

The Bataan Memorial's twelve granite columns bear the names and the story of the men who served with the 200th and 515th Coast Artillery (Anti-aircraft) units in the Philippines in World War II at Bataan Memorial Park in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The Bataan-Corregidor Memorial Foundation of New Mexico, Inc. extends its appreciation to Jack W. Bradley, 515th Coast Artillery, who, despite a debilitating illness, wrote the history — engraved on three of the columns.

200TH AND 515TH COAST ARTILLERY (AA) IN DEFENSE OF THE PHILIPPINES

(Panel One)

On December 8, 1941, only nine hours after the Japanese attack of Pearl Harbor, the 200th Coast Artillery engaged Japanese bombers at Clark Field and Fort Stotsenberg, becoming the first unit to go into action in defense of the U.S. flag in the Philippines. Despite having outmoded weapons and faulty ammunition, the 200th scored eight confirmed hits and lost two men.

That evening, 500 soldiers from the original regiment of 1800 men were sent to provide additional air defense in Manila. This provisional force was christened the 515th Coast Artillery and became America's first war-born regiment in World War II. At that time the soldiers of the 200th and 515th were part of a total of 27,000 American troops in the Philippines along with 98,000 Filipino soldiers.

When Japanese forces under the command of Lt. General Masaharu Homma landed on December 22, 1941, the 200th and 515th were among the troops who fought valiantly with little hope of reinforcements or supplies. New Mexicans were involved in every defensive battle waged in the jungles of Bataan and on the small island fortress of Corregidor.

We're the battling bastards of Bataan;
No mama, no papa, no Uncle Sam;
No aunts, no uncles, no nephews, no nieces;
No pills, no planes, no artillery pieces;
And nobody gives a damn.

— Frank Hewlett, war correspondent, UPI

The defense of the Philippines lasted four months. It gave the Allied Pacific forces the precious time needed to regroup and delay Japanese aggression in the Asia-Pacific region. Shortly before the fall of Bataan, General Douglas MacArthur left Corregidor for Australia pledging, "I shall return."

200TH AND 515TH COAST ARTILLERY (AA) PRISONERS OF WAR

(Panel Two)

On April 9, 1942, the weakened survivors from the combined American and Filipino forces were unconditionally surrendered to the Japanese by Major General Edward King. Thus began one of the most cruel and unrelenting prisoner-of-war episodes in modern U.S. history.

Most POWs were assembled in Mariveles at the southern tip of the Bataan peninsula and forced to march to San Fernando, Pampanga. Wounded men were assisted by able-bodied prisoners or carried on crude stretchers. Stragglers were beaten or killed. Civilians who showed mercy to the prisoners endured a similar fate. The incident covered a distance of 104 kilometers (65 miles) and became known as the Bataan Death March.

The final leg of the northward journey was completed inside stifling railway boxcars that took them to the prison set up at Camp O'Donnell near the town of Capas, Tarlac. Most of the American POWs were eventually transferred to Cabanatuan in Nueva Ecija. The captured soldiers were subjected to inhumane conditions. Death from malnutrition, disease and abuse was a common occurrence. More than 4,000 American POWs and 25,000 Filipino POWs died in these two camps alone.

Prison camps became the staging places for forced labor. POWs were routinely relocated to distant work camps in Manchuria, Formosa, Japan, Korea and throughout the Philippine Islands. The Japanese transported prisoners aboard unmarked vessels and many POWs died when Allied forces mistakenly attacked these "HELL-SHIPS."

On August 15, 1945 the Japanese surrendered. The liberation forces rescued approximately 1,000 brutalized and malnourished POWs from the 200th and 515th. Due to their weak condition, nearly a fourth of them died shortly after returning to the United States.

New Mexico earned the tragic distinction of having the highest prisoner-of-war population per capita of any state in the Union. The plight of the New Mexico soldiers motivated next-of-kin and organizations throughout the state to participate in government war relief efforts and to raise funds for the International Red Cross. "Remember Bataan" became one of America's most enduring wartime credos.

200TH AND 515TH COAST ARTILLERY (AA) HISTORICAL LEGACY

(Panel Three)

The 200th Coast Artillery (AA) has a distinguished military legacy. The unit was established in 1939 from elements of the 111th Cavalry, New Mexico National Guard. The 111th Cavalry had its origin in the territorial militias of the 1850's and fought in the U.S. Civil War, in the Spanish-American War as "Rough Riders," and in World War I.

After the 200th was inducted into federal service, recruits joined from all walks of New Mexican life. They enlisted in centers in Albuquerque, Carlsbad, Clovis, Gallup, Santa Fe, Silver City and Taos. Many young men deferred going to college. Many chose to leave their small towns and rural villages for the first time in their lives.

On January 6, 1941, the 200th was sent to the Anti-Aircraft Training Center at Fort Bliss, Texas where draftees augmented its ranks. At the end of the training, the 200th was cited as the best anti-aircraft unit in the U.S. Armed Forces. In August, General George C. Marshall's action letter ordered the immediate dispatch of the 200th to the Philippines. By the end of the month, the 200th set sail from San Francisco, California.

The survivors of the 200th and the 515th are among the most highly decorated soldiers in American history. They have received four Presidential unit Citations, five Battle Stars, the Bronze Star, the Bataan Medal issued by the State of New Mexico and a Philippine Presidential Unit Citation.

The 200th and 515th shall forever be remembered for fighting against all odds. They fought and paid a huge price for the freedom Americans enjoy today. General Douglas MacArthur noted, "No troops have ever done so much with so little." To these men we remain eternally grateful.

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Our resolve as a nation will be tested in the future. Be prepared to defend the ideals of democracy.

— Surviving Veterans
200th and 515th Coast Artillery (AA)
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