

By Bobby M. Reyes of Sorsogon City, PH, & West Covina, CA

The American and Filipino Decision-and-Policy Makers Must Reexamine the United States-Philippines Relations In View of New Geopolitics in the South China Sea and the Emerging Filipino-American Clout

{xtypo_quote} Then senatorial candidate Phil Gramm, who was born in Georgia, said that two Georgians fought and died at The Alamo and, therefore, the two Georgians bought his birthright as a Texan. {/xtypo_quote}

On Oct. 13, 2006, I sent a "love letter" to then-Filipino envoy to the United States, H.E. Willy C. Gaa, about the Filipino-Veterans issues. I told then-Ambassador Gaa "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 who died in the European Holocaust and not many of the Jewish victims were even American nationals?"

I also raised in the same letter the following matters to Mr. Gaa, whom I invited to toss (and he did toss) the ceremonial first pitch at the now-historic First Filipino-American Community Night at the Dodgers Stadium on July 24, 2006: "Even from the viewpoint of economic and/or military aid, the Philippines receives anywhere 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

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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."

To read a reproduction of the said Oct. 13, 2006, letter to then-Ambassador Gaa, please copy and paste this URL: <http://www.mabuhayradio.com/filipino-veterans-lobby/the-truth-about-the-filipino-veterans-lobby-part-two>

Now seven years later, Mr. Gaa has long retired from the Philippine diplomatic corps and still nobody has addressed the issues that I have raised to Filipino national policy-and-decision makers since the early 1980s. I raised the same issues to then-Amb. Emmanuel Pelaez and

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Foreign Affairs Minister Raul Manglapus during their visits to Los Angeles, California, in the mid-1980s and to date nobody has addressed my stated concerns.

To date, Filipino Americans, American citizens of Filipino descent, Filipino immigrants and contract workers (who exceed four-million in number) now earn per year more-than US\$92-billion (spelled with a B) and they pay roughly US\$30-billion (plus) in federal, state and city income taxes and more in sales taxes. Yet, the Philippines continues to receive in combined American military and/or economic aid anywhere from US\$75-million (spelled with an M) to a maximum of US\$300-million per annum.

An American-Filipino Public Affairs Council Must Be Formed

Ernesto Gange was originally my long-term foe in the Filipino-American discussion circles but who has become my dear friend and collaborator. "Apo Ernie" Gange, who is the most-respected Filipino-American leader in the Great State of Pennsylvania, is a cofounder of the National Federation of Filipino-American Associations (NaFFAA). He was also the first Filipino-American member of the Board of Trustees of the Pearl S. Buck Foundation. He headed also bi-partisan efforts to protect the interests of the so-called "Amerasian children," the offspring of American servicemen in the Philippines and elsewhere in Asia and who have been abandoned by their respective father.

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"Apo Ernie" Gange said that he totally supports the idea of emulating the Jewish Americans and forming our version of the "American-Israeli Public Affairs Council." For want of a better name, Mr. Gange and I chose to call tentatively this new lobby group as the "American-Filipino Public Affairs Council" (AFPAC), which should be registered as a lobby group with the United States Congress, the White House and other federal entities.

As a Filipino citizen, I cannot join Mr. Gange and our growing number of supporters, especially among the NaFFAA leaders, in organizing and running the proposed AFPAC -- as only American citizens can be registered lobbyists. The NaFFAA and many similar Filipino-American federations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that have the status of tax-exempt 501 (C) 3 public-benefit entities cannot engage in lobbying efforts. Hence, the need for the AFPAC

"Apo Ernie" Gange is the interim founding chairman of the proposed AFPAC and, hopefully, when the next Memorial Day comes in 2015, it would have perhaps by then established its legal presence in the corridors of influence and power in Washington, D.

C . And speaking of political clout, it may be worth remembering the adage that "If you have it, then flaunt it." It looks like also that current

NaFFAA
National Chairman Eduardo Navarra
and other Filipino-American community leaders like
Tonie Sison

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of the Federation of Filipino-American Associations of Southern Nevada are backing the efforts of Mr.

Gange

in organizing the

AFPAC

as a viable lobbying vehicle to promote and protect the interests of the Filipino-American communities, the Filipino people and their government.

(To be continued ...) # # #

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