

Speaker Ryan: U.S. congress presents gold medal to Filipino veterans of World War II

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U.S. Congress Presents Gold Medal to the Filipino Veterans of World War II

WASHINGTON—U.S. House and Senate leaders today presented a Congressional Gold Medal in honor of the Filipino veterans of World War II for their service and sacrifice during the war. The ceremony took place in Emancipation Hall of the U.S. Capitol Visitor Center. The following are Speaker Ryan's remarks prior to the presentation of the medal, as prepared for delivery:

"Ladies and gentlemen, good morning. I am honored to welcome all of you to the United States Capitol. The Congressional Gold Medal is one of our oldest traditions. It is the highest civilian honor this body can bestow. Today, pursuant to S. 1555, we award this Medal to the Filipino veterans of World War II.

"This is a day that is long, long overdue. Everyone knows about Pearl Harbor on December 7th, 1941. Perhaps lesser known is that, within hours, Japanese forces also invaded the Philippines. Under the command of General MacArthur, American and Filipino forces fought side-by-side to stave off the invasion.

"All told, 250,000 Filipinos answered President Roosevelt's call to duty. Most had no formal training. Many had never even picked up a weapon. But they risked—and in the case of many—gave their lives fighting under our stars and stripes. They battled not only the enemy, but starvation and malnutrition. But they never lost sight of the

cause. And they never accepted defeat.

“In the midst of the struggle, President Roosevelt addressed the Filipino people. He said, ‘The great day of your liberation will come, as surely as there is a God in heaven.’ And sure enough, that day came. But only due to the incredible valor and sacrifice of the Filipino resistance movement. And only at a heavy cost. More than 10,000 Americans and nearly one million Filipinos, mostly civilians, died in the Philippines.

“We are blessed to be joined today not only by some of these veterans, but also their families. Thank you for being here. You are an integral part of this legacy. And without you, we know this day would not have been possible.

“A longtime dear friend of mine, my former deputy chief of staff, Joyce Meyer, tells the story of her great grandfather, Andres Arribe. He was one of many Filipinos recruited from Manila during the war. He was a sharp shooter. He was at Leyte when General MacArthur was there. But like too many others, he was stricken with tuberculosis and passed away shortly after the war.

“But his granddaughter used his veterans benefits to help pay for a college education, and she became the first in her family to move to America. And today, her daughter—this soldier’s great-granddaughter—works for the President of the United States.

“So you see, this is not simply a feel-good story of delayed recognition. We are here to immortalize the legacy of great liberators, who have paved the way for generations to follow.

“Let this ceremony serve to ensure that those who fought for freedom are never forgotten, and always remembered.

“Thank you all for being here.”