(U)CRYPTOLOGIC ALMANAC

(U) The Necessary Invention: The Cryptologic Effort by the Philippine Guerrilla Army, 1944-1945

(U) With the fall of Bataan and Corregidor in the Philippines in early 1942, official United States military resistance in the Philippine Archipelago ended. However, this was not the end of resistance to the Japanese. Hundreds of Americans and thousands of Filipino combatants escaped the Japanese forces. Some managed to make it to Australia. Others remained on the various islands and began to build a base of irregular forces to harass and spy on the Japanese occupiers and the collaborationist Philippine Republic under Jose Laurel.

(U) In late June 1942, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) monitoring station at San Leandro, California, intercepted an unidentified radio station with the callsign VCJC attempting to contact General Douglas MacArthur's Southwest Pacific Area (SWPA) Headquarters. The FCC relayed the information about the callsign to the Signals Intelligence Service, which, in turn, passed the information to the War Department. Eventually, MacArthur's Southwest Pacific Area Headquarters established contact with VCJC, located on Luzon Island. It turned out to be the first sizable guerrilla band. From this point in time, communications with the various guerrilla units grew until a net of almost a dozen stations located on the major islands of the Philippine Archipelago had been formed. General MacArthur's SWPA Headquarters supplied radios, technical personnel, codes, ciphers, signals operating instructions and even M-94 and M-209 cipher devices for the guerrillas to use. Some Filipino and American army officers were smuggled in by submarine to organize other bands.

(U) The guerillas sent numerous messages over the next two years until the islands were liberated. Information was transmitted about Japanese troop locations, installations, Japanese ship and aircraft movements (a special code was developed for rapid reporting of the planes), the effects of the Japanese occupation, the status of POWs and conditions in their camps, and the collaborators in the puppet Philippine Republic. The guerrillas also sent many messages about the rescue of escaped POWs and downed Allied airmen and the subsequent arrangements for pickup by covert submarine missions.

(U) The usefulness of the intelligence the guerrillas gathered varied greatly. Perishable types of information, such as ship movements (the guerrillas set up a corps of coast watchers through the Philippine Islands similar to the Australian coast watchers) and aircraft activity arrived too late to be of much use. On the other hand, locations of Japanese units, construction of fortified positions, airfields, transport centers, ammunition dumps, and enlarged port facilities were important targets for navy and army air mission planners. Also, conditions inside the Philippines under the Japanese occupation provided material for propaganda broadcasts. For the most part, this intelligence was gathered through ground reconnaissance by the guerrillas or supplied by sympathizers among the Philippine population.

(U) However, in February 1944 MacArthur's headquarters received an interesting intelligence

message from the largest guerrilla group under Colonel Wendell Fertig, who operated from Mindanao, a major island in the southern part of the archipelago. Colonel Fertig informed SWPA Headquarters that his unit had begun intercepting messages from the Philippines Bureau of Posts in the southern islands of the archipelago. The message did not mention any technical details on how this was being done and by whom. What Fertig did, though, was relay intelligence that his unit had intercepted: complaints by the Japanese-led Philippine Constabulary about guerrillas on Panay Island and Japanese reports about skilled labor shortages for their construction projects.

(U) MacArthur's military intelligence staff, G-2, declared that this information's "value remains to be seen." The guerrilla groups, principally Fertig's, continued to send in intelligence gained by intercept of Philippine Republic and Japanese communications. MacArthur's staff passed the intercept on to other elements in the SWPA. Some messages dealing with the progress of dock expansions at various ports on the islands of Panay and Mindanao were given to the navy's liaison staff. SWPA Operations received information on the size of the various pacification campaigns against the guerrillas, while information useful for anti-Japanese propaganda "reports of famine, expropriation of rice stores by the Japanese, profiteering by Filipino collaborators, and overall poor economic conditions" was passed along to special staffs that handled morale broadcasts to the Philippine resistance.

(U) From the material in the records, it is not completely certain how these transmissions were intercepted and processed. It appears that the guerrillas, probably radio operators, listened in on the Philippine inter-island medium- and high-frequency radiotelephone system. This was probably the best and most lucrative target from an intelligence standpoint for the guerrilla monitors. The guerrillas could intercept radio messages from the entire archipelago. For example, one intercept consisted of economic reports from Cebu in the southern part of the archipelago to Manila, which is some 500 miles north on the island of Luzon. Many of their intercepts were of high-ranking Filipino collaborators speaking to local governors and magistrates. In other cases, Japanese military and civilian communications also were intercepted. On Mindanao the guerrillas were able to intercept and decrypt Japanese communications sent in "military number code." The movement of Japanese senior officers, discovered by monitoring these radiotelephone circuits, also was reported to MacArthur's staff.

(U) In the final analysis, it is not certain that the intelligence gathered by the guerrilla intercept was substantially better than from other sources. The existing records suggest that the effort was sporadic and somewhat short-lived. There is nothing after August 1944 in the records. The intercept and decryption efforts would have required stable locations from which to operate. In mid-1944, the Japanese stepped up pacification efforts against the major guerrilla groups. Units were forced to pack up and run. This meant that the intercept effort would have to be abandoned. MacArthur's intelligence staff accepted the material, but seemed to make little fuss over it. It is not clear if the Army's intercept and code breaking unit at Central Bureau Brisbane was ever informed of the guerrilla intercept and decoding successes.

(U) Still, the effort deserves some notice. The guerrilla units showed initiative, inventiveness, and some technical know-how (consider the exploitation of Japanese codes) to pull off this small homegrown cryptologic mission.

(U) For further information on the American and Filipino guerrilla movement, see the U.S. Army in World War II series, the volumes, *Leyte: The Return to the Philippines*, and *Triumph in the Philippines*. Also, the records of the guerrilla movement can be found in the National Archives in College Park, MD, in Record Groups 407 and 496.

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