

Japan Attacks the Philippines

(From “Readings in History Class” webpage)

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THE BATTLE OF THE PHILIPPINES – STRATEGIC OVERVIEW

The Japanese attack of the Philippines occurred nine hours after their attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941. Despite that nine hour warning of the outbreak of hostilities with Japan, the commander of the United States army and air forces in the Philippines, Lieutenant General Douglas MacArthur, was paralyzed by indecision during these crucial hours and failed to bring his forces to a state of readiness to meet a Japanese attack. MacArthur’s indecision, combined with his poor military judgment and slackness in his command structure, led to the destruction of half of his air force on the ground and his troops being denied adequate supplies to withstand a lengthy siege.

Despite the hopelessness of their position, MacArthur ordered his troops to fight to the end. He did not remain to see that happen. He arranged his own escape with senior staff officers to Australia on 11 March 1942, leaving his sick and starving troops, their nurses, and American civilians to face the fury of a Japanese army commander humiliated by the stubborn resistance of the Americans. From the safety of Australia, MacArthur continued to order his troops in the Philippines to fight to the death. The American and Philippine defenders finally surrendered to the Japanese invaders on 6 March 1942 when they were too weak from sickness and starvation to resist any longer. The survivors were then subjected by the Japanese to death marches and other atrocities.

There are two aspects of the Battle for the Philippines which should be of particular interest to Australians. The lengthy and heroic resistance by MacArthur’s abandoned troops seriously disrupted the Japanese offensive timetable in the South-West Pacific region. Only 50 days had been allowed for the capture of the Philippines. It took Lieutenant General Homma 135 days to defeat the abandoned American and Philippine troops, and he needed massive reinforcements to do so. The stubborn resistance wrecked a Japanese division, tied up Japanese troops and resources in the Philippines, and provided vital time for Australian troops to return from the Middle East to defend Australia from Japanese invasion.

The Battle of the Philippines also provides an insight into the deeply flawed character and military of General Douglas MacArthur, and helps to explain his inexcusable neglect of Australia’s northern defences in 1942 and his indifference to the welfare of Australian troops fighting and dying on the Kokoda Trail.

Japanese hostility to acquisition of the Philippines by the United States

The defeat of Spain in 1898 in the Spanish-American War brought a new and powerful player into the western Pacific region. As part of the fruits of its victory over Spain, the United States acquired the Philippines. Japan viewed this development with hostility. The United States possessed a powerful navy, and military planners in Japan realized that American occupation of the Philippines could hinder Japan's plans for aggressive territorial expansion into South-East Asia. To meet this potential challenge, Japan began to prepare for the possibility of armed conflict between the two countries. For their part, American military planners recognized the risk of the Philippines from Japan's expansionist foreign policy and they also began planning for possible armed conflict with Japan.

American strategies for the Defense of the Philippines against Japan

The vastness of the Pacific Ocean created serious problems for the navies of the United States and Japan in the planning of their defensive strategies against each other. When Japan launched its devastating surprise attack on the United States Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii on 7 December 1941, and seized American island bases between Hawaii and the Philippines, one major aim was to facilitate capture of the Philippines without interference from the United States Navy. As American and Philippine fought a hopeless battle against invading Japanese troops between December 1941 and May 1942, any hope of reinforcement by the greatly weakened United States Pacific Fleet was negated by the Japanese Navy's control of the vast stretch of waters between Hawaii and the Philippines.

The American military planners were aware of the difficulties involved in the defence of the 7,000 scattered islands of the Philippines archipelago against the powerful Japanese attack. Between World War I and World War II, strategic planning envisaged that the American garrison on the Philippines, then numbering about 17,100 troops, would be concentrated at Manila Bay on the large northern island of Luzon and hold the heavily fortified island of Corregidor and the Bataan Peninsula of the western side of the bay until they could be relieved by the United States Pacific Fleet sailing from Hawaii. This strategic plan for the defense of the Philippines against Japan was given the code reference "Plan Orange". Given the history of Japanese military aggression on the Asian mainland, Plan Orange assumed the probability of a surprise Japanese attack on the Philippines. Being fully aware of the strength of the Japanese Imperial Army and the power of the Japanese Imperial Navy, the American military planners realistically assumed that their Philippines garrison would probably be overwhelmed and forced to surrender before an American fleet could flight its way from Hawaii to Manila Bay.

After the commencement of World War II, Plan Orange was largely superseded by a number of contingent plans which were collectively assigned the code reference "Rainbow". When Japan signed the Tripartite Pact in September 1940, and thus aligned itself with the Axis Powers Germany and Italy, this dangerous alliance forced the United States to reassess the various Rainbow scenarios. The Tripartite Pact recognized Japan's self-assumed role in establishing a "New Order" in East Asia, and provided for mutual assistance should any one of the three Axis powers be attacked by another country not already involved in the European conflict or Japan's undeclared war against China. The Germans and Italians wanted the pact to convey a clear warning

to the United States that it would face war with Japan if it entered the war in Europe on Britain's side.

In the event of war between the three Axis powers and the United States, Admiral Harold R. Stark, Chief of Naval Operations in Washington, argued for containment of Japan in the western Pacific region and commitment of American military power in partnership with Britain against Germany and Italy as a priority. Instead of an offensive response to Japanese aggression in the western Pacific as envisaged by Plan Orange, Admiral Stark proposed that the United States should maintain a defensive stance against Japan until Germany and Italy had been defeated. This strategic plan was strongly supported by the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, who had long argued that defeating Germany must be the first priority of both Britain and the United States. Admiral Stark's plan was approved by American and British military planners and joint meetings in Washington between January and March 1941. The plan assigned the code reference "Rainbow 5", and became the unofficial policy of the United States and Britain in the event of the United States being drawn into war with the three Axis powers.

There were disturbing implications for both the Philippines and Australia in the Rainbow 5 plan. If Japan launched itself on the path of military aggression, Rainbow 5 would effectively give Japanese a free hand to pursue that aggression in the western Pacific region until Germany and Italy had been defeated. The survival of the Philippines and Australia would both be gravely threatened by the plan. There would be no American naval reinforcements for the Philippines. The likely fate of an American garrison in the Philippines, in the event of war with Japan, was not disclosed to the garrison troops or the American people. The British government did not inform Australians that London and Washington had effectively abandoned their country to invasion in the event of war with Japan.

Fortunately for Australia, the sinking of the United States battleship fleet at Pearl Harbor forced a rapid reappraisal of Pacific strategy by Washington. The whole of the central Pacific was now under threat from Japan, and the survival of Australia became of vital importance to the United States to provide a potential base for an American counter-offensive. This major change of American policy was fortunate for Australia because, once Singapore was lost to the Japanese on 15 February 1942, the British government made it clear to Australia that Britain was more concerned to save India rather than Australia from Japanese invasion. No British troops would be provided by Britain for the defence of Australia.

THE UNITED STATES EQUIPS THE PHILIPPINES TO RESIST A JAPANESE ATTACK

General MacArthur is appointed Commander of US Army Forces in the Philippines

In July 1941, with tensions rising between Japan and the United States, the Philippine Army was incorporated into the American armed forces, and Lieutenant General Douglas MacArthur was recalled from retirement to take command of the newly created United States Army Forces in the Far East. The new military structure included American troops serving in the Philippines and the local Philippine Army. The appointment was obviously based upon MacArthur's lengthy

military service in the Philippines which included service as Military Adviser to the Commonwealth of the Philippines since 1936.

The deeply flawed personality of General Douglas MacArthur

While acknowledging these special qualifications, it is still difficult to understand how this appointment could have been made. MacArthur possessed a deeply flawed personality. He was a commander with a mind that was too closed and inflexible for him to readily deduce an enemy's strategic and tactical goals or options, and this impaired his capacity to take appropriate measures to counter them. He ignored unpleasant realities when it did not suit him to acknowledge them, and tended to surround himself with servile staff officers who were aware of this dangerous weakness and indulged it. A surprise move by an enemy could produce paralyzing indecision at MacArthur's headquarters. He distanced himself from his troops and was indifferent to their welfare. He was also a conceited man, with a passion for self-glorification, and incapable of admitting serious military mistakes or learning from them. These character flaws would lead him in the Philippines to squander his military resources and sacrifice his troops for the sake of his own vanity. This was the man President Roosevelt had placed in command of the United States army and air force of the Philippines.

MacArthur persuades Washington that the whole of the Philippines can be defended

Driven by conceit and unwillingness to acknowledge the stark realities of Japan's enormous military strength, the isolation of the Philippines from American support Washington that the whole of the Philippines could be defended. He claimed that this could be done by providing him with more American troops, by arming his Far East Air Force with the new B-17 "Flying Fortress" heavy bomber, and by deploying American garrison troops, together with ten trained and fully equipped local Philippine army divisions, across the nine major islands of the Philippines archipelago. Employing the pompous and extravagant language that was typical of MacArthur's style of leadership and lack of concern for the lives of his troops, he boasted that they would stop the Japanese on the beaches or die in the attempt. MacArthur neglected to tell his superiors in Washington that the bulk of his local Philippine Army units existed only on paper, and that the units that did exist lacked the training and equipment necessary to meet Japanese troops on equal terms.

Inspired by MacArthur's optimism, Washington amended the Rainbow-5 war plan on 19 November 1941 to permit the whole of the Philippines to be defended in the event of war in the Japan. The amended war plan included orders for the planes of the Far East Air Force to attack any Japanese forces and installation within range at the outbreak of war. These attack orders acquire great significance on the light in the war warning sent to MacArthur from Washington on 27 November 1941 and his later attempt to exploit the words of that war warning in defense of his failure to bring his command to a state of readiness to resist a likely Japanese attack in the hours immediately following Pearl Harbor. The relevant part of the war warning is set out below at Reference. In the light of this express authority, it is important to note that major Japanese

airbases and harbor facilities on the island of Formosa (now Taiwan) were within the operational range of MacArthur's B-17s.

In response to MacArthur's glib assurances, and without checking their truth, Washington greatly increased American troop numbers in the Philippines and supplied MacArthur with tanks, artillery, and the most modern fighters and bombers. By December 1941, MacArthur commanded 31,000 American troops and 110,000 under-trained and ill-equipped Philippine Army troops. MacArthur's Far East Air Force had one hundred front-line Curtis P-40 "Warhawk" fighters (in Australia known as the P-40 "Kittyhawk"), and thirty-five of the new B-17 heavy bombers. The headquarters of the United States Asiatic Fleet was also located in the Philippines. Although lacking battleships and aircraft carriers, Admiral Thomas C. Hart could deploy three cruisers, thirteen destroyers, six fast patrol torpedo boats, and twenty-nine submarines against the Japanese. The deadliest weapons at his command were the submarines because Japan would be heavily dependent on sea transport to move invasion forces to the islands of South-West Pacific. The Navy Department in Washington did not share MacArthur's view that the Philippines could be held against a full-scale Japanese attack, and in November 1941, Admiral Hart was ordered to withdraw his fleet from the Philippines.

In responding to MacArthur's request for more American troops and up-to-date military equipment to defend the whole of the Philippines, Washington was not at this stage abandoning the Rainbow-5 war plan that relegated the defence of the Philippines to a lower priority than to defeat of Germany. National pride was involved in the defense of the Philippines, and while acknowledging that it would become a secondary theatre in the event of war with both Japan and Germany, the United States was not prepared to abandon the Philippines to the Japanese without a fight. Another persuasive factor was the availability of the new B-17 Flying Fortress heavy bomber for the defense of the Philippines. The US Army Air Corps argued that it gave the United States capability to strike with devastating effect at distant Japanese airbases and naval invasion forces before hostile planes ships could reach the Philippines. Of course, that was only theory; the bomber had not seen military action at this time.

Having secured Washington's support, MacArthur then dispersed his troops widely and thinly across nine of the major Philippine islands. In doing so, he breached one of the cardinal rules of military tactics. He thought that the Japanese would be unlikely to attack the Philippines before April 1942, and had no realistic plan to defend the islands if the Japanese attacked earlier. His poor military judgment would ensure the piecemeal loss of almost one third of his army when the Japanese attack came, and the loss of vital equipment and supplies that should have been concentrated on the heavily fortified island of Corregidor and the Bataan Peninsula on the western side of Manila Bay.

Although he was overall commander of air forces in the Philippines, MacArthur appeared to have little understanding of the requirements of modern air warfare. When Major General Lewis H. Brereton arrived in the Philippines in October 1941 to take command of the Far East Air Force, he was surprised to find a makeshift air force that was slackly organized and short of aircraft, spare parts and trained personnel. Instead of allowing Brereton time to prepare this makeshift air force

for combat, MacArthur immediately sent him off on liaison duties to Malaya and the Dutch East Indies. Prompted by alarming decode Japanese signal intercepts, the following war warning was sent by the US Army Chief of Staff, General George C. Marshall, to all commands, including the Philippines, on 27 November 1941:

“Japanese future action unpredictable but hostile action possible at any moment. If hostilities cannot, repeat cannot be avoided, the United States desires that Japan commit the first over act. This policy should not, repeat not, be construed, as restricting you to a course of action that might jeopardize your defense.... Should hostilities occur you will carry out the tasks assigned in Rainbow Five so far as they pertain to Japan.

Even though the Philippines was regarded as a likely primary target in the event of war with Japan, MacArthur took no significant steps to place his command on war alert. As he was preparing to depart on another frivolous overseas liaison mission for MacArthur, General Brereton warned his commander that the B-17 bombers at Clark Field near Manila were within range of Japanese bombers from Formosa (now Taiwan). Brereton proposed that the B-17s be moved to an airbase on the Southern Philippine island of Mindanao. MacArthur agreed, but seventeen of his total force of thirty-five B-17s were still sitting on the airstrip at Clark Field when the Japanese attacked that airbase on 8 December 1941.

The failure of MacArthur and Brereton to pay proper heed to General Marshall’s war warning of 27 November is demonstrated by the fact that neither man saw any need to cancel a lavish party held in the ballroom of MacArthur’s hotel on the night of 7 December 1941 (Manila Time). Crewmen of the B-17s still sitting on the ground at Clark Field attended the party which lasted until 2.00 am on the morning of 8 December 1941. The reveling pilots were carrying orders to fly these vital aircraft to Mindanao on the very day that the Japanese attacked.

THE JAPANESE ATTACK FINDS GENERAL MACARTHUR UNPREPARED

Japanese preparations for the invasion of the Philippines

By 6 December 1941 (Hawaii time), the Japanese had assembled about five hundred fighters and bombers at airbases on Formosa (now Taiwan) for their assault on the Philippines. The task of this huge fleet of Japanese aircraft was to support a seaborne invasion by destroying the United States Far East Air Force, and seizing control of the skies over the Philippines for Japan.

The Japanese were not expecting to be able to employ their standard tactic of a swift surprise attack for their invasion of the Philippines. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor would take place at 8.00 a.m on 7 December 1941 (Hawaii time). However, because of the difference in time zone, and the separation of Hawaii and the Philippines by the International Date Line, at the time of the attack on Pearl Harbor it would be 2.30 am on 8 December 1941 in Manila. The Japanese had planned for their bombers and fighters to begin taking off from Formosan airbases at 2.30 am on 8 December. This timing would enable the Japanese aircraft to reach the Philippines by daybreak on that same day. By that time, the Japanese expected that the commander of American air forces on the Philippines (MacArthur) would have responded to their attack on Pearl Harbor by placing

his air defenses on full war alert. The Japanese expected that their fighters and bombers would meet stiff opposition from American fighters when they arrived over the Philippines.

Before Japanese aircraft could take off from Formosa at 2.30 am on 8 December, thick fog began to envelop the airbases. As hours passed with no sign of the fog lifting, senior Japanese commanders and their staff became increasingly concerned that the Americans must strike first at the Formosan airbases which were crowded with aircraft, fully armed, and waiting to take off. They need not have worried. In the Philippines, General MacArthur had neglected to place his command on a full war footing even after learning about the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

The Japanese Attack on the Philippines

MacArthur's inaction and failure to follow war orders causes the loss of American air power in the Philippines

Within minutes of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, which occurred at about 2.30 am on December 1941 (Manila time), the news was received at the headquarters of the United States Asiatic Fleet in the Philippines. Admiral Hart was informed at about 3.00 am. The news was not passed on to the army. Shortly after 3.00 am on that morning, General MacArthur was informed of the Japanese attack by his Chief of Staff, Brigadier General Richard K. Sutherland. An army signalman had picked up the news while listening to a Californian radio station. At 3.40 am, Brigadier Leonard T. Gerow, Chief of the Army's War Plans Division, telephoned MacArthur from Washington to confirm that Pearl Harbor had been attacked by the Japanese. He told MacArthur that he "wouldn't be surprised if you get an attack there in the near future".

The commander of MacArthur's Far East Air Force, Major General Lewis Brereton, heard the news about Pearl Harbor from Brigadier General Sutherland shortly before 4.00 am. Brereton immediately placed MacArthur's only powerful offensive weapon on war alert. Many of his fliers had only just returned to their airbases from the lavish party at MacArthur's hotel. It is at this point, that MacArthur's headquarters at Manila takes on the characteristics of a chapter from Alice in Wonderland. History records that the Japanese launched devastating attacks on MacArthur's airbases at about 12.20 pm on 8 December 1941. Instead of acting decisively to prepare for a likely Japanese attack on the Philippines, MacArthur took no significant action between 3.00 am and 12.20 pm to bring his command to a proper state of readiness to resist an attack and to preserve his air force. Whether MacArthur's paralysis during these critical nine hours was due to indecision or the restraining influence of President Quezon, or perhaps a combination of both, has never been satisfactorily explained by historians.

From 5.00 am in the morning of 8 December 1941, Major General Brereton tried to speak to MacArthur about a Far East Air Force response to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, but he was repeatedly denied access to MacArthur by Brigadier General Sutherland. At 5.30 am on this morning, MacArthur received a cable from Washington directing him to execute the Rainbow-5 war plan at once. It will be recalled from the preceding chapter, that Washington had amended the Rainbow-5 war plan on 19 November 1941 to include orders for the planes of the Far East Air Force stationed in the Philippines to attack any Japanese forces and installations within range at

the outbreak of hostilities. The Japanese airbases and harbor installations on Formosa were within range of MacArthur's B-17s.

Two of the most extraordinary aspects of this morning were:

- a) The failure by MacArthur to contact and confer with the commander of his Far East Air Force between 5.00 am and 11.00 am, and
- b) MacArthur's failure to obey both the amended Rainbow 5 war plan and the war order transmitted from Washington at 5.30 am

Major General Brereton was aware of the Japanese propensity to launch surprise attacks at dawn, and he wanted to persuade MacArthur to mount a bombing attack on the Japanese airbases on Formosa. While waiting to see MacArthur on this morning, Brereton was informed by Admiral Hart that Japanese carrier aircraft had bombed the American seaplane tender *William B. Preston* in Davao Bay on the southern Philippine island of Mindanao. This was clearly a hostile "first overt act" by Japan of the kind referred to in General Marshall's war warning of 27 November 1941. In response to this direct hostile act against an American warship in Philippine waters, Brereton again asked Sutherland to permit him to see MacArthur or approve bombing of the Japanese airbases on Formosa himself. Sutherland refused both requests.

Fearing that his aircraft would be caught on the ground by the Japanese and destroyed, Brereton finally ordered them aloft to circle their airfields. Shortly after 9.00 am, Brereton was told that Japanese aircraft had attacked southern Luzon, and he pressed Sutherland again for permission to attack the Japanese airbases on Formosa. Again Sutherland refused. It was not until 11.00 am that MacArthur finally approved a bombing attack on the Japanese airbases. Brereton ordered all of his aircraft to land so that they could be refuelled and the bombers armed.

As a direct result of MacArthur's inexcusable failure to bring his command to proper state of readiness to resist a likely Japanese attack, most of Brereton's aircraft were sitting on their airstrips when Japanese bombers and fighters arrived overhead at about 12.20 pm on 8 December and took them by surprise. Reflecting the slackness of MacArthur's command structure, radar and other warnings of the approach of unidentified aircraft formations had not been passed on to flight commanders at American airbases. At the Clark Field airbase, located about 50 miles (80 km) north of Manila, the American bombers and fighters were caught on the ground and most were destroyed. Other Japanese aircraft attacked the American fighter airbase at Iba on the west coast of the main northern island of Luzon and destroyed all but two of the American P-40 fighters based there. Half of the aircraft of MacArthur's Far East Air Force were destroyed on the ground on the first day of the Japanese attack. In the following week, continuing Japanese air attacks reduced Brereton's remaining aircraft to a handful of P-40 fighters and a handful of B-17 bombers. Realising that there were not enough fighters left to protect the B-17 bombers, MacArthur ordered Brereton and his staff to take the B-17s to the safety of Australia.

It has been difficult for historians to establish the reason for MacArthur's fatal inaction during the crucial nine hours that elapsed in Manila following news of the Pearl Harbor attack. There was no American government inquiry into MacArthur's behavior of the kind that addressed alleged failures of command at Pearl Harbor. When informally questioned after the war, the chief actors in the Philippines disaster appeared to be concerned to protect their own reputations by shifting blame to others.

MacArthur's failure to respond appropriately to the emergency was almost certainly influenced by Philippine politics. The President of the Philippines, Manuel Quezon, had been a friend of MacArthur for many years. Despite the Philippines already having been included, without its consent, in Japan's Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere, Quezon naively believed that his country was neither militarily or economically important to Japan. In pursuance of this fantasy, Quezon had hoped to steer the Philippines to a course of neutrality in the event of war between the United States and Japan.

When Quezon received news of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, he contacted MacArthur immediately to urge him to avoid action that might provoke a Japanese attack on the Philippines. Quezon's pressure for neutrality was reflected in the orders issued by MacArthur immediately following the news of Pearl Harbor.

Although ordering his army and air forces to battle stations, MacArthur directed that the American Army and Air Force in the Philippines was not to initiate offensive action against Japan. The American Far East Air Force was permitted by MacArthur to retaliate only if directly attacked by the Japanese.

Quezon's pressure for neutrality appears to have infected the decision-making process at MacArthur's headquarters in Manila during the critical hours immediately following Pearl Harbor. MacArthur's inaction was particularly damaging for America's most powerful means of retaliation, the Far East Air Force in the Philippines. United States Air Force historian, Dr. Daniel R. Mortensen, describes the paralysis at MacArthur's headquarters during the initial hours following news of Pearl Harbor:

"Awakened before dawn on December 8, the military and political leaders at Manila realized that the disaster of Pearl Harbor might prevent the reinforcement of the islands. The shock of the Japanese attack on American territory, and the lingering hope that Japan might somehow ignore the Philippines, confused and paralysed MacArthur and other decision-makers. With Quezon urging neutrality, (Admiral) Hart hoping the regroup to the south, and (Major General) Brereton calling for a strike against Formosa by his ill-prepared bomber squadrons, MacArthur's command post sank in a positive quagmire of indecision". From *Delaying Action or Foul Deception, "War in the Pacific: Pearl Harbor to Tokyo Bay"* (1991).

Drawing on the recollections of those who observed MacArthur at his headquarters during the critical nine hours between news of Pearl Harbor reaching Manila and the commencement of the Japanese air assault on the Philippines, his biographer William Manchester describes MacArthur's mental condition at this time as verging on "catatonic". The commander of America's Army and Air Force in the Philippines was observed to be "grey, ill and exhausted." Manchester was not a hostile biographer. He suggests that MacArthur's decision-making faculties may have become paralysed in the hours immediately following Pearl Harbor owing to "overload" caused by conflicting pressures. (See William Manchester, "American Caesar", *The Freedom Constitution and the Revolutionary Government*.)

The inexcusable failure by MacArthur to place American military forces in the Philippines on a proper war footing immediately following news of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor compromised the defence of the Philippines. His neglect of his duty to the United States resulted

in the effective elimination of American air power in the western Pacific by 15 December 1941, forced the complete withdrawal of the United States Asiatic Fleet from Philippine waters, and paved the way for the Japanese invasion that followed. The navy and Army commanders at Pearl Harbor were relieved at their commands even though they were taken completely by surprise by the Japanese attack. MacArthur's failure to obey orders and disgraceful neglect of duty were much worse and would appear to have justified consideration of court martial. His subsequent escape to Australia with only his closest staff officers and family enable him to escape close scrutiny of his behavior at that time. Brereton was posted to duty elsewhere. Senior officers who might have testified to MacArthur's neglect of duty and incompetence as a commander remained in the Philippines, and either died or suffered lengthy imprisonment in Japanese prison camps. Even after the truth became known at the end of World War II, MacArthur had established himself as an heroic figure and was never brought to account for this disgraceful episode in the Battle of the Philippines.

MacArthur was criticized after the war for what appeared to be an inexcusable failure to bring his command to a proper state of readiness to resist the Japanese attack that took place on 8 December 1941. It was suggested that he failed to obey orders imposed on him by the amended Rainbow-5 war plan and the 5.30 am cable from Washington on 8 December 1941. In his defense, MacArthur relied on the words "...the United States desires that Japan commit the first overt act" in General Marshall's war warning of 27 November 1941, and said, "my orders were explicit not to initiate hostilities against the Japanese". This ludicrous defense ignored the obvious facts that Pearl Harbor and the bombing of the *William B. Preston* in the Philippine water were each a hostile "first over act". In conformity with his standard approach of blaming others for failures in his commands, MacArthur blamed Major General Brereton for the loss of half of the Far East Air Force on the ground.

Major General Brereton cannot escape criticism for the debacle that wiped out American air power in the Philippines in such a short time. Even allowing for MacArthur's fatal indecision during the crucial nine hours that elapsed after news of Pearl Harbor, Brereton should responded to the danger created by MacArthur's indecision by taking sensible precautions could have included maintaining combat fighter patrols over the main airbases while other fighters were being refueled, dispersing some of his fighters to secondary airfields, and withdrawing all of his B-17s to Mindanao MacArthur was paralyzed by indecision.

The Japanese Cut the American Supply Line to the Philippines

The Japanese plan to capture the Philippines included necessary military action to isolate the defenders of the Philippines from any hope of reinforcement from the United States. Within hours of Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, Japanese aircraft bombed Guam and Wake, America's two island outposts between Hawaii and the Philippines. On 10 December 1941, 5,000 troops of Japan's elite South Seas Detachment stormed ashore on Guam and quickly overran the small garrison of 300 US Marines. On 11 December 1941, a Japanese amphibious invasion force approached Wake Island. Here the Japanese received a nasty surprise. The Americans had reinforced their Marine garrison with twelve Grumman F4F Wildcat fighters and 5 inch coastal

guns. As the Japanese warships approached Wake, they were subjected to heavy bombardment and were forced to withdraw with the loss of two destroyers and damage to several cruisers, destroyers and transports.

The Japanese mounted daily air attacks on the small Wake Island garrison, and after all of their aircraft had been destroyed, a second much more powerful invasion force attacked the island successfully on 22 December 1941. This second invasion force included two of Vice Admiral Chuichui Nagumo's powerful fleet aircraft carriers, *Hiryu* and *Soryu*. With three aircraft carriers at his disposal, the Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific Fleet, Admiral Kimmel, could probably have reinforced the defenders of Wake Island from Hawaii, and forced the Japanese into a drawn-out war of attrition in the central Pacific which would have hampered their aggression in the Philippines and the South-West Pacific. Unfortunately, Kimmel was not a bold commander. He passed up the opportunity and allowed Wake Island to fall to the Japanese.

Japanese troops land in the Philippines

Having won complete control of the skies over the Philippines, the Japanese poured in their troops on 22 December 1941. Two divisions of Lieutenant General Masaharu Homma's 14th Army landed at Lingayen Gulf which is located 120 miles (193 km) north of Manila on the west coast of Luzon. They were opposed by two Philippine Army divisions, but these experienced and poorly equipped troops were unable to hold their ground against the battle-toughened Japanese troops, and the Japanese advanced steadily towards Manila. The ease with which the Japanese established themselves on Philippine soil exposed the absurdity of MacArthur's boast that his troops would hold the Japanese on the beaches.

THE SIEGE OF BATAAN AND CORREGIDOR

*Dugout Doug MacArthur lies a shakin' on the Rock
Safe from all the bombers and from any sudden shock
Dugout Doug is eating of the best food on Bataan
And his troops go starving on*

Disgusted and disillusioned by MacArthur's absence from the front lines, the failure of promised relief and MacArthur's retention of adequate food for himself and others on Corregidor, his starving troops on Bataan coined this derisive verse. The title "Dogout Doug" attached itself to MacArthur behind his back for the rest of the war.

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PLAN ORANGE

MacArthur realizes too late that he has spread his troops too thinly

On 24 December 1941, MacArthur implemented Plan Orange by withdrawing the Philippines government and his own headquarters to the heavily fortified island of Corregidor on the western side of Manila Bay. Realizing too late that he had committed a fatal error by spreading his troops

thinly across the islands of the Philippines, MacArthur ordered a general retreat of his troops on Luzon to the Bataan Peninsula on the western side of Manila Bay. The American and Philippine Army troops scattered across eight to the other large Philippine islands were abandoned to the Japanese.

The air of unreality pervading MacArthur's command in the Philippines is further evidenced by his share buying as the Japanese neared Manila. With Japanese troops closing in on the capital, MacArthur telephoned the mayor of Manila, Jorge Vargas, from Corregidor on 28 December and asked him to buy \$35,000 worth of shares in the Lepanto mining company for him. Vargas executed the transaction for MacArthur on the following day. Many years later, Vargas recalled that this single share transaction during the critical stages of the Japanese invasion of the Philippines made MacArthur a millionaire by the end of the war.

When MacArthur's 90,000 troops on Luzon reached the Bataan Peninsula after a week fighting withdrawal, they discovered that adequate equipment and supplies for a lengthy defense of the peninsula were not available because their commander had scattered huge quantities of military equipment, food, and medical supplies across nine of the major islands in the Philippines. The Japanese would be grateful beneficiaries of MacArthur's foolishness.

Plan Orange had required the Bataan Peninsula to be stocked with sufficient food and medical supplies to enable 43,000 troops to withstand a Japanese siege for six months. MacArthur had only stockpiled enough food and medical supplies on Bataan for a thirty day siege. The troops were immediately put on half-rations.

No significant support for the beleaguered defenders of Bataan could be expected from the United States because the British and American governments had resolved to adopt a "Germany First" war strategy. This strategy assigned to the western Pacific the status of a secondary theatre, and acknowledged that the Philippines could not be saved. This grim fact was not admitted publicly, and the government of Franklin D. Roosevelt went out of its way to pretend that adequate reinforcements were on their way to the Philippines. The lie fooled the American public and, for a short time, fooled the troops fighting the Japanese in the Philippines. However, it has to be conceded that even if the American government had wanted to save the Philippines from Japanese invasion, it would have been an almost impossible task. Japan ruled the skies over the Philippines and the Japanese Navy ruled the seas of the western Pacific. American submarines and fast torpedo boats were able to penetrate the Japanese blockade of the Philippines from time to time, but they could not deliver sufficient supplies to maintain MacArthur army.

Unaware at this stage that Roosevelt and Churchill had adopted the "Germany First" war strategy, MacArthur bombarded Washington with his own plans for an Allied offensive launched from Australia to take pressure off his troops and permit the arrival of reinforcement and supplies.

MacArthur demands and receives a reward for "distinguished service" from President Quezon

Suspecting that his military reputation and career had been compromised by his failing defence of the Philippines, MacArthur spent his first two weeks on Corregidor pestering President Quezon for rewards for his “distinguished service” to the Philippines. Quezon was terminally ill and racked with anxiety for the fate of his countrymen. He was in no fit state to resist MacArthur’s demands. He also believed that his best hope for continued American support lay with MacArthur, and he responded to MacArthur’s pressure for rewards by granting him the sum of \$500,000 from the impoverished Philippine treasury on Corregidor. In today’s values, the gift to MacArthur would have been worth in excess of \$5,000,000. MacArthur’s closest staff officers received smaller sums. These gifts of large sums of money to serving officers of the United States Army were grossly improper, but Roosevelt and Secretary for War Stimson elected to turn a blind eye even though they were aware of the payments.

When Quezon had escaped from the Philippines, he visited Washington and offered General Dwight D. Eisenhower \$60,000 for “distinguished service” during Eisenhower’s time in the Philippines as MacArthur’s chief of staff. Eisenhower politely declined the improper gift.

MacArthur establishes defensive lines across the Bataan Peninsula

Despite the hopelessness of the American position, MacArthur declared that he was determined to hold Bataan and Corregidor to the end, and he set up the Abucay-Mauban defensive line with two army corps across the Bataan Peninsula. The defensive line was divided into two sections, with Major General Jonathan M. Wainright’s corps defending the western section, and Major General George M. Parker’s corps defending the eastern section. Wainright’s and Parker’s troops were separated by Mount Natib, a towering volcano. When the Japanese attacked the American defensive line on 9 January 1942, they met stiff resistance despite the fact that the American and Philippine troops were living on half-rations, drinking contaminated water, and increasingly weakened by disease.

The Americans were so short of basic medical supplies on Bataan that even wound dressings had to be reused. Even the hospitals were not safe for the sick and medical staff, including female nurses. In violation of the 1929 Geneva Convention, the Japanese repeatedly bombed the hospitals on Bataan, despite the fact that they were clearly marked with red crosses. This barbarous behavior was not an isolated war crime. The Japanese bombed the clearly marked hospital ship *Manunda* in Darwin Harbour in February 1942, and torpedoed the brightly lit and clearly marked hospital ship *Centaur* off the coast of Queensland in 1943.

The Japanese finally outflanked the defenders of the Abucay-Mauban line by finding an accessible path over Mount Natib. MacArthur thought that the volcano would prove impassable for Japanese troops, and had neglected to take any steps to defend this formidable natural barrier. MacArthur was not a general who learned from his mistakes. When he assumed command of Australia’s defence later in 1942, he would make the same error of military judgment by underrating the ability of Japanese troops to cross the rugged Owen Stanley Range to attack the Port Moresby.

MacArthur orders his troops on Bataan to fight to the end

On 24 June 1942, MacArthur responded to the outflanking of his first defensive line by ordering his troops to withdraw to a second line closer to the island of Corregidor called the Bagac-Orion line. He now realizes that Bataan would inevitably fall to the Japanese and took the precaution of withdrawing food and medical supplies from his sick and starving front-line troops to ensure adequate supplies for his own headquarters on Corregidor. From the comparative safety of the underground fortifications of Corregidor, MacArthur directed that there would be no more retreats by his troops on Bataan and no surrender.

The order to fight to the end was stupid, callous, selfish, and typical of MacArthur's leadership style. It was a stupid order because MacArthur knew that the American defence of the Philippines was a lost cause and that his troops could expect no significant help from any source. It was callous because all of MacArthur's troops on Bataan were starving, and many were sick. If he was capable of honest appraisal of his own conduct, he must have known that he was only condemning them to further suffering in a lost cause produced by his own serious errors of military judgment. It was a selfish order because it only served MacArthur's vanity for his troops to die heroically in a lost cause. From events that followed, it is a fair inference that MacArthur did not intend to share the fate to which he had condemned his troops if he could avoid doing so. Perhaps it is not surprising that MacArthur was regarded with contempt by many of his troops on Bataan who assigned to their commander the derisive title "Dugout Doug". This was a reference to the fact that MacArthur only left his underground headquarters on Corregidor once during the siege to visit his troops on Bataan.

Despite the hopelessness of their position, MacArthur's troops on Bataan obeyed his order and resisted every attempt by the Japanese to penetrate their second line of defence. By the middle of February 1942, Homma's forces were so depleted and exhausted that the Japanese general had to halt the attack on Bataan and ask Tokyo for troop reinforcements. Homma had thrown 20,500 troops into the attack on the defenders of Bataan, and when he pulled back his troops on 24 February he had less than 2,000 left on their feet and many of these were sick. Imperial General Headquarters in Tokyo was furious with Homma. He had unwisely boasted that he would crush all American resistance on the Philippines within forty-five days, and he had lost a full Japanese army division in the assault on Bataan without defeating the American defenders. He was severely reprimanded by Tokyo and demoted by being placed under the overall command of General Yamashita. Unfortunately, Homma would revenge himself for this humiliation on his prisoners when the Americans finally surrendered to him.

During March, Japanese reinforcements poured into the Philippines. On Bataan, the food situation had become so serious that the daily ration had to be dropped below half-rations. The Japanese renewed their offensive on 3 April 1942, with fresh troops, heavy artillery, tanks and air support. MacArthur was not there to witness the renewal of the Japanese offensive. He had arranged his own escape to Australia with his family and senior staff officers.

MACARTHUR DESERTS "THE BATTLING BASTARDS OF BATAAN" AND ESCAPES TO AUSTRALIA

*“We’re the battling bastards of Bataan:
No Mama, no papa, no Uncle Sam,
No aunts, no uncles, no nephews, no nieces,
No rifles, no planes, or artillery pieces,
And nobody gives a damn.”*

This doggerel verse reflects the strong sense of betrayal felt by MacArthur’s troops on Bataan.

MacArthur is shocked to learn that the Philippines had been abandoned by the United States to its fate

On 4 February 1942, the submarine *Trout* arrived at Corregidor to transfer Philippine Treasury gold to a safe place and evacuate Lieutenant Colonel Warren J. Clear, an intelligence officer. Before departing, Clear revealed to MacArthur that the Arcadia Conferences, held in Washington between 22 December 1941 and 14 January 1942, and involving the chiefs of staff of the United States and Britain, had produced agreement between the United States and Britain “that only the minimum of force necessary for the safeguarding of vital interests in other theaters should be diverted from the operations against Germany”. In a study that the US Army planners had produced on 3 January 1942, they demonstrated that MacArthur’s plan for reinforcement of the Philippines from Australia was impractical while the Japanese ruled the seas in the western Pacific. The Army planners described MacArthur’s plan as “an entirely unjustifiable diversion of forces from the principal theater – the Atlantic”.

MacArthur was deeply shocked to learn that he and his command had effectively been abandoned to the Japanese by President Roosevelt. President Quezon was enraged by the news, and sent a cable to Roosevelt requesting immediate independence for the Philippines so that his government could negotiate a state of neutrality with the Japanese. Despite his bombastic press releases that had proclaimed his intention to defend the Philippines to the last man, MacArthur gave substantial support to Quezon’s request. Roosevelt was appalled by the proposal and rejected immediate independence. With the intention of shaming the Philippine president, Roosevelt indicated willingness to allow Quezon to surrender the Filipino troops if they had no stomach to continue fighting and leave the Americans to fight the Japanese alone. As expected, Quezon was shamed by the offer and declared his willingness to fight beside the American troops to the end.

MacArthur was rebuked for supporting Quezon in a separate cable. He was ordered by General Marshall “to proceed rapidly to the organization of your forces and defences so as to make your resistance as effective as circumstances *will permit and as prolonged as humanly possible.*” In his angry response to Washington on 11 February 1942, MacArthur insisted that he intended “fighting my present battle position in Bataan *to destruction...*”

MacArthur manipulates public opinion to facilitate his escape from the Philippines

Despite his poor military judgment and other failings as a commander, MacArthur had a talent for self-promotion and cultivation of the media. He established a public relations office on his island stronghold of Corregidor in Manila Bay. During the siege of the Bataan Peninsula, while his desperate troops were starving, fighting, and dying in order to obey his order to hold their defensive lines to the end, MacArthur passed his time on Corregidor promoting an image of himself in American minds as the “Hero of the Pacific”. He bombarded the American media with extravagant and self-adulatory press releases that hailed his military genius and determination to fight to the last man in his command. These press releases mostly ignored the heroic resistance of the American and Philippine troops and attributed full credit for delaying the Japanese capture of Bataan to MacArthur’s brilliance as a commander. His former Chief of Staff in the Philippines and Australia, Major General Richard K. Sutherland concede that MacArthur personally wrote or approved all of his self-adulatory press releases.

In his history of MacArthur in the Philippines, Richard Connaughton wrote:

“In the first three months of the war, MacArthur or his staff wrote 142 communiques; 109 of which mentioned one man, MacArthur. They carried brave, exciting, heartwarming, gripping though often imaginary accounts as to how MacArthur’s guile, leadership, and military genius had continually frustrated the evil intentions of Japan’s armed forces. His picture appeared on the cover of Time at the end of 1941 and, early in the new year, the effect of these press releases upon the American public served to whip them up into a frenzy of fawning adulation of MacArthur, American hero.”

MacArthur’s account of his brilliant defence of the Philippines were splashed across newspapers in the United States where the war news had been uniformly grim since Pearl Harbor. MacArthur had quickly transferred to a bank in the United States the “reward” of \$500,000 given to him by President Quezon in early January 1942, and as he had no close relatives in the United States, it is not unreasonable to suspect that MacArthur did not intend to end his military career sharing the hardships of a Japanese prison camp with his troops. MacArthur’s self-glorification was aided by his powerful friends in the American media and politics who hailed him as the “Hero of the Pacific”, and helped to promote a myth that he was a military genius who could not be allowed to fall into Japanese hands when Bataan and Corregidor inevitably fell.

President Roosevelt and senior army officers in Washington had become aware of the emptiness of MacArthur’s boast that his troops would stop the Japanese on the beaches of the Philippines. They knew that MacArthur had compromised the defence of the Philippines by allowing his effective air power to be eliminated on the ground despite nine hours advance warning of such a risk. They also knew that MacArthur had inflicted unnecessary suffering of his troops by failing to prepare Bataan for a lengthy defence.

The phrase “to destruction” to MacArthur’s cable to Washington of 11 February 1942 sent a clear message that he intended to sacrifice himself and his family in defence of the Philippines, and the words caused alarm in Washington. Roosevelt was very conscious that MacArthur’s extravagant and self-serving press releases from Corregidor had made him a hero in the eyes of

many Americans. The democrats were facing tough mid-term Congressional election in November, and Roosevelt was aware that MacArthur had powerful political support from the Republican side of politics. General Marshall urged Roosevelt to permit his old West Point classmate to be evacuated from the Philippines to take up a new command before the Japanese overran the defenders. General Dwight D. Eisenhower (later to become 34th President of the United States) had served as chief of staff under MacArthur in the Philippines in 1939. Eisenhower was aware of MacArthur's talent for self-aggrandisement, and he had serious reservations about MacArthur's military competence. He urged Roosevelt not to bow to public pressure by saving MacArthur from sharing capture with his troops.

President Roosevelt also has strong doubts about MacArthur's military competence, but he was faced with enormous pressure in the United States to save the "Hero of the Pacific" from the Japanese and give him a new command. Although reluctant to do so, Roosevelt bowed to public opinion and political pressure. He decided to offer MacArthur a new command in the Pacific region. When the senior admirals of the United States Navy informed Roosevelt that they would not serve under MacArthur, Roosevelt decided to offer MacArthur an appointment as commander of Allied forces in Australia. US Army Chief of Staff, General George C. Marshall, contacted MacArthur in early February 1942 to mention the President's offer of a new command and to suggest that MacArthur consider leaving the Philippines with his family and his most senior staff officer before the Japanese overran the defenders of Bataan.

MacArthur discussed General Marshall's proposal with his senior staff officers, and they agreed with him that the American position in the Philippines was hopeless and that they and MacArthur could best serve their country by leaving their troops to fight on to the end while they escaped to Australia. MacArthur advised General Marshall that he was prepared to leave the Philippines. On 22 February 1942, President Roosevelt reluctantly ordered MacArthur to leave the Philippines and take up a new command in Australia.

MacArthur Prepares to Abandon his Troops to the Japanese

MacArthur realized that his departure for Australia could be misunderstood by his abandoned troops, and he requested time to prepare the groundwork for his departure from the battlefield with his senior staff officers. Before leaving them, MacArthur gave his desperate troops false hope for reinforcements. MacArthur assured them that many thousands of fresh troops were on their way, with strong air support, to relieve the beleaguered American and Philippine forces on Bataan. He ordered them to fight on until these reinforcements arrived. The promise of a relieving force from the United States was a cruel lie, and MacArthur knew it to be so. The order to sick and starving troops to fight on in a hopeless cause doomed them to greater suffering than they might otherwise have experienced.

In 11 March 1942, MacArthur departed for Australia under cover of night with his wife, his son, his son's nanny, and a large contingent of his closest and most trusted staff officers. Although ordered by General Marshall to take only one senior staff officer with him to Australia, MacArthur disobeyed the order and left the Philippines with fourteen staff officers, including his Chief of Staff,

Major General Richard Sutherland. These staff officers were notorious for their sycophancy and lack of combat experience, and became known in Australia as the “Bataan Gang”.

MacArthur left behind his starving troops, female army nurses, and many civilians to face the fury of a Japanese Army frustrated and angered by the stubborn resistance of the American and Filipino troops. With MacArthur’s departure, Major General Jonathan M. Wainwright assumed command of American Army Forces in the Philippines with the temporary rank of Lieutenant General and the certain knowledge that he and his command were doomed to death or capture.

From the safety of Australia, MacArthur orders his troops to fight to the end

From the safety of Australia, MacArthur sent the following callous message to General Wainwright:

“I am utterly opposed under any circumstances or conditions to the ultimate capitulation of this command (i.e. the Philippines). If food fails, you will prepare and execute an attack upon the enemy”.

Speaking of MacArthur’s order to his sick and starving troops to fight to the end, and his infamous lie that reinforcements were on the way from the United States, one of the abandoned Americans on Bataan, Brigadier General William E. Brougher, probably expressed the views of most of them when he described the order and lie as:

“A foul trick of deception played on a large group of Americans by a commander-in-chief and his small staff who are now eating steak and eggs in Australia”.

THE FALL OF BATAAN AND CORREGIDOR

The Fall of Bataan

When the Japanese renewed their offensive on 3 April 1942 with fresh troops supported by heavy artillery, and air attack, the American survivors on the Bataan Peninsula were so weakened by disease and starvation that they were unable to offer any effective resistance. From the comfort and safety of his new headquarters in Australia, and with no concern for the severely weakened physical condition of his abandoned troops and their critical shortage of military supplies, MacArthur ordered a general counterattack against the Japanese. The commanding officer on Luzon, Major General Edward King, ignored this absurd order. Trusting to the mercy of the Japanese, he surrendered his troops on 9 April 1942. Before the surrender came into effect, he transferred his female army nurses to Corregidor in the hope that they might be evacuated from the Philippines.

The Japanese did not follow European tradition which usually honours troops who surrender after a gallant defence and treats female captives with respect and compassion. Infuriated by the lengthy American resistance of Bataan, and the heavy losses they had suffered themselves, the

Japanese vented their rage on their sick and exhausted prisoners of war whom they subjected to the atrocities of the Bataan Death March and the harsh conditions of Japanese “hell camps”.

Being well aware of the hopelessness of the American position in the Philippines, President Roosevelt authorized the senior commander, Lieutenant General Wainwright, to continue the battles against the Japanese or seek terms for surrender as he saw fit. At his headquarters on the fortified island of Corregidor, General Wainwright elected to follow MacArthur’s order from Australia to continue the hopeless battle to the end. Wainwright was urged by his senior staff officers to follow MacArthur’s example and escape from the Philippines by fast patrol boat under cover of night, but he calmly replied:

“I have been with my men from the start, and if captured, I will share their lot.”

The Fall of Corregidor

The 11,000 defenders of Corregidor held out against intense Japanese bombardment until 6 May 1942. With some 12,000 shells crashing onto the island every 24 hours, sleep for the exhausted defenders was virtually impossible. Even huddled deep underground in the Malinta Tunnel, women and children bled from the ears from the concussive effect produced by the earth-shaking explosions overhead. Food, water and ammunition had dropped to critical levels when the Japanese finally secured a beachhead on the island on 5 May, and landed tanks. On the next day, General Wainwright ordered the American flag lowered on Corregidor in the hope of avoiding a massacre. In a flagrant repudiation of international convention governing the treatment of prisoners of war, General Homma warned Wainwright during surrender negotiations that he would execute all prisoners of war unless the surrendered applied not only to Corregidor but to all American and Philippine troops still resisting the Japanese on other islands of the Philippine archipelago. In the hope of avoiding reprisals against his troops, and the women and children under his care, Wainwright agreed.

When MacArthur heard in Australia that Wainwright had surrendered to the Japanese, he was furious and countermanded Wainwright’s order to his troops to surrender. This last insane order by MacArthur was ignored. It would almost certainly have produced a massacre of all American and Philippine prisoners of war, and placed at risk the lives of civilian captives, including the women and children under Wainwright’s care. MacArthur responded to the rejection of his order to fight to the death by vindictively refusing to sign a recommendation from the US Army Chief of Staff, General Marshall, that General Wainwright be awarded the Medal of Honour.

The heroic defenders of Corregidor were subjected to the same appalling brutality that had been inflicted by the Japanese on the survivors of Bataan. American and Philippine troops suffered 16,000 casualties in the Battle of Philippines, and 84,000 endured cruel imprisonment or execution at the hands of the Japanese. Of 20,000 American troops captured by the Japanese in the Philippines, about half died in captivity before the Pacific War ended. Some were murdered, others died from starvation, sickness or brutal treatment. Lieutenant General Wainwright remained in Japanese prison camps until the end of the war in 1945. He emerged from the captivity resembling little more than a skeleton. He was awarded a hero’s welcome in the United States, promoted to

full general and finally awarded the Medal of Honour which had been denied to him by MacArthur's spite.

MacArthur is honoured despite his incompetent defence of the Philippines.

If the American people had known in 1942 the truth about MacArthur's incompetent defence of the Philippines, his abandonment of his troops, army, nurses and American civilians to the vengeance of the Japanese, and his callous disregard for their survival when he was safe in Australia, it is almost certain that they would have demanded that he be dismissed from command. As it happened, MacArthur escaped to Australia with his staff officers, and those who could have testified to his incompetence as a commander were left behind on the Philippines where they were either executed by the Japanese, died from mistreatment, or suffered harsh captivity in Japanese prison camps until 1945.

Although Roosevelt had serious misgivings about MacArthur's military competence, a view which was shared by many senior Navy and Army officers, the United States government was forced to acknowledge MacArthur's self-generated status as a national hero by awarding him the Medal of Honour and placing him in supreme command of the South-West Pacific Area, with his headquarters in Australia.

The appointment of MacArthur in March 1942 as Supreme Commander South-West Pacific Area, placed a man of deeply flawed character and poor military judgment in overall command of Australia's defence forces at a time of great peril for Australia. Later in 1942, when heavily outnumbered and poorly supplied Australian troops were engaged in a deadly struggle to block a determined Japanese advance towards Australia along the Kokoda Trail, MacArthur would again exhibit his serious failings as a commander.

Fortunately for Australia, this liability was balanced by the appointment of a brilliant naval officer, Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, to command the war at sea against the Japanese.