

Lt. Col. Edwin Price Ramsey, AUS (Ret.)

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SENATE VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

APRIL 11, 2007

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Thank you, Chairman Akaka and Honorable Members of the Senate Veterans of Affairs.

My name is Edwin Price Ramsey and I am appearing before the House and again on February 15th of this year, where copies of my testimony appear in more detail.

I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you here today. Having appeared before the committee on November 5, 1993 and again on July 2, 1998, and since I will turn 90 years of age on May 9th of this year, I will never have another chance to contribute in some small way, to correcting a longstanding gross injustice to the Filipino Veterans of World War II.

To do so, it is important that you be aware of why I had a unique position during that time and have considerable knowledge in this matter.

In 1941, I was a lieutenant in the 26th Cavalry Regiment, Philippine Scouts, a regular unit of the US Army with whom I fought from the Japanese Landing in Lingayen Gulf through the Battle of Bataan. After Bataan surrendered on April 9, 1942, my troop commander, Capt. Joseph R. Barker II and I escaped and made our way to Pampanga Province in Central Luzon, where we met Col. Claude Thorp whom General MacArthur had sent out of Bataan in January to establish resistance behind the enemy lines. We joined Col. Thorp and began the Guerrilla forces in Central Luzon designated by Col. Thorp to be the "East Central Luzon Guerrilla area" (ECLGA) under the "Luzon Guerrilla Army Forces" of Thorp. After the capture of both Thorp and Barker, and their later execution, in early January of 1943, I became the commander of the ECLGA. By the liberation of Central Luzon, it had grown to approximately 45,000 guerrilla troops.

With that background, I would like to address the question of the status of Filipino Veterans and their treatment, especially with respect to the Recission Acts of 1946.

In July of 1941, President Roosevelt authorized, through the War Department, the formation of the "United States Army Forces in the Far East" (USAFFE) under the command of General Douglas MacArthur and ordered the induction of the Military forces of the Commonwealth of the Philippines into and as part of the USAFFE. It is impossible to see how these Philippine troops could be federalized into the USAFFE and not be part of the United States Army. Further, when we inducted the Filipinos into the guerrilla forces, we required that they all swear an oath of allegiance to the United States of America and the Commonwealth of the Philippines. Therefore, all those guerrillas that were recognized after the liberation would have the same status. In that connection, I question why there was a difference in the treatment accorded to the 65,000 or so Commonwealth of Puerto Rico troops and those from Hawaii and elsewhere, who served in the U.S. Army and were later treated the same as American Veterans.

The USAFFE forces fought courageously, delaying the Japanese time table for several months, instead of the six weeks General Homma had been given by the Japanese High Command to conquer Bataan. This probably saved Australia from the Japanese. Also, remember that only the Filipinos remained loyal to their former colonial masters while the Indo-Chinese turned on the French, the Indonesians on the Dutch, and Malaya and Burma on the British. It was this unbelievable loyalty that provided the environment necessary to build the massive guerrilla forces that made it impossible for the Japanese to defend, in any serious way, against the liberating Allied Forces and ultimately saved thousands of American and Allied lives. General MacArthur personally confirmed this to me in a meeting I had with him in Tokyo in March of 1947. At that time, he gave me an autographed photo signed, "To Ramsey with the Admiration and Affection of His Old Comrade in Arms, Douglas MacArthur." My most prized memento.

For the sake of brevity, since we have so little time today, for more detail, please refer to my previous testimonial letters submitted in the earlier hearings on November 5, 1993 and July 22, 1998 and were incorporated in the hearing records. I would especially call your attention to the paragraphs on page 4 of my letter re: the July 22, 1998 hearing, referring to President Roosevelt's letter to Congress on October 6, 1943, "to make provision for the physical and economic rehabilitation of the Philippines made necessary by the ravages of war which the invaders have inflicted upon them. All of this is due Filipino people in recognition of their heroic role in this war and the political ties which have bound us together in the past. It should be remembered by us all today that this plea was made in 1943 at a time when morale was very low worldwide and particularly in Asia and there was a great deal of uncertainty from our fortunes of war at that time.

It is my belief that if President Roosevelt would have lived, he never would have sanctioned an agreement so demeaning to the Filipinos as resulted by the Recission Act of 1946.

Thank you for your time.

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Edwin Price Ramsey