

Written by

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By JOSEPH G. LARIOS

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CHICAGO (*jGLi*) – On the eve of the Nov. 11 Veterans Day, one of the most-famous American guerilla leaders during World War II in the Philippines is calling on President Barack Obama to sign an executive order, allowing the Department of Veterans Administration to accept benefit applications of Filipino WW II veterans even if their names are not found in the roster of the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis, Missouri.

Retired Lt. Col. Edwin P. Ramsey, who was in command of the 40,000 guerillas during WW II in the Philippines, told this reporter in a phone interview from his home in Los Angeles, California, Wednesday (Nov. 9) that President Obama should consider signing the executive order because many of the records of the guerillas under his command were lost during the war and these veterans are in their nineties.

Mr. Ramsey, 94, U.S. commander of the famed 26th Cavalry, said he had testified to the heroisms of the “Filipino guerillas under my command three times in the U.S. Congress. What

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more do they want?"

Ramsey, a lawyer, also testified before a U.S. Federal Court some years ago, attesting that one of his men, Silverio S. Cuaresma, was under his command. But the Department of Veterans would still not accept Cuaresma's benefit application.

CUARESMA IS NO "FAKE" GUERRILLA

"Originally, I appeared before the Federal court on his (Cuaresma's) behalf. What more could I do? I appeared there and submitted an affidavit. I think it is an injustice. What can I do?" according to Mr. Ramsey, who raised a family in the Philippines after the war.

When told by this reporter that some claimants might be pretending to be guerillas, Mr. Ramsey said, he is aware that there might be "fake" guerillas but Mr. Cuaresma is a "legitimate guerilla. He (Mr. Cuaresma) was under my command in Pangasinan military district of my guerilla forces. I presented papers in court many years ago on his behalf. I remember his name came up originally."

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When asked if he would testify again on Cuaresma's behalf, Mr. Ramsey said, "No. I don't think I will be called again. I will but it is very hard for me to travel. There is just too much that I can do. If they did not accept my testimony in Congress and in Court, they will not accept anything."

Cuaresma, 99, a U.S. citizen, was denied the \$15,000 lump-sum benefit tacked in the ARRA when he applied for the benefit before the deadline on Feb. 16, 2010. ARRA was also conferring one-time \$9,000 benefit for veterans, who are not U.S. citizens.

Cuaresma was listed as 2nd Lt., USAFEE, and No. 7 on a list of 85 soldiers under the roster dated April 22, 1943 for the Pangasinan-Tarlac Military District.

Ramsey was leading the last horse cavalry charge in U.S. history on Jan. 16, 1942, as Troop E of the 26th Cavalry Regiment toward the village of Morong, Bataan. Japanese forces had landed at Lingayen Gulf, outnumbering Americans and Philippine scouts and soldiers who made a retreat into Bataan.

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WAINWRIGHT ORDERED RAMSEY TO TAKE COMMAND

Gen. Jonathan Wainwright, the North Luzon commander, ordered Ramsey, a first lieutenant at the time, to take the lead into Morong.

A Filipino-American veterans group in Las Vegas, Nevada led by Ceasar Elpidio rolled out last week a petition addressed to President Obama, asking him to sign an executive order after it was disclosed that there are 24,000 applicants for beneficiary of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 who were rejected because their names were not found in the NPRC.

There is a pending H.R. 210, Filipino Veterans Fairness Act, sponsored by Rep. Jackie Speier [Dem.-CA-12] that mandates the Secretary of the VA to accept applicants whose names are not in the NPRC while another S. 63 sponsored by Sen. Daniel K. Inouye [Dem.-HI] requires the Secretary of the Army to "determine the validity of the claims of certain Filipinos that they performed military service on behalf of the U.S. during World War II." It asks the Secretary of the Army to consider "all information and evidence that is available to the Secretary, including information and evidence submitted by the applicant, if any."

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Arturo P. Garcia of the Justice for Filipino American Veterans in Los Angeles, California said that U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer [Dem.-CA] was going to introduce a companion bill to H.R. 210 that now teems with 75 co-sponsors. Even if H.R. 210 reaches 100 on Nov. 14-15, it will not be enough to muster the 218 votes needed for it to pass at the end of the Congressional session before Christmas.

For this reason, Luke Perry, of Las Vegas and son-in-law of the Filipino veteran, said there is a need to appeal to family and friends of veterans to view and sign up at the White House page the executive order, asking President Obama to sign it, by accessing this site:
<http://wh.gov/Tpw>

MEANINGFULLY CELEBRATE

Meanwhile, Fr. Prisco Entines, of Los Angeles and a son of a Filipino veteran, also said, "To meaningfully celebrate November 11, 2011 (11/11/11) Veterans' Day, this Executive Order Petition to President Obama would be a very good expression of our committed support and unity in veracity for criminally-enslaved yet U.S. National-dubbed Filipino soldiers. Later only to be unremorsefully to be tyrannically betrayed."

Last Friday, Nov. 4, retired Maj. Gen. Antonio Taguba, outspoken U.S. military leader during the

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Bush Administration, and U.S. Sen. Dean Heller, Nevada's newly-appointed senator, were on hand in Las Vegas when Silverio Cuaresma was honored as the "oldest known living Nevada WW2" who was denied the benefit at the Annual Veterans Ball. General Taguba appealed for unity among the Filipino veterans so leaders in Washington, D.C. will listen to their cries.

Arturo Garcia said Justice for Filipino American Veterans (JFAV) and different community, youth, students, and allied groups are all set for the 11th Annual Veterans Day "March for Equity, Justice and Peace" in Los Angeles on Friday, November 11, 2011.

FOR THE FIRST TIME FIL AMS JOIN MARCH

For the first time, Filipino Americans will march on the city's main streets. The protest march will start at 11:30 in the morning at the Downtown L. A. intersection of Broadway/Olympic and end at the INS Federal Building, 300 N Los Angeles St, Los Angeles, CA 90012

The main bulk of the marchers will be the youth and students component of JFAV who are advocating for their elderly seniors and veterans. They will carry the banners of anti-war, NO to Closure of Adult Day Care Centers, NO to budget cuts and PASS the DREAM ACT and Comprehensive Immigration Reform for 2012.

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The JFAV forces will assemble and hold a pre-rally program starting at 8:00 in the morning at the Filipino-American Community of Los Angeles (FACLA)
1740 W Temple St

,
Los Angeles

,
CA
90026

Instead of the traditional commemoration of the Filipino-American community and its World War II veterans, JFAV will conduct seminars and teach in on the different community issues that the community faces like immigration reform, closure of adult-day care centers in California, budget cuts, Filipino World War II veterans rights. # # #

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