

The Truth About the Filipino Veterans' Lobby (Part Two) - MabuhayRadio

Written by Bobby Reyes

Thursday, 12 April 2007 02:35 - Last Updated Monday, 23 April 2007 07:44

On Oct. 13, 2006, this writer made known to Philippine Amb. Willy C. Gaa in Washington, DC, the truth about the Filipino World War II veterans and the lobby for their rights and benefits. I am reproducing the letter to Ambassador Gaa in full. Readers may now be able to decipher the truth that I tried to convey to the Filipino and the Filipino-American policy makers and decision makers.

-----Original Message-----

From: MEDIABCLA@aol.com

To: USWashpe@aol.com

Sent: Fri, 13 Oct 2006 1:08 PM

Subject: Re: Truth About Filipino WWII Veterans (2) And the Philippine Lobby in DC

His Excellency Ambassador Willy C. Gaa

Philippine Embassy Washington, DC

Through the Hon. Consul Patty Paez

CC: The Office of the President

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Through the Hon. Jerry Adevoso Presidential Assistant for Veterans Affairs

Dear Your Excellency:

I have the honor of providing you with a copy of my posting in the NaFFAA_forum regarding "The Truth About Filipino World War II Veterans" and the so-called Philippine Lobby in Washington, DC. Because it may be time to "reinvent" the process of lobbying the policymakers and decision-makers in Washington, DC, for the Filipino veterans, the Filipino-American community and the Filipino people, in general.

The truth is that the said Philippine Lobby has not succeeded in doing much for the Filipino WWII veterans, despite the efforts of Filipino-American community leaders -- from the National Federation of Filipino-American Associations (NaFFAA), the various Filipino-American veterans' federations and other community organizations -- even with the support of distinguished Filipino diplomats and visiting government officials.

The Philippine Lobby in Washington, DC, has gone on and on since 1997 and nothing much has really been accomplished. The Philippine Lobby has not progressed much, despite also the hiring supposedly for several million dollars of an American lobbying/public-relations firm to look after the interest of the Philippines.

Since Your Excellency is the "new kid in town," to use an oft-quoted idiom, perhaps your esteemed office may spearhead the "reinvention" of the said Philippine Lobby.

Even from the viewpoint of economic and/or military aid, the Philippines receives anywhere

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from \$75-million to \$175-million per year from the United States. The amount is peanuts, if compared to countries like Israel and Jordan. American aid to the Kingdom of Jordan totaled \$3.59-billion (spelled with a B) from 2001-2005. Jordan received also in American aid \$1.36-billion from 1996 to 2000, according to the Congressional Research Service. Israel of course receives anywhere from \$7.0-billion to \$9.0-billion (also spelled with a B) per year, principally because of the extremely-effective American-Jewish Lobby and the fact that the Holocaust continues to touch the hearts of many Americans.

The Philippines receives from the United States almost nothing in economic/military aid (when compared to Israel or Jordan or countries like Egypt) in spite of the presence of 3.0-million Filipino Americans and Filipino contract workers in the United States. There are certainly more Americans of Filipino descent than there are Americans of Jordanian and/or Egyptian ancestry.

And considering further that Filipino Americans earn more-than \$42-billion (spelled also with a B) per annum and they pay at least thirty (30%) per cent in combined federal, state and local taxes every year. (Therefore, the taxes paid by Filipino Americans and Filipino contract workers in the United States exceed \$12.0-billion per year.) Now if only the American policymakers and decision-makers would be able to compare the American taxes being paid by Filipino Americans to the American economic and/or military aid to the Philippines and the expenditures for the Filipino WWII veterans, the American public will readily see the gross injustice being done to the Philippine homeland, which is after all a former American colony and said to have been molded after the American monolith.

We wish, therefore, to suggest most respectfully to Your Excellency that perhaps it is time to spearhead the "reinvention" of the Philippine Lobby in Washington, DC, so as to make it more effective insofar as our veterans and our people are concerned.

We end this open letter to Your Excellency by telling you of the story of former Texas Senator Phil Gramm. When Mr. Gramm first ran for the Senate, his campaign manager asked how he would answer the attack that Mr. Gramm, who was born and raised in Georgia, was a mere carpetbagger. Mr. Gramm said that there were two Georgians who fought and died at The Alamo and, therefore, the two Georgians bought his birthright as a Texan. Can we not use this analogy and argue that more-than one-million Filipinos who died during WWII as American nationals bought also the birthrights of Filipino Americans? Can we not argue -- pursuant to the Phil Gramm analogy -- that the one-million Filipino "American nationals" who died during WWII constituted also a Filipino version of the Holocaust? And, thus, the Philippines is entitled to at least one-sixth of the American annual aid to Israel, there being six-million Jews

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who died in the European Holocaust and not many of the Jewish victims were even American nationals?

My friends and I are willing to help Your Excellency come up with a more-formal position paper about the need to "reinvent" the Philippine Lobby in Washington, DC, and for that matter, in all the state capitals of the United States.

My friends, especially my fellow 2006 "Twenty Outstanding Filipinos in America (TOFA)" recipients, may be in a position to help Your Excellency in this suggested undertaking as we are now in the process of forming a Filipino-American Think Tank.

We send our highest esteem to Your Excellency, Madame Linda Gaa and your staff and our deepest appreciation of your favorable action on the aforesaid proposal,

Mabuhay,

Very respectfully yours,

Bobby M. Reyes and Associates

Media Breakfast Club of Los Angeles, California

In a message dated 10/13/06 7:57:45 AM Pacific Daylight Time, MEDIABCLA writes:

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Dear Friends, especially Fellow Sons (and Scions) of Filipino World War II Veterans:

Up to now, many Filipino-American community leaders refuse to acknowledge the real facts in the lobbying efforts in the US Congress for our veterans:

FACT No. I: The demand by many community leaders and veterans themselves for pension has no basis in fact and in law. Why? Because service men (and women) who serve the US Military have to be in uniform for at least 20 years to get a pension. World War II lasted only four years. How could Filipino soldiers (including my father who was integrated in the US Sixth Army) be given pension when they did not serve at least 20 years in the US Military?

FACT No. II: Lobbying in the US Congress has an established tradition. If you cannot get any bill approved in the committee level by summer, the bill is dead, especially in an election year.

FACT No. III: According then to Senator Lyndon B. Johnson, never introduce any bill in the Senate or House of Representatives if you do not have the necessary votes lined up. This means that lobbying has to be done effectively BEFORE any bill is filed. Filing bills for Filipino veterans by some legislators -- who have not yet secured the proper support from their colleagues -- may just amount to pandering (for the Filipino-American votes).

FACT No. IV: The present Filipino-American lobby is not effective in the US Congress because in American politics, a lobby group must not only deliver the votes of a community but also must deliver the cash contributions to the Political Action Committees (PACs) of American politicians. For as long as Filipino Americans (who earn more-than \$42-billion annually) refuse to donate to PACs, lobbying for Filipino WWII veterans and other causes will always be ineffectual.

FACT No. V: The matter of family reunification. The WWII veterans who petition their children must also execute Affidavits of Support for their children. Affidavits of Support may be given by siblings of the children being petitioned. If our WWII veterans are relying on SSI (welfare checks), how can their petitions be approved?

There are other issues that have to be addressed before another lobby is attempted after

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January 2007 (next year). As of now, we are just wasting our time in pursuing the cause of the Filipino WWII veterans with the US Congress.

Mabuhay,

Bobby M. Reyes

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