

INFORMATION ON GRLA MOVEMENT IN SOUTH CENTRAL PORTION OF BATANGAS

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HEADQUARTERS
UNITED STATES ARMY FORCES WESTERN PACIFIC
G-3, GUERRILLA AFFAIRS BRANCH

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Summary of Information Obtained on the Guerrilla
Movement in the South Central Portion of Batangas Province

The Units I have investigated were the Blue Eagle Brigade, various FAIT units and several independent units. From these investigations I feel that I obtained a clear, composite picture of the guerrilla movement in the south central portion of the province of Batangas.

Batangas Province was, before the war, a peaceful area and on the whole the people enjoyed a measure of prosperity not obtained in many of the provinces of Luzon. The main products of the land were: sugar cane, rice, coffee and fruit; in addition to this there were home industries such as: the manufacturing of knives, weaving and the breeding of horses that added materially to the income of the people of the province.

In 1942 after the fall of Bataan and Corregidor, certain ex-USAFPE men and ex-Constabulary members began to organize units to operate in an underground movement against the Japs. The leaders of these units instilled in the members great hope that it would only be a matter of a few months before the Americans would return to the Philippines. These organizations had very few arms and little or no equipment and had to confine their activities to those of a passive nature. Most of them did good work in protecting the barrios from banditry and

helped greatly to alleviate the suffering of the civilian population. These Units also carried on a determined campaign of propaganda against the Japs and were responsible for a general policy of non-cooperation in the province. By late 1943 the organizations had gained a great many members but due to lack of arms and constant patrolling by the Japs the members were not able to assemble as a unit so that there was lack of control and consequently very loose organization.

During 1943 several happenings occurred which caused the disintegration of the major units and forced all units to become on the whole inactive. About the middle of the year 1943 the Japs began an intensive campaign against the guerrillas, at first one of encouraging them to surrender with the promise that they would not be harmed. When this was found to be ineffective, they began an active campaign against them and attempted to round up all the leaders. Early in 1943 Col Hugh Straughn, who is believed to have influenced the beginning of most of the guerrilla units in southern Luzon, was captured and executed by the Japs. The Batangas guerrillas then lost contact with the FAIT Headquarters and the Japs captured and executed many of the leaders of the resistance movement, among these being Espina, Evangelista and Tuguigui.

The pressure of the Japs, the loss of their leaders and a diminishing in the faith that the Americans would return caused the units to suspend operations as far as resistance to the Japs was concerned. Some small groups continued to operate as home guards in keeping peace and order in their home communities.

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During the latter part of 1944 it became apparent to the people of Batangas that it would not be long until the American forces would land on Luzon. At this time a man named Eduardo D. Alabastro, formerly a sugar and land broker in Manila, using as a nucleus a small intelligence unit in Manila, known as the Blue Eagle, began to recruit men into his organization. In Batangas Province, Alabastro stated that he held the rank of Colonel and that he had long military experience. He also stated that he had given instructions by Gen McArthur to form a guerrilla organization. Alabastro claimed to have wealthy and influential friends who would supply the money to finance his units. He used as his main inducement to joining his organization the claim that, through his connections, he would be able to get his organization recognized whereas it would be difficult for small units with leaders who had no influence to gain recognition. Alabastro's efforts were successful and his Malakas Div in Batangas province inducted somewhat over 8,000 members.

When the American liberation forces landed in Batangas, various guerrilla units contacted them and, since the Americans could not use all the guerrillas, they established a practice of attaching one or more combat companies from each guerrilla unit. Many of these attached companies worked throughout the liberation and did excellent work and for this combat duty were recommended for recognition by Hqs Sixth Army.

To the potential guerrillas of Batangas Province who were not actively engaged, this action of the Sixth Army was believed to establish the policy of the American Army in recognizing

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guerrillas. In short, they felt it was necessary to have been actively engaged in combat to gain recognition. A few of the units believed they should have had more men recognized, but on the whole they were satisfied that the recognition policy had been just and did not at the time submit the rosters of all of the members of their units.

Late in 1945 the United States Army announced that the Blue Eagle Command, which had approximately 1167 men recognized for attachment to American Units, had been given additional recognition in the strength of a Brigade of 6,269 men. This latter recognition, to the guerrilla leaders, meant a complete change of policy, for they were certain that additional members of the Blue Eagle recognized at that time were never engaged in combat with the enemy. They were of the opinion further that many members of their own units were equally deserving of recognition, in light of what was apparently the new policy of requirements for recognition. Great pressure was brought to bear on the individual leaders by the members of their units who had ^{not} been recognized and also by people who had assisted the units in providing money, supplies and shelter, to submit rosters so that they, too, could be recognized and thereby enjoy the same prosperity enjoyed by the members of the Blue Eagle Brigade.

This started a flow of requests for recognition from all types of units. In fact, all groups who had ever had any sort of organization in opposition to the Japs, submitted histories and rosters to substantiate their claims.

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After talking to hundreds of people who claimed to be guerrillas, local governmental officials and civilians, in Batangas province, I have concluded that, had the Blue Eagle Brigade not been recognized, only a very few organizations from Batangas would have requested recognition. The situation at present is that units that are being turned down are not satisfied they are being justly treated since they are of the opinion that the Blue Eagle Brigade recognition set a precedent.

Therefore, there now exists an apparent dissatisfaction with American Army policy, whereas previously, the policy was believed to be just.

If at some future date the American Army could feel justified in withdrawing recognition from the Blue Eagle Brigade it would go far toward alleviating the resentment and dissatisfaction that exists.

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