The American Influence on the Mindanao Resistance During the Second World War

Michael Anthony Balis
Old Dominion University

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THE AMERICAN INFLUENCE ON THE MINDANAO
RESISTANCE DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

by

Michael Anthony Balis
B.A. May 1987, Old Dominion University

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Approved by:

Dr. Willard C. Frank, Jr., Director

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ABSTRACT

THE AMERICAN INFLUENCE ON THE MINDANAO RESISTANCE DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Michael Anthony Balis
Old Dominion University, 1990
Director: Dr. Willard C. Frank, Jr.

This thesis examines the American participation in the development of resistance against the Japanese on Mindanao Island in the Philippines, 1942-1945. Americans directed the overall resistance movement and commanded most of the provinces. As leaders Americans played a key role in the evolution of the resistance from an independent guerrilla force to a partisan force that gave U.S. forces combat and intelligence assistance. The most important information for the thesis came from the MacArthur Archives, the Hayden Papers at the University of Michigan, the U.S. Army Military History Institute at Carlisle Barracks, and correspondence with 14 men who served with the Mindanao resistance.
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To Mom and Dad
INTRODUCTION

This thesis explores the American participation in the development of resistance against the Japanese on Mindanao Island, 1942-1945. In December 1941, Japanese forces launched their attacks against United States forces at Pearl Harbor and in the Philippines and British forces in South East Asia. The Japanese also invaded the U.S.-controlled Philippine Islands on 8 December 1941 and swept through them in a six-month campaign. Filipino and American forces under General Douglas MacArthur, U.S. Army, were stationed on Mindanao until their surrender to Japanese forces in May 1942. The thesis examines the activities of Americans remaining on Mindanao after May 1942 who did not accept defeat and who resisted the Japanese.

This thesis contains several subtopics. It treats the island's fall to the Japanese in 1942 and how subsequent Japanese abuse of the population led to indigenous resistance. It analyzes how three indigenous and four American leaders organized the independent guerrilla groups. It explores how Colonel Wendell Fertig, U.S. Army Reserve, unified the separate guerrilla groups. It explains conflicts between Fertig and three Mindanaoan leaders over the establishment of Fertig's authority and the resolutions of those conflicts in an effort to see how unified command
developed. It treats Japanese military operations against the American-led resistance in order to clarify the dangers the resistance faced. It analyzes the development of the resistance by its passive and active reactions to Japanese military pressure. It examines the role of MacArthur's headquarters, which supplied and directed Fertig beginning in January 1943 in converting an independent guerrilla force into a partisan force that followed U.S. Army orders. It also analyzes the contributions of Fertig and his province commanders in this evolution. It finally asks how operations in support of American forces that landed on the island in 1945 made the Mindanao resistance a true partisan force.

There are significant differences between guerrilla and partisan warfare. The most important difference is control. A guerrilla force is independent of outside military command. It may choose to assist a military force at times that its leaders are free to decide. Because the guerrilla force is not allied with a military force, its war is usually more protracted.¹ A partisan unit is a resistance force that is directly under military orders. Its missions include direct combat support, intelligence gathering, rescuing prisoners, cutting communications and harassing enemy movements. Because of the average partisan's lack of training in communications and

intelligence, his activities usually require the supported military force to instruct the partisan in those tasks. The arms and ammunition supplied by an allied military organization gives the partisans firepower superior to that of a guerrilla force.²

Guerrilla and partisan warfare share some similarities. Brutal foreign invaders or harsh indigenous leaders can anger people so much that they fight their enemies through partisan or guerrilla war. Successful guerrillas and partisans respect civilian property; so, they earn the indigenous population's support. Both require such support to survive and grow. Successful groups receive supplies, shelter, recruits, and intelligence from friendly inhabitants. Most guerrillas and partisans use their superior knowledge of the terrain to ambush the usually better-armed enemy troops and then disperse to avoid costly battles.³

Because the guerrilla missions change to include intelligence gathering and combat support of military operations, the transition to partisan warfare requires articulate and flexible leadership. Fertig and his four


American commanders were sufficiently persuasive to convince local peasants and townspeople that organized guerrilla warfare would protect their families from Japanese brutality. The guerrilla leaders earned widespread respect from the indigenous people who in turn supported the guerrillas with clothing, shelter, recruits, and information. MacArthur appointed Fertig to command the Mindanao resistance and transform it into a partisan force. Since Fertig earned the respect of the major guerrilla leaders, he convinced them to come under his command. After Fertig established his authority over the separate guerrilla units, the guerrillas fell under military authority and they became partisans who first collected and sent intelligence to MacArthur and later supported his landings on Mindanao.

The most important documents for this thesis came from the MacArthur Archives in Norfolk, Virginia. Documents in Record Group 16 include MacArthur's orders to Fertig, Fertig's reports on the strength and growth of the resistance, as well as on Japanese activities. Record Group 3 contains Japanese reports on the Mindanao resistance including partisan radio station locations, directives on counter-partisan operations, and data on combat results.

The General Robert Eichelberger Papers at Duke University has post-war interviews with Japanese generals who served on Mindanao that describe Japanese counter-partisan operations, Japanese defense plans, as well as partisan activities in 1944 and 1945.
The Joseph Hayden Papers at the University of Michigan contain a valuable report made by an American schoolteacher, Edward Kuder, who fought the Japanese alongside the Moslem Moro resistance. Kuder describes their contributions to the resistance and was a witness to much that he describes. He provides key answers on how the Moslems resisted.

John Keats's book, *They Fought Alone*, is a good secondary source on Fertig's view of the resistance. It is not documented, but other works in the MacArthur Archives support most of his facts. Keats had access to Fertig's diary which was unavailable to the author. Keats portrays Fertig and Captain Charles Hedges, U.S. Army Reserve, as the only important leaders.4


others. However, documentary evidence supports much of his account.5

Thirteen Americans and one Australian who fought with the resistance were generous enough to provide this author with information. They were Colonel Robert Bowler, U.S. Army; Lieutenant Sam Grashio, U.S. Army Air Forces; Captain Erling Jonassen, U.S. Army; Major Rex Blow, Royal Australian Army; Captain Paul Marshall, U.S. Army; Sergeant Ken Newton, U.S. Army Air Forces; Lieutenant Robert Merchant, U.S. Army; Captain Robert Spielman, U.S. Army; Lieutenant Gerald Chapman, U.S. Army Air Forces; Lieutenant Iliff Richardson, U.S. Navy; Lieutenant Colonel Clyde Childress, U.S. Army; Chief Petty Officer Ellwood Offret, U.S. Navy; Lieutenant Colonel Austin Schofner, U.S. Marine Corps; and Dr. William Johnson, DDS. All of these men gave clear and candid answers to this author's questions. Because they gave information on battles, partisan tactics and the role that Americans played in the resistance which is not found elsewhere, their perspectives have contributed much to this thesis.

This thesis attempts a comprehensive examination of the American-led resistance groups on Mindanao Island. It

is based on archival and secondary sources as well as personal correspondence. Japanese reports on the partisans, American partisan accounts, and official U.S. Army messages made it possible to analyze the resistance from varied perspectives.
CHAPTER 1
ORIGINS OF RESISTANCE

In December 1941, Japan's and America's national interests collided. The U.S. believed that Japanese expansion in China and Indo-China would eventually threaten American interests in the Pacific; so, the Americans refused to sell oil to Japan. The Japanese believed that they could not maintain their empire without American oil imports. Japan saw this as a conspiracy by a loose coalition of the United States, Britain, and the government of the Netherlands in exile to weaken her militarily and economically. The Japanese government under General Hideki Tojo believed the United States would then attack Japan. After Japan's border clashes with the Soviets in 1939, Tojo expected the Soviets to invade Japanese held territory in China and Manchuria. The Japanese thought that a desperate gamble such as striking the U.S. Pacific Fleet in Hawaii and seizing the oil rich Dutch East Indies was preferable to letting their empire crumble to the inevitable U.S., British, Dutch, and Soviet pressure. The United States believed that if she strengthened her relations with Britain, the Netherlands, and China, she would deter the Japanese from attacking the Philippines and other U.S. possessions. The American government became even more
determined to check Japanese aggression when Japan allied herself with Germany and Italy. The Japanese attacked the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941 and destroyed two battleships, damaged six others, crippled three destroyers, and damaged three light cruisers. This stunned the U.S. Pacific Fleet and left the Philippines, Malaya, and Dutch East Indies open to conquest.¹

The Japanese campaign to capture the Philippines lasted from December 1941 to May 1942. Japan landed her main invasion force in the Philippines on 10 December 1941. Those islands contained important natural resources needed by her war industry, and the archipelago was an important part of the island shield Japan was building across the Pacific against U.S. forces. Japanese planes would have many airfields to launch attacks on U.S. invasion fleets. Japanese ground forces would gain mountainous and jungle covered islands that were easy to fortify. The Japanese 14th Army under General Masaharu Homma forced MacArthur's forces in Luzon to retreat to the Bataan Peninsula and Corregidor Island early in 1942. The rest of Homma's army swept across the Visayas in April and May 1942. Because of their low supplies and the hopelessness of rescue by the

U.S. Pacific Fleet, further resistance by the Americans and Filipinos became meaningless. MacArthur left Lieutenant General Jonathan Wainwright, U.S. Army, in command of the Philippines and went to Australia to prepare a counteroffensive against the Japanese.2

Most of the Filipino and American troops on Mindanao were not trained or equipped to go into combat with the Japanese force. The 101st and 102nd Philippine Army Divisions were stationed on Mindanao. Major General William Sharp, U.S. Army, commanded the island's garrison beginning in January 1942. Both divisions were understrength in trained infantrymen; so, policemen and artillerymen bolstered them. There was too little ammunition for training troops on a firing line; so, the U.S. and Filipino soldiers never learned to fire live ammunition.3 Most of their weapons were from the First World War; so, they had many damaged and obsolete parts. Because ammunition for their World War I mortars had not been made since 1918, a commander ordered his unit to push the mortars over a cliff. Some American officers were relatively new to the island,


and they had a hard time communicating with the Filipinos.4

Sharp organized the island into five regions. Since each region had few useful roads, defense of the interior was relatively simple. Sharp ordered each defense region to hold the Japanese as long as possible in the hope reinforcements would arrive before the Del Monte airfields near Cagayan were lost.5 Sharp lacked a friendly navy; so, he could not intercept and destroy the Japanese invasion force at sea. Sharp only planned to defend likely landing areas near Cagayan and Cotabato cities.

The Japanese completed their Mindanao invasion plan while the U.S. garrison struggled to prepare its defenses. As Mindanao's airfields and ports were useful staging areas for Japanese troops destined for the invasion of the Dutch East Indies, the Japanese planned to capture the island. The Japanese plan was to land at Macajalar Bay, the Moro Gulf, and Davao Gulf. Each landing force contained no more than 5,000 of men in an effort to push the U.S. forces inland along the Sayre Road and Highway One and encircle them. The Japanese planned to use their superior air and


armor to crush the final U.S. defense positions.\(^6\)

Needing the Davao City port on Mindanao to stage their invasion of the Dutch East Indies scheduled for January 1942, the Japanese sent a battalion of 1,000 men under Lieutenant Colonel Toshio Miura to capture the port on 20 December 1941. Miura pushed Colonel Roger Hilsman's 900-man force from the Davao-Digos area and secured it.\(^7\)

The Kawaguchi Detachment of 4,852 men landed at Parang and Cotabato cities on 29 April 1942. Three infantry battalions, one artillery battalion deployed as infantry, and police troops defended this area. Three hundred Japanese attempted to outflank the defenders by going down the Mindanao River in barges on 31 April. This situation forced the sector commander, Colonel Russell Nelson, U.S. Army, to leave Highway One and move northeast to defend the trails that led to the Sayre Road. Other Kawaguchi units landed near Parang and faced a Filipino Rifle Regiment. The Japanese outflanked the Filipinos and forced them to retreat to Lanao Province.\(^8\)

The island's defenders simultaneously contended with the Japanese Miura detachment which was reinforced to a strength of 4,000 men in April 1942. Colonel William Norton, \textit{Fall of the Philippines}, 508-9.

\(^6\)Morton, \textit{Fall of the Philippines}, 508-9.

\(^7\)Hilsman to Vachon, 26 January 1942, RG 30, Box 24, MA; Morton, \textit{Fall of the Philippines}, 507-19. The author does not know the level of training of the Miura Detachment or Hillsman's force.

\(^8\)Morton, \textit{Fall of the Philippines}, 508-9.
Graves, U.S. Army, took command of the Digos area from Hilsman. Until Graves's 2,000 men withdrew to secure the vital Kabacan Road junction against the Kawaguchi Detachment, the Americans and Filipinos conducted a skillful defense. The Americans and Filipinos successfully defended Kabacan and protected the 6,000 men at Cagayan and Del Monte from a Japanese attack in their rear until their surrender.9

The roughly 4,000-man Kawamura Detachment assaulted Macajalar Bay on 3 May 1942. Two artillery regiments and an infantry regiment defended the beach. Sharp committed his regimental reserve to halt Japanese flanking attacks along the Sayre Road. Enemy troops infiltrated the U.S. positions, which were defended by about 6,000 men, and the Japanese caused so much confusion among the U.S. and Filipino troops that the Kawamura Detachment knocked them out of two defense lines on the highway.10

Because the Japanese were on the verge of defeating U.S. forces in the Philippines, Sharp followed General Wainwright's May 1942 order to surrender. The Japanese broke the defense line near the important Del Monte airfields, while the entire U.S. Cotabato sector fell in April.11 Japanese troops had landed on Corregidor island

9Colonel Roger B. Hilsman, "The Occupation and Withdrawal from Davao," 26 January 1942, RG 30, Box 24, MA.

10Morton, Fall of the Philippines, 508-19.

11McGee, Rice and Salt, xviii.
where Wainwright was with the last organized resistance. Wainwright telegraphed Sharp that unless all U.S. forces surrendered, the Japanese would continue killing his men. Sharp then ordered his men to surrender.¹²

After the collapse of the U.S. and Filipino forces, Mindanao became a part of a Japanese Empire that was oppressive to conquered people throughout most of the Far East. It is unclear whether Japanese senior officers and national leaders or local commanders ordered the atrocities. A small group of Japanese scientists performed medical experiments on Manchurians while the Japanese troops followed a "Kill All, Burn All, Loot All" policy in Chinese cities and villages. For example, Japanese troops murdered more than 200,000 people in Nanking, China. The Japanese killed more than 60,000 Koreans in Japanese mines and factories. Japanese-run labor gangs killed more than 100,000 Indonesians. Renegade Japanese patrols transferred the corporal punishment they received from their leaders to civilians and prisoners. Even pro-Japanese leaders like Ba Maw of Burma and Sukharno of Indonesia later turned against their harsh Japanese rulers.

The Japanese tried to instill fear into the Mindanao

They assigned no more than 10,000 men to rule over 1,000,000 Mindanaoans. The garrison's mission was to protect the ports at Davao, Zamboanga, and Cagayan from guerrillas. Japanese troops were concentrated around the cities of Zamboanga, Davao, Cagayan, and Surigao with smaller outposts deeper inside Mindanao to gather food. In Mindanao, Japanese leaders believed that if they spread enough fear by public executions of suspected guerrillas and by controlling their movements that the islanders would be too afraid to rebel or to slow Japanese exploitation of Mindanao's wood, rice, and gold resources. Because many Japanese combat troops left Mindanao to fight Dutch ground forces in the East Indies, the Japanese garrison remaining on Mindanao was small. Although the Japanese believed that they had to instill fear in the indigenous population to rule them, they only assigned an insufficient 7,000 to 10,000-man garrison for this task.\textsuperscript{14}

The Japanese showed how little they understood the militant pride of the Moros, all of whom were Moslem. Catholic Spaniards and Filipinos had tried to convert the Moros to Christianity for 200 years; so, the Moros regarded


any outsiders as a threat. Because there were incessant conflicts between Moro tribes and Christian Filipinos, each tribe, comprised of interrelated families, lived in forts under their spiritual and military leaders called Datus. Any outsider who antagonized any of these tribes or families faced the danger of large tribal alliances forming and attacking them. However, Japanese patrols crossed Moro areas without permission. Moro territory was under a Datu's control, and he had hundreds of followers who were ready to fight to the death for him.\textsuperscript{15} Because the Datu's followers might believe he could not control his own land, unannounced Japanese intrusions were a clear insult to him.\textsuperscript{16}

The Japanese physically abused the Moros instead of trying to manipulate the latter's traditional hatred of Filipinos to their advantage. The Japanese believed that the Moros would be too intimidated to resist; so, the Japanese underestimated Moro guerrilla war traditions and family pride. The Japanese applied indiscriminate terror in an attempt to forestall a guerrilla movement. For example, Japanese slapped Moros for not bowing to them. They also suffocated them with water torture and stabbed them. If

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Japanese troops were sniped at, Japanese patrols razed entire villages. Japanese officers refused to meet with Moro leaders to discuss problems.\textsuperscript{17}

The Japanese suppressed all political parties except for the collaborationist Kalipibi Party made up of Moros and Filipinos. This party consisted of those who tried to protect their villages by interceding in disputes between the Japanese and the local population, others who bargained to retain control over their land by supporting the Japanese, some who believed American troops would never return, and the sincerely pro-Japanese. The typical Filipino and Moro inwardly ignored this party and only pretended to obey it. They saw too much Japanese terrorism to believe in the goals of such a party. Villagers saw their prewar political leaders humiliated by the Japanese. For example, a Japanese soldier forced a Filipino mayor to climb a tree and get a coconut for him.\textsuperscript{18}

From 1898 to 1911, Captain John J. Pershing's tactics in his pacification of Mindanao's Moros were the opposite of how the Japanese ruled the island in the Second World War. His accomplishments bring Japanese errors into clearer


focus. Over 700,000 Moros lived in the Cotabato, Bukidnon, Lanao, and Zamboanga Provinces, and they were the only people on the island to oppose the Americans. Pershing knew that Moro resistance was best overcome with minimum force and a good understanding of Moro psychology. He used road construction, trading posts, and trade schools to calm Moro fears of a harsh American occupation. He also promised that Americans would not try to Christianize them.\footnote{Donna Donald Smythe, \textit{Guerrilla Warrior} (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), 23-193; Frank Vandiver, \textit{Black Jack} (College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 1977), 142-314, 521-70.}

The Japanese occupiers also had to contend with Filipinos who were just as family-centered as the Moros. Their population of 536,729 was concentrated on the western, northern, and eastern coasts as well as Lanao Province. Their cultural traditions obligated them to help their immediate family of parents, brothers, and sisters as well as their most distant relatives through any crisis. Professional alliances and ritual relatives called "compadres" added even more people to the group the Filipino had to assist at all times. He had to fight any outsider who threatened this large network or lose his family's respect and care. This support system made Filipino families very self-reliant.\footnote{McGee, Rice and Salt, 150; Stanley Karnow, \textit{In Our Image: America's Empire in the Philippines} (New York: Random House, 1989), 20; Forbes, \textit{Philippine Islands} 2:49; Teodoro Agoncillo, \textit{A Short History of the Philippines} (New York: New American Library, 1969), 12-14.}
The Japanese threatened Filipino families with the "neighborhood association." Japanese troops made one man responsible for each section of a city or village. He had to inform the Japanese secret police, the "Kempei Tai," of all anti-Japanese activity or face the probability that the Japanese would execute or kidnap his closest relatives. This Filipino was usually so afraid that the Japanese would discover unreported "crimes" in his village that he forced his subordinates to spy on their own neighbors. The Japanese took advantage of family outcasts and bribed them to turn in their neighbors and even their relatives. The Japanese imprisoned or executed these people along with their families. Because the Japanese forced some Filipinos to betray their distant relatives in order to protect their closest kin, this system made Filipinos hate the Japanese.\(^2\)

The Japanese supplemented the above attack on the Filipino family with "zonification." The Japanese chose a collaborator to wear a mask before a lineup of suspects and identify suspected guerrillas. Because these spies usually lived among the indigenous population, these traitors were especially dangerous to the villagers and townspeople. They knew who had helped an American escape or who had spoken

\(^2\)McGee, *Rice and Salt*, 150.
badly of the Japanese.\textsuperscript{22}

The "round up" was another direct Japanese attack on the Filipino culture. Because the most important matter to the Japanese was to crush any resistance and learn of information on threatening Filipino activities, their commanders issued very vague rules concerning villager welfare. The smallest unit employed in this tactic was a company of 100-200 troops. The Japanese surrounded a selected village before dawn. At first light, the troops moved into their assigned positions around the village. The Japanese kidnapped some men who were suspected of having firearms. The troops questioned their wives on their husbands' activities. If the Japanese did not get the necessary information on the firearm owners, they massacred the inhabitants. Filipinos were naturally furious about such brutality.\textsuperscript{23}

The Japanese invasion broke down law and order in the Surigao, Agusan, and Lanao Provinces. The Japanese destroyed the police force that had fought the banditry of thieves and murderers before the war. The Japanese did not have a large enough garrison to control bandit violence. There were many bloody fights between Filipino and Moro

\textsuperscript{22}Jose Reyes, \textit{Terrorism and Redemption} (Manila: n.p., 1945), 17; Fertig to MacArthur, 20 December 1943, RG 16, Box 18, MA.

\textsuperscript{23}Allied Translator and Interpreter Service, Southwest Pacific Area Enemy Publications, "Intelligence Work and Round Up," 13 August 1944, RG 3, Box 129, MA.
bandits near Kolambugan in the Lanao Province. Moros attacked and drove out Filipino Catholics near Malabang. A Filipino Catholic policeman responded to this by killing an unknown number of Moros. Filipino Catholics killed 200 Moros in Cotabato province. Ex-soldiers led bandit gangs which terrorized many villages in Surigao and Agusan provinces. Such unrest frightened many law-abiding Filipinos and Moros. 24

Because the Japanese did not learn from America's less violent method forty years earlier that Mindanaoan cooperation could best be attained with a good application of psychology and with minimum force, the Japanese garrison applied a violent and ineffective pacification policy. The island's Filipinos and Moros were very family-centered and ready to defend their relatives against indigenous or foreign enemies with guerrilla warfare. Moros had fought the Americans until they were satisfied that the Americans were not a threat to their culture. The brutal actions of the Japanese in 1942 caused the Filipino and Moro hatred that quickly precipitated a guerrilla war Japanese leaders wanted to avoid. Japanese soldiers therefore overreacted to

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their fears of resistance and created a self-fulfilling prophecy.
CHAPTER 2
SEVEN GUERRILLA GROUPS ARE FORMED

Popular anger required organization under leaders if it was to be converted to coordinated resistance among the Mindanaoans. Proper organization was the best way to insure that people performed important tasks and worked towards a common goal of attaining greater security from bandits and Japanese troops. Peasants also needed leaders to train them to shoot guns if they were to kill enough bandits and Japanese to protect their villages. If Filipinos were to survive outside Japanese-controlled areas, they needed civil governments that preserved law and solved food shortages by assigning certain people to try and jail criminals as well as ordering other people to plant food.

After May 1942, Mindanaoans responded to the Japanese threats to their society with resistance. The Japanese garrison was deployed in major cities along Mindanao's coast with the largest contingent at Davao. The Mindanaoans faced a harsh Japanese occupation and indigenous banditry which angered them. Former superintendents, officers, and foremen became the officers and sergeants of these first resistance groups. Soldiers who did not surrender added their training to these groups when they taught them the tactic of simultaneous fire. A few men from many villages throughout

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the island collected discarded and hidden guns and ambushed small Japanese groups. Since farmers, stevedores, soldiers, and construction workers were accustomed to group activity, they made the best guerrillas. Some leaders trained their volunteers for one to two months.¹

Because the different guerrilla groups lacked overall control, they sometimes fought over territory and cultural differences. Some Lanao Province Moro guerrillas fought with Filipinos over land. Such activities started feuds between the small guerrilla bands and diverted them from fighting the Japanese. In Lanao Province, many Moro guerrilla groups refused to assist other Moros and especially Christians against the Japanese. Such animosities drove an even deeper wedge between existing Moro and Filipino guerrillas. The guerrilla leaders lacked authority to convince their men to concentrate on fighting the Japanese.²

From May to December 1942, several guerrilla leaders formed large guerrilla units to fight the Japanese troops and local bandits. All of them were strong-willed men who convinced leaders of smaller guerrilla groups to come under their command.

¹Royce Wendover, "Foreshadows," The Royce Wendover Papers [hereafter WP], U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Carlisle, Pennsylvania [hereafter CB].

²Haggerty, Guerrilla Padre, 130-36; "Kuder Report," HP, Box 41, UM; Fertig to MacArthur, 25 October 1943, RG 16, Box 1, MA.
Salipada Pendatun, a Moro religious leader, understood the different cultures extant among the people and he had an excellent background for leading a large resistance force in the Cotabato Province. He administered Moslem universal law to hundreds of his followers. Pendatun used passages from the Koran to justify a war against the Japanese, and he maintained his religious leadership through spiritual and physical bravery in different tribal feuds. Furthermore, by his powerful personality Pendatun became very skillful in forming alliances. Pendatun also learned how to work with Americans and Filipinos at the University of the Philippines Law School. This experience later helped him lead Filipinos and Americans, who came from very different cultures. Military training in the University of the Philippines and wartime service in Davao Province, taught him basic military leadership skills.

Pendatun used family support to build a resistance group in the summer and fall of 1942. His brothers-in-law, who were also Moslem priests (Datus), joined his guerrilla force. Peasant families under these Datus were obligated under their law to stick together and fight under their strong leaders. One of the brothers-in-law was reputed to be one of the most influential leaders in Southeast Cotabato. As a result, these peasants gave Pendatun's men

3Haggerty, Guerrilla Padre, 49; Kiefer, Tausug, 71-83.
shelter, food, recruits, and information on the Japanese.

Pendatun needed a victory to gain more local support and show his men that the Japanese could be defeated. Because Fort Pikit in Cotabato Province was lightly garrisoned and distant from the main Japanese bases on the Lanao and Davao coasts, he chose it as the site for such a victory. If the guerrillas captured Fort Pikit, they would cut the only east-west road on Mindanao. Japanese loss of control of this road, Highway One, would mean that their Cotabato Province garrison would be isolated from the bases at Davao and Cagayan. If such a main road were cut, the guerrillas and peasants in Cotabato Province would be safer. Japanese patrols would have to use trails to bypass roadblocks on Highway One the guerrillas could easily ambush. Since these Cotabato Moros would consider his actions brave, Pendatun realized that killing some Japanese would increase support from other Cotabato Province tribes even if he failed to capture Fort Pikit. If the Japanese killed many Moros, this would also elicit more family vengeance against the enemy.

The attack was a success. Thanks to peasant guides who led the guerrillas safely down secret trails, about 200 guerrillas attacked the garrison in August 1942 and

overwhelmed it from many directions at once. Because the victory demonstrated Pendatun's power and encouraged the local peasants' desire to get revenge for the abuse they suffered, they joined him. Pendatun was tolerant of other cultures and he welcomed Filipino Catholics and Americans into his guerrilla force. His fame grew so large that 500 Filipinos who fought Cotabato Province Moros before the war joined his force. Several unsurrendered American officers and enlisted men who lived in the jungle since May 1942 also joined Pendatun and contributed their staff and combat skills. Four Army Air Forces enlisted men who were experienced with infantry weapon maintenance, repaired machine guns and rifles. Other U.S. soldiers repaired vehicles. Lieutenant Colonel Frank McGee, U.S. Army, joined Pendatun as a subordinate. He was a very experienced infantry officer with combat experience in World War I and the Battle for Mindanao and helped Pendatun plan his military operations.5

The Piang and Sinsuat clans were pre-war political rivals and both families remained hostile to each other during the Japanese occupation. Datu Sinsuat was the most important Japanese collaborator in the Cotabato Province. This situation turned the Piang family and their allies, who controlled the entire province, except the lower Cotabato

5Jack Samples, Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army, (ret.), letter to author, 30 September 1989; Merchant letter; Willoughby, Guerrilla Resistance, 540-41; Kiefer, Tausug, 52-59, 121-34.
River Valley and the west coast, against the Japanese. Many members of the Piang family decided to join or help the guerrillas in order to fight the Sinsuat Clan. After Pendatun received support from the Piang clan, most of the Moros in Cotabato Province supported Pendatun; so, he had greater security from enemy patrols and he had more recruits for his combat force.\(^6\)

Pendatun's power reached its zenith when he expanded his control over Highway One in Central Mindanao in late 1942. This highway ran from Cotabato City to Davao City. His men surprised the enemy at Kabacan and gave Pendatun control of the junction of the Sayre Road and Highway One, the best roads on Mindanao. Pendatun then overwhelmed five more small Japanese bases on Mindanao. These successes increased his stature and support. By January 1943, his force numbered 2,000 guerrillas, which made it almost as large as a U.S. regiment. He used his military training to set up a staff section to control this force.\(^7\)

Pendatun prepared to assault his biggest objective, Malaybalay City in Bukidnon Province in January 1943. Because he wanted to replenish his low ammunition stocks with captured enemy supplies, he decided to capture Japanese


\(^7\)Jesus Villamor, \textit{They Never Surrendered} (Quezon City, Philippines: Vera-Reyes, 1982), 144.
equipment at Malaybalay. Pendatun sent units of unknown strength to positions north and south of Malaybalay to ambush enemy troops who tried to rescue their comrades. Since the route the enemy would use, the Sayre Road, was only 20 feet wide and overgrown, the guerrillas easily set up ambushes there.

From January to March 1943, Pendatun launched his attacks on Malaybalay with great determination and ingenuity. The enemy was well-armed with machine guns and other heavy weapons but the guerrillas temporarily overcame this with an amazing series of homemade weapons. The guerrillas took a 50-caliber machine gun from a crashed Japanese plane and used it to support the guerrilla assault. Guerrillas engaged Japanese-held buildings with dynamite and glass bombs wrapped in vines. They even salvaged bombs from a deserted U.S. airfield and catapulted them into Japanese lines. These weapons enabled Pendatun's men to surround the remainder of the garrison in a schoolhouse in the city's center by March 1943. However, superior Japanese firepower wore the guerrillas down so much that by the time they reached the schoolhouse they were too weak to capture it. Because the guerrillas assaulted the Japanese across streets that did not give them as much cover to surprise the enemy as the jungle, the guerrillas suffered more casualties. Pendatun's men used their makeshift weapons well, but replacement of casualties took time which the Japanese used to fortify their building and wait for reinforcements. By
6 March, the guerrillas were so weak that 35 Japanese were able to break through guerrilla lines and reinforce the schoolhouse. Because it was obvious that his force would be subject to punishing enemy attacks if he remained, Pendatun retreated and consolidated his strength in Southern Bukidnon and Cotabato. Since the peasants considered Pendatun's attack brave, his popular support did not weaken.8

Police Lieutenant Colonel Claro Lauretta was another important guerrilla leader with an excellent background for resistance warfare in Davao Province. He was a graduate of the Philippine Military Academy where he learned basic leadership and combat skills. Lauretta also served with the Philippine Constabulary before the war. He gained valuable combat experience when he fought the Japanese during their invasion of Mindanao. Lauretta refused to surrender in May 1942 and he gathered 2,000 Davao City refugees in the hills 20 miles north of the city.

In the summer of 1942, Lauretta's refugee community faced the most potentially dangerous Japanese garrison on Mindanao. The enemy's airfields and port at Davao City were staging areas for Japanese offensives in the South and Southwest Pacific; so, it housed a 1,500-man garrison. Thousands of Japanese troops also passed through the port on

their way to the Southwest Pacific.

From May 1942 to June 1943, Lauretta established a very tight security arrangement to warn him of any Japanese operations; so, that his people could evacuate if danger became real. His 30 riflemen from a former police unit enforced law and order among the 2,000 peasants. Lauretta's men also repulsed Filipino bandit attacks. He used a series of outposts on every trail that led to the Japanese garrison which passed him information on the direction and location of enemy patrols that searched for guerrillas. This system made the Japanese easy to intercept and ambush before they reached the refugees. Lauretta's men treated strangers as if they were spies unless they quickly proved otherwise. His men enhanced security when they restricted farming to areas nearby so that nobody could be captured and give away the guerrilla locations.

Lauretta surrounded his villages with observation posts which alerted them to any danger. Because the peasant refugees joined his force as spies and riflemen, his small 32-man force grew to 1,000 men. Lauretta ordered some of his men to infiltrate the Filipino stevedore group at the Davao port where Japanese ships were loaded. Since they worked in the center of the Japanese garrison, they gave him

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9Rex Blow, Major, Australian Army, (ret.) letter to author, 1 September 1989; Mellnick, Philippine Diary, 243-47; Willoughby, Guerrilla Resistance, 542; Grashio and Norling, Return to Freedom, 115.
valuable information on enemy strength and plans. Because the jungle was so dense, Japanese troops patrolled trails and waterways. Guerrillas set up their ambushes along trails and bivouac sites where they could surprise Japanese patrols. Japanese troops usually did not have time to deploy and shoot their ambushers, so the guerrillas either chased them away or killed them. After an ambush, the Filipinos split up in different directions. If the Japanese survivors divided their patrol into small groups to capture the guerrillas, they would become disoriented and vulnerable. Lauretta's men gained such a fearsome reputation that Japanese prisoner-of-war camp guards at Davao were afraid to go deep into the jungle.10

Captain Louis Morgan, a Catholic Filipino guerrilla leader who was also half American and a police company commander built a guerrilla force from his company in Lanao Province. Morgan had served in the Lanao Province before the May 1942 surrender. After the surrender, he found other Filipinos and convinced them to join him. His 500 men spent most of their time protecting Filipinos near Kolambugan City from Moro bandit raids. Morgan massacred Moro villages instead of negotiating a solution through the local Datus, and so worsened Filipino-Moro relations. Due to his hatred of Moros, the guerrilla force was unable to form alliances

10Hawkins, Never Say Die, 84-133; Grashio and Norling, Return to Freedom, 122; Blow letter; "Evacuee Report of Lieutenant Commander Melvin McCoy," RG 16, Box 45, MA.
in the Moro-dominated province.

Lieutenant Colonel Wendell Fertig was another major guerrilla leader who gained a very important background for guerrilla warfare on Mindanao during his prewar civilian employment as an engineer in the Philippines. He had a Reserve Officer Training Corps commission earned at the Colorado School of Mines. He traveled throughout the islands for five years and he met many Filipinos. Fertig entered active service in the U.S. Army in June 1941 as an airfield construction inspector. He traveled all over the archipelago, including Mindanao. This experience gave him a relatively good insight to Filipino and Moro culture that someone who had not lived in the Philippines would not have had. Fertig realized that Filipinos and Moros valued personal rather than institutional loyalty. He observed how Catholic Filipinos reacted in various jobs at the mines in his reserve engineer unit and in his home. Fertig still felt somewhat condescending towards Filipinos. He believed that the moderate climate made them lazy and dependent on Americans for leadership.\footnote{"Evacuee Report by Wendell Fertig," RG 16, Box 44, MA; "Evacuee Report of Ellwood Ofrett," RG 16, Box 44, MA.}

During the 1941-42 Philippine Campaign, Fertig served under Brigadier General Hugh Casey, MacArthur's chief engineer, on Luzon and Corregidor Island. Fertig flew from Corregidor to Mindanao in March 1942 during the fall of the Philippines. Since no space was left on the last plane that
left for Australia, he remained on the island. He met a prewar friend, Captain Charles Hedges, U.S. Army, and they traveled around the island looking for a U.S. unit to join. After Fertig and Hedges heard of Wainwright's surrender at Corregidor and Sharp's surrender on Mindanao, they traveled on foot in Lanao Province and evaded Japanese patrols with the help of Filipinos and Moros who hid and fed them.

A combination of factors drove Fertig to organize a guerrilla force. He was grateful to the many peasants who risked their lives to take care of him, and he was angry that they were being treated so badly by the Japanese. He was furious at the Japanese who abused U.S. prisoners in a mock Fourth of July 1942 parade in Lanao Province. Police Captain William Tate, a Filipino who was half-American and a member of Morgan's guerrilla force, told Fertig that Morgan had organized 500 men into a guerrilla force. Fertig considered such a unit large enough to make guerrilla warfare feasible. Fertig also knew that Filipinos and Moros had been good guerrillas in the early years of the U.S. occupation from 1898 to 1911.12

Japanese troops were concentrated in coastal areas of Lanao and Misamis Occidental Provinces to defend ports that linked their shipping lanes to the Southwest Pacific. Because these enemy garrisons did not have enough men to constantly patrol the island's interior, guerrillas like

12Fertig to Casey, 1 July 1943, RG 16, Box 11, MA; Keats, They Fought Alone, 36-103.
Fertig lived in relative security. Large Japanese bases were in Lanao Province and smaller garrisons were kept at Zamboanga City and Misamis City. Japanese garrisons did not patrol more than a few miles from their cities. The Misamis City garrison only contained three Japanese who were probably recruiting Filipino policemen. Obviously, the Japanese did not consider this province very important. The Lanao Province garrison amounted to a total of 800 men. A number of Japanese occupied Zamboanga City but the rest of Zamboanga Province was free of Japanese.\(^3\)

From July to September 1942, Fertig established his authority over Captain Morgan's men. Morgan had wanted Fertig to be the titular commander of his 500 men while Morgan secretly retained actual control. While he agreed to be Fertig's Chief of Staff, Morgan believed that he could get more Filipinos to join his guerrilla force by using Fertig's senior rank as a magnet. Because Fertig inspected Morgan's men and he demanded staff reports from Morgan and his assistants, Morgan's guerrillas learned to respect Fertig. Morgan's men saw Fertig, not Morgan, making policy; so, this action was a challenge to Morgan's power. Fertig knew about Morgan's violent past with the Moros and believed that all Morgan planned to do was fight Moros in Lanao Province instead of Japanese. Fertig was determined to gain

\(^3\)"Brief Tentative Report on Conditions in the Tenth Military District," 6 March 1943, RG 16, Box 1, MA; Keats, They Fought Alone, 81-110; Willoughby, Guerrilla Resistance, 335-67.
control over Morgan's men. Fertig lied that he was a Brigadier General who was sent by MacArthur to lead a guerrilla movement. Since many Filipinos considered MacArthur a legendary figure due to his defense of Corregidor, Fertig's prestige rose. Morgan overestimated his strength in his following, and he did not pay attention to Fertig's growing power.

The opportunity for further expansion of guerrilla power came in September 1942. Japanese troops continued to remain in or near their garrisons in Lanao and Cagayan Provinces; so, they did not present an obstacle to the expansion of Fertig's force. Tate and 37 men sailed across Illigan Bay to Misamis Occidental Province and killed three Japanese policemen who probably were trying to organize a pro-Japanese police force. Because Fertig gained a larger peasant support base there, gaining Misamis Occidental Province was a very important event in the development of resistance strength. This extra area gave his organization more volunteers and food.  

From September 1942 to March 1943, Fertig set up a civil government in Eastern Zamboanga and Misamis Occidental Provinces to fulfill the people's basic needs. Fertig restored prewar mayors and province governors to their

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United States Forces in the Philippines, HQ Tenth Military District, Office of the Commanding Officer to the Commander in Chief SWPA, 28 September 1943, RG 16, Box 12, MA; Reverend Patrick O'Connor to Dr. O'Dwyer, 5 March 1943, St. Columban's Archives, Bellview, Nebraska; Keats, They Fought Alone, 91-103.
previous positions. The civil government worked strenuously to assist areas which suffered from shortages in important crops to receive supplies of those crops from other areas with surpluses. The resistance established an elaborate supply system of trails, work animals, and laborers which kept the supplies moving. Fertig's civil government held prices to prewar levels that allowed the average peasant to buy enough rice or corn to feed his family. Since money gave Filipinos an alternative to barter, the Fertig's officials made this currency with crude printing presses to ease trade for the population. By March 1943, resistance-controlled areas functioned almost like they did before the war.¹⁵

Peasants and townspeople showed their gratitude by working for the resistance. Women rubbed brass against stone to make bullet cartridges while men enlisted in the combat units. Peasants distilled alcohol from coconut and tuba plants and made it into propulsion fuel for trucks and water launches. Bar girls, farmers, and stevedores near enemy garrisons in Lanao and Cagayan told the resistance what enemy activity they saw. Such volunteers were also an important replacement pool for casualties suffered in combat with the Japanese. As long as this popular support continued, the Japanese had to kill every Filipino in

¹⁵Jonassen letter; Willoughby, Guerrilla Resistance, 335-67.
Zamboanga and Misamis Occidental Provinces if they were to destroy the resistance. Because Japanese resources were scattered all over the Far East and the Pacific fighting the British, Australians, Chinese, and the Americans, this was quite impossible. One peasant stated his lack of concern for Japanese attacks by uttering that even 4,000 Japanese could not find him among forty million trees. Because Mindanao was 94,600 square kilometers in area and covered with jungle, this peasant's statement was no mere boast.16

By May 1943, Fertig organized the combat arm of the resistance in the Western Zamboanga and Misamis Occidental Provinces. Fertig was determined, however, not to attack the Japanese garrisons. He spent from September 1942 to June 1943 preparing his men to defend against a Japanese offensive, and he established a peasant spy network that extended to the nearest Japanese garrisons in the Lanao and Misamis Oriental Provinces to warn him of a Japanese attack. He hoped to make radio contact with MacArthur in Australia and receive more weapons for even greater security. He established a complete staff to delegate his orders to the resistance. Fertig sent Morgan on an expedition around Zamboanga and Northern Mindanao to gather more volunteers. Because a military system had a complete chain of command

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for efficient transmission of orders, Fertig organized his 3,747 men into squads, platoons, companies, battalions, and regiments. Fertig's men conducted their training with captured Japanese weapons. Since the men were not all former soldiers and because sergeants and officers with combat experience were rare, Fertig and his officers knew that the Filipinos would be best at ambushes and not in long battles. Because resistance warfare was based on squad-sized ambushes and rapid retreats to assembly areas, this fighting style would later avoid the high casualties of company and battalion level combat in which his men were not trained. According to a wartime Japanese document, the targets for Japanese "subjugative" operations for 1943 in the Philippines were resistance bases and radios. The Japanese garrison commander of Mindanao probably believed that such missions required months to find resistance targets and assemble enough force to launch them. This gave Fertig some time to organize his forces. 17

Captain Charles Hedges, U.S. Army, Reserve, was another important guerrilla leader in Lanao Province who had a good background for organizing guerrilla warfare on Mindanao. He had several years of prewar service experience on the island during which he worked for a Lanao Province logging company. Hedges met many Moros and understood their

17 Fertig to Casey, 1 July 1943, RG 16, Box 11, MA; Fertig to MacArthur, 25 October 1943, RG 16, Box 1, MA; Japanese Monograph No. 3, "Philippine Operations Record, Phase Two, December 1942 to June 1944," CMH.
strong loyalties to their local Datus. He also knew several important Moro leaders on Mindanao. Moros would respect Hedges' forceful personality.

During the fall of 1942, Moro resistance to the Japanese in Lanao was divided along clan lines and thus uncoordinated; so, Hedges faced a difficult task in uniting significant numbers of Moros. Moros responded to the Japanese murders and abuse of family members as well as intrusions on their land by forming guerrilla bands which ambushed enemy patrols. For example, when 129 Japanese troops fired on the Moro village of Tamparan in September 1942, the Moros surrounded and killed 128 Japanese. The Moros destroyed another Japanese patrol in the same area. A Moro guerrilla band showed its fighting skill when it laid siege to the enemy's Ganassi Village garrison in Lanao. They remained so close to the enemy lines that Japanese planes could not bomb or strafe them. Yet these scattered bands were based solely on village and family loyalties that also turned into feuds after ambushes were complete; so, the resistance was not long-lasting. Moro society was a web of alliances among different families which shifted constantly, and this kept the culture from destroying itself in civil war. They could have assumed that the Japanese would be too afraid to return after a successful Moro ambush; so, their old feuds became more important. Their hatred of Filipinos persisted and it complicated relationships between their guerrilla groups. Unifying Lanao required careful
leadership to overcome these complex problems or the province resistance effort would be uncoordinated.\textsuperscript{18}

Because Hedges established a good relationship with the Datus from September 1942 to May 1943, he accomplished unification despite the fact that he was an outsider. He placed members of feuding families as well as Moros and Catholics in separate guerrilla units in order to avoid internal fights. Hedges appointed Datus to command their respective followers to demonstrate his respect for their authority. Thomas Cabili, a prewar Lanao Province politician, and Edward Kuder, a former school teacher in Lanao, gave Hedges important advice concerning those Moro leaders who were trustworthy. Hedges demonstrated the type of showmanship Moros admired in a leader by keeping his headquarters within a few miles of a Japanese camp and by showing his skillful marksmanship. He helped set up effective civil government to meet Moro needs and security. His men arrested or killed bandits so that the civil government could be established and function smoothly. Enemy foraging patrols caused a food shortage but the civil officials arranged for surplus food to be redistributed from other provinces. The Moros reciprocated Hedges for these considerations by supplying his guerrillas with food, spies and recruits. The Moros were impressed with Hedges' understanding of their culture and his constant

demonstrations that he was tough but fair. By May 1943, 
Hedges controlled almost 2,000 men.19

Major Robert Bowler, U.S. Army, was another pioneer 
guerrilla leader with a good understanding of Mindanao's 
cultures gained from a year of prewar service on the island. 
Bowler was a Regular Army officer and an instructor with the 
Filipino units before the war. He learned about the key 
trails, cities, local politicians, and Catholic Filipino and 
Moro soldiers who would later join his guerrilla force. 
During the battle for Mindanao he became a battalion 
commander who successfully led his men against the first 
enemy landings until his positions were outflanked. 
Bowler's commander ordered him to take his battalion to the 
Bukidnon Province for a last stand. After traveling through 
the jungle for nearly a month, Bowler and his men learned of 
Wainwright's surrender. Bowler was determined not to 
surrender himself or his command, so he released his men to 
return to their homes. He faced considerable danger from 
Japanese patrols, so he constantly hid among friendly 
Filipinos. The Talakag Village peasants hid him and any 
other American who entered the village from many Japanese 
patrols. On one occasion, Bowler hid only 400 meters from a 
Japanese outpost. These experiences made him a tough but 
flexible-minded officer who knew how to lead men of a 
different nationality.

19 Willoughby, Guerrilla Resistance, 533-34; "Kuder 
Report," HP, Box 41, UM; Samples letter; Grashio letter.
Japanese control of Bowler's area in the Misamis Oriental and Bukidnon Provinces was not very firm during the Autumn of 1942. Their main garrison which contained 275 men was at Cagayan in Misamis Oriental Province while a smaller unit of 190 troops was in the Bukidnon Province. They established smaller outposts nearby to collect food and taxes from the local population. Enemy troops needed the Sayre Road to reach Davao and Cotabato provinces, and they built outposts along this road to protect their truck convoys.

Bowler proved his courage and gratitude to the Talakag villagers. Unsurrendered Filipino soldiers and sergeants dug up hidden arms caches and found seventy men for Bowler. They asked Bowler to lead them in a guerrilla war. Bowler's seventy guerrillas drove the Japanese out of Talakag. After the battle, the Filipino policemen, whom the Japanese had tried to train, joined the guerrillas. In addition, the Talakag townspeople voted to make Bowler their leader. Due to his justifiable belief in the great danger of savage Japanese reprisals on civilians, Bowler was very reluctant to wage guerrilla warfare. If the Japanese considered Bowler's guerrillas a threat, they could have increased their inland patrols and killed more Filipinos. Because townspeople were so furious about the enemy atrocities and because they had confidence in Bowler, they were adamant about continuing to fight the Japanese. Therefore, he restricted guerrilla activities to small ambushes to satisfy
their need for vengeance until he could contact U.S. forces. Because of the possibility of even small ambushes triggering more Japanese patrols, Bowler planned to disperse his guerrillas during such an enemy offensive. He believed his guerrillas' future mission in the war effort was intelligence gathering to assist returning U.S. forces. Even if his ambushes provoked a Japanese offensive, Bowler's men could still collect information on the Japanese as long as they dispersed and at least one leader remained alive to analyze it.

Bowler's men established a good relationship with the peasants. They respected private property and reestablished a civil government. Bowler's guerrillas bought their supplies with their manufactured currency or goods. Patrols watched Japanese garrisons and warned the peasants of any approaching soldiers. Bowler restricted operations to small ambushes. After the Japanese left the area, peasants returned to their homes. Because Bowler restrained guerrilla activity so much that his men were not perceived as a threat by the Japanese, large Japanese patrols did not disrupt peasant life.20

Bowler and his men gained such a good reputation from their liberation of Talakag that more Filipinos joined him. Former soldiers and local peasants brought guns and ammunition with them to fight the Japanese. By October

20Bowler letter; Jonassen letter; Haggerty, Guerrilla Padre, 52-60.
1942, Bowler commanded at least 500 guerrillas who were fed by the local population in northern Bukidnon Province and Misamis Oriental Province.\textsuperscript{21}

Major Ernest McClish, a Regular Army officer, was another early guerrilla leader in the Surigao and Agusan Provinces with extensive knowledge of the indigenous culture gained from long service in the Philippines. He honed his combat skills with the elite 57th Filipino Scout Regiment. When the U.S. Army gave McClish a training command with the 81st Filipino Division, he gained further experience in working with Filipinos. He learned how to lead Filipinos with an effective combination of tact and decisiveness. McClish did not have an arrogant attitude towards Filipino culture which allowed him to be open-minded in his conversations with Filipinos. McClish's service as a battalion commander during the Japanese invasion of Mindanao gave him important combat experience. He refused to surrender and spent months dodging Japanese patrols. McClish's experiences on Mindanao gave him the necessary understanding of the indigenous culture to communicate with the local population and the combat experience to lead men in battle.

McClish was appalled at the indigenous banditry and Japanese brutality after the May 1942 surrender. He was determined to protect the population with a guerrilla force.

\textsuperscript{21}Haggerty, \textit{Guerrilla Padre}, 41-65; Bowler Letter.
Due to widespread banditry, he faced a serious challenge in organizing resistance in the Surigao and Agusan Provinces. Banditry threatened to stifle resistance to the Japanese. The Japanese were naturally content with the situation and only maintained 160 men in Butuan City in Agusan Province and 120 in Surigao Province. Since Japan did not send food to her garrisons, the Japanese troops in Agusan and Surigao would continue to steal Filipino crops in the area if they were not stopped by guerrilla resistance.

McClish had a charismatic personality that quickly impressed local guerrilla leaders and earned their loyalty. He convinced two guerrilla leaders near Claveria village to come under his command and McClish gained 1,000 men. A Syrian mining engineer named Khalil Khador organized 900 men and joined him. McClish realized that harsher methods would be necessary to defeat bandits; so, he had one of his best officers organize a 200-man company for this task. They arrested or killed so many bandit leaders in late 1942 and early 1943 that McClish's power was solidified and peasant security increased. McClish's guerrillas recruited many bandits after the guerrillas arrested their leaders.

Because McClish's men were spread among the Agusan and Surigao villages, his supply system was very decentralized. If McClish gathered his 1,900-man force in one small area it would have eased supply problems but it also would have alarmed the Japanese. McClish's men were a serious threat to the Butuan garrison consisting of 300 Japanese troops.
Unless the guerrillas remained scattered most of the time, they were vulnerable to counterattacks from Japanese troops from Davao and reinforcements that could have landed at Butuan to eliminate them. The guerrillas bought or traded for their food and clothing from the nearest villages. McClish's staff included supply personnel who found and distributed arms and ammunition that U.S. and Filipino soldiers buried before their surrender. Because they immediately issued whatever they received to the guerrillas, these men did not burden themselves with cumbersome records or storage facilities. This prevented surprise enemy raids from capturing their supplies and the staff was free to escape without trying to carry anything away.

Because McClish believed that killing Japanese was the best way to convince the local population that his guerrillas were not bandits who accepted peasant food and did nothing to protect them, he decided to attack the Japanese garrison at Butuan. Since the Japanese would be able to quickly reinforce Butuan by sea if they so desired, great dangers were involved in such an operation. McClish realized this and planned to send his 1,900 men against it from four sides and eliminate the Japanese before they could be reinforced. This was a reasonable estimate considering that only 300 Japanese opposed his forces. Clearing the garrison would also bring the guerrillas greater control of the Agusan River which could be used for more farming and increased transportation, unless the Japanese returned to
Butaun. McClish also had to respect the understandable Filipino need for vengeance against the garrison which stole their crops and terrorized them. If he forgot or ignored the indigenous population's wishes, his popular support could have disappeared.

McClish's men launched a determined attack on Butuan, but they were not armed or trained for combat against fortified positions. The guerrillas assaulted the town in April 1943 from opposite sides and overwhelmed the outer defenses. The fighting was so fierce on the first day that most of the town was on fire. Because some guerrillas were not used to such constant fighting, they ran away. The Japanese withdrew into a brick schoolhouse and fortified it against a siege until their reinforcements arrived. The enemy used heavy fire from narrow gun ports to hold off the guerrilla assaults. McClish's men lacked the mortars and machine guns with high rates of fire required to defeat the Japanese. Japanese reinforcements arrived with air support and on the ninth day they drove out the guerrillas.  

Because the local population considered the guerrilla attack brave, McClish still retained popular support. The Filipinos realized that McClish's men were willing to sacrifice themselves for their safety and not simply live off of their generosity in idleness. Such respect meant

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more volunteers and food for McClish to strengthen his force. Guerrilla fortunes increased when the Butuan garrison totally evacuated the city. The Japanese evacuation was probably intended to consolidate their strength for a 1943 summer offensive in Western Mindanao to destroy Fertig's guerrillas, but the peasants considered the Japanese evacuation a guerrilla victory.23

There were two other significant guerrilla leaders. James Grinstead was a World War I veteran. Before the war, he trained Filipino policemen and hunted Moro and Catholic Filipino bandits on Mindanao. Grinstead later became a plantation manager. Because this background on Mindanao gave Grinstead the ability to know enough about Filipino culture to be fair to his men, he recruited a number of guerrillas in Bukidnon Province after the May 1942 surrender. The other was Khalil Khador whose father had sent him to run his mines in the Agusan Province before the war. Khador was a tough man who used his powerful personality to intimidate 900 of his miners to join the guerrillas.

23Jonassen letter; Childress letter; Austin Shofner, Brigadier General, U.S. Marine Corps, (ret.), letter to author, 4 December 1989; Paul Marshall, Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army (ret.), phone call, October 1, 1989; Grashio letter; Fertig to MacArthur, 6 March 1943, RG 16, Box 1, MA; United States Forces in the Philippines HQ, Tenth Military District in the Field to the Commanding General Southwest Pacific Forces, 6 March 1943, RG 16, Box 1, MA; Willoughby, Guerrilla Resistance, 537-39; Hawkins, Never Say Die, 171-180; Ingham, Rendezvous, 63; Keats, They Fought Alone, 221-24. The author could not find any Japanese documents on this withdrawal. McClish's organization did not suffer from a decrease in popular support, a sign that the Filipinos considered the result a guerrilla victory.
guerrillas.\textsuperscript{24}

Because the most important seven American and Mindanaoan leaders, except Morgan, understood the family-centered indigenous culture and they knew how to convince the population that organized guerrilla warfare was the best way to protect their families against the Japanese, they were able to organize resistance in their separate areas. When the guerrilla leaders killed Japanese patrols, warned villagers of their approach, and drove away bandits, they proved their worth to the local population. Filipinos and Moros repaid the resistance with food, shelter, recruits, and intelligence on Japanese activity.

CHAPTER 3
ESTABLISHMENT OF AUTHORITY OVER THE MINDANAO RESISTANCE

The Mindanao resistance had to become partisans under MacArthur if it was going to play a significant role in the Southwest Pacific area. Once a clear chain of command stretched from MacArthur through one island commander to the individual resistance members, the guerrillas would become partisans. Fertig was determined to accomplish this. Because Fertig believed that a unified resistance would give Mindanaoans the most power to fight their Japanese occupiers, he wanted to take control over all of the guerrilla groups. Guerrilla leaders who feared losing the authority they worked hard to attain, as well as other leaders who tried to usurp Fertig's authority over the island's resistance for greater personal power, made it difficult for Fertig to establish his control over the island. Because he was an American, Fertig faced potential indigenous resentment if he tried to attain control of Filipino and Moro guerrilla leaders. Due to Mindanao's rugged terrain, Fertig would be unable to meet and personally convince some of the independent guerrilla leaders to join him. Fertig had to convince these leaders that his command would help them kill more Japanese, and he had to neutralize his opposition without starting a civil
war, if he was to unify resistance.

In February 1943, Fertig used a "home made" radio to contact MacArthur's Southwest Pacific Area Headquarters (hereafter SWPA HQ) in Australia. In early 1943, SWPA HQ knew very little about any of the resistance groups in the Philippines. Because of the potential civil wars that could erupt on the islands over authority, SWPA HQ considered it imperative that it give the strongest leaders official authority. Because Fertig worked for Brigadier General Hugh Casey before and during the Philippine Campaign and since Casey was still MacArthur's chief engineer, Casey probably convinced MacArthur that Fertig was fit to command the Mindanao resistance. It is not clear if SWPA HQ knew that other commanders like Bowler and McClish were still alive. MacArthur gave Fertig official command of the Mindanao resistance in February 1943. In March, MacArthur sent four tons of supplies by submarine and an officer, Lieutenant Commander Charles Parsons, U.S. Naval Reserve, to confirm that Fertig was a good commander. Parsons had lived in the Philippines before the war, and he was an expert navigator. He was impressed with Fertig's civil government, guerrilla organization, and Filipino morale. Parsons also informed Fertig that more supplies would arrive.

Beginning in February 1943, General MacArthur's headquarters exercised its authority over Fertig through the Allied Intelligence Bureau under Colonel Allison Ind, U.S. Army. The Allied Intelligence Bureau gathered information
on the Japanese for Major General Charles Willoughby, U.S. Army, MacArthur's Chief of Intelligence. Ind maintained contact with the coastwatchers on New Guinea, New Britain and the Solomon Islands who reported Japanese sea and air movements to U.S. forces. The Allied Intelligence Bureau also sent small parties of agents into the Philippines to gather intelligence on the Japanese garrisons from embryonic guerrilla groups on each island, including Mindanao. Because Fertig's intelligence on Japanese activities would allow MacArthur to make a more successful invasion of Mindanao, Ind considered the Mindanao guerrillas valuable. If SWPA HQ were to supply and train the Mindanao guerrillas to become partisans, it would have a clearer picture of Japanese plans and dispositions.¹

Despite SWPA HQ's location 700 miles away, it had an easy time bringing Fertig under its authority. When Fertig placed himself under MacArthur, Fertig achieved a crucial step towards commanding a partisan force. The first submarine shipment of supplies to Fertig included the latest radio equipment to make communications with Australia more reliable (and also make transmitters more vulnerable to enemy radio detectors). The most immediate benefits from coming under MacArthur's command were the supply of arms and medicine. The guerrillas needed more supplies to become

¹Willoughby, Guerrilla Resistance, 70-71; Allison Ind, Allied Intelligence Bureau: Our Secret Weapon in the War Against Japan (New York: Van Rees, 1958), vii-viii, 48-57; James, Years of MacArthur, 2:319, 507.
strong enough to defend themselves against future Japanese offensives while MacArthur's men fought to return to the Philippines. In addition, Fertig knew that his guerrillas lacked the firepower and training to defeat the enemy garrisons without U.S. support. The defeats of the guerrillas at Malaybalay and Butuan illustrated these weaknesses.²

SWPA HQ ordered the Mindanao guerrillas to assist U.S. operations with an intelligence reporting system and not to attempt large-scale military operations (like Butuan and Malaybalay), which could trigger a strong Japanese counteroffensive out of reach of SWPA HQ direct assistance. MacArthur ordered the guerrillas only to fight to defend themselves. MacArthur planned to send instructions, radio equipment, rifles, sub-machine guns, ammunition, and medicine to give the guerrillas the necessary equipment to survive Japanese attacks and transmit information.³

Fertig had to unify his command before MacArthur's orders for him to set up an intelligence net could be implemented. If Fertig was to insure that coastwachers and radio operators were to be properly selected, monitored, and positioned, he had to establish a firm chain of command from himself down to the individual guerrillas. Furthermore,

²Fertig to Casey, 1 July 1943, RG 16, Box 11, MA; Fertig to Whitney, 24 January 1943, RG 16, Box 1, MA.
³Fertig to Casey, 1 July 1943, RG 16, Box 11, MA; Bowler letter; Willoughby, Guerrilla Resistance, 526-28; Keats, They Fought Alone, 173-201.
Fertig needed a supply network throughout the island if he was going to transport the radios, weapons, ammunition, and spare parts from the submarines. Fertig needed a unified command to insure that this equipment would be distributed properly and not stolen.

Due to a combination of reasons, Fertig had a relatively easy time establishing his authority over the American guerrilla leaders. Hedges, Bowler, and McClish came from a military culture that trained its men to respect the Jominian principle of unity of command. They believed that one man had to be in charge of tying an island's resistance forces together, or a chaos of conflicting directives would have resulted in the midst of a constant Japanese threat. Given their belief in unity of command, it is plausible to assume that MacArthur's appointment of Fertig to command the island solidified Bowler's, McClish's and Hedges's respect for Fertig. Because Fertig was a Lieutenant Colonel and, therefore, their superior in rank, Majors Bowler and McClish were also legally obligated as U.S. Army officers to place their guerrillas under him. Fertig's goal of establishing a unified resistance also impressed McClish on a personal level.4

The radios, guns, and propaganda material from

4Bowler letter; Merchant letter; Grashio letter; Blow letter; Jonassen letter; Samples letter; Childress letter; Fertig to Whitney, 17 January 1944, RG 16, Box 1, MA; Parsons to G-2, 10 August 1943, RG 16, Box 17, MA; Haggerty, Guerrilla Padre, 244-45.
MacArthur's headquarters were also beneficial to Fertig's ability to establish his authority over guerrilla groups. Rifles, submachine guns, and ammunition gave the guerrillas more firepower for shorter and deadlier ambushes. Because the matchboxes with MacArthur's picture and American magazines reminded Filipinos and Moros that America was not defeated but actually winning the war against Japan, guerrilla morale improved. One American leaflet contained pictures of U.S. planes and ships along with the promise in Tagalog and English that America's vast resources would free the Philippines. News of the U.S. victories at Midway, Guadalcanal, and Tarawa convinced many Filipinos and Moros that American forces would return to Mindanao. Therefore, many Moros and Filipinos considered Fertig a valuable asset to help them fight the Japanese. Such outside aid was proof to many Filipinos and Moros that the U.S. was still in the war and could return to Mindanao. Therefore, they considered an alliance with U.S. officers on Mindanao realistic.

Lauretta, the guerrilla leader of Davao Province, joined Fertig's command in early 1943 soon after hearing about it. McClish sent Lauretta a telegram sometime before

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5Bowler letter; MacArthur to Fertig, 15 August 1943, RG 16, Box 29, MA; Fertig to Casey, 1 July 1943, RG 16, Box 11, MA; "America Keeps Her Promises," pamphlet, n.p., circa 1942 or 1943, author's collection.

April 1943 which stated his strength and that he would like to stay in regular contact with Lauretta. Since Lauretta thought his guerrillas would have greater security if they had such a powerful ally, he was excited about finding another guerrilla force to work with. Lauretta was pro-American and he proved so when he helped ten prisoners escape from Davao Prison Camp in April 1943. He also was not adverse to working with or for Americans. In July 1943 Lauretta traveled to McClish's headquarters at Butuan, and he learned more about Fertig. Lauretta was in favor of an overall commander and he agreed to accept Fertig's order that his men be placed under McClish's command.7

The first serious challenge to Fertig's authority came from Salipada Pendatun, a successful guerrilla leader in Cotabato Province, who did not want Fertig to control him. Because Pendatun did not know Fertig personally or professionally, it was not clear to him what Fertig could accomplish; so, Pendatun refused to accept Fertig's authority over him. Furthermore, Pendatun was unsure of Fertig's motives and was afraid that Fertig would try to take away all of his power and influence in Cotabato.8

The existence of a large and independent regiment such as Pendatun's conflicted with unified resistance until

7Grashio letter; Mellnick, Philippine Diary, 244-45; Willoughby, Guerrilla Resistance, 99-100; Grashio and Norling, Return to Freedom, 115-30.

8Willoughby, Guerrilla Resistance, 536; Keats, They Fought Alone, 173-90.
Fertig could bring Pendatun's 2,000 men under control. Fertig had to get this force to cooperate or face the possibility that Mindanao would have two leaders who would not work together. Two such power centers could have complicated guerrilla operations with violent disputes over areas of operation. If Fertig appeared too weak to control Pendatun, Fertig realized that Moros and Catholic Filipinos might lose confidence in Fertig's leadership and they might desert him. Fertig sent Pendatun messages that stated that he was the commander of all resistance on the island.

Fertig sent Parsons and Bowler to Cotabato Province to convince Pendatun to join his command. Parsons had been on Mindanao for about two months as MacArthur's supply coordinator and inspector. Parsons had a likeable personality; so, Fertig was confident that Parsons could tactfully bring Pendatun under control. The May 1943 discussion between Pendatun and Parsons is not documented. Because Bowler befriended Pendatun before the war and Bowler was a valuable resource of information on Pendatun, Fertig chose Bowler to accompany Parsons. Bowler also demonstrated his skill in organizing resistance in Northern Bukidnon and it was clear to Fertig that Bowler knew how to

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influence the local population tactfully.\textsuperscript{10} 

Major Bowler played an important role in convincing Pendatun to recognize Fertig's authority. They were prewar friends, and this made communication easier between them. As a Moro, Pendatun placed greater importance on personal loyalty to Bowler than to Fertig, a stranger. Pendatun's attitude made it easier for Bowler to convince him that unity of command under Fertig would allow Pendatun's guerrillas to kill more Japanese and better protect his people.\textsuperscript{11}

Due to a violent disagreement between Police Major Angeles Limena and Philippine Army Major Manuel Jaldon in Misamis Oriental Province early in 1943, Fertig faced a second and more serious obstacle to the unification of the resistance. Limena was so violently-tempered that in November 1942 he tried to execute a priest whom he had mistakenly considered a traitor.\textsuperscript{12} Jaldon had brothers who were pro-Japanese. Limena probably feared that Jaldon's brothers would influence him to collaborate with the Japanese; so, he attacked Jaldon's headquarters on 17 February 1943. This created a condition for a potential

\textsuperscript{10}Grashio letter; Pendatun to Parsons, 24 May 1943, RG 16, Box 13, MA.

\textsuperscript{11}Pendatun to Parsons, 24 May 1943, RG 16, Box 13, MA; Bowler letter; Bowler telephone conversation.

\textsuperscript{12}Haggerty, \textit{Guerrilla Padre}, 58.
civil war between each man's unknown number of supporters. If Fertig arrested one or both, he could have faced an attack against his own headquarters from embittered followers of both leaders and their families. Fertig had to solve this problem quickly before an internal war broke out which the Japanese could exploit by secretly giving both factions arms to destroy each other.

Fertig restored peace when he transferred both men in April 1943. Since Limena was an officer in Bowler's battalion before the war and the two of them were good friends, Fertig sent Bowler to calm Limena down. Bowler gave Limena some supplies from the first submarine delivery. Limena's attacks against Jaldon ended within two weeks. To prevent future battles between their followers, Fertig then transferred each man to different provinces. Both received the same treatment, presumably to offend neither. With Jaldon and Limena both gone, there was no more fighting between their men. Fertig gave Jaldon another command in the Zamboanga Province. It is not clear whether Jaldon's pro-Japanese brothers influenced him or if he was angry at being transferred but he deserted to the Japanese sometime about July 1943. This incident threw his regiment into disarray until December 1943 when new leadership arrived. Limena served under Hedges in Lanao without any apparent

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13Willoughby, Guerrilla Resistance, 87-97.
problems.\(^{14}\)

The third and greatest challenge to Fertig's authority was Morgan, Fertig's Chief of Staff. Morgan believed he was betrayed by Fertig when in June 1943 Fertig chose Bowler to be Fertig's second in command.\(^{15}\) Because Morgan provided Fertig with his first guerrillas and territory, Morgan thought he was the more deserving officer. Morgan did not have any respect for Fertig, and he planned to control the resistance secretly. Consequently, he refused to accept Fertig's judgment in making another man his second in command. Morgan also resented what he saw as Fertig's racism toward the Filipinos. He stated that Fertig issued better equipment to American enlisted men than were issued to Filipino officers. Morgan also accused Fertig of only promoting Americans and placing them in key positions.\(^{16}\)

Since the U.S. officers were part of the same military culture, they were easier for Fertig to control. Because the army that the guerrillas would support was American, American officers were the best men to make the indigenous

\(^{14}\)Bowler letter; Royce Wendover, "War Diary 7 December 1941 to 5 December 5 1945," 225-51, WP, CB; Worchester to Fertig, 16 October 1943, HP, Box 43, UM; Willoughby, Guerrilla Resistance, 87-52; Haggerty, Guerrilla Padre, 93-94.

\(^{15}\)Willoughby, Guerrilla Resistance, 540-41; Pendatun to Parsons, 24 May 1943, RG 16, Box 31, MA; Iliff Richardson, Lieutenant, U.S. Navy (ret.), letter to author, 7 November 1989.

\(^{16}\)Fertig to MacArthur, 28 September 1943, RG 16, Box 12, MA; Heilbrunn, Partisan Warfare, 118-21.
partisans conform to U.S. missions. Fertig appointed Americans who were deeply involved in a certain province's resistance effort.

Morgan tried to incite the Filipinos and Moros against Fertig, and he became a serious threat to the unity Fertig had developed. Morgan sent a series of demands and threats to Fertig. He provided copies to his loyal 80 supporters and neutral Moro leaders to try to prove his power. He promoted himself to "Commander of the Resistance on Mindanao, the Dutch East Indies, and the British East Indies."\textsuperscript{17}

Fertig realized that if he executed or imprisoned Morgan, either action would have radicalized Morgan's 80 men and other sympathizers. If Fertig did not exercise restraint in dealing with Morgan, Morgan's guerrillas would have become potential enemies. Because Morgan's men knew where to find and kill Fertig and other key leaders, they could be more dangerous than the Japanese soldiers. Should Morgan launch any attacks against him, Fertig planned to lure the Japanese into an attack on Morgan on the Lanao Province coast while Captain Hedges' Moros were to attack from inland.

\textsuperscript{17}Morgan to the Dutch and British East Indies, 4 July 1943, RG 16, Box 12, MA; Hailbrunn, Partisan Warfare, 118-21; Keats, They Fought Alone, 329. The author found no documentation that mentioned any other indigenous leaders who leveled the charge of racism against Fertig. Fertig's diary, which is owned by his daughter in Golden, Colorado, was unavailable to the author. Without an examination of this diary, any discussion of his "racism" is speculative.
Since Morgan's attempts to broaden his support failed, Fertig's patience was justified. Fertig's power was relatively secure after Pendatun joined him in May 1943. Because the Datus knew that Fertig, not Morgan, had the guns and authority from MacArthur, Morgan failed to gain Moro support. These Moro leaders saw Fertig as the best way to get more guns to kill Japanese, who were the immediate threat. Additionally, one Datu whom Morgan tried to enlist claimed that Morgan had murdered some of his relatives during Mindanao's fall in 1942. This Datu along with others believed that Morgan still hated Moros and that he merely wanted to use them to crush Fertig. When MacArthur awarded Fertig a Distinguished Service Cross, the second highest U.S. medal, in August 1943, Fertig's prestige rose. From a Moro's perspective, Fertig then had a more assured access to American weapons which the Moros needed to protect their people from the enemy.18

Because Fertig wanted to avoid violence with Morgan, Fertig wanted to put him on the next supply submarine from Australia. He asked Morgan to leave for Australia so that he could train Filipinos for their return to Mindanao. First Lieutenant Samuel Grashio, United States Army Air Forces, an escaped prisoner-of-war, established a good relationship with Morgan and reinforced Fertig's proposal by

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18 Morgan to Fertig, 4 August 1943, RG 16, Box 12, MA; Fertig to MacArthur, 10 August 1943, RG 16, Box 17, MA; Keats, They Fought Alone, 55.
persuading Morgan that he had to tell his own story at MacArthur's headquarters if he were to receive any credit for what he did on Mindanao to oppose the Japanese. Morgan probably knew by this point that his attempt to usurp Fertig's authority was a failure, but this advice gave him an honorable way to accept defeat, and he left by submarine. Morgan was obviously a broken man when he left Mindanao. He attended a combat course at the Fraser Commando School. His activities after that are unknown.\(^\text{19}\)

Small guerrilla bands that formed in southern Zamboanga after the May 1942 surrender remained independent of Fertig's command until December 1943. The separate guerrilla groups which formed in 1942 to protect Filipino refugees from enemy troops did not cooperate with the commanders the former Philippine Army Lieutenant Colonel Hipolito Garma, the Zamboanga Province Commander, sent from the province headquarters in Northeastern Zamboanga. Garma did not adequately supervise bad commanders like Jaldon. Therefore, Garma was unable to unify these smaller guerrilla units. First Lieutenant Donald LeCouver, U.S. Army Air Forces, assumed command of the guerrillas in Southern Zamboanga in December 1943 and finally unified the separate groups. He brought his battalion-sized command under

\(^{19}\)Grashio letter; Fertig to MacArthur, September 1943, RG 16, Box 17, MA; "Fraser Commando School Passing Out Report, L.P. Morgan," 16 April 1944, RG 16, Box 12, MA; Keats, They Fought Alone, 256-94, 285-300; Grashio and Norling, Return to Freedom, 133-35.
Fertig's control.\textsuperscript{20}

By demanding reports made by courier or radio on unit strength and activities, Fertig maintained control over the six province commanders. With the serious organizational obstacles removed, Fertig established his command structure that covered most of Mindanao by September 1943. Hedges commanded Lanao Province, McClish led Surigao, Agusan and Davao Provinces, McGee led Cotabato Province, Garma commanded the northeastern Zamboanga Province and Misamis Occidental Province, and Bowler was in charge of Bukidnon. Fertig made these commanders send reports not only for information, but also to remind his subordinates that he was their commander. It would have been impossible for Fertig to travel throughout the island to personally supervise his commanders when travel between adjacent provinces lasted weeks and fulfill his missions as the overall commander. Fertig used the reports as a substitute for personal travel and to evaluate the performance of his commanders. He also sent orders to correct problems he saw in the reports. Because this method of control was very common in the army Fertig and his commanders were trained in, it was generally accepted.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{20}Willoughby, \textit{Guerrilla Resistance}, 87-88; McGee, \textit{Rice and Salt}, 166-75. McGee has the only information on LeCouver's early days as a guerrilla leader but he does not explain how LeCouver unified his command.

\textsuperscript{21}Spielman, "114th Infantry Regiment," 23; Jonassen letter.
The local civil government was a key factor in establishing Fertig's authority over the island and in achieving unity of command. Due to the fact that the resistance civil government kept many Filipinos and Moros as satisfied as they could have been under the circumstances, Fertig's province commanders found it easier to implement military directives. It was better for Fertig's headquarters to disseminate anti-Japanese propaganda through civilian leaders who insured wider distribution.22

The unity Fertig established transformed the Mindanao guerrillas into partisans. If the partisans were to construct a proper intelligence net, SWPA HQ needed one commander on Mindanao. Since the most powerful guerrilla leaders shared his goal of a unified resistance, Fertig achieved this unity. By using good negotiators, he overcame two serious challenges to his authority. By allowing a rebel to realize his own weakness and leave the island, Fertig prevented a civil war within the resistance.

22Jonassen letter; Grashio letter; Willoughby, Guerrilla Resistance, 333-67; Spielman, "114th Infantry Regiment," 62.
CHAPTER 4
PARRYING JAPANESE ATTACKS

Throughout 1943 and 1944, Fertig and his province commanders faced the danger of Japanese offensives. The partisans were not equipped to defeat the Japanese by destroying them; so, the partisans had to develop a strategy that would preserve their own strength. If Fertig and his officers did not, the Japanese had the firepower to destroy partisan radio stations and units. Such a result would have forced Fertig or his successor to waste time rebuilding the resistance organization.

Fertig's communications with SWPA HQ concerning partisan missions and submarine rendezvous also made the resistance a target for Japanese offensives. The Japanese pinpointed his headquarters with radio direction finders. Since the guerrillas coordinated rendezvous points by radio for submarine supply shipments of guns, ammunition, and radios, the Japanese had good reasons to want to destroy the partisan radios. Mindanao was the closest Philippine Island to MacArthur's northwesterly path from New Guinea and the Japanese feared that MacArthur would try to seize Mindanao and use its large port at Davao and the airfields at Del Monte as staging areas for reconquering the rest of the Philippines. The enemy must have realized that U.S.
supplies also increased the chances of the partisans becoming a combat as well as a security threat which would assist a U.S. invasion force with information on Japanese garrisons and harass Japanese movements. Therefore, the Japanese assembled a 3,000 man force to strike Misamis Occidental Province, where Fertig's headquarters was, in June 1943 and attempt to eliminate the partisan radio traffic with SWPA HQ.¹

Fertig realized that his men were not trained or equipped to defend territory against a Japanese offensive, and he employed a defensive theory to prevent the enemy from surrounding and destroying his command. The resistance established mutually supporting ambush positions to pin down any Japanese unit smaller than a battalion while other partisan ambushers launched flanking or rear attacks on it to inflict maximum casualties. He ordered that the partisans not engage any enemy units of battalion size or larger. Fertig anticipated that the rapid partisan withdrawals along jungle paths which only Filipinos knew would frustrate Japanese efforts to engage and destroy them. Fertig expected that Japanese terrorism in the lost areas would preserve peasant support for the partisans. He thought that the enemy's frustration over failing to destroy the resistance would force the Japanese to halt their

offensive and withdraw their troops. After the Japanese retreated, the partisans would return and reestablish the civil government in former Japanese-held areas.²

The flaw in Fertig's defense plan was the location of his headquarters in a province, Misamis Occidental, that was easy for the enemy to isolate from the bulk of his forces. The Japanese had to control only a seven-mile wide isthmus between the Pagadian and Panguil Bays and the surrounding coastal waters to cut Fertig off from the bulk of Mindanao. Even after several Japanese reconnaissance flights flew over Fertig's headquarters at Misamis City, he did not move his command post. His headquarters was too close to the coast, and it was vulnerable to a Japanese amphibious commando raid. He could have moved to the much safer eastern part of Mindanao where his escape into the mountainous jungle was easier, but he did not.³

The Japanese began their first major offensive on 26 June 1943 and they landed simultaneously at Clarin in Misamis Occidental province just north of Misamis City and at Tucuran on the other side of the isthmus in the adjacent province.⁴

²Fertig to Casey, 1 July 1943, RG 16, Box 11, MA; Fertig to Commanding General SWPA Forces, 6 March 1943, RG 16, Box 1, MA; Keats, They Fought Alone, 170; Mao, On Guerrilla War, 46.

³Station WYZB to MacArthur, 27 June 1943, RG 16, Box 29, MA; Worchester to Fertig, 16 October 1943, HP, Box 42, UM.
Zamboanga Province. According to Fertig's estimates and a Japanese wartime document, 3,000 Japanese troops attacked in a pincer movement to prevent Fertig's escape into Eastern Mindanao and to destroy his organization. Eight aircraft and one destroyer supported the landings. The well-armed Japanese faced only several hundred armed partisans near the Japanese landing areas. Because the partisans lacked coastal artillery and antiaircraft guns to fight back effectively, the ship and planes panicked many guerrillas. Filipinos were not armed or trained to hold their ground against such heavy firepower; so, most of them deserted their positions. If the partisans had not done this, the Japanese would have surrounded and annihilated the Misamis Occidental Province resistance.

Fertig tried to control this unexpected partisan mass escape, but he found it impossible. Panicked partisans gave Fertig reports which confused him. Because the general panic halted radio communications, Fertig was rarely informed of the situation. Fertig loaded his truck with supplies and tried to reassemble the command, but he could not contact his commanders. He kept his SWPA codes and

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4Worcester to Fertig, 16 October 1943, HP, Box 42, UM; Keats, They Fought Alone, 223.


6"Local News," RG 16, Box 12, MA; Worchester to Fertig, 16 October 1943, HP, Box 42, UM.
partisan files in a suitcase and fled into the jungle. Fertig dodged Japanese patrols in Misamis Occidental for a week. Finally, Captain Hedges and a Moro company rescued him, and they took him to Lanao by boat.  

The Japanese incorrectly assumed that the resistance was destroyed and that all that needed to be done was to hunt down individual partisans or small partisan bands; so, they split their 3,000-man force into smaller units. Their goal was to find and kill as many partisans as possible and eliminate the leadership. The smaller patrols allowed the Japanese commanders to search larger areas of Misamis Occidental province in less time, but they lacked the strength to defend themselves or to assist each other. The enemy sweep against the resistance forces was like hundreds of weak fingers searching through a hornet's nest. This weakness allowed first pairs and then hundreds of Filipinos to reassemble and eliminate some weak and isolated Japanese patrols.

The enemy over-reacted to this partisan resurgence by forming much larger-sized patrols in an attempt to defeat the partisan platoons or companies. These enemy patrols grew in size to battalions which made a lot of noise while they struggled through the jungle. The Japanese needed more

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7 "Kuder Report," HP, Box 41, UM; Keats, They Fought Alone, 229-44; Wolfert, American Guerrilla, 108-9.

8 Fertig to Casey, 1 July 1943, RG 16, Box 11, MA; Keats, They Fought Alone, 258-69; Wolfert, American Guerrilla, 108.
mobility and information to catch the Filipinos who knew the
local trails well. Because of their heavy equipment and
their reliance on maps, the Japanese patrols moved slowly
through the jungle. The enemy controlled an area only as
long as they were actually in it. The resistance reoccupied
the same area after the Japanese left it.9

By October 1943, the enemy withdrew to the coastal
villages of Misamis Occidental Province. Their extreme
shifts from small to large patrols without good information
on partisan locations made it almost impossible for them to
eliminate Fertig's forces. These operations were a drain on
enemy manpower given the fact that the Japanese were
fighting MacArthur in New Guinea and Admiral Chester Nimitz,
U.S. Navy, in the Central Pacific. Some Japanese left
Misamis Occidental Province and went to other combat zones
in the Pacific. These withdrawals left Japanese units in
the interior too weak to control their areas; so, the
Japanese retreated to and fortified Misamis City. According
to Fertig's 9 August 1943 estimates of Japanese casualties,
they suffered 152 dead and 52 wounded from partisan ambushes
since the offensive started in June 1943.10

The partisans retained popular support despite the
fact that the Japanese temporarily pushed them out of the

9Fertig to Casey, 1 July 1943, RG 16, Box 29, MA; Keats, They Fought Alone, 250-58.

10Station WYZB to Fertig, 7 August 1943; Fertig to
MacArthur, 9 August 1943; Fertig to MacArthur, 9 August
1943, RG 16, Box 29, MA.
province. The Japanese did not destroy the partisan infrastructure among the townspeople and villagers, and the resistance easily reestablished its authority over the indigenous population by reinserting its leaders into the villages where they spread American propaganda. Japanese troops did not remain deep inside the province long enough to even attempt to gain popular support. Because the partisans depended on peasants for food, shelter, recruits, and information, their relationship with the peasants was essential for partisan survival.11

SWPA HQ needed a special staff to help the partisans survive future Japanese offensives and assist the partisans in developing their intelligence system. SWPA HQ therefore in July 1943 established the Philippine Regional Subsection in MacArthur's headquarters under Colonel Courtney Whitney, U.S. Army. He took the responsibility for directing Fertig's combat and intelligence missions from Colonel Ind's Allied Intelligence Bureau. Whitney was responsible for recognizing the authority of resistance leaders who were pro-American as well as supplying them with guns to defend themselves and radios to report enemy information. The Philippine Regional Subsection gathered information on Japanese strength and activities from resistance groups all over the archipelago, including Mindanao. Whitney reported  

11Station WYZB to Fertig, 9 August 1943, RG 16, Box 29, MA; Fertig to MacArthur, 7 August 1943, RG 16, Box 29, MA; Fertig to MacArthur, 25 October 1943, RG 16, Box 1, MA; Keats, They Fought Alone, 250-58.
the intelligence to Lieutenant General Willoughby, MacArthur's chief intelligence officer. The Philippine Regional Subsection had access to Japanese documents that were translated by Ind's staff. Colonel Sydney Mashbir, U.S. Army, and his Allied Translator and Interpreter Service also gave Whitney translated Japanese documents. These documents gave Whitney a good view of Japanese strength and its colonial administration. The advantage of dedicating such a group to the Philippines was that Whitney's staff became specialists on this prospective battleground and would be better able to instruct the partisans on their intelligence missions.12

Whitney's primary concern was that Fertig's partisans survive Japanese offensives in order to build an intelligence network. In December 1943, Whitney was concerned that Fertig had planned a static defense of his new headquarters at Esperanza City in Northern Agusan Province. Whitney was afraid that increased submarine supply shipments of cannons and heavy machine guns, would convince Fertig that he had enough firepower to hold his ground against a Japanese offensive and thus run the risk of being destroyed. Whitney telegraphed Fertig that a mobile and dispersed defense would probably convince the Japanese that the partisans were a small threat, and the Japanese

12Willoughby, Guerrilla Resistance, 119-80; James, Years of MacArthur, 2:506-11.
would not attack the partisans.\textsuperscript{13} Whitney supplemented his message by an order to Fertig not to distribute heavy weapons to the partisans until an actual U.S. landing on Mindanao. SWPA Headquarters feared that such weapons would force the enemy into wiping out the resistance before a U.S. landing and would increase Japanese abuse of the population.\textsuperscript{14}

The radio transmissions threatened the partisans' existence for about a year before MacArthur's troops returned to Mindanao; so, Fertig issued the heavy weapons to his men and established a subcommand to take over the resistance if he were killed. Fertig issued the machine guns and he limited his attacks to ambushes in an effort to convince the Japanese that his partisans were not a combat threat to their garrisons. The partisans were in jeopardy while they reported intelligence; so, they needed the machine guns and cannons to increase their firepower to gain time to relocate their communications equipment in case of an enemy attack.\textsuperscript{15} In January 1944 Fertig set up a sub-command in Western Mindanao called "A Corps" under Bowler to allow the resistance to continue on its missions if Fertig's headquarters was destroyed. Fertig gave him

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{13}Whitney to Fertig, 3 November 1943, RG 16, Box 17, MA.
\item \textsuperscript{14}Keats, \textit{They Fought Alone}, 331-32.Keats prints this document in his book.
\item \textsuperscript{15}Fertig to Whitney, 17 January 1944, RG 16, Box 1, MA; Keats, \textit{They Fought Alone}, 334-38.
\end{itemize}
command of the forces in Zamboanga, Misamis Occidental, Misamis Oriental, Lanao, Bukidnon, and Cotabato so that these partisans would have an overall commander close by to coordinate submarine rendezvous, supply distribution and partisan missions.\textsuperscript{16}

After having failed to destroy Fertig's force in Misamis Occidental Province in 1943, the Japanese remained very concerned about Fertig's radio transmissions to Australia. Due to the many radio transmissions that passed from all provinces to Fertig as well as Fertig's messages to Australia, the Japanese once again located Fertig's headquarters with radio direction finders. The Japanese were also aware of some of the submarine shipments to the partisans. Unless the Japanese were to smash the resistance soon, the partisan radio reports would give away the Japanese defense plans that would help MacArthur's planners send enough troops to crush them.\textsuperscript{17}

The 1944 Japanese offensive's main effort was concentrated on Fertig's command post in Esperanza City in the Agusan Province. According to Fertig's estimates, the


\textsuperscript{17}Allied Translator and Interpreter Section Document No. 601006; Allied Translator and Interpreter Section Document No. 600615, RG 3, Box 146, MA; Allied Translator and Interpreter Section Document No. 600420; Allied Translator and Interpreter Section Document, "Guerrilla Warfare in the Philippines," RG 3, Box 145, MA. The author could not find any sources that describe the schedule and the specific content of each submarine shipment.
Japanese seized the mouth of the Agusan River in March 1944 with a 200-man landing force drawn from Misamis Oriental Province. They supplemented this attack by landing what Fertig estimated to be 1,500 troops at Lianga in Surigao Province. The enemy intended to smash the partisans with these simultaneous attacks and encircle as many of the resistance forces as possible. The Japanese forces that drove southward along the Agusan River were reinforced to 1,000 men and those in Surigao were eventually increased to 3,000 men in June 1944; so, they drove Fertig's 5,403 men southward along the Agusan River.

Skillful partisan defenses gave most of Fertig's force time to evacuate; so, the Japanese pincer attacks never surrounded the partisans. For example, one partisan unit used some 37-millimeter cannons to stall the Japanese advance. These partisans were fortunate enough to have canister rounds which each sprayed 122 steel balls fired from concealed positions. Some partisans ambushed Japanese deep inside their own lines. For example, one patrol killed 53 enemy who had assembled for a briefing. McClish, the commander of the guerrilla forces in Agusan and Surigao

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18 Philippine Regional Subsection to Chief of Staff SWPA, 21 March 1944, RG 16, Box 13, MA; Jonassen letter.

19 Fertig to MacArthur, 20 June 1944, RG 16, Box 31, MA; Fertig to MacArthur, 26 June 1944, RG 16, Box 58, MA; Whitney to Chief of Staff SWPA, 6 July 1944, RG 16, Box 58, MA; Fertig to MacArthur, 7 July 1944, RG 16, Box 58, MA; Willoughby, Guerrilla Resistance, 539. The author could not find any Japanese estimates for their troop strength in this offensive against Fertig's headquarters.
Provinces, proved to be a good tactician who insured that his men retreated before they were overwhelmed. Such performance and dedication bought Fertig enough time to move his headquarters several times during the Japanese offensive without losing communications with SWPA HQ in Australia. No partisan casualty figures were available for this sector of the Japanese offensive.20

The intelligence network of Lieutenant Colonel Clyde Childress, U.S. Army, played a vital role in helping to relieve pressure on the Agusan and Surigao resistance forces. SWPA HQ gave Fertig the authority to promote Childress from Major to Lieutenant Colonel. His organization gave Fertig detailed information on enemy activities near the Davao Naval Base where more than 20,000 Japanese troops concentrated on fortifying the Davao port against a U.S. landing. This information allowed McClish to concentrate most of his men to oppose attacks from Northern Agusan and Surigao without using manpower unnecessarily to prepare defense against attacks from Davao. Most importantly, Childress's spies sent SWPA HQ by submarine photographs of Davao with ships, buildings, and air defense installations plotted on them, which made the August and September 1944 Army Air Forces and Navy air attacks

20 Whitney to Chief of Staff, SWPA, 9 July 1944, RG 16, Box 58, MA; Fertig to MacArthur, 12 July 1944, RG 16, Box 58, MA; Fertig to MacArthur, 16 July 1944, RG 16, Box 58, MA; Jonassen letter; Whitney to Chief of Staff, SWPA, 18 July 1944, RG 16, Box 58, MA.
effective. For example, on one raid, B-24 bombers from a New Guinea airbases destroyed 34 planes before they were airborne and killed 100 Japanese. Because the U.S. attacks were so destructive, the Japanese became convinced that U.S. landings were imminent. They halted their major antipartisan sweeps and in September 1944 began to prepare for the expected U.S. landings.21

The Japanese battalion offensives in April and May 1944 in Bowler's provinces also failed to eradicate the resistance. These attacks were uncoordinated. By laying ambushes that bought enough time for their escape, Bowler's men learned to evade these attacks without suffering many casualties. The partisan ambushers also struck the enemy when they returned to their bases. The resistance was so good at preserving its strength that the Japanese only killed 260 partisans in the A Corps area.22

Despite the large Japanese patrols, Bowler's men

21 Childress letter; Fertig to MacArthur, 28 July 1944, RG 16, Box 58, MA; Whitney to Chief of Staff, SWPA, 5 August 1944, RG 16, Box 58, MA; Davao Gulf Evacuee Report, RG 16, Box 44, MA; Whitney, Guerrilla Resistance, 543; M. Hamlin Cannon, Leyte: The Return to the Philippines, 2d ed., U.S. Army in World War Two Series (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, Department of the Army, 1987), 42.

22 Samples letter; MacArthur to Fertig, Cushing, Abcede, and Peralta, 19 October 1944, RG 16, Box 5, MA; Allied Translator and Interpreter Section Document No. 601006, RG 3, Box 146, MA; Allied Translator and Interpreter Section Document No. 600615, RG 3, Box 146, MA; Allied Translator and Interpreter Section Document No. 60042, RG 3, Box 145, MA; Allied Translator and Interpreter Section Report, "Guerrilla Warfare in the Philippines," RG 3, Box 145, MA; Spielman, "History of the 114th Regiment," 28.
launched damaging raids along the Sayre Road. The partisans launched ambushes and commando raids on enemy troops and vehicles on bridges that carried the road. The partisans burned some bridges that spanned rivers and gorges; so, the Japanese were forced to rebuild them. Partisan ambushers usually set up their attacks where the road crossed a hill where Japanese vehicles had to slow down, making the occupants vulnerable to partisan fire. If a Japanese convoy contained more than four vehicles, the average ambush patrol fled; so, that the partisans would not be overwhelmed. Lieutenant Colonel James Grinstead, who was promoted by Fertig and was the Bukidnon Province commander, and his partisans killed 68 Japanese troops and destroyed 31 trucks in only 11 ambushes. Because the Sayre Road was the fastest route for the Japanese to shift forces to oppose prospective landing sites at Davao, Cagayan, and Malabang, the road's security became more important to the Japanese as MacArthur came closer to the Philippines. Because of the damaging partisan attacks, the Japanese reinforced their road garrison to Fertig's estimate of 1,000 men by May 1944. These men could have attacked partisan areas but instead, they were on the defensive.\(^\text{23}\)

\(^{23}\)Jonassen letter; Merchant letter; Fertig to MacArthur, 26 March 1943, RG 16, Box 29, MA; Fertig to MacArthur, 20 October 1943, RG 16, Box 30, MA; Fertig to MacArthur, 25 November 1943, RG 16, Box 30, MA; Fertig to MacArthur, 28 November 1943, RG 16, Box 50, MA; Fertig to MacArthur, 11 May 1944, RG 16, Box 30, MA; "Allied Translator and Interpreter Service Current Translations," 2 February 1945, RG 3, Box 146, MA. The author could not
The Japanese never separated the partisan force from its support base—the people. Peasants continued to pass information on enemy activity to the partisans. This intelligence allowed the resistance to disperse units before a massive enemy attack and to reassemble to strike the Japanese when they returned to their base camps. Peasants continued to join the partisans and to replace casualties. Because Filipinos and Moros regarded the enemy as unappeasable, further Japanese movements through Bukidnon, Agusan and Surigao only made the Mindanaoans more determined to assist the partisans.

The Japanese never formed effective spy groups among the population to infiltrate the partisans and guide Japanese patrols to the partisan infrastructure. Such a capability would have given the Japanese the means to capture or assassinate partisan commanders and propartisan political leaders. If the Japanese succeeded in killing enough partisan leaders, this would have disrupted the partisan intelligence net that the enemy feared so much. Instead, the Japanese coerced Filipino policemen into these units. These Filipinos were rarely loyal to their Japanese masters. The infiltration effort of the resistance into these units was so successful that by October 1944 the partisans knew not only the strength of former Filipino policemen on Mindanao (3,000 according to Fertig) but each locate any Japanese documents that confirmed or denied these events.
company commander's name and the location of his headquarters. The Japanese Army on Mindanao relied too heavily on its conventional combat power to defeat the partisans and therefore it neglected to purge unenthusiastic police or partisan spies from its units.  

The failure of the Japanese offensives in the spring and summer of 1944 to destroy the resistance was the turning point in the battle for Mindanao. Because the Japanese were too busy building defenses against potential U.S. landings at the Davao and Zamboanga Cities, they were too occupied to launch any more major offensives against the Mindanao partisans. The Japanese deployed one division near Davao City and three battalions near Zamboanga City. Partisan units in every province reoccupied their lost areas. From September 1944 until the U.S. landings in April 1945, the resistance was able to concentrate most of its energy on completing its intelligence network to assist U.S. landings without being disrupted by major Japanese offensives.

The partisans fought against the enemy offensives in 1943 and 1944 with a combination of active and passive strategies. They gathered information on enemy activities and prepared their ambushes. The flexible partisan


25"Summary of Enemy Situation," 7 November 1944, RG 16, Box 3, MA; Cannon, Leyte, 52.
ambush-and-run tactics nullified superior Japanese firepower and bought time for escape. Partisan attacks on the Sayre Road forced the enemy to immobilize perhaps 1,000 men to guard the road. The Japanese never developed effective spy networks among the partisans, and Japanese troops were never able to inflict great harm on the partisans.
The Mindanao partisans had to send information on Japanese sea and land operations and/or develop their combat strength to assist U.S. landings if they were to have a significant impact on the Pacific War. Because the resistance was so large, it had the potential to report Japanese activities which would reduce the possible surprises for U.S. forces in the Pacific and those that would land on Mindanao. Because the partisans lacked formal intelligence and radio training, this was a difficult task. If the landing forces did not control partisan operations, it would have been impossible for the partisans and U.S. forces to apply simultaneous pressure on the Japanese garrison. This could have resulted in a needlessly longer campaign for U.S. forces.

MacArthur was well aware of how valuable coastwatchers were in the Pacific War and he wanted such men on Mindanao. Coastwatchers in the Solomon Islands radioed the locations of enemy troop convoys headed for Guadalcanal; so, the U.S. Navy was able to intercept and destroy most of them before they could land reinforcements that could have destroyed the hard-pressed U.S. Marines. MacArthur relied on Fertig to implement an intelligence gathering and reporting system.
Partisan spies living near the Japanese garrisons were in a prime position to give MacArthur's planners raw data on the Japanese so that enemy weaknesses could be exploited.¹

SWPA HQ gave Fertig the coastwatcher station locations it desired. He passed the orders to the province commanders who placed some of their men at such locations. The partisan coastwatcher stations gradually spread to all of the coasts of Mindanao. By June 1944, a coastwatcher station was near the important Basilan and Surigao Straits as well as in every province.²

SWPA HQ gave the partisan coastwatchers important instructions for their dangerous mission. Lieutenant Colonel Steve Mellnick, U.S. Army, who was on Willoughby's staff, sent copies of the "Philippine Intelligence Guide" to the partisans to help them send more specific reports on enemy attacks and movements. Four net control stations on Mindanao that were responsible for making anyone who used the frequency identify himself for greater security, passed the coastwatcher reports to Fertig who then sent them to SWPA HQ. Whitney criticized some radio stations for not reporting in at scheduled times or not following the orders

¹Jonassen letter; Bowler letter; Spector, Eagle Against the Sun, 166-78, 458-59.

²Information Report No. 211, 14 April 1943; Fertig to MacArthur, 18 May 1943, RG 16, Box 17, MA; Fertig to Parsons, 10 September 1943, RG 16, Box 13, MA; Parsons to McCallum, 11 January 1944, RG 16, Box 6, MA; Whitney to Chief of Staff, 21 March 1944, RG 16, Box 1, MA; James, Years of MacArthur, 2:507-11.
of the various Mindanao partisan and SWPA HQ net control stations. Radios were rather complex for men who were not trained for them so such problems were inevitable. Their "on-the-job" training included fighting malaria and avoiding enemy patrols but they became more skillful operators. SWPA HQ code books that allowed the operators to change frequencies at certain times to confuse enemy radio direction finders kept most radio stations secure. Due to these frequency changes, the Japanese had to search a frequency spectrum about 1000 kilocycles wide. This search required two instruments to pinpoint a suspicious area in less than five minutes to locate the partisan radio. If the partisans followed proper radio procedures and kept their transmissions under five minutes, they could usually escape detection.3

The typical coastwatcher led a potentially perilous life. He had to keep his radio transmissions to the net control station short to avoid detection by enemy radio direction finders in the area. Due to the fact that he required a hilltop position to see the most area, the

3"Guerrilla Radio Correspondence Map," January 1945, RG 23a, Box 12, MA; Gerald Chapman, Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Air Force, (ret.), letter to author, 7 November 1989; Samples letter; MacArthur to Fertig, Smith, Abcede, Peralta, Kangleon, Cushing, Inginiero and Young, 2 August 1944, RG 16, Box 5, MA; William Johnson, M.D., D.D.S., letter to author, 28 June 1990; Mellnick, Philippine Diary, 288-89. SWPA HQ sent Johnson and other coastwatchers pamphlets that assigned codes to diagrams of different types of Japanese merchant ships. The coastwatcher radioed that code along with the location of the vessel to Fertig's station.
coastwatcher was vulnerable to visual detection by enemy aircraft and to radio direction finders. Suitable locations for sighting Japanese ships in important straits and other narrow water passages were also predictable targets for enemy observation. Because the coastwatcher and his assistants could not defend themselves against a Japanese patrol, they had to be ready to destroy their equipment and quickly escape. In Surigao Province, partisan ambushes were so effective at defeating small Japanese patrols that had the mobility to find coastwatchers, that the Japanese only sent larger and noisier patrols which gave coastwatchers enough warning to escape.

The coastwatchers gave the U.S. Navy valuable information despite the dangers. These stations sent their messages to the net control stations, which in turn sent them to Fertig's headquarters. He radioed the intelligence to SWPA HQ which passed it to the U.S. Navy. On 6-7 April 1944, coastwatchers tracked a powerful Japanese naval force that the partisans believed to be five battleships, one heavy cruiser, and five destroyers moving westward through the Basilan Straits just south of Zamboanga City and then northeastward along the western coast of Mindanao. A station on the Agusan Province coast also reported this force later. The U.S. Seventh Fleet Intelligence staff absorbed this data into their records in order to improve their knowledge of Japanese activities. In June 1944, Fertig's coastwatchers also tracked and reported the
Japanese First Mobile Fleet that moved from Tawi Tawi in the Sulu Islands and through the Surigao Straits on about 13 June to attack the U.S. Navy's Task Force 58 near the Mariana Islands. Because the partisans sent this information, U.S. Navy commanders had more time to plan and deploy for their victory in the naval Battle of the Philippine Sea, 19-21 June 1944.4

The Mindanao human intelligence network provided the Japanese with a plausible explanation for how the U.S. acquired so much information on Japanese strategy. MacArthur and Admiral Chester Nimitz utilized extensive signal intelligence to provide information to U.S. ground, sea, and air commanders. However, every time U.S. forces used this information to win battles, they faced the risk of alerting the Japanese that their code was broken and forcing the Japanese to change their codes. The coastwatcher signal traffic on Mindanao and throughout the Philippines was known to the Japanese and gave them a plausible explanation for how the U.S. knew about Japanese ship movements and operations.5

4"Philippine Frequency List," RG 16, Box 7, MA; Chapman letter; Whitney to Chief of Staff, SWPA, 8 April 1944, RG 16, Box 1, MA; Mellnick, Philippine Diary, 295-5; Spielman, "114th Infantry Regiment," 24; Willoughby, Guerrilla Resistance, 348-50; Dull, Imperial Japanese Navy, 303-10; Spector, Eagle Against the Sun, 458-59.

5Allied Translator and Interpreter Section, Southwest Pacific Area Enemy Publications Number 359, RG 3, Box 137, MA; Japanese Monograph No. 3, "Philippine Operations Record, Phase Two, December 1942 to June 1944," CMH; Spector, Eagle Against the Sun, 445-60.
The Mindanao resistance also increased the effectiveness of the U.S. Navy's Third Fleet's devastating air raids on Mindanao in September 1944. Thanks to detailed partisan intelligence on the locations of Japanese airfields, air defense positions and types of aircraft, U.S. Naval aircraft knew where to find and destroy Japanese planes on Mindanao. Because the information eliminated the need for aerial reconnaissance that would have alerted the Japanese, the U.S. pilots achieved complete surprise and destroyed 60 Japanese planes on the ground and eight in the air. This left the island too weak to threaten MacArthur's invasion armada with land based aircraft attacks; so, he decided to bypass Mindanao and land at Leyte. There American forces could cut the Japanese forces in the Philippines in half and capture an excellent harbor.6

The partisans also supplied useful intelligence material to SWPA HQ by submarine. Thanks to the partisan spies who stole Japanese documents from their garrisons, Fertig sent Whitney many captured copies of the "Official Journal of the Japanese Military Administration," the Japanese "Official Gazette," and newspapers. Whitney used this material to study Japanese occupation policy. Japanese propaganda leaflets added to his data on their threat to the

6Mellnick, Philippine Diary, 295-97, Cannon, Leyte, 42-43.
popular support of the resistance. By December 1944, Fertig's intelligence personnel ran a communication system which in Whitney's words was "an example of guerrilla efficiency." SWPA HQ's guidance and the resistance's tenacity were responsible for an intelligence force which had a system of more than 58 radio stations which included 29 coastwatcher stations. The partisans operated a flexible network that was prepared to operate under emergency net control stations even if their usual control stations and Fertig's headquarters were destroyed. Because several stations were prepared to perform as net control stations if existing ones were destroyed or had to relocate due to Japanese pressure, the radio net was flexible.

MacArthur wanted to liberate Mindanao for military and humanitarian reasons. Because the Zamboanga Province contained airfields that would help protect the Borneo operations that would begin in May 1945, he first wanted to liberate Zamboanga Province in March 1945. MacArthur

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7 Philippine Regional Subsection to Chief of Staff, SWPA, 17 August 1943, RG 16, Box 1, MA; Philippine Regional Subsection to Chief of Staff, SWPA, 19 October 1943, RG 16, Box 1, MA.

8 "General Headquarters, SWPA, Military Intelligence Section General Staff Radio Locator Map," 24 February 1944, RG 16, Box 2, MA; MacArthur to Fertig, Smith, Abcede, Peralta, Kanglino, Cushing, Inginiero and Young, 2 August 1944, RG 16, Box 5, MA; "10th Military District United States Forces in the Philippines Radio Communications Report No. 1," 1 December 1944, RG 16, Box 7, MA; Whitney to Fertig, 21 December 1944, RG 16, Box 11, MA.
thought that he would need Mindanao and the Visayan Islands to stage the giant invasion of Japan. Because MacArthur sent Eichelberger's Eighth Army to liberate the Visayas and Mindanao instead of reinforcing his hard-pressed Sixth Army on Luzon, the Luzon campaign lasted longer than it might have. The Visayas, Mindanao, and Borneo operations were deviations from his strategy of bypassing strong Japanese pockets and maintaining a forward momentum towards Japan. MacArthur was aware that strategy is not always dictated solely by military considerations. MacArthur knew of the brutal Japanese rule and he was afraid that bypassed Japanese troops would massacre the indigenous population along with prisoners-of-war. Mindanaoans certainly wanted MacArthur to free them from the constant Japanese menace as soon as possible regardless of the strategic implications.9

Under the protection of U.S. air supremacy over the Philippines, Fertig flew to meet with Eichelberger at Leyte Island several times before the U.S. landings on Mindanao in March 1945. The plan was to coordinate the partisan effort with U.S. combat operations. Because unauthorized partisan attacks in areas that U.S. forces had to break through could draw sufficient Japanese forces to delay or halt the

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Americans and upset important operations, the partisans needed guidance from Eichelberger. Partisan cooperation with the U.S. Eighth Army would enable both forces to assist each other during a crisis. Unity of command under the army was vital to applying simultaneous pressure on the enemy. Fertig must have left the meetings with a better understanding of the scheme for liberation.

Fertig's conferences with Eichelberger and resistance intelligence reports provided the U.S. Army with valuable information for the Zamboanga Province landings that would commence in March 1945. According to partisan estimates and Japanese wartime documents, the resistance gave Eichelberger a fairly accurate estimate of the province's 8,900 Japanese soldiers and sailors of the 54th Independent Mechanized Brigade. Eichelberger's Eighth Army staff created a partisan subsection to analyze resistance intelligence. This staff compared this information with their estimates and drew an accurate picture of Japanese capabilities. Thanks to this information, Eichelberger knew that the Japanese planned to fight a few miles north east of Zamboanga City where they would be less affected by U.S.


11 "Eichelberger's Official Correspondence," 6 March 1945, EP, Box 7, DU; Smith, Triumph, 592-93, Appendix A-1. Eichelberger's Eighth Army consisted of the 10th, 11th and 24th Corps.
naval gunfire. Therefore, he planned to move inland as fast as possible to destroy the Japanese.\(^\text{12}\)

Because U.S. units would land near Zamboanga City in March 1945, Eighth Army headquarters on Leyte needed to talk to partisans who knew about the landing area. Captain Royce Wendover, U.S. Army, was a Zamboanga Province partisan and a former enlisted sailor who was stationed in Zamboanga City before the war. He fled the Japanese and joined the guerrillas. He knew much about the geography of where the U.S. troops would land. Wendover flew to the Eighth Army headquarters. Wendover analyzed photos of the city and his knowledge of local terrain helped him identify enemy fortifications for Eichelberger's intelligence staff. He also pointed out that due to a non-negotiable eight to twelve foot sea wall, one of the prospective landing areas at the city was impractical. Wendover also identified nearby gravel beds that would be required for road and airfield construction or repair. He showed Eighth Army planners an estuary that American troops could use to attack the city from the north if it was heavily defended on the

Eichelberger planned to invade Mindanao in two stages. First he would land the 41st Division at Zamboanga City on 10 March 1945. Its main mission was to secure the three airfields near the city to cover MacArthur's prospective invasion of Borneo in May 1945. Then the division was to secure the rest of the province. Then from 17 to 22 April, the 31st and 24th U.S. Divisions of the 10th Corps would land at Malabang and Parang Cities. The 24th Division's objective was to capture Davao City and clear the rest of the province of enemy troops. The 31st Division had to secure the Sayre Road and liberate Northern Mindanao.\textsuperscript{13}

Eichelberger wanted an airfield that would be close enough to protect his Zamboanga City beachhead; so, in February 1945 he ordered a U.S. Marine fighter bomber squadron from Marine Air Group 12 to a partisan-controlled airfield at Dipolog in northern Zamboanga Province. A partisan battalion of 500 men defended this important airfield. The Japanese launched several strong attacks, and they forced the partisans closer to the airfield. The partisans and Marine pilots worked together to halt the enemy incursions at Dipolog. The partisans provided security while the planes refueled and the pilots made

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\textsuperscript{13}Royce Wendover, "Special Assignment G-3 to 8th Army," "Foreshadows," WP, CB.
\textsuperscript{14}Smith, Triumph, 591-96, 624; James, Years of MacArthur 2:755.
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strafing runs on enemy spearheads. The best example of this partisan-Marine teamwork occurred on 27 March, 1945 when 150 elite Japanese troops were only 16 kilometers from Dipolog. The partisan commander, Major Donald Wills, U.S. Army, knew the enemy locations but he lacked maps and radio to direct the pilots; so, he rode with one pilot and guided four planes against the Japanese. The enemy retreated and the partisans were spared what would have been a costly battle.15

Japanese forces on Mindanao were not well-prepared for the coming battles. Only 15,000 of the 43,000 troops in the Japanese 30th and 100th divisions were qualified infantrymen. The 30th Division's main defense area was along the Sayre Road in Bukidnon Province. It lost four of its nine battalions in the Leyte battles. The 100th Division was deployed north of Davao City. It had only ten well-trained officers. The Japanese 54th Independent Mechanized Brigade in Zamboanga Province was in poor condition to resist the U.S. landings. It had only 8,000 men. It was isolated from the Japanese 100th and 30th Divisions in Eastern Mindanao; so, it had no chance of slowing the U.S. liberation. Worst of all, the Japanese Commanding General Gyosaku Morozumi drafted no realistic

defense plans. He expected each of his divisions to guard its own province, lure U.S. forces into a close quarter battle in the jungle to cause them as many casualties as possible, and not expect reinforcement from another province. He did not force the two division commanders to link their defenses in order to prevent isolation and piecemeal destruction. This failure was symptomatic of widespread defeatism among Japanese officers and sergeants.16 Other Japanese officers shared General Morozumi's belief that American forces would bypass Mindanao in 1945, and this led to a less than diligent effort to present a coordinated defense.17

U.S. Army forces landed two miles north of Zamboanga City on 10 March 1945 and quickly moved inland. Because the Japanese had been softened by a seven-day bombardment by the U.S. Army Air Forces, the U.S. 41st Division's two infantry regiments encountered light opposition. The main American operations took place deep inside the jungle north of the city where the enemy fought desperately but hopelessly against the better-armed Americans.

The Zamboanga partisans gave the 41st Division valuable support by harassing the Japanese brigade's retreat to Moroc, north of Zamboanga city. The partisans set up

16"Interview of Major Yasura Hanada, Japanese 54th Independent Mechanized Brigade," EP, Box 22B, DU; McGee, Rice and Salt, 9-12, 166-69.

17"Interview with General Gyosaku Morozumi," EP, Box 96, DU.
strong defenses behind Japanese lines on a series of ridges around Moroc. This denied the enemy defense positions badly needed to slow down the 163rd U.S. Rifle Regiment. The partisans used their thorough knowledge of the area to dominate key ridges with heavy weapons and to ambush enemy patrols that tried to pass through the valleys. The partisans even pushed some enemy elements toward the Americans. The Japanese could not take time to drive out the partisans; so, they by-passed Moroc and tried to escape to the northeastward.18

Local partisans also prevented the enemy 54th Independent Mechanized Brigade from occupying key defense terrain at Bolong, north of Moroc on the Zamboanga Peninsula. A partisan battalion defended this key area and killed 51 of the enemy. If the Japanese had retained Bolong, they could have fought a guerrilla war from a mountain stronghold or they could have retreated up the coast road to Eastern Mindanao.

The road blocks the Zamboanga partisans established along the western coastal road caused serious problems for the retreating enemy brigade which tried to use it. Over 1,200 Japanese failed to pierce the partisan defenses, and

the relentless U.S. advance pushed the Japanese into very mountainous and malaria-infested areas. Because of the partisan combat support, more than 7,000 out of the 8,000 Japanese that fought the U.S. landings died from battle, disease, and starvation by the end of the war in September 1945.19

The partisans compounded the Japanese problems in eastern Mindanao before the U.S. landings at Parang and Malabang when they made it difficult for the Japanese to move between garrisons. Partisan attacks forced enemy troops that should have been in a mobile reserve or constructing defenses to guard the enemy-held Sayre Road and Highway One. The partisans infested every province. They cut telegraph wires, blew up bridges, and ambushed enemy columns. Partisan raids destroyed almost all the trucks in the Japanese 100th Division at Davao City, denying the Japanese the mobility to quickly restructure their defenses if they had to. Partisan raids and Japanese lack of radio parts cut Japanese communications, which increased Japanese reaction time to counter potential American landings.20


20 "Interview with General Jiro Harada," EP, Box 95, DU; Fertig to MacArthur, 8 February 1945, RG 16, Box 33, MA; Fertig to MacArthur, 25 February 1945, RG 16, Box 34, MA.
Fertig was aware that the U.S. landings would occur at Malabang and Parang on 17 April 1945 and ordered that an assault be planned in support of the landings to annihilate the Japanese garrison at Malabang. He entrusted this task to Hedges's Lanao Province partisans. Hedges realized the tremendous strength of a well-armed force in buildings; so, he assembled nearly 3,000 men and placed them under his best combat leader, an escaped Australian infantryman, Major Rex Blow. These men faced about 300 Japanese. Blow organized the force and planned the attack for a month. If air support was required, the battle site was well within range of the Marine fighter bombers at Dipolog. The partisans also coordinated air support through MacArthur's headquarters. Such air support and close timing to the American landings insured that the partisans would be rescued if they got into serious trouble.21

The partisans began their attack on 12 March 1945, but Japanese bunkers, trenches, tunnels, and minefields slowed their advance. Enemy troops used the tunnels to reinforce threatened areas inside Malabang. The partisans did not have artillery or sufficient heavy machine-guns to pin the Japanese, and they relied on ground attack missions from the Marine planes from Dipolog and Army bombers from the 13th Air Force. Because the friendly planes did not signal that

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21Fertig to MacArthur, 24 February 1945, RG 16, Box 34, MA; Fertig to MacArthur, 29 March 1945, RG 16, Box 34, MA; Fertig to MacArthur, 15 April 1945, RG 16, Box 35, MA; Samples letter.
their attacks had been completed, a few partisan attacks were aborted. This partisan delay gave dazed Japanese defenders time to rally, reoccupy their bunkers, and defeat some ground assaults. The airfield at Malabang fell on 24 March 1945 and allowed the partisans to be resupplied there. Major Blow offset the advantages the Japanese had in fortifications when he attacked in different places with small units while the Moros launched intermittent but frightening attacks from many directions at once. Blow's men pushed the Japanese into a fort inside the city and surrounded them. Two hundred enemy troops broke through the partisan ring and escaped.22

Lieutenant Colonel Bowler flew from Mindanao to brief the 10th Corps commander, Brigadier General Frank Sibert, on partisan and Japanese dispositions. Bowler gave Sibert valuable information on partisan capabilities and Japanese activity. Because U.S. possession of Kabacan would divide enemy forces into two parts, he advised the general to capture it. Bowler explained that the Japanese were so uncertain about U.S. intentions that they constantly shifted troops north and south along the Sayre Road between the possible invasion sites at Davao and Cagayan harbors. Bowler also warned the general of the enemy fortifications from Digos to Central Cotabato and made it clear to Sibert that the Japanese planned their main defenses along the

22Bowler letter; Samples letter; Blow letter; Fertig to MacArthur, 9 March 1945, RG 16, Box 34, MA.
Sayre Road north of Kabacan and north of Davao City.  

The partisan seizure of Malabang made it easier for elements of the U.S. 10th Corps to land on 17 April 1945 and to drive inland quickly. Partisan reports that Malabang and Parang were secure allowed Eichelberger to shift most of his 24th Division to Parang where they would be closer to Highway One. This enabled two infantry regiments to move more quickly on Highway One toward the Kabacan junction in an attempt to split the Japanese 30th Division to the north from the enemy 100th Division to the south near Davao. Because the 24th Division moved so rapidly, the Japanese did not have enough time to delay the Americans along Highway One. The Japanese forces at Kabacan were unable to prepare adequate defenses before the U.S. forces crashed down on them on 23 April. With Kabacan lost, the enemy in Davao was isolated from the Japanese on Sayre Road, and neither enemy force assisted the other in the upcoming battles.

The Davao Province partisans assisted the 24th Division during the battle for the Davao area. Lauretta's 2,038 men were a few miles north of the Japanese defenses at Davao. The U.S. 24th Division pounded the Japanese defenses from the southeast in May. The partisans were not armed

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23 Bowler letter; Smith, Triumph, 620-47.

24 Fertig to MacArthur, 12 March 1945, RG 16, Box 34, MA; Fertig to MacArthur, 8 April 1945, RG 16, Box 34, MA; Fertig to MacArthur, 10 April 1945, RG 16, Box 34, MA; Fertig to MacArthur, 12 April 1945, RG 16, Box 34, MA; Fertig to MacArthur, 13 April 1945; RG 16, Box 34, MA; Smith, Triumph, 620-30.
well enough to assault the Japanese; so, they attacked their outposts and patrols. Partisans defended small airstrips for American artillery observation planes. The partisans also guarded roads that led northward in order to cut off any enemy reinforcements from strengthening Davao. Because the Japanese sought to escape the devastating U.S. firepower, they began to move north against Lauretta's men. The partisans informed the 24th Division of the Japanese movements. Lauretta rebuffed some Japanese northward probes but he was not strong enough to stop their retreat from the U.S. troops, and some Japanese escaped into the jungle.25

While the Battle for Davao raged, the Bukidnon partisans assisted U.S. 31st Division operations on the Sayre Road. The division landed near Parang on 22 April 1945. The Americans and Filipinos faced a weak force of 5,800 enemy infantry and 9,500 poorly trained service troops. The Filipinos used their stealth to creep up and observe Japanese activities. Partisan units showed great skill in scouting for intelligence and then leaving an area before they were caught between U.S. and Japanese patrols. Because the Filipinos knew their trails well, U.S. commanders attached the partisans to U.S. patrols where they helped the Americans find the Japanese. Other partisans

25Fertig to MacArthur, 2 May 1945, RG 16, Box 35, MA; Fertig to MacArthur, 4 May 1945, RG 16, Box 35, MA; Fertig to MacArthur, 5 May 1945, RG 16, Box 35, MA; Fertig to MacArthur, 6 May 1945; RG 16, Box 35, MA; Marshall telephone conversation; Willoughby, Guerrilla Resistance, 542-43; Smith, Triumph, 624.
assisted American engineers in the repair of roads so that American troops were well-supplied from their lorries on the Sayre Road.\textsuperscript{26}

When the Filipinos and Americans pushed the Japanese off of the Sayre Road in May, partisan harassment continued against the Japanese. The Filipinos continued to guide U.S. patrols down the fastest routes to attack the retreating Japanese. A U.S. infantry battalion landed at Butuan Bay on 25 June 1945. The partisans guided it to the last Japanese defenses at Waloe and helped the Americans scatter the enemy. The Filipinos hunted down Japanese survivors until the war ended on Mindanao in August 1945.\textsuperscript{27}

The Mindanao partisans gave U.S. forces valuable support in 1944-1945. They built an intelligence net that reported Japanese naval movements to the U.S. Navy, and the partisans informed MacArthur's staff of Japanese strength and activities. This information allowed the U.S. Navy to destroy more Japanese ships during the Battle for the Philippine Sea. Coastwatcher radio traffic provided the Japanese with another reason besides codebreaking as to how

\textsuperscript{26}Jonassen letter; Fertig to MacArthur, 5 May 1945, RG 16, Box 35, MA; Fertig to MacArthur, 15 May 1945, RG 16, Box 35, MA; Fertig to MacArthur, 21 May 1945, RG 16, Box 35, MA; Fertig to MacArthur, 23 May 1945, RG 16, Box 35, MA; Smith, Triumph, 624.

\textsuperscript{27}Fertig to MacArthur, 12 June 1945, RG 16, Box 36, MA; Fertig to MacArthur, 19 June 1945, RG 16, Box 36, MA; Fertig to MacArthur, 27 June 1945, RG 16, Box 36, MA; Fertig to MacArthur; 1 July 1945; RG 16, Box 36, MA; Smith, Triumph, 635-47.
U.S. forces knew so much about Japanese plans. Partisan information on Japanese airfields enabled U.S. aircraft to neutralize any air threat to MacArthur's invasion of Leyte. The resistance also allowed MacArthur's troops to exploit the weaknesses of the Japanese on Mindanao. The partisans rendered valuable combat support when they protected a U.S. Marine airfield at Dipolog, harassed Japanese retreats, cleared beachheads, guarded another airfield for U.S. spotter aircraft, and guided U.S. patrols through the jungle trails.
CONCLUSION

The U.S.-led Mindanao resistance force was transformed from an independent guerrilla force in 1942 to a partisan unit in 1943 that supported U.S. Army and Navy operations with intelligence and combat assistance. In late 1942 and early 1943, Moros and Filipinos as well as unsurrendered American soldiers formed separate guerrilla groups that addressed local needs for civil government and protection from Japanese patrols and indigenous bandits. Fertig and his American province commanders convinced Filipinos and Moros that they could protect their families best with organized guerrilla warfare. Because the resistance was adept at eluding Japanese forces, the Japanese never destroyed it. Fertig and his province commanders also built an intelligence system that reported Japanese strength and activities to SWPA HQ and the U.S. Navy. When U.S. forces landed on Mindanao in 1945, the partisans cleared beachheads, blocked Japanese retreats, and collected intelligence.

The Min'canaoans' hostile reaction to the brutal Japanese occupation was predictable and was a foundation for the Mindanao resistance. The inhabitants had a guerrilla war tradition that began against the Spanish and continued against the Americans in 1898. The Moros feared that U.S.
troops would be as harsh as the Spanish; so, they fought the
U.S. garrison for 13 years. Pershing used minimum force
against the guerrillas and established economic programs
that gave Moro businessmen significant profits and reduced
the fears of many Moro leaders. The Japanese occupation
policy in Mindanao during World War II was very different.
The Japanese authorities tried to terrorize Moros and
Catholic Filipinos into submission with rape, torture, and
unnecessary destruction. Japanese commanders made no real
attempt to earn the trust of the indigenous population.
Most villagers and townspeople were too proud or vengeful to
cooperate with the Japanese.

Seven resistance leaders organized their guerrillas in
the provinces. The leaders used the most influential men to
gain local support. Four of the seven leaders were American
officers who had several years of prewar duty in the
Philippines and who understood how to work with the
population. The other three guerrilla leaders were
Mindanaoans with exceptional organizational skills, except
Morgan. Brutal Japanese soldiers murdered Filipinos and
Moros while indigenous bandits stole food from Moros and
Filipinos. These guerrilla leaders organized their men into
units that ambushed Japanese patrols and Mindanaoan bandit
groups. The various guerrilla commanders reduced local
hardships by forming civil governments which tried to meet
most peasant requirements for food and shelter. These
guerrilla leaders gained local support to make the guerrilla
units stronger by providing a source for replacement of casualties and recruits.

Due to Fertig's engaging personality, senior rank, and official recognition from MacArthur, most guerrilla leaders quickly joined him. Fertig transferred one rebel, Morgan, out of Mindanao. Fertig separated two rival guerrilla leaders and thus halted their fighting. He clarified each province commander's area of operation in order to use the available manpower more efficiently. Most of Fertig's province commanders were Americans. Because all were members of the same military culture as the army they supported, Americans were best suited to making the resistance conform to MacArthur's objectives. Only one man could assign missions so that they could be accomplished in an orderly manner. Fertig's subordinate commanders insured that the intelligence and combat missions were accomplished.

The American partisan commanders survived two major Japanese offensives with active and passive strategies. The Japanese patrols were either too large to be stealthy or too small and uncoordinated to avoid partisan ambushes or catch fleeing partisans. Partisan commanders gathered information from spies for setting up deadly ambushes along likely Japanese avenues of approach. Partisan attacks along the Sayre Road forced the enemy to employ roughly 1,000 men to guard the road. This guard duty denied those Japanese the ability to launch offensive operations against the partisans. By not allowing themselves to be destroyed in
battle, the partisans survived to support MacArthur's return.

The partisans gave U.S. forces valuable support. In accordance with SWPA HQ directives, the partisans built an intelligence system that reported enemy ground, air and sea activities. Partisan coastwatchers gave the U.S. Navy information on the route of a Japanese fleet before it attacked the American ships. Resistance information on Japanese airfields on Mindanao enabled U.S. Naval aircraft to devastate Japanese planes on the island. Partisan radio traffic to Australia provided the Japanese another reason as to how the U.S. received Japanese intelligence besides the possibility that Americans broke the Japanese code. This event helped make it safer for MacArthur to invade Leyte Island. Partisan intelligence gave the 10th Corps planners an accurate picture of Japanese strengths and locations before the American landings on Mindanao occurred. The partisans further assured the security of the landings when they cleared 200 enemy troops from the landing area at Malabang City. After the 10th Corps landed, the partisans gave it important combat assistance. Partisans harassed and blocked Japanese retreats, which made it easier for U.S. troops to destroy or capture the enemy. The partisans were not decisive in destroying the enemy garrison on Mindanao, but they enabled a swifter campaign by the U.S. 10th Corps.

So that these lessons might be applied to upcoming events with an open mind, future historians and military
analysts should keep the following checklist in mind when analyzing similar events. Do the partisan leaders understand the indigenous culture and thus convince the local population to follow them? Would they know how to defeat rebellions within their organizations without causing a civil war? Do the armed forces have the capability to supply the partisans and assist their leaders in unifying and training the men? Do the partisans understand how to use the terrain to their advantage? Would these partisans be able to collect and send enemy intelligence without leaving themselves too vulnerable to enemy offensives? Could the resistance leaders train their people to operate radios and collect accurate information? Would the partisan leaders be able to support their military's operations with reliable intelligence, guide troops to enemy locations, and participate in combat operations?
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**THESES AND DISSERTATIONS**


MINDANAO ISLAND

(Source: Morton, Fall of the Philippines, Philippines Map)

Scale: 1" = .60 miles
WESTERN PACIFIC - 1942
(Source: Dull, Imperial Japanese Navy, 96-97)
Scale: 1" = 600 miles

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