

The Fall of the Philippines Bataan and Corregidor

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Introduction to Bataan and Corregidor

The [Philippine](#) Department had been the outlying [U.S. Army](#) command in the [Pacific](#) for many years. In the summer of [1941](#) increasing tension between [Japan](#) and the [United States](#) caused the War Department to set up a new command for the specific purpose of organizing the defense of the Philippines. This command, activated on July 26, 1941, was named the United States Armed Forces, Far East (USAFFE, or AFFE); General Douglas MacArthur, retired, was placed on active duty and designated commanding general.

At the time of [Pearl Harbor](#), General MacArthur's ground forces consisted of the Philippine Army of 10 divisions and supporting troops, with a total strength of about 100,000, and a U.S. Regular Army contingent of more than 25,000. Of the latter force, the largest unit was the Philippine Division, consisting of one American regiment and two Philippine Scout regiments. The Japanese struck before the Philippine Army could be completely trained or properly equipped.

The Japanese air attack on the Philippines on December 8, 1941 seriously crippled elements of the American air forces stationed in the islands and damaged naval installations. On December 10, Japanese forces landed at Aparri and Vigan on the northern coast of Luzon. The main body of the invasion force began landing on Luzon at Lingayen Gulf on December 22. Other landings were made below Manila and on other islands of the Philippines. Unable to stop the enemy at the shoreline of Luzon, MacArthur withdrew sea forces into the Bataan Peninsula, the island of Corregidor, and three other small islands in Manila Bay. This complex retrograde movement was accomplished by 7 January 7, [1942](#). Meanwhile, on January 2, the Japanese had occupied Manila, which had been declared an open city on December 24. The American and Filipino troops had lost most of their supplies during their withdrawal; and a Japanese blockade precluded the possibility of resupply or the landing of reinforcements.

On March 12, 1942, General MacArthur was ordered by the President to leave for [Australia](#). His successor in command was Lt. Gen. Jonathan M. Wainwright who, for a short period (21 March to 6 May 1942), commanded the so-called U.S. Forces in the Philippines (USFIP), although General MacArthur remained the nominal commander.

On April 9, 1942, by which time the troops of Bataan had been reduced by hunger, disease, and casualties to the point of military helplessness, their commander, Maj. Gen. Edward P. King, Jr., surrendered his forces to the Japanese. General Wainwright surrendered the remainder of the American forces on Corregidor and elsewhere in the Philippines on May 6, 1942.