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H. R. 3603

To award a Congressional Gold Medal to the troops from the United States and the Philippines who defended Bataan and Corregidor, in recognition of their personal sacrifice and service during World War II.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 28, 2021

Ms. LEGER FERNANDEZ (for herself, Mr. MELJER, Mr. THOMPSON of California, Mr. TONY GONZALES of Texas, Mr. GALLEGRO, Mr. BACON, Mr. CUELLAR, Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN, Ms. NORTON, and Mr. COHEN) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Financial Services, and in addition to the Committee on House Administration, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To award a Congressional Gold Medal to the troops from the United States and the Philippines who defended Bataan and Corregidor, in recognition of their personal sacrifice and service during World War II.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Defenders of Bataan
5 and Corregidor Congressional Gold Medal Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

2 Congress finds the following:

3 (1) Hours after the attacks on Pearl Harbor,
4 Hawaii, Imperial Japanese forces launched an at-
5 tack on the Philippines, cutting off vital lines of
6 communication to members of the Armed Forces of
7 the United States (referred to in this Act as the
8 “Armed Forces”) and Filipino troops in the Far
9 East under the command of General Douglas Mac-
10 Arthur.

11 (2) On December 8, 1941, the 200th and 515th
12 Coast Artillery Regiments, successors to the New
13 Mexico National Guardsmen who made up part of
14 the famed “Rough Riders” of the Spanish-American
15 War, were the “first to fire”.

16 (3) Despite being cut off from supply lines and
17 reinforcements, members of the Armed Forces and
18 Philippine troops quickly executed a plan to delay
19 the Japanese invasion and defend the Philippines
20 against that invasion.

21 (4) Combined Armed Forces and Filipino
22 ground forces fought a prolonged 6-month resistance
23 to Imperial Japan’s invasion of the Philippines.
24 With the Armed Forces unable to deliver reinforce-
25 ments, the Armed Forces and Filipino forces slowly
26 deteriorated in combat effectiveness from—

1 (A) lack of food, supplies, and ammunition;

2 (B) disease; and

3 (C) no air and naval support.

4 (5) By December 10, 1941, the United States
5 Army Air Corps airfields at Del Carmen, Clark,
6 Nichols, and Nielson on Luzon in the Philippines, as
7 well as the nearby United States naval facilities at
8 Cavite and Olongapo, had been destroyed. The sur-
9 viving sailors, marines, and airmen were organized
10 into provisional infantry units and sent to fight on
11 the Bataan Peninsula.

12 (6) By April 1942, troops from the United
13 States and the Philippines had bravely and staunch-
14 ly fought off enemy attacks in Bataan for more than
15 4 months under strenuous conditions that resulted
16 in widespread starvation and disease.

17 (7) Securing the withdrawal of Armed Forces
18 on Luzon to the Bataan Peninsula were the fol-
19 lowing:

20 (A) 1,809 New Mexico National Guards-
21 men from 200th and 515th Coast Artillery
22 (Antiaircraft) regiments. First stationed at
23 Fort Stotsenberg north of Manila, they are
24 credited as being the “first to fire” in the de-
25 fense of the Philippines on December 8, 1941.

1 (B) 1,006 National Guardsmen of the
2 192nd GHQ Light Tank Battalion (596) com-
3 posed of Company A from Janesville, Wis-
4 consin, Company B from Maywood, Illinois,
5 Company C from Port Clinton, Ohio, and Com-
6 pany D from Harrodsburg, Kentucky, and the
7 194th Light Tank Battalion (410) composed of
8 Company A from Brainerd, Minnesota, Com-
9 pany B from Saint Joseph, Missouri, and Com-
10 pany C from Salinas, California. The 192nd
11 and 194th Tank Battalions had arrived in the
12 Philippines on or before Thanksgiving Day,
13 1941.

14 (8) Barely $\frac{1}{2}$ of the men from the National
15 Guard units described in paragraph (7) returned
16 home at the end of the war, with the majority dying
17 as prisoners of war of the Imperial Japanese Army.

18 (9) By maintaining their position and engaging
19 the enemy for as long as they did, the troops at Ba-
20 taan were able to change the momentum of the war,
21 delaying the Japanese timetable to take control of
22 the Southeast Pacific for needed war materials. Be-
23 cause of the heroic actions of the defenders of Ba-
24 taan, members of the Armed Forces and other Allied
25 forces throughout the Pacific had time to regroup

1 and prepare for the successful liberation of the Pa-
2 cific and the Philippines.

3 (10) On April 9, 1942, approximately 12,000
4 members of the Armed Forces and 66,000 Filipino
5 soldiers became prisoners of war with the surrender
6 of the Armed Forces and Filipino forces on the Ba-
7 taan Peninsula in the Philippines by Major General
8 Edward P. King.

9 (11) Beginning on April 9, 1942, and lasting
10 for almost 2 weeks, troops from the Armed Forces
11 and the Philippines were taken prisoner and forced
12 to march 65 miles without any food, water, or med-
13 ical care in what came to be known as the “Bataan
14 Death March”. They marched from Marviveles north
15 to the San Fernando train station. At San Fer-
16 nando, the men were packed standing in
17 unventilated boxcars for the 24-mile journey by rail
18 to Capas. Survivors then marched an additional 3
19 miles to the makeshift prisoner-of-war camp at
20 Camp O’Donnell, an unfinished Philippine Army
21 training facility.

22 (12) During this forced march, an estimated
23 700 members of the Armed Forces and possibly
24 10,000 Filipino soldiers died from starvation, lack of
25 medical care, sheer exhaustion, or abuse by their

1 captors. Hundreds of men on the Death March re-
2 main unaccounted for from the march and its imme-
3 diate aftermath.

4 (13) Conditions at the prisoner-of-war camps
5 were appalling, leading to increased disease and mal-
6 nutrition, which precipitated extraordinary death
7 rates of as high as 300 per day.

8 (14) Thousands of troops fought under siege
9 conditions on Corregidor (Fort Mills), a fortress is-
10 land in Manila Bay, the headquarters of the wartime
11 U.S. Army Forces in the Far East, and the nearby
12 fortified islands of Fort Hughes, Fort Drum, and
13 Fort Frank until May 6, 1942.

14 (15) On May 6, 1942, Corregidor, which had
15 become the military command center for all the Phil-
16ippines, United States Forces in the Philippines
17 (USFIP), was surrendered by Lt. General Jonathan
18 M. Wainwright. Nearly 10,000 members of the
19 Armed Forces as well as more than 3,000 Filipino
20 soldiers and nurses became prisoners of war of Im-
21perial Japan.

22 (16) On June 6, 1942, the prisoners at Camp
23 O'Donnell were transferred to Camp Cabanatuan,
24 north of Camp O'Donnell.

1 (17) Nearly 26,000 of the 50,000 Filipino pris-
2 oners of war died at Camp O'Donnell and survivors
3 were gradually paroled from September through De-
4 cember 1942.

5 (18) Between September of 1942 and December
6 of 1944, prisoners of war from the Armed Forces
7 who had survived the horrific Death March were
8 shipped north for forced labor aboard “hell ships”
9 and succumbed in great numbers because of the
10 abysmal conditions. Many of those ships were mis-
11 takenly targeted by Allied naval forces because the
12 Japanese military convoys were not properly labeled
13 as carrying prisoners of war. The sinking of the
14 Arisan Maru alone claimed nearly 1,800 lives of
15 members of the Armed Forces.

16 (19) The prisoners who remained in the camps
17 suffered from continued mistreatment, malnutrition,
18 lack of medical care, and horrific conditions until
19 they were liberated in 1945.

20 (20) The veterans of Bataan and Corregidor
21 represented the best of the United States and the
22 Philippines, hailed from various locales across both
23 countries, and represented true diversity.

24 (21) Over the subsequent decades, the veterans
25 of Bataan and Corregidor formed support groups,

1 were honored in local and State memorials, and told
2 their stories to all people of the United States.

3 (22) The United States Navy has continued to
4 honor the history and stories of the veterans of Ba-
5 taan by naming 2 ships after the battle, including 1
6 ship that is still in service, the USS Bataan (LHD-
7 5), in memory of their valor and honorable resist-
8 ance against Imperial Japanese forces.

9 (23) Many of the survivors of Bataan and Cor-
10 regidor have died and those who remain continue to
11 tell their stories.

12 (24) The people of the United States and the
13 Philippines are forever indebted to these men for—

14 (A) the courage and tenacity they dem-
15 onstrated during the first 4 months of World
16 War II fighting against enemy soldiers; and

17 (B) the perseverance they demonstrated
18 during 3 years of capture, imprisonment, and
19 atrocious conditions, while maintaining dignity,
20 honor, patriotism, and loyalty.

21 **SEC. 3. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

22 (a) AWARD AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of the
23 House of Representatives and the President pro tempore
24 of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements for the
25 collective award, on behalf of Congress, of a gold medal

1 of appropriate design to the troops from the United States
2 and the Philippines who defended Bataan and Corregidor,
3 in recognition of their personal sacrifice and service during
4 World War II.

5 (b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—For purposes of the
6 award under subsection (a), the Secretary of the Treasury
7 (referred to in this Act as the “Secretary”) shall strike
8 the gold medal with suitable emblems, devices, and in-
9 scriptions, to be determined by the Secretary.

10 (c) SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.—

11 (1) IN GENERAL.—Following the award of the
12 gold medal under subsection (a), the gold medal
13 shall be given to the Smithsonian Institution, where
14 it shall be displayed as appropriate and made avail-
15 able for research.

16 (2) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of
17 Congress that the Smithsonian Institution should
18 make the gold medal received under paragraph (1)
19 available for display at other locations, particularly
20 at locations that are associated with the prisoners of
21 war at Bataan and the troops from the United
22 States and the Philippines who defended Bataan and
23 Corregidor.

1 **SEC. 4. DUPLICATE MEDALS.**

2 (a) STRIKING OF DUPLICATES.—Under such regula-
3 tions as the Secretary may prescribe, the Secretary may
4 strike duplicates in bronze of the gold medal struck under
5 section 3.

6 (b) SELLING OF DUPLICATES.—The Secretary may
7 sell such duplicates under subsection (a) at a price suffi-
8 cient to cover the costs of such duplicates, including labor,
9 materials, dies, use of machinery, and overhead expenses.

10 (c) PROCEEDS OF SALE.—Amounts received from the
11 sale of duplicate bronze medals under subsection (b) shall
12 be deposited in the United States Mint Public Enterprise
13 Fund.

14 **SEC. 5. STATUS OF MEDALS.**

15 (a) NATIONAL MEDALS.—Medals struck under this
16 Act are national medals for purposes of chapter 51 of title
17 31, United States Code.

18 (b) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purposes of section
19 5134 of title 31, United States Code, all medals struck
20 under this Act shall be considered to be numismatic items.

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