange programs in the United States, the funds for the POW Friendship exchanges have been slashed.

This is profoundly shortsighted. And it is something that should worry Members of Congress. History does not end when the last witness dies. The proliferation of distorted history in Japan is cause enough to encourage greater work of historical preservation. An active, ongoing program of remembrance and education is what will guarantee that Japan does not fall into moral complacency.

For the POW families, it is clear that a POW’s captivity is not merely an individual trauma—the pain has spanned several generations. The wives, children, and siblings of those who died suffered irreparable loss. The families of those who survived suffered from the long-term physical and mental health problems caused by the former POW’s years in cruel captivity. New research has found that trauma changes one’s DNA, which is then passed on to the victim’s progeny.

Concerns with moving backwards

To our dismay, there appears to be backtracking in Japan regarding the American POWs history. It was not until February 2016 that the 2014 biographical film *Unbroken* about American Olympian and aviator Louis Zamperini's ordeal as a POW was shown in Japan. It was preceded by a venomous campaign of misinformation and slander denouncing the scenes of abuse and torture as untrue. In contrast, surviving POWs believed the film did not show the full depravity and squalor of their imprisonment.

We are concerned by the 2015 designation of the sites of Japan's "Meiji Industrial Revolution: Iron and Steel, Shipbuilding and Coal Mining" on the UNESCO World Industrial Heritage list. In five of these eight new World Heritage areas there were 26 POW camps that provided slave labor to Japan's industrial giants including, Mitsui, Mitsubishi, Sumitomo, Aso Group, Ube Industries, Tokai Carbon, Nippon Coke & Engineering, Nippon Steel & Sumitomo Metal Corporation, Furukawa Company Group, and Denka. This was not noted in the application nor given mention today.

Japan stated on July 4, 2015, that it "is prepared to take measures that allow an understanding that there were a large number of Koreans and *others* [emphasis added] who were brought against their will and forced to work under harsh conditions in the 1940s at some of the sites." However, we do not know how the Japanese government interprets "others," and U.S. government officials have not asked. Frankly, we have not seen any effort toward including the history of the 13,000 Allied and American POWs held at the UNESCO-designated sites.

Many of the 60 companies that requested and acquired POW slave laborers during the War still exist and are members of Japanese consortia—headed by JR East and JR Central—that want to participate in high-speed rail and other infrastructure projects in the United States. Neither has acknowledged or apologized for their use of POW slave labor. By contrast, their French (SNCF) and German (Siemens) competitors have been held accountable for their behavior during WWII.

It is also unsettling that no one has objected to the selection of Osaka as the host city for the G20 leaders' summit in 2019 and of Fukuoka as the venue for the meeting of G20 finance ministers and central bank governors. The Japanese government is also promoting Osaka to the Bureau of International Expositions to be the site for Expo 2025. These internationally forward-focused events contrast sharply with the parochial, anachronistic views of the city's leaders.

Over the past three years, the mayors of Osaka have distinguished themselves as outspoken deniers of Pacific War history—even threatening to end the sister city relationship with San Francisco over the American city's refusal to accept the Osaka mayors' false and pernicious construction of war history.-

The G20 is composed of Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Britain, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the United States and the European Union. Over half of the member states had nationals who were forced into becoming sex slaves to Imperial Japan's Armed Forces. Nearly every G20 country had nationals who were held, abused, and died as POWs of Japan having fought as Allies against Japan.

Osaka and Fukuoka were areas of the greatest number of slave labor camps using American and Allied POWs in mines, factories, mills, and on docks, many of which have become UNESCO World Industrial Heritage sites. It was at Fukuoka prefecture's Port of Moji where most of the POWs arrived in Japan. Fukuoka's international airport was originally an Imperial Army airfield (Mushiroda Airfield) built by British, Dutch, and American POWs. In Fukuoka, eight American aviators were vivisected at the local university. Hours after the Emperor declared the war over, seventeen Americans were beheaded on the slopes of the city's Mt. Abura.

Today, no G20 country would plan an international conference in Warsaw or Gdansk given Poland's new revisionist Holocaust law. The same should be true for Osaka. We object to American participation in any conference or Expo held by a city that publicly and willfully embraces a discredited and dishonest historical narrative. That the Japanese government, in the midst of Osaka's controversy with San Francisco, would select such a city is both arrogant and indecent.

What we ask Congress

We ask Congress to encourage the Government of Japan to hold to its promises and responsibilities by preserving, expanding, and enhancing its reconciliation program toward its former American prisoners. We want to see the trips to Japan continued. We want Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs to publicize the program, its participants, and its achievements. We want to see a commitment to remembrance. We believe that both countries will be stronger the more we examine our shared history.

We ask Congress to encourage Japan to turn its POW visitation program into a permanent Fund supported by Japanese government and industry. This "Future Fund," not subject to Ministry of Finance yearly review, would support research, documentation, reconciliation programs, and people-to-people exchanges regarding Japan's history of forced and slave labor during WWII. Part of Fund's educational programming would be the creation of visual remembrances of this history through museums, memorials, exhibitions, film, and installations. Most important, the Fund would support project among all the arts from poetry, literature, music, dance, and drama to painting, drawing, film, and sculpture to tell the story to the next generation.

We ask Congress to ask and to legislate that the U.S. State Department represents the interests of American veterans with Japan. It is only the U.S. government that can persuade Japan to continue the visitation program, to create a Future Fund, and to ensure that the Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution include the dark history of POW slave labor.

We ask Congress to press the Japanese government to create a memorial at the Port of Moji, where most of the "Hell ships" docked and unloaded their sick and dying human cargo. The dock already features a monument to the Japanese soldiers who departed for war from this port. Nowhere in Moji's historic district is there mention of the captive men and looted riches off-loaded onto its docks. This must change.

Congressional Gold Medal

Most important, we ask Congress to approve an accurate and inclusive Congressional gold medal for the American POWs of Japan. It is long overdue. Over the past few years, there have been

Congressional gold medals given to groups that included American POWs of Japan. Eight members of the Doolittle Raiders were POWs, at least one Nisei member of the Military Intelligence Service was a POW, and nearly all the officers of the Filipino troops who were awarded Congressional Gold Medals were American. Seventy-seven years after the start of the War in the Pacific, it is time to recognize *all* those who fought the impossible and endured the unimaginable in the war against tyranny in the Pacific. Moreover, as I have described above, the Gold Medal would also recognize that we are the only American wartime group to have negotiated our own reconciliation with the enemy.

High price of freedom

The American POWs of Japan and their families paid a high price for the freedoms we cherish. In return for their sacrifices and service, they ask that their government keep its moral obligation to them. They do not want their history ignored or exploited. What they want most is to have their government stand by them to ensure they will be remembered, that our allies respect them, and that their American history be preserved accurately for future generations.

The torment of the American POWs of Japan is not just another facet of war history. Nor is it simply another saga of WWII suffering. It is a history of resilience, survival, and the human spirit, good and bad. And it has become an example of a path toward reconciliation and justice between Japan and its former victims.

We ask Congress for support and to help our veterans in their unique quest for justice and remembrance. It should not be forgotten that our robust and successful alliance is as much a product of mutual interests as of blood, steel and, as Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said in his 2015 address to Congress, of tolerance. Today's alliance between Japan and the United States rests on how well we honor the memory of those who liberated Japan and its occupied territories.

In the United States this history is being forgotten, and in Japan it is being revised. We cannot let this happen, on either side of the Pacific.

It is a sacred trust of both Congress and Department of Veterans Affairs to continue to fight for its WWII veterans and to defend their history.

Thank you for this opportunity to address your committee.

Ms. Jan Thompson

President

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