

Book Reviews

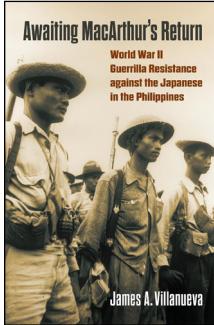


Awaiting MacArthur's Return: World War II Guerrilla Resistance against the Japanese in the Philippines

By James Villanueva

Lawrence, KS: University of Press of Kansas, 248 pages, 2022

Reviewed by LTC (Retired)
Jesse McIntyre III



Fighting in the Philippines did not end with the surrender of U.S. and Filipino forces to Imperial Japanese Army forces on 6 May 1942. James A. Villanueva, a former history professor at the U.S. Military Academy, explores how guerrilla forces resisted Japanese occupation of the Philippines and set the conditions for liberation in 1944 in *Awaiting MacArthur's Return: World War II Guerrilla Resistance Against the Japanese in the Philippines*. In doing so, Villanueva's work examines the contributions of guerrilla operations to the Allied cause in providing intelligence, combating Japanese occupation efforts, and supplying timely manpower support to the Allied war effort in the Pacific theater of operations.

Villanueva opens in providing a background on resistance to the Japanese occupation of the Philippines during World War II. He informs us that the study of the Filipino guerrilla movement is limited, especially when considering the scope and complexity of the movement. Earlier works focused primarily as unit histories, while later efforts addressed the subject in more broader terms. His research indicates earlier works, while credible, can suffer from author biases and may not expand beyond their area of operation nor include archival records. Villanueva elevates the experience of guerrilla warfare in the Philippines to classical counterinsurgency theories developed during colonial wars involving natives and colonial powers. In addition, the author assesses guerrilla warfare in the Philippines in relation to similar operations that occurred elsewhere during World War II.

Villanueva describes the vastness of the Philippine Islands and its terrain as well as provides an overview of the key islands and population groups that inhabited them in 1942. His research indicates that while the guerrilla movement started largely due to the Japanese invasion of the archipelago, each group differed in terms of reasons and objectives for resistance. Nationalism and the desire for independence appears to have been the overarching objectives for the movement. He describes the personalities and infighting between various guerrilla groups and efforts by MacArthur's staff to mediate. One of the more interesting discussions involves the challenges guerrilla groups faced to successfully sustain forces in remote areas. Guerrilla movements

quickly found themselves lacking weapons and equipment when U.S. and Filipino forces surrendered in April 1942. General Headquarters, Southwest Pacific Area (SWPA) was able to provide arms and conduct resupply throughout the archipelago. Furthermore, these resupply efforts kept morale raised and gave Filipinos hope that liberation was a reality in the near future. Guerrilla forces benefited from U.S. and Filipino military personnel who avoided capture and provided badly needed leadership and organization.

The author describes how guerrilla forces were successful in contesting Japanese control of the Philippine Islands. He provides an in-depth assessment of personalities, groups, and activities in the key islands and regions of the country. Guerrilla forces forced the Japanese to leave key population centers and coastal areas to execute anti-guerrilla operations throughout the Philippine archipelago. Coordination and support between SWPA and guerrilla groups resulted in establishing radio stations throughout the islands that provided communications between guerrilla forces and General MacArthur's headquarters.

Villanueva excels in describing guerrilla forces' contributions in support of the liberation of the Philippines. They provided intelligence, destroyed bridges, attacked Japanese supply depots, served as guides, recovered down pilots, and harassed Japanese forces. Guerrilla forces were able to convey locations of Japanese troop movements that were then quickly targeted by Allied fires. They harassed and interdicted retreating Japanese forces and served as an economy of force by clearing areas of remaining pockets of Japanese forces, enabling U.S. Army forces to continue offensive operations against the Japanese Army.

Villanueva's research indicates the effectiveness of guerrilla propaganda efforts in maintaining support for the United States and exiled Philippine government while degrading the effectiveness of Japanese propaganda of their occupation programs. These efforts exploited the extreme brutal Japanese counterinsurgency methods to erode support for Japan's occupation government and its collaborators.

The author's work is more than a study of guerrilla resistance in the Philippines during World War II. It serves as a case study and model for establishing guerrilla operations in a future conflict. Villanueva's research uncovers and discusses the numerous challenges faced by guerrilla groups and MacArthur's SWPA headquarters in providing support and coordination for them.

The strength of *MacArthur's Return: World War II Guerrilla Resistance Against the Japanese in the Philippines* is Villanueva's use of graphics, primary source documents, numerous perspectives of senior leaders, and a writing style that conveys the complexity in creating, sustaining, and coor-

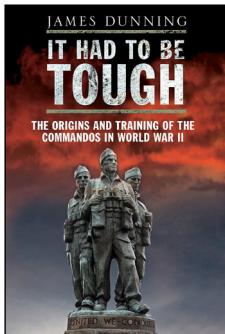
dinating guerrilla operations in the Philippines during World War II. Equally interesting, the author provides the Japanese perspective on guerrilla operations and their impact on Japanese operations throughout the archipelago. This work is highly readable and provides a comprehensive examination of a lesser-known area of World War II. It would be an excellent addition to the library of any historian or student with an interest on the subject.

It Had to be Tough: The Origins and Training of the Commandos in World War II

By James Dunning

Frontline Books, 224 pages,
Re-released 2021

Reviewed by SFC (Retired)
John C. Simpson



If one is to be a professional Soldier, it's important that some measure of time and effort should be devoted to the study of military history. This is due to the fact that the price of only learning from your own experience often has a cost in blood when the shooting starts. Although there is no shortage of military history books with lessons to teach regarding strategy, tactics, logistics, and leadership done both right and wrong, there still remains a large gap in the coverage in regard to the history of military training.

Think back to reading a history of some famous unit where we only get vague references to things like "weapons training" or "physical conditioning" or the ever popular "grueling training," which tells us nothing useful. This is why I was so happy to obtain a copy of the World War II memoirs of a British Army Commando instructor named James Dunning, who saw fit to go into detail on the training methods of that unit. Although the British Army Commandos were disbanded at the end of WWII, their influence can still be felt to this day by the units that are literally descended from them: the British Parachute Regiment, the Royal Marine Commandos, the Special Boat Service, and the Special Air Service in addition to other international (to include U.S.) units that trace their creation back to the Commandos.

It would be useful at this point to look at a timeline of the author's career. Dunning was 19 years old in 1939 when he enlisted in the British Army at the beginning of WWII. In 1940 when Prime Minister Winston Churchill pressed for the creation of the Commandos, Dunning volunteered to join No. 4 Commando. In March 1941, as a member of that unit, Dunning took part in Operation Claymore, a 500-man raid on Lofoten in Norway that resulted in the sinking of 18,000 tons of shipping, capture of more than 200 German prisoners, and seizure of the code books and rotor wheels of an Enigma cryptographic machine. In August 1942, as an NCO

commanding a mortar team in 4 Commando, he took part in Operation Jubilee (also known as the Dieppe Raid), the mission to scale the cliffs six miles west of the main landing and take out the German coastal battery, which ended up being the only success of the entire operation. Commissioned in 1943, Dunning served as an instructor at the Commando Basic Training Center at Achnacarry Castle, Scotland. While getting ready to return to an active Commando unit, Dunning fractured his spine during parachute training and recovered to eventually command a British parachute company before leaving the Army in 1958.

It's important to note that this book is more of a primary reference than a memoir, so it isn't arranged chronologically. I point this out because it can be disconcerting to read about the author's experiences in 4 Commando near the beginning of the book and then he mentions some other experiences in that organization elsewhere in the book in connection with another functional area. The simple reason for this is that the book is brilliantly organized by chapters that address specific subjects and events.

Useful ideas for training are found one after another in this book. Rather than a hasty coverage of all of them, I'll focus on the WW2 Army Commando's approach to physical fitness training. Reading the author's description of the Command School's functional fitness approach reminded me of a quote from an article that once appeared in this very publication. In the January-February 1976 issue of *Infantry*, then-U.S. Army Infantry School Commandant MG Willard Latham wrote: "The Infantry leader must be *physically strong*. This does not imply the bulging muscles of the weightlifter, or the power of the fullback. The Infantry leader needs the kind of strength that will permit him to move over a long distance at a fast pace, carrying the equipment he needs to fight and survive, and preserve strength enough to do his job when he arrives."

It was the last part that struck a chord with me as I read some of the Commando School's standards for speed marching with combat gear. Example activity standards included:

- 7 miles in under 70 minutes, followed by digging a defensive position;
- 9 miles in under 90 minutes, followed by a firing practice;
- 12 miles in under 130 minutes, followed by a drill parade on the square; or
- 15 miles in under 170 minutes, followed by assault course and firing.

Lastly, the author provides insightful conclusions on why the original Commando concept was a unique success, even though he points out that by the war's end a great many of the training innovations had been adopted by the British Army as a whole (although I would say that they were quickly forgotten in the post-war army). This book has so much to teach combat Soldiers; I recommend all Soldiers read and learn from it.

Note: There's an out-of-print edition with the alternate title of *British Commandos: The Origins and Special Training of an Elite Unit* published by the now defunct Paladin Press, but there's no need to pay for that higher-priced version while the other edition is still in print.