

Running Head: NCO Challenges in the Philippines

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NCO Challenges faced during the Philippine insurrection of 1902

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ABSTRACT

Noncommissioned Officers have always been the backbone of the Army. Throughout history, NCO's have proven themselves to be professional, flexible, knowledgeable and capable of adapting to any situation any mission may present around the world. Knowledge of the mission in all aspects is critical to the successful outcome. We have placed it into our Warrior Ethos by placing the phrase "mission first". Although the U.S. Army has made many mistakes in battles and wars fought around the world, by recording them in historical text, we learn from them to ensure never repeating them. This paper focuses on how we dealt with the Philippine people during the insurrection of 1900-1902. The events of this war have proven to be useful as we face the same issues in the war with Afghanistan and Iraq.

Throughout our education, we learn history has a way of repeating itself if forgotten. We can look at the lessons learned from the Philippine war and surprisingly enough apply it to our current situation in Iraq and Afganistan. For all the frustrations we dealt with in the Philippines during the war it was the split operations that presented the greatest challenge to the NCOs. The dynamics of the battlefield went from one extreme to another whether it was fighting off a guerilla attack during a foot patrol to assisting a local town or village in getting a school built or helping re-shape their system of governing. The NCO's worked overtime in keeping moral up and tensions down as Soldiers would get brutally murdered or preventing retaliatory acts while they get ready to go out on the next foot patrol and during the patrols.

General Arthur MacArthur succeeded General Otis as Commanding General and Military Governor of the Archipelago on 5 May 1900. Gen. MacArthur didn't find much success in the coming months continuing with the current operations that Gen. Otis left in place.

After much frustration and a few hard defeats by guerilla fighters, Gen. Macarthur decided to fully enforce the punishments authorized in General Order 100 which covered;

- Suspension of civil rights

- trial by provost court

- confiscation

- deportation

- property destruction

- summary executions

Under General Order 100 which meant enforcing Martial law, NCO's had a greater role regarding control of Soldiers as well as enforcing the Standards of Conduct. It was during this time period that the practice of "Chastisement" took place using such torture practices as "water cure" which entailed restraining an individual on the ground, placing a bamboo stick in their mouth and pouring dirty water down the bamboo shoot until the individual couldn't take any more.

Burning villages and summary executions were relatively common practice and were acceptable given the situation at the time. Until the enforcement of General Order 100, guerillas were steadily re-grouping, killing Soldiers on patrol, recruiting from local villages and being supplied by the same underground resistance group. General MacArthur's intent was to force the population into choosing a side. After President McKinley won his re-election in 1900, he announced the best route to take was with what he called "benevolent assimilation". President McKinley figured that if the United States improved the lives of the Filipinos would lead to the growth of pro-Americanism thinking within the Filipino society. They eventually turn on the guerilla fighters. This would place a heavy burden on Noncommissioned Officers as they would not only focus on fighting counter-insurgency but simultaneously conduct Civil Military Operations. This same scenario has been repeated in recent years in the Al-Anbar province and Tal-Afar Iraq. Fighting captured the majority of time but later transitioned into rebuilding the townships and infrastructure thus winning the hearts and minds of the local people.

President McKinley believed that self-government was needed and it wasn't our place to restrain the Filipinos from advancement. The local government put the projects together and the U.S. Army would do the work through partnership. During the reformation, re-building and re-shaping of their local self-governments young officers and senior NCO's quickly learned how to be civil administrators. These young leaders were given extraordinary decision making power that they wouldn't normally have. Although not formally trained, these leaders proved successful and presented a favorable view of the United States. Education was among the most important factors for the Philippine people. The ability to speak and communicate with the Americans proved useful. Performing Civil Affairs duties assisted the Filipino people with re-building;

-Schools

-Homes

-Hospitals

-Providing medical treatment

From the beginning of the American military occupation until this point the Philippine people did not want to be conquered as represented through their resistance of the Spaniards in previous insurgency resistance fighting for freedom's and liberties. It has taken not only years but thousands of lives lost before a level of trust with the American Military was built. Between the deaths of family in combat, to death due to illness or disease the realization to all, including the upper class that an alliance with the United States in the future was possible. As signs of progress in September 1900 thru mid 1901 showed, so did the growing U.S. feelings against the war's progress and its leadership. Reports of torture and horrible atrocities by American troops were taking its toll across America. Word had spread that brutality and inhumane treatment towards the Philippine people was being condoned by superiors and was wide spread. Although chastisement was allowed it had its boundaries set forth in General Order 100. Much was learned from the Philippine war that applied to the U.S. occupation of Iraq. The Philippine people did not want us there and neither do the Iraqi people as we occupied their territory. Both the Philippine and Iraqi people resented us and fought from within the cities. Chastisement wasn't used in Iraq as it was in The Philippines but the U.S. did use interrogation techniques that mirrored some torture methods used in the Philippines.

In the end both the Philippine and Iraqi people realized what the United States was capable of bringing to the table to improve quality of life for their country. Prior to the arrival of the United States military, there was very little if any intelligence to disseminate to the commands. The only thing we knew was out of the encyclopedia which described the Philippines as an archipelago of over 7000 islands with a population in 1900 of approximately 7.4 million people. Although the United States didn't see the Philippine people or culture as civilized they quickly understood how dedicated to their freedom they were. NCO's throughout this entire time period had to change how they thought, fought, and communicated in order to accomplish the mission. Some say the NCO's were the ones on the ground administering punishment to the locals while many will argue it was painted quite differently. From the beginning of the occupation American Soldiers had better weapons, better training and better supply system (Roswell, 2006). The NCO's for the most part had control of their Soldiers. The local fighters had the will, desire to fight and win but lacked the training and equipment to tackle the United States military. They were decentralized across all the islands and one never knew what the other was doing. The dangerous piece was you never quite knew who was friendly and who wasn't. The defeat of

Spanish troops who intended to occupy the archipelago was bold and could have been planned better.

The United States went into the Philippines area of operation with no tangible intelligence or formal knowledge of the local populace but was set on occupation based on egocentric belief of American superiority would quickly prevail.

President McKinley was dedicated to the mission but underestimated the will of the Philippine people. As atrocities by both sides took place, popularity of this war grew weak with the American people. Pressure was placed heavily on NCO's so their flexibility and leadership skills were challenged. If the American leadership had gone in with more knowledge and appreciation for another culture we would have saved countless lives of both American and Philippines. Lessons from our past, give us a direction to go with in current operations. Our OPTEMPO sets the stage for either success or failure, depending on whether or not we use lessons learned from our past in current operations.

References

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