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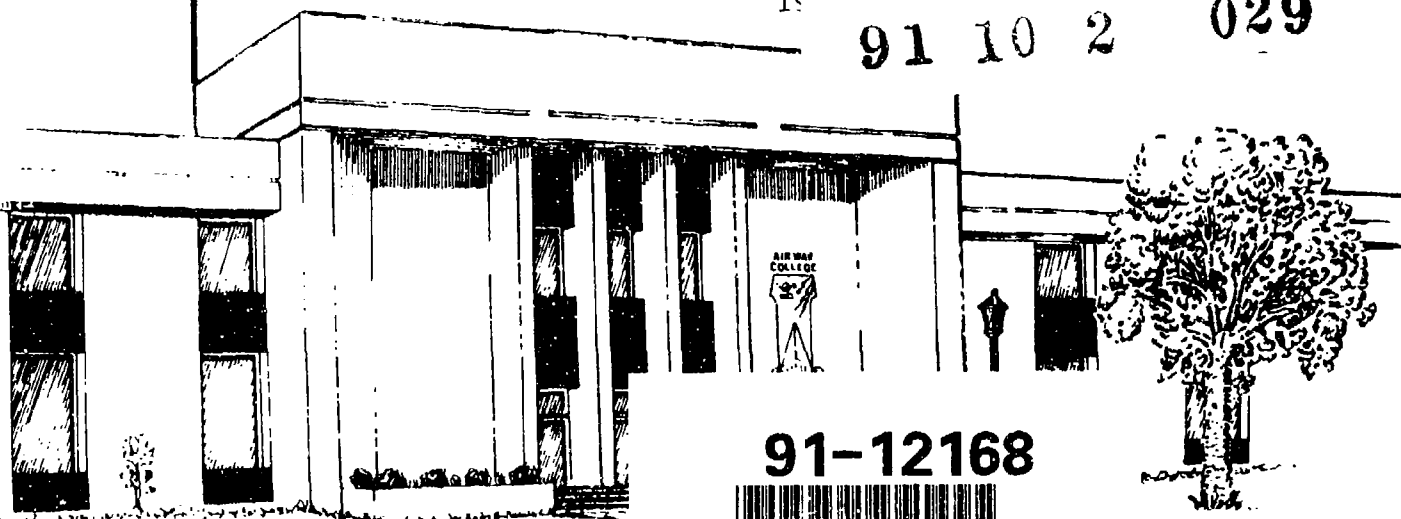
A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE GENERALSHIP OF
GENERAL DOUGLAS MacARTHUR AS THEATRE
COMMANDER IN THE PACIFIC DURING
WORLD WAR II

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UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
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A Critical Analysis of the Generalship of
General Douglas MacArthur as Theatre Commander
in the Pacific during World War II

by

Jeffrey E. Furbank

Lieutenant Colonel, USA



A DEFENSE ANALYTICAL STUDY SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY

IN

FULFILLMENT OF THE CURRICULUM

REQUIREMENT

Advisor: Dr. William Snyder

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TITLE: A Critical Analysis of the Generalship of General Douglas MacArthur as Theatre Commander in the Pacific during World War II

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Many critics have commented on the performance of General Douglas MacArthur during his tenure as Commander of the South West Pacific Theatre in World War II. Criticism is divided between those who praise MacArthur and those who attack him. This paper focuses on the reasons for the lapses in MacArthur's performance, specifically his hopeless plan for the defense of the Philippines, his questionable motives for insisting on the retaking of the Philippines, and his inconsistency in applying his principle of bypassing and envelopment in operations to recapture the Philippines and the Dutch East Indies. Rather than being the simple old soldier driven by strict ideals of Duty, Honor, Country, MacArthur was seduced by "hubris" and questionable personal motives. When he allowed these factors to take over, his generalship plummeted because he was serving MacArthur and not the nation.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Lieutenant Colonel Jeffrey E. Furbank attended the United States Military Academy at West Point, graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree in June, 1969. He received a Master of Arts degree in English Literature from the University of Massachusetts in 1976 and is a graduate of the Air Defense Artillery Advanced Course and the United States Army Command and General Staff College. He has served in a variety of command and staff positions in the United States and overseas, including command of two batteries in Germany and South Korea. He has also served on the faculty of the United States Military Academy, been the Secretary of the General Staff at Headquarters, 32nd Army Air Defense Command, FRG, and been the Chief of Media Relations, Office of the Chief of Public Affairs, DA, Washington D.C. In his last two assignments, he was Commander of the 1st Bn, 43rd ADA (PATRIOT), and Executive Officer to the TRADOC Systems Manager for High Altitude Missile Systems. Lieutenant Colonel Furbank is a graduate of the Air War College, class of 1990.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

General of the Army Douglas MacArthur is one of the most controversial figures in American military history. Critics are divided in their treatment of MacArthur, most choosing to perpetuate heroic myths or condemn glaring weaknesses. Unfortunately, official treatment of MacArthur has been skewed to one or the other of these extremes, with the notable exception of the most recent and best work on MacArthur by D. Clayton James. James provides a balanced and objective analysis of MacArthur, but as James admits, "the reader will probably find himself alternately admiring and despising MacArthur." (8,vii)

Douglas MacArthur was a man of endless contradictions, contrasts and extremes. MacArthur was repeatedly decorated for bravery, receiving seven Silver Stars and the Medal of Honor, yet he also earned the nickname "Dugout Doug" for not visiting Pacific battlefields for extended periods of time. Many close to him revered him and thought he was the epitome of a leader one would follow, anywhere, anytime and do anything for, yet he remained largely aloof from his soldiers and those outside his inner official circle. He was arguably America's best military strategist of the twentieth century, devising envelopment and bypassing schemes in the Pacific, and the dramatic Inchon landing in Korea, yet he appeared sluggish and

hesitant during the defense of the Philippines in 1941, and acted contrary to his own principles when he insisted on recapturing all of the Philippines and Dutch East Indies in 1944-1945. He demanded loyalty from his subordinates, yet openly and repeatedly criticized the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the President.

MacArthur is a character larger than life, a legend who remains largely an enigma. He defies categorization, and it is difficult, if not impossible, to come to any finite conclusions about his generalship or character. D. Clayton James states that in interviewing MacArthur's closest associates, none thought it possible to fully probe his complex character or personality. (8,vii) This study does not presume to do what others have been unable to do, but will investigate the reasons for the apparent contradictions and extremes in MacArthur's performance as a theatre commander in World War II. A study that addresses the reasons behind his performance is essential for our nation's military leaders and for any serious student of military history.

William Manchester calls Douglas MacArthur an American Caesar. Manchester coined the metaphor largely to portray MacArthur as an American emperor with parallels to the famous Roman general.

"MacArthur was like Julius Caesar: bold, aloof, austere, egotistical, willful. The two generals surrounded themselves with servile aides-de-camp; remained long abroad, one as

proconsul and the other as Shogun, leading captive peoples in unparalleled growth; loved history; were fiercely grandiose and spectacularly fearless; and reigned as benevolent autocrats."

(14,8)

Manchester fails to recognize, however, that MacArthur's real parallel with Caesar has its roots in Greece, not Rome. It is "hubris," the hero's fatal tragic flaw in Greek tragedy, which results in his ultimate downfall. Caesar who nobly served the Roman Republic as a general, later as its emperor, changed that democratic republic to a dictatorship. This change signalled the demise of both Caesar and the Empire.

MacArthur's "hubris" is a complex mix of ego, personal motivations, phobias and power. Ironically, MacArthur's career successes prior to the war created a myth of infallibility, and the legend of an intellectual genius and courageous hero. Tragically, he began to believe the myth and tried throughout the war to live up to the legend.

MacArthur's sense of his own infallibility and his tendency to define right and wrong in absolute terms were a dangerous combination. He was confident that he could solve any problem, that all problems had only one solution and that his solution was the right one. It was inconceivable that he could be wrong. He often dismissed constructive opposition as personal attacks rather than objective advice, thereby rationalizing his rejection of otherwise sound alternatives.

(18,219) Perhaps this explains why he surrounded himself with

a staff that carefully filtered all input to him and rarely gave him anything other than what he wanted to hear. These faults aside, however, it was MacArthur's overconfidence, his over-reliance on his own judgment and abilities, and his willingness to prosecute the war based on personal and political rather than purely military motives that reflected MacArthur's "hubris." This "hubris" led to MacArthur's first battlefield failure in a forty-two year military career, his defeat in the Philippines. He subsequently became obsessed with erasing this personal failure. It clouded his professional judgment for the remainder of the war to the extent that his personal goal of retaking the Philippines became more important than national military strategy.

CHAPTER II

THE MACARTHUR HERITAGE

Had it not been for World War II and Korea, Douglas MacArthur might today be considered one of America's greatest generals. When he retired as Chief of Staff of the Army in 1934, it marked the culmination of a brilliant military career. Everything Douglas MacArthur did, he did well. He had been a total success at every job or mission.

His drive and ambition in public life was his attempt to live up to the legacy of excellence left him by his family. MacArthur was descended from a thousand years of ancient warriors of the Scottish Highlands. (16,219) His grandfather was Governor of Wisconsin and an associate justice of the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia. His father won the Medal of Honor at Missionary Ridge in the Civil War, was the youngest officer, at age nineteen, to attain the rank of colonel in the Union Army, and continued to serve with distinction in the Army, ultimately being appointed Commanding General and Military Governor of the Philippines. (16, 24-27)

Douglas MacArthur's meteoric career was just as distinguished as he followed in the footsteps of his famous ancestors. He graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1903 as First Captain of the Corps of Cadets and with one of the highest academic records in Academy

history. As a junior officer he saw combat action in the Philippines and Mexico. As a colonel he devised the concept for the Rainbow Division in World War I and served in the Division in France as Brigade Commander, and later as Assistant Division and Division Commander. During the war he earned more awards for gallantry than any other officer, earning seven Silver Stars, two Distinguished Service Crosses, the Distinguished Service Medal and two Purple Hearts. After the war, as Superintendent of the United States Military Academy, he modernized and restructured the curriculum. According to most accounts, he was the only officer at Billy Mitchell's Court Martial to vote for acquittal. As Chief of Staff of the Army, he fought valiantly to preserve funding for the Army during the difficult depression years. (16,47-50)

Thus before the Japanese ever dropped the first bomb on Pearl Harbor, Douglas MacArthur had already completed a fantastic career virtually devoid of failure and was quietly serving out his retirement as Field Marshal in the Philippines. MacArthur was accustomed to success. He had experienced nothing else. In 1941 it was only reasonable for him to trust his own skills as a professional soldier. Even the most modest men are seduced by success, and MacArthur was neither an exception nor modest.

History and the people who make history are driven by relationships of time and space. All events and decisions must be considered in such context. Having served as Chief of Staff

of the Army, it was only natural for MacArthur to believe he understood the nature and politics of the job. Many of the officers who would hold key positions during World War II, such as Eisenhower and Marshall, were junior to MacArthur, and in the case of Eisenhower, had even worked for the General. MacArthur was well acquainted with Franklin Roosevelt from long conversations, often having nothing to do with military affairs, the two had engaged in at the White House when MacArthur was Chief of Staff. On one such occasion, MacArthur asked Roosevelt why he wanted the General's advice on civilian matters. The President replied, "Douglas to me you are a symbol of the conscience of America." (20,124) These facts do not justify MacArthur's behavior during the war, but they do explain how, from MacArthur's perspective, he might be self-confident and believe himself at least the equal, if not the superior, of the key decisionmakers in Washington. If events prior to World War II had brought MacArthur power and legend, MacArthur would seek to regain the power and perpetuate the legend during the war.

CHAPTER III
MACARTHUR'S DEFENSE PLAN

"Effective this date [27 July 1941] there is hereby constituted a command designated as the United States Army Forces in the Far East. This command will include the Philippine Department, forces of the Commonwealth of the Philippines called into the service of the Armed Forces of the United States for the period of the existing Emergency and such other forces as may be designated to it. Headquarters of the United States Army Forces in the Far East will be established in Manila, Philippine Islands. You [MacArthur] are hereby designated as Commanding General, United States Army Forces in the Far East." (13,109)

Even the most ardent MacArthur critic would concede that professionally the General never tasted defeat either in war or peace prior to December 1941. On the other hand even the most strident MacArthur fan must admit that his actions in connection with the defense of the Philippines at the outbreak of World War II rank as perhaps MacArthur's worst performance as a military officer. Quite probably the Philippines would have fallen eventually, regardless of any action taken in theatre, without reinforcements and resupply. However, it is

absolutely certain that the defense plan MacArthur devised and so poorly executed hastened the defeat of United States and Filipino forces.

As Field Marshal of the Philippines, MacArthur had been unable to do much to improve the defense posture of Filipino forces in the years prior to 1941 because of a lack of resources and commitment from both the United States and the Philippine governments. (20,4-5) After the President appointed him Commander, USAFFE, he seriously began reviewing and reevaluating existing war plans for defense of the islands.

The current war plan was called Rainbow 5. It was basically the same as its predecessor, War Plan Orange, a plan for war with Japan. Rainbow 5 called for defending the Philippines with United States and Filipino forces in theatre and focused on retaining Manila Bay by establishing defenses on the Bataan peninsula. (15,150) Therefore, Rainbow 5 was predicated on defending limited key terrain which favored the outnumbered defender. That strategy made sense. Its objectives were limited, but realistic, in light of the actual forces and resources available.

After completing his review of Rainbow 5 in October, 1941, MacArthur deemed it inadequate. He immediately began lobbying the War Department in favor of his own more comprehensive plan. MacArthur wanted to defend all of the Philippines by opposing the Japanese on the beaches rather than concede the northern half of Luzon by withdrawing to defensive terrain on the Bataan

peninsula as called for in Rainbow 5. To get sufficient forces to make his plan work, MacArthur envisioned expanding Filipino forces to 200,000, organized in ten Reserve Divisions. (7,595) He believed these forces would be sufficient to repel any Japanese invasion. Rainbow 5 strategy was based on United States and Filipino forces being vastly outnumbered by as many as three or more to one, facing a potential Japanese force of 300,000. MacArthur's strategy, however, was grandiose-- its objectives over-ambitious and unrealistic. Instead of concentrating his limited forces on Bataan, MacArthur opted for deploying them throughout the archipelago in three commands: the North Luzon Force, the South Luzon Force, and the Mindanao Force. (20,16-18) To succeed MacArthur's plan was dependent on a rapid improvement in Filipino military capability and substantial increases in support from the United States.

Neither was likely and both were contrary to the actual situation. The Philippines had received less, not more U.S. support during 1940-1941. The almost 100,000 men assigned to existing Filipino Reserve Divisions were untrained and poorly equipped. (13,594) In addition to raising, equipping, and training at least another 100,000 Filipino soldiers, existing divisions had to be brought up to basic combat readiness quickly to have any chance of defeating the Japanese on the Leaches. To correct these deficiencies MacArthur needed time and resources. Both were a gamble at best.

When MacArthur first arrived in the Philippines, he

projected it would take him until 1946 to provide the Philippines with an Army that would be capable of defending the Islands. (2,423) After taking over as Commander, USAFFE, and proposing his revised defense plan, he claimed his forces would be ready by early 1942. This new estimate was totally without justification, since readiness reports from the field suggested the contrary. Filipino soldiers lacked the essential equipment and supplies necessary to function in the field. There was a serious shortage of clothes and blankets. "There were no entrenching tools, raincoats, gas masks, or steel helmets to issue to Filipino soldiers." (7,599) Brigadier General Albert M. Jones, who commanded the 51st Division of the Philippine Army said that no Filipino officers above the grade of captain were capable of functioning properly as staff officers. Jones said his instructors reported that "most of their men were quite proficient in close order drill, but beyond that they seemed to have had no training at all." (7, 600) General Wainwright stated that pre-mobilization training "was inadequate, particularly in rifle marksmanship and scouting and patrolling." (7,600) As MacArthur had found in previous practice mobilizations, "rarely did the Filipino reservists recall what they had learned during their stints of five and a half months of active duty." (7,600) According to Brigadier General Clifford Bluemel, "his 31st Division enlisted men -- all Filipinos who had had five and a half months of training previously -- seemed to be able to do only two things well:

'one, when an officer appeared, to yell attention in a loud voice, jump up and salute; the other, to demand 3 meals per day.'" (7,600)

MacArthur's assessment of Filipino readiness was overly optimistic and unsubstantiated by facts or demonstrated ability. MacArthur's goal of defending all the Philippines and repelling the Japanese on the beaches may have been well intentioned, but his plan ignored reality. He grossly overestimated Filipino combat readiness and changed a reasonable, conservative strategy to a plan that had little hope of success. The time to alter a plan is after the capability exists to execute it, not before. To do otherwise, as MacArthur did, is irresponsible.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff approved MacArthur's plan on 7 November 1941, a short month before the attack on Pearl Harbor. The plan was approved largely because of MacArthur's insistence and influence. He had told the Joint Chiefs that "The wide scope of enemy operations, especially aviation, now makes imperative the broadening of the concept of Philippine defense, and the strength and composition of defense forces here are believed to be sufficient to accomplish such a mission."

(8,595) Shortly after the plan was approved, MacArthur sent a glowing report as to his command's readiness. Marshall responded on November 28, 1941, that "The Secretary of War and I were highly pleased to receive your report that your command is ready for any eventuality." (7,609) Ironically, in a few

weeks the plan that MacArthur fought so hard for would lose him the battle and thousands of Americans and Filipinos their lives.

Pushing so hard for his plan, considering its obvious weaknesses, is the first of a series of lapses throughout the war that were to hound MacArthur in the future. Perhaps overstating Filipino readiness reflected an unwillingness on his part-- a loss of objectivity and perspective-- to admit to others that he had been unable to do the job. Maybe he realized their weaknesses, but thought he would have time to fix them. MacArthur commented that a Time Magazine article critical of Filipino readiness "completely underestimates the fighting capacity of the Philippine Army." (7,583) In May, 1941 he boasted to correspondent John Hersey that "the Philippine situation looks sound; twelve Filipino divisions are already trained." (7,584) There is even evidence that suggests he really never believed the Japanese would attack. "He thought that no enemy after studying the lessons of Gallipoli, would ever again attempt an attack against a coast defended by modern weapons." (2,423) MacArthur predicted that such an attack would cost the enemy "at least a half million men as casualties and upwards of five billion dollars." (2,423) He also believed that he was the only American who understood the Oriental and argued that those who feared a Japanese attack "fail to fully credit the logic of the Japanese mind." (2,423)

CHAPTER IV

A FLAWED PLAN LEADS TO DISASTER

When mobilized to fight in 1941, the Filipino Army failed to live up to MacArthur's expectations. Of the ten Filipino divisions MacArthur had counted on paper, not one had been completely mobilized by the time the Japanese attacked. Most subordinate units never attained more than 50%-70% authorized strength. Most divisions went into combat without their field artillery regiment. "The 11th Division's case was typical: it was scheduled to have a 1300 man field artillery regiment equipped with twenty-four 75mm guns, but that regiment did not go into action until late December, as the division was withdrawing to Bataan, and even then had only 60% of its manpower and eighteen guns." (7,609)

Many factors contributed to the Philippine Army's lack of readiness. "The Joint Army and Navy Board had never pursued a consistent course or established long-range policy regarding the defense of the Philippines." (7,608) President Quezon and the Philippine National assembly de-emphasized the defense program from 1939-1941, opting instead for a neutralist policy in the event of war. In July, 1940 the War Department failed to subsidize the Philippine Army as MacArthur had requested. And lastly, the U.S. Philippine Department failed to give MacArthur's mission even the nominal support directed by the

War Department. (7,609)

"The plan which would be followed when the Japanese invasion came would be neither fish nor fowl, neither MacArthur's planned 'last ditch' stand on the beaches nor the Orange and Rainbow plans for immediate withdrawal of all ground forces to the Bataan-Corregidor 'citadel' defense." (7,609)

Obviously, MacArthur was not solely responsible for the Philippine Army's lack of preparedness. However, he must be held accountable for the military collapse that resulted from the execution of a plan that never had any chance of succeeding. The plan was his.

CHAPTER V
FIGHTING A LOSING BATTLE

"MacArthur's order of December 3 to his field Commanders that the beaches must 'be held at all cost' might have been impossible if the USAFFE forces had been ten times larger than they were." (7,603)

When he was awakened at 3:40 AM Sunday morning December 8, MacArthur was told of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. In his memoirs he writes that "My first impression was that the Japanese might well have suffered a serious setback." (13,117) His rationale was that Pearl Harbor was America's strongest military position in the Pacific. "Its garrison was a mighty one, with America's best aircraft on strongly defended fields, adequate warning systems, antiaircraft batteries, backed by our Pacific Fleet." (13,117)

It is inconceivable that a Commander of MacArthur's experience could have arrived at such a conclusion, even if it was a first impression based on fragmentary reports. Prudent commanders err on the side of preparedness. But it is consistent with his belief in the infallibility of his opinions. He had repeatedly and publicly pronounced that the Japanese would not invade the Philippines and lacked the power

to take on the U.S. in the Pacific. This personal bias obviously influenced his conclusion even in the face of events to the contrary. Any responsible commander would have put aside any personal bias in favor of quickly preparing for a worse-case scenario. MacArthur, instead, combined arrogance with paralysis and did virtually nothing.

For MacArthur's plan for the defense of the Philippines to have any chance of success, he needed total air supremacy and the ability to interdict invasion forces and convoys. But at 12:20 P.M., December 8, 1941, nine hours after the attack on Pearl Harbor and eight hours after MacArthur had been notified of the attack, three flights of Japanese bombers and Zero fighters attacked Clark Field. Both squadrons of B-17 heavy bombers were destroyed on the ground along with the majority of the P-40 fighters. Ten minutes later at Iba Field, forty miles from Clark, Japanese airplanes demolished the P-40 fighter squadron-- that also was caught on the ground. (8,4) In a few hours, MacArthur's air force had been cut in half without a fight. Although MG Lewis H. Brereton exercised tactical control of the Far East Air Force, the major blame for a large portion of the Air Force being destroyed on the ground rests with MacArthur. He never demonstrated any sense of urgency, communicated any direct order, or followed up to assure himself that proper precautions had been taken for its survival.

Brereton and MacArthur's accounts differ as to why the command's B-17's were caught on the ground. Brereton claimed

that he had asked Sutherland, MacArthur's Chief of Staff for permission to bomb the Japanese shipping at Takao harbor, Formosa. (8,7) MacArthur claimed that no such request was forwarded to him, and that if it had, he would have rejected it as foolhardy. (8,8) These alleged conversations cannot be corroborated, but since both were honorable men, it is likely that Sutherland was the real roadblock. It can be documented that Brereton did try to see MacArthur on two separate occasions that morning of 8 December, 1941, only to be told by Sutherland that MacArthur was too busy to see him. (8,7) Although some accounts say that MacArthur phoned Brereton at 11:00, MacArthur denied that he ever discussed the proposed Formosan raid or had any personal contact that day with Brereton. Yet the very admission that a commander was not personally involved in a matter of such importance borders on the unbelievable. Such neglect borders on dereliction of duty. Two weeks after these attacks, Army Chief of Staff, George Marshall stated, "I just don't know how MacArthur happened to let his planes get caught on the ground." (8,6)

Switching to ground operations, recall that MacArthur believed the lessons of Gallipoli precluded an enemy from attacking a beach defended by modern weapons, and so he had elected in his plan to deploy his forces to defend the beaches. Yet MacArthur overlooked the differences between Gallipoli and the Philippines. First, Turkish troops were well trained and well led by skilled German professional cadre-- Filipino

soldiers and officers were poorly trained. Second, the Turks opted to concede tactical surprise and position their forces in strategic locations so they could react to landings on any part of the coast; MacArthur divided Filipino forces into three separate forces to cover all possible landing sites. Being so divided each force would be inferior to any concerted landing and be so separated from each other as to make mutual reinforcement impossible and piecemeal defeat inevitable. Third, in 1915 modern weapons meant artillery and machine guns; in 1941 air power was the key. MacArthur either failed to recognize this change or chose to ignore it. Finally, the terrain at Gallipoli favored the defender, with rugged, steep cliffs at the water's edge backed up by almost impenetrable mountains in the interior; the Philippines favored the invader. The enemy could choose to land anywhere along the coast of almost 7,000 islands. Wainwright's North Luzon Force of four Filipino divisions was responsible for defending over 600 miles of beach. The South Luzon Force of two divisions was responsible for 400 miles. (7,603) None of this shoreline was the natural obstacle that the coastline of Gallipoli was.

Predictably, when the Japanese invaded in late December, the Filipino divisions defending the beaches were quickly overrun. (2,28) MacArthur had almost two weeks from the time of the initial Japanese air attacks at Clark and Iba before the invasion finally came on the 21st to reevaluate his command's readiness posture and its ability to execute his defense plan.

In spite of the destruction of half of his air power and the withdrawal of his naval forces a week later, MacArthur publicly clung to his view that the Filipino's would hold and his plan would work; yet privately as early as the 8th he confided to Sutherland and four days later to President Quezon that his forces would have to withdraw immediately to Bataan. (8,27).

Despite reports that Filipino divisions were being routed, MacArthur stubbornly refused to revert to War Plan Orange or develop contingencies for withdrawing personnel, equipment and essential logistical support south to Bataan until 23 December, a full two days after the invasion had begun. (14,28)

When he finally gave the order, it was too late. After the War Department approved MacArthur's plan in November, supplies previously earmarked for Bataan were in the process of being shipped to depots near the beaches. Some had arrived; some was in transit. It was now virtually impossible to reverse direction and redirect supplies. Much had already been captured; the vast remainder lacked a means of transport and faced continuous air interdiction. (2,30-31)

Caught in the middle of two operation plans and compounded by MacArthur's indecisiveness, the critical supplies necessary to hold out on the peninsula never got to Bataan and Corregidor. Ten million gallons of gasoline had to be destroyed and large quantities of food had to be abandoned. (8,31) Field commanders attempted to confiscate local food stores, some even owned by Japanese firms; but, because of

political pressure from President Quezon that they might later be used by Filipino civilians, MacArthur prohibited it. USAFFE quartermaster officers then tried to purchase rice from local sources, but again were prevented from doing so by MacArthur's headquarters, again because of pressure from Quezon. According to Philippine law, rice could not be moved from the province in which it was purchased. (8,33) MacArthur thus blatantly sacrificed the welfare and lives of the men in his command along with its ability to resist. He clearly lost sight of his military mission. Enough rice was available to have fed his soldiers on Bataan for years, but none of it got there. Instead on 5 January MacArthur had to place all his forces on half rations. (1,64) Official U.S. Army history concludes that "lack of food probably more than any other single factor forced the end of resistance on Bataan." (8,37)

In his memoirs MacArthur takes credit for his decision to revert to War Plan Orange as saving forces and prolonging the campaign. "I have always regarded it not only as the most vital decision of the Philippine campaign but in its corollary consequences one of the most decisive of the war." (13,127) What he apparently never realized was that his insistence on switching to his plan so close to the anticipated beginning of hostilities created confusion and was based on his inaccurate and overly optimistic estimates of resources and capabilities. Former U.S. Army Chief of Staff, General Harold K. Johnson, then a lieutenant with the 57th Infantry Regiment, has said

that MacArthur's beach defense plan was "a tragic error in judgment that should have been corrected much earlier." (8,36)

The defense of the Philippines in 1941-1942 thus marks the first professional defeat of General Douglas MacArthur. His performance was flawed by overconfidence, arrogance, overly optimistic estimates and unrealistic goals, isolation, and indecisiveness. It began with his unwillingness to believe that an attack by the Japanese was possible and his inability to believe that when it came it could be successful. As a result his forces were caught napping. It concluded with his rigid adherence to a plan that was fundamentally flawed from its inception. He staked his professional reputation that he was right, but events proved him wrong.

Had the Japanese not attacked until April, 1942 which was the earliest MacArthur had said they could, perhaps history would be different. He might have had enough time to get additional supplies from the United States, train and equip his Filipino divisions, complete the redistribution of supplies as called for in his plan, and rehearse his defense. But history was not kind. Some might argue that MacArthur was unlucky. On the contrary, he was irresponsible. Commanders make their own luck and must play the hand they are dealt. MacArthur chose to ignore the hand he was dealt and shift to a strategy prematurely, before the capability existed to carry it out. MacArthur deluded himself and others that his plan would succeed, became its advocate because it was his idea, and

subsequently never critically or objectively examined its viability. He blamed his defeat on lack of support from Washington and never accepted his own culpability. He became obsessed for the remainder of the war with vindicating himself and retaking the Philippines.

CHAPTER VI

"I SHALL RETURN"

"I came through and I shall return."

General Douglas MacArthur

From the first day MacArthur arrived in Australia after his daring escape from Corregidor, retaking the Philippines became his personal quest. "The office of War Information thought the phrase [I Shall Return] a good one but asked MacArthur's permission to change it to We Shall Return. He refused permission. And so I Shall Return, it stayed." (2,424) The emphasis on I would become more pronounced as the war went on. Douglas MacArthur would personally avenge the defeat in the Philippines, regardless of U.S. National Strategy that focused on Europe first. He instead believed that Asia was the key to U.S. future interests and should, therefore, receive first priority. This fundamental difference between MacArthur and Washington regarding the thrust of U.S. foreign policy would continue throughout the war and for the next decade, culminating in the General's relief in Korea.

MacArthur's reasons for believing Asia should be first, and specifically the reconquest of the Philippines, were more the result of personal motivations than objective analysis.

First, as noted earlier, defeat in the Philippines was a personal defeat for MacArthur which he desperately wished to rectify. Second, MacArthur had strong ties to Asia and the Philippines. His father had been Commanding General there. MacArthur had begun his military career there, established close ties with the islands throughout his career, and had decided to retire there. (12,165) The Philippines were home to MacArthur. He spent his happiest years there. "The tropical beauty of the archipelago had provided a fertile backdrop for his romantic imagination. The Filipinos had for long periods of time bolstered his often uncertain self-image. These were gifts he was determined to repay." (18,214-215)

When the Philippines were lost, it was not just some distant Asian land. To MacArthur it was his adopted country. He clearly had personal, if not selfish motives for insisting on its liberation. He had left behind in his Manila penthouse a personal library of over 8,000 volumes and the accumulations of a lifetime. "MacArthur planned to return to the Philippines after the war and resume life there. Much of his planning and strategy during the war years was shaped by this firmly held intention." (12,215) He would for the next two and one-half years, often in conflict with senior military and civilian policy makers, insist on and "achieve the liberation of the Philippines before the attack on Japan." (12,215) Personal motives, which at the very least were serious conflicts of interest with his military duty, explain some otherwise

inexplicable contradictions in MacArthur's decisions and
performance for the rest of the war.

CHAPTER VII
BACK TO THE PHILIPPINES

MacArthur began his offensive strategy to retake the Philippines by establishing a forward defense of Australia from bases in New Guinea.

"My strategic conception for the Pacific Theatre contemplates massive strokes against only main objectives, utilizing surprise and air-ground striking power supported and assisted by the fleet. This is the very opposite of what is termed 'island hopping' which is the gradual pushing back of the enemy by direct frontal pressure with the consequent heavy casualties which will certainly be involved. Key points must of course be taken, but a wise choice of such will obviate the need for storming the mass of islands now in enemy possession. 'Island hopping' with extravagant losses and slow progress is not my idea of how to end the war as soon and as cheaply as possible. New conditions require for solution, and new weapons require for maximum application, new and imaginative methods. Wars are never won in the past." (19,134)

Contrary to popular belief, however, MacArthur did not begin his offensive operations by adhering to this concept. The Papuan campaign was in reality nothing more than a series

of costly frontal assaults, culminating in "Bloody Buna." The campaign was lengthy and extremely high in casualties. But MacArthur to his credit learned from this mistake. He gradually changed his mind on the need for air power, and even though he actually opposed the bypassing of Rabaul, he was quick to appreciate the potential of this strategy and adopt the technique in his future operations. MacArthur later stated that, "It was the practical application of the system of warfare... to bypass Japanese strong points and neutralize them by cutting their lines of supply... to 'hit em where they ain't'--that from this time forward guided my movements and operations." (8,335)

The major feature of MacArthur's strategy was that it substituted flexibility and economy of force for strength. It permitted tactical and strategic deception in securing the objective. The problem with MacArthur, however, was that his objective was the Philippines, not Japan.

His efforts were designed to get him to the Philippines as quickly as possible, bypassing strong points and real estate along the way, but once there, he resorted to frontal assaults and retaking every inch of the archipelago.

Ironically, MacArthur's strategy of bypassing strong points almost deprived him of his objective. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, who did not suffer from MacArthur's personal tunnel vision, correctly focused on Japan as the ultimate objective and began looking at ways to attack Japan at the earliest

possible time and thus end the war sooner.

"Although MacArthur consistently maintained that it was both militarily necessary to reconquer the Philippines before the invasion could begin, by early 1944 the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff were questioning this wisdom and suggesting that Formosa might prove to be a more effective base from which to launch the air bombardment preliminary to the main attack on the home islands." (12,216)

MacArthur violently opposed any thought of bypassing the Philippines. In March, 1944 he met with Nimitz, his rival in the Pacific theatre for mission, personnel, and resources, to discuss Nimitz' plan for an alternate route through Formosa. In a letter to Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral King, Nimitz describes MacArthur's reaction:

"He blew up and made an oration of some length on the impossibility of bypassing the Philippines, his sacred obligations there--redemption of the 17 million people--blood on his soul--deserted by American people--and then a criticism of 'those gentlemen in Washington'...I told him that the JCS were people like himself and myself, who, with more information, were trying to do their best for the country and, to my mind, were succeeding admirably." (19,136)

On 17 June MacArthur cabled Marshall that any attempt to bypass the Philippines and launch an attack on Formosa directly was unsound. It would lack support from land-based aviation, and Luzon would have to be taken to establish air bases prior to any move on Formosa. He stressed that "purely military considerations demand the reoccupation of the Philippines in order to cut the enemy's communications to the south and to secure a base for our further advance." (20,121)

However, MacArthur did not rely on the "purely military" and went on to appeal to the political and moral sides of the argument. "It is American territory, where our unsupported forces were destroyed by the enemy." (20,121) I feel also that a decision to eliminate the campaign for the relief of the Philippines...would cause extremely adverse reactions among the citizens of the United States." (20,122)

On 24 June, Marshall abruptly replied. "With regard to the reconquest of the Philippines we must be careful not to allow our personal feelings and Philippine political considerations to overrule our great objective...." (20,123) Undaunted, MacArthur asked to present his views personally and on 28 July was summoned to Pearl Harbor for a conference with President Roosevelt and the JCS to settle Pacific strategy. The conference was a dramatic one. The cards were stacked against MacArthur since the JCS had tentatively approved the Formosa option before he arrived. MacArthur thus had to

convince the President of the soundness of his Philippine option against the advice of his senior military advisers. (20,123)

Accounts of the conference portray MacArthur at his most eloquent, but he "placed the real emphasis...on the moral argument against abandoning the Philippines." (20,124) He also took the opportunity to criticize the decision to abandon the Philippines in the first place.

"I was also critical of what I regarded as a major blunder in originally abandoning all effort to relieve the Philippines. I stated that had we had the will to do so, we could have opened the way to reinforce Bataan and Corregidor garrisons and probably not only have saved the Philippines but thereby stopped the enemy's advance toward New Guinea and Australia. I felt that to sacrifice the Philippines a second time would not be condoned or forgiven." (20,125)

The President made no decision at the conference but later MacArthur had a short private conversation with Roosevelt at which time he told the President that, "if your decision be to bypass the Philippines and leave its millions of wards of the United States and thousands of American internees and prisoners of war to continue to languish in their agony and despair--I'd dare say the American people would be so aroused that they would register complete resentment against you at the polls

this fall." (20,125)

Roosevelt replied, "We will not bypass the Philippines. Carry out your existing plans . And may God protect you." (20,125) MacArthur had used strong moral and political arguments to win his case. He had openly criticized his chain of command and Commander-In-Chief about past decisions and policy. His admonition about the upcoming election was a not so subtle form of blackmail since MacArthur's name had been floated for some time as a potential Republican candidate for president. (8,408)

One might forgive MacArthur for using such tactics if his objective had been the earliest possible defeat of Japan. Perhaps one could then argue that the end justified the means, but in MacArthur's case neither his end nor his means were pure. Although there is evidence that suggests that the Formosa strategy was militarily unsound, that MacArthur attacked it as such, and that the JCS eventually came to that same conclusion, his primary motive clearly seems to have been other than military.

CHAPTER VIII

PHILIPPINES RECAPTURED BUT AT WHAT PRICE

On 3 October 1944, the JCS authorized MacArthur to conduct the Luzon operation. They had not given approval to retake the rest of the Philippines or to move against the remainder of the Dutch East Indies. In fact at the Yalta Conference in February, 1945 the JCS assured the British that the United States had no such intentions. (9,28) MacArthur, however, had been independently working on his Victor Plan and his Oboe plan, respectively, that would do exactly that "rather than leave the two island groupings to wilt on the vine." (9,28) As early as September, 1944, MacArthur had decided to use his Eighth Army to take the rest of the Philippines south of Luzon as soon as his Sixth Army had control of Northern Luzon. Without approval from the JCS and while the Sixth Army was taking heavy losses around Manila and at other strong points, MacArthur gave the order. By the time the JCS finally authorized the operation it was long after the fact and the Eighth Army had all but completed the southern campaign. (9,28)

"MacArthur's dispatch of the Eighth Army to the Japanese-held Philippine islands south of Luzon and his transfer of three Sixth Army divisions had a crippling impact on Luzon operations." (9,28) The Japanese had not repeated MacArthur's error and attempted to defend the beaches.

Instead, they had withdrawn to interior strong points, forming a defense in depth. After landing on Luzon at Lingayen Gulf on 9 January, MacArthur thought Manila would quickly fall and in fact made every effort to capture the city by his birthday on 26 January. (12,166) But over 20,000 Japanese Army and Navy troops elected to use the city to anchor their defense, resulting in a bloody battle that lasted from February 23rd to March 3rd. In the fight for Manila the U.S. lost 1,010 KIA, the Japanese 1600 KIA. The city was virtually in ruins and of its 800,000 people, an estimated 100,000 had been killed. (12,169) It is difficult to say what would have happened had the Eighth Army not been pulled away from the major fight on Luzon. But it is fair to say that MacArthur did not have permission to conduct the attack to the south, and this attack violated his own policy of bypassing and isolating garrisons. He also grossly underestimated the resistance on Luzon. And lastly, no operation should be so trivialized that it includes its commander's birthday as part of its timetable.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

As the war progressed a pattern developed with regard to MacArthur's performance as a theatre commander that went unchecked and unchallenged. He began the war just recently recalled to active duty from retirement, but with the reputation as a Far East expert and perhaps the greatest living figure in the U.S. Army. His genius was widely accepted; so too was his courage. By 1941, MacArthur had been in the military for forty-two years, twenty-three as a general officer. He had been successful at every stage of his career, and with success had come recognition, confidence and optimism.

Tragically that self-confidence grew like a cancer into "hubris." A strength became a weakness. Self-confidence became overconfidence and then became infallibility. In 1941, MacArthur largely ignored warnings of imminent Japanese attack against the United States or its territories in the Far East, because he did not believe such was the Japanese intent. For the most part he dismissed intelligence and directives from Washington. Just prior to the Japanese attack he scuttled a workable but conservative defense plan in favor of his own grandiose scheme that depended on resources, troops and time he didn't have.

He was awarded the Medal of Honor for his efforts in defense of the Philippines, but in actuality left Corregidor a

defeated commander, primarily and personally responsible for its rapid collapse. Unaccustomed to ever failing, with his personal honor and adopted homeland at stake, MacArthur became obsessed with retaking the Islands. This obsession clouded his objectivity, narrowed his focus and often placed him at odds with his peers in the Pacific, his superiors in the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington, D.C., and even the President of the United States regarding the prosecution of national strategy and theatre operations.

MacArthur learned from early mistakes of frontal assaults in the Papuan campaign and to his credit switched instead to an envelopment strategy. However, that strategy was not always applied with equal vigor. He used it religiously to get in a position to retake his personal objective--the Philippines, but once there abandoned it, delaying the advance against Japan and costing countless lives, perhaps many more than would have been lost if he had left it to "wither on the vine," as he had done elsewhere. He allowed the Australians to "nullify previous envelopments" (9,31) by fighting in Borneo because of pressure on him to "use the First Army in combat or send it home." (9,31) When the JCS took a page from MacArthur's book and suggested bypassing the Philippines to get to Japan more quickly, he vehemently argued against it on political and moral grounds.

Thus when bypassing suited his personal goals, MacArthur used it. When it conflicted, he did not, even when it may have been in the best interests of National Strategy.

"It is tragic that the decisionmakers in the White House and Pentagon contemplating the North Korean invasion of the South, in June 1950, did not recall his [MacArthur's] behavior pattern of five years before. Perhaps some of them had begun to notice by April 1951 that there were similarities between MacArthur's strategic concepts and his attitude toward his superiors during the last stages of the Pacific war and during the first nine months of the Korean conflict." (9,30-31)

The seeds of MacArthur's performance in Korea were sown in the Pacific. MacArthur successfully bullied his opinions, policies and strategy through the National Command Authority, using a full range of military, political, and personal arm twisting. He seldom compromised and rarely admitted to being wrong on an issue, even when facts or events proved him to be. He blamed Washington for abandoning the Philippines, and developed an almost paranoid persecution complex which created a tense we-they atmosphere. His actions in Korea were predictable. After five years as virtual emperor of Japan, with unquestioned authority and little interference from Washington, he had become an American Caesar.

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