

1455

Doc. 2869

GENERAL HEADQUARTERS
UNITED STATES ARMY FORCES, PACIFIC
OFFICE OF THE THEATER JUDGE ADVOCATE
WAR CRIMES BRANCH

AGO 500
18 August 1945

AG 000.5 (18 Aug 45) JA

SUBJECT: Report of War Crimes Branch on Atrocities

TO: The Judge Advocate General
Washington 25, D. C.

* * *

IV. SUMMARY OF THE TESTIMONY:

On 1 August 1942, Barta, Bogue, and McDole arrived at Puerto Princesa, Philippine Islands (pp. 3, 5, Ex. B; p. 6, Ex. C) and presumably, Balchus, Koblos, Neilsen, Pacheco and Smith arrived at the same time (par. 10, p. 2, Ex. A) while Petry arrived sometime after 16 August 1943 (par. 25, p. 4, Ex. A). All prisoners present were put to work on an airfield (pp. 2, 5, 8, Ex. B) in the scorching sun, with inadequate food, water, clothing and the simplest of tools (p. 6, Ex. C). On 9 or 11 August 1942, six men, viz Buddy Henderson, USMC, Sidney Wright, USMC, Davies, USMC, Bobby Hodges, USN, Elliot, USN and the sixth unknown, attempted an escape, whereupon all prisoners were placed on one-third rations for three days, enclosures reinforced, sentries increased, and movements restricted. (Par. 27, p. 4, Ex. A; p. 5, Ex. B; p. 6, Ex. C).

Two prisoners sustained broken arms for picking a papaya from a tree within the compound, the punishment being inflicted by a cook named Nishitani (p. 6, Ex. C). Staff Sergeant Mullin's arm was broken because he refused to admit defeat and was forced to work with his arm in a sling (p. 7, Ex. C).

Another escape on 29 August 1942 by Joe Paul Little, USN, and Charlie Watkins, USN, resulted in a similar reduction of rations (p. 5, Ex. B; p. 7, Ex. C). For possessing a small portion of corned beef and talking to a Filipino, six men, Jimmy Barna, USMC, Laidlaw, USN, Jack Taylor, USMC, Yoder, USN, Robert Brown, USMC, the sixth unknown, were tied to a coconut tree in the center of the compound and were beaten with a small wire whip and a pole 3" or 4" in diameter until loss of consciousness, whereupon they were revived with water and the torture continued. The six were then returned to Manila (p. 7, Ex. C; p. 5, Ex. B). The prisoners had no access to medical supplies, one or two men were beaten every day and an appendectomy was performed on McDole without anaesthetic (p. 5, Ex. B).

In February, 1943, Sergeant Swift, USMC, Robert Pryor, MM 1c, Private Sloat, MC, U.S. Army and Hansen U.S. Army, escaped during the night and were missed the following morning, but a search resulted in the capture of Sloat and Hansen, who were placed in a Kempei (Jap Military Police) dungeon. It was later learned that Pryor was decapitated in

northern Palawan and his head placed on exhibition. (p. 7, Ex. C). On 29 June 1943, Pfc. Seldon T. White, USMC, and Wilson, USN, temporarily escaped but were recaptured on 4 July 1943, and severely beaten before being turned over to the Japanese Military Police, who put them on a truck which drove off. They did not return, and the Filipinos and Japanese stated that they were shot (pp. 7, 8, Ex. C).

One afternoon Charles Street was missing from muster and ten men were immediately locked in the brig and subjected to severe beatings. Jack Ward was beaten with a section of an iron pipe. Street had not tried to escape but had lost his way back to camp and when he returned the prisoners were released from the brig and Street incarcerated and beaten (p. 2, Ex. B).

John M. Stanley, for no reason at all, was struck over the head with a pick handle, causing a gash three inches long (p. 3, Ex. B). Men were required to work on the airstrip during raids (p. 2, Ex. B).

In September 1943 Jim Flynn, Boatswain Mate USN, was accidentally killed by a landing dive bomber, and he was denied a decent burial (p. 8, Ex. C).

A rule was imposed providing for the execution of ten prisoners for each one that escaped (pp. 2, 8, Ex. B; p. 8, Ex. C).

Following raids by 17 B-24's on 19 and 28 October 1944, the prisoners were ordered to build air-raid shelters consisting of three trenches, five feet deep, four feet wide, and of sufficient length to accommodate 50 men. There was to be an overhead covering with only one entrance but due to American officers' continual suggestions, two entrances were permitted, one at each end. Some men had individual fox-holes in the small enclosures surrounded by double barbed-wire strands two meters high and closely interwoven. (Par. 30, p. 4, Ex. A; pp. 1, 3, 9, Ex. B; p. 9, Ex. C). The Special Company shelter was near the fence in the rear of the compound, from which a passageway led into the one for "B" Company, about one meter away. The third for the use of "A" Company was near the side fence of the compound (p. 3, Ex. B; pp. 10, 11, Ex. C).

After each raid the Japs seemed to take the attitude that the prisoners were the cause of the bombings and treatment became worse (par. 29, p. 4, Ex. A). The number of prisoners varied from time to time as new prisoners arrived and replacements were sent to Manila. However, on 14 December 1944 there were 150 in prison (par. 29, p. 4, Ex. A; pp. 1, 9, Ex. B). About 0200 14 December 1944 two Jap officers informed the men while in barracks that they were going to work early the next morning. So, they began at dawn but were called back at noon, which caused the Americans to sense something strange. There were two air raids during lunch and extra guards were placed around the compound. During the early afternoon another air raid warning was sounded and the men were forced into their shelters (par. 29, p. 4, Ex. A; p. 10, Ex. C) and required to remain under cover, the Japs saying that there were hundreds of American planes approaching (p. 5, Ex. B; pp. 9, 11, Ex. C). When everyone was securely below the ground, between 50 and 60 Jap soldiers, armed with light machine-guns, rifles, and

carrying buckets of gasoline, attacked the unsuspecting, defenseless prisoners in the first shelter where there were approximately 40 of "A" Company. They first threw a lighted torch into the entrance and followed it with a bucket or two of gasoline (par. 29, p. 4, Ex. A; p. 3, Ex. B) which exploded, setting everyone within on fire (pp. 5, 9, Ex. B; p. 10, Ex. C). As screaming men ran from the shelter, they were mowed down by machine guns and rifles (pp. 1, 6, 9, Ex. B; p. 10, Ex. C) while others, realizing they were trapped, ran to the Japs and asked to be shot in the head, but the Japs laughingly would shoot or bayonet them in the stomach. When the men cried out for another bullet to put them out of their misery the Japs continued to make merry and left the men to suffer, twelve men being killed in this manner (par. 31, p. 5, Ex. A). Captain Sato, commander of the Jap garrison at the camp, walked over to C. C. Smith, Signal 2c, USN, and split his head open with his saber (par. 29, p. 4, Ex. A). The Japs started shooting everything in sight, poked guns into the foxholes and fired them, threw hand grenades, while throughout Sato was laughing and shouting, urging the men to greater effort (par. 29, p. 5, Ex. A). Men were thrown into holes while still alive and covered with coconut husks (par. 31, p. 5, Ex. A). Some escaped through a hole in their dugout, while 30 or 40 others successfully tore barehanded through barbed wire fences and ran to the water's edge (par. 29, p. 4, Ex. A; p. 9, Ex. B; p. 10, Ex. C). Those who attempted to swim the bay were shot in the water from the shore or from a barge roving just off shore (par. 30, p. 4, Ex. A). Still others who sought refuge in crevices were hunted down and dynamited (pp. 1, 9, Ex. B; p. 10, Ex. C). Bogue located Barta, Petry, Pacheco, and Martyn, and about 2100 hours they swam the bay to safety. For five days and nights, without food or water except rain, Bogue tramped through the jungle until rescued by Filipino prisoners at Iwahig Penal Colony where he met McDole. They were taken further south to Aborlan where Barta joined them, whereupon the three proceeded to Brooke's Point and were picked up 21 January 1945 by a PRY from Leyte (p. 10, Ex. C).

Neilsen reached the beach and covered himself with coconut husks for three hours. He was discovered but feigned death and was left by the Japs and crawled into a cove, finding 15 Americans, eight of whom were subsequently killed from a barge. When a group of Japs approached the cove Neilsen dived into the water, was struck in the leg, head, and ribs by bullets, but nevertheless kept on swimming as the Japs continued shooting, was washed seaward by a strong current, finally reached the other side of the five-mile bay at 3:00 p.m. and remained in a mangrove swamp until noon the next day when he moved into a coconut grove where he was found by a Filipino who led him to Petry and Pacheco, and was later joined by Balchus (par. 31, p. 5, Ex. A). The latter had been hiding in the underbrush with Deal, while the Japs were firing at Neilsen. They moved along the beach and picked up Williams and Daniels. Balchus and Deal separated from the others when an argument arose as to the best plan for an escape, and decided to approach the top of the cliff, giving up the idea of swimming the bay as Deal had a shoulder wound (par. 32, p. 5, Ex. A). Five Japs heard them and started to investigate; two of the Japs moved further down the cliff but the three others came directly towards the two men. It was quite dark at this time and the Japs were

using torches. As one of them came within a few feet of the two men, Balchus hit him on the head with a big piece of coral and they then jumped the other two. These Japs were killed but reinforcements started moving towards the vicinity of the row. Balchus and Deal moved a short distance from each other and when some Japs got in between them, Deal ran over the cliff and Balchus ran down the beach, dived into the water and swam the bay. Hearing gunfire back on the beach he assumed that the Japs had killed Daniels and Williams (par. 32, p. 5, Ex.A).

The Filipinos had the four men change to civilian clothing and took them to Brooke's Point, picking up Smith at the southern Penal Colony and Hobbs at Aborlan. They stayed at Brooke's Point until 6 January 1945 when they were picked up by the "Catalina" (par. 33, p. 5, Ex.A).

Barta with four others, including Pacheco, Petry and Bogue started to swim the bay between 2000 and 2100. He became unconscious about half-way across and when he regained his senses he was floating out of the mouth of the bay but only about 50 yards from the shore which he managed to reach about sunrise the next morning. After being in the jungle 10 days he reached the Philippine Penal Colony from which he was taken to Aborlan, where he met McDole and Bogue and all were then taken to Brooke's Point (pp. 4, 6, 10, Ex. B; pp. 10, 11, 12, Ex. C).

Bogue, after being in the jungle five days and nights was also rescued by the Filipino prisoners at Iwahig Penal Colony (p. 10, Ex. B).

McDole saw six Japs torturing one American with bayonets when another Jap joined the group with a bucket and torch. While the American screamed to be shot, the Japs poured burning gasoline on one foot, then on the other until he collapsed, whereupon they poured gasoline over his body and ignited it (p. 6, Ex. B).

McDole stayed with Harrick, whom he found on the beach, until the latter died of gangrene on 18 December 1944 from a bullet wound in the arm. Covering the body, McDole swam the bay to Iwahig Penal Colony shortly after dawn and in the late afternoon started out again but because of exhaustion had to remain on a fish trap all night, from which he was rescued by Iwahig prisoners gathering their fish, and he, with Bogue, was sent to Brooke's Point on 7 January 1945, from whence the PBX picked them up 21 January 1945 (pp. 6, 7, Ex. B; p. 12, Ex. C). Martyn swam the bay but did not contact the others (p. 13, Ex. C).

That night the Kojima Tai officers, in company with personnel from the Kempel Tai and the Obayashi Tai, held a celebration to commemorate the incident (p. 2, Ex. E).

Following the landing by American Forces at Puerto Princesa, Palawan, on 28 February 1945 a search of the POW enclosure was made and identification tags, certain personal items, and fragmentary records concerning American personnel were obtained (p. 1, Ex. D).

Between the 15 and 23 of March 1945, seventy-nine individual skeletons were buried by the 3rd Platoon,

601st QM Co. (GR). Twenty-six of these skeletons were found piled four and five high in one excavation. Bullets had pierced the skulls and they had been crushed with blunt instruments. Nine dugouts were inspected and the supporting planks were charred near the openings indicating a flash fire of intense heat but of short duration, resembling the results of a gasoline fire.

The smallest number of bodies were found in the largest dugouts which were closest to the cliff and furthest away from the prison buildings. Most of the bodies were huddled together at a place furthest away from the entrance where twenty-six bodies were taken from one hole which was not a dugout. In two dugouts (closest to the cliff) bodies were in prone positions, arms extended with small conical holes in the fingertips showing that these men were trying to dig their way to freedom (pp. 1, 2, Ex. 2 of Ex. D).

* * *

DOCUMENT 10-V

PLAIN

May 19, 1945

AMLEGATION,

BERN.

1856

AMERICAN INTERESTS - JAPAN

Please request Swiss to transmit verbatim to Japanese Government following message:

QUOTE: The brutal massacre on December 14, 1944 of one hundred and fifty American prisoners of war at Puerto Princesa, Palawan, Philippine Islands, by the personnel of the Ogawa Tai Construction Corps has profoundly shocked the Government and the people of the United States.

At noon of that day the prisoners who had been detailed to work on a nearby airfield were recalled to camp. Following upon a series of air raid alarms the Japanese guards forced the prisoners into air raid shelters within the camp compound. The shelters were tunnels some seventy-five feet long with openings at each end. About two o'clock in the afternoon fifty to sixty Japanese guards armed with rifles and machine guns and carrying buckets of gasoline and lighted torches, approached the shelters. They emptied the gasoline into the openings of the tunnels and hurled the blazing torches after it. Violent explosions followed. The victims, enveloped in flames and screaming in agony, swarmed from the shelters only to be mowed down by machine guns or attacked with bayonets. Four officers who had sought shelter elsewhere suffered a similar fate. One of them, emerging in flames from his retreat, approached a Japanese officer and pled that the carnage be stopped. He was ruthlessly shot down. In order to insure that

- 2 -

no living prisoners remained in the shelters, the guards fired the tunnels with dynamite charges.

About forty prisoners succeeded in escaping from the compound by throwing themselves over a fifty-foot cliff onto the beach below. Landing barges patrolling the bay and sentries on the shore fired upon them. Many moaning in agony, were buried alive by their captors. One, who had reached the water and struck out to sea, was recaptured and brought back to land where Japanese soldiers, prodding him with bayonets, forced him to walk along the beach. A Japanese guard poured gasoline upon the prisoners foot and set fire to it. Ignoring his entreaties that he be shot the Japanese soldiers deliberately set fire to his other foot and to both his hands. They mocked and derided him in his suffering and then bayoneted him until he collapsed. Thereupon they poured gasoline over his body and watched the flames devour it.

Such barbaric behavior on the part of the Japanese armed forces is an offense to all civilized people. The Japanese Government cannot escape responsibility for this crime. The United States Government demands that appropriate punishment be inflicted on all those who directed or participated in it. It expects to receive from the Japanese Government notification that such punishment has been inflicted. The United States Government further demands that the Japanese Government take such action as may be necessary to forestall the repetition of offenses of so heinous a nature and assure the United States Government that such outrages will not again be inflicted upon American prisoners of war in Japanese custody.

CREW
(Acting)