

**PRESIDENT FERDINAND ROMUALDEZ MARCOS JR.'s
SPEECH AT THE 82nd ANNIVERSARY OF THE ARAW NG KAGITINGAN
Mt. Samat National Shrine, Pilar, Bataan
April 9, 2024**

[00:00:04]

Thank you very much, Secretary Gilberto Teodoro, for your kind introduction.

Please take your seats.

His Excellency Charles John Brown, Dean of the Diplomatic Corps and the other Excellencies of the Diplomatic Corps here today; His Excellency Endo Kazuya, Ambassador of Japan to the Philippines; Mr. Robert Ewing, the Chargé d'affaires of the US in the Philippines; Governor Jose Enrique Garcia of the province of Bataan; Congressman Alberto Raymond Garcia, District Representative of the Second District of Bataan; Mayor Carlos Pizaro, our host today; Chairperson Lisa Guerrero-Nakpil of the National Historical Commission of the Philippines; Undersecretary Reynaldo Mapagod, the Administrator of the Veterans Affairs Office; the Reverend Father Josue Enero, Vicar General, Roman Catholic Diocese of Balanga and Parish Priest of St. Catherine of Sienna Parish; Ms. Yeshua Brylen S. Flores, Grade 7 Luacan High School, Dinalupihan District; and Mr. Felisisimo Paala De La Cruz, World War II veteran. And, of course, the most important guests that we have here are the veterans not only of the Second World War but all of our veterans who are here today. [applause] My fellow workers in the government, ladies, and gentlemen. Good morning!

We gather here today in annual remembrance of the series of events in 1942, which all of us Filipinos hold dearly to our hearts. It is of high importance to us compelled not by mere law or presidential issuance, but by sheer heritage; by our shared history; by the proud example of our compatriots whom we revere as our real heroes.

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Indeed, this occasion should not be seen as a tiresome recollection of a horrendous loss recorded in our history, nor just as a yearly exercise in remembrance of a terrible time in our history.

As the Day of Valor, it is a fitting tribute to our Filipino soldiers from all over the country, who bravely fought in World War II, side by side with our allies. Most especially, to the more than 60,000 of them who were pummeled and forced into submission during the Fall of Bataan.

And their fate did not end in that surrender on home soil. Those who were spared from execution had to endure the equally difficult and horrendous Death March, the prison camps that awaited and those who survived this excruciating journey on foot.

Described by historians as a “tragic nightmare, without form, reason or mercy,” the Death March was yet another extreme test of the will, both physically and mentally of every Filipino.

Our fighters went on for days in the sweltering summer heat, with no food, no medicine, under terrible malarial conditions. Their severely weakened bodies, further wilted by depression, were forcibly mobilized by threats of beatings and possible spot execution.

We will forever be in debt to our heroes --- those who perished and the survivors who stared death in the eye and lived to tell the tale. Some of whom are with us here today. For them, the higher and nobler cause made their supreme sacrifice worth enduring.

And on a much deeper level, the Fall of Bataan is not just a past event that we commemorate. It serves as a constant reminder of our singular purpose towards the future as one nation, supported by like-minded allies in this post-war, rules-based international order.

As recounted, the retreat to Bataan was a strategic “defense in depth.” The plan was to hold out for as long as possible until external support arrived. Bataan was the crucial last bastion, Mt. Samat functioned as its veritable watchtower. Bataan, as well as Corregidor, Caballo, El Fraile and Carabao islands, all proved to be strategic sites in the defense of our archipelago.

We have been blessed not only with persevering and valorous people. Our own natural resources furnished us with both sustenance and the means for our own self-defense.

[00:05:23]

And as fate would have it, the battle that was initially lost, the war would eventually be won.

In that stunning reversal, the Fall of Bataan thus marked the resurgence of the genuinely independent and sovereign Philippines.

Eighty two years on, our nation remains confronted with novel challenges, in varying forms and degrees, but with the same existential impact. Some portend clear and present threats to our sovereign rights and in fact have already caused physical harm to our people.

Ang mga ito ay hindi katanggap-tanggap. Hindi makatuwiran o makatarungan, lalo na sa panahong ito ng payapang pakikipag-ugnayan ng mga bansa.

Nawa'y magsilbing inspirasyon ang mga kaganapan noong 1942 at ang tagumpay natin noong 1945 sa ating lahat. Gayundin sa ating kabataan at sa mga ating susunod na salinlahi.

Tulad ng pinamalas ng ating mga dakilang ninuno, hindi tayo dapat magpasupil at magpaapi, lalo na sa loob ng ating sariling bakuran. Nawa'y mapagkunan natin ito ng pang-ibayong kamalayan, tapang at lakas ng loob. Higit sa lahat, nawa'y patuloy nitong pagtibayin ang ating pagkakaisa at ang ating pagiging makabansa.

We must leverage these lessons if we are to safeguard the future of our Republic. The sacrifices of our heroes must galvanize us and strengthen our national consciousness, our patriotic spirit.

The present-day Armed Forces continue this noble duty of safeguarding our nation's security and our sovereignty. And in recognition of their bravery and sacrifices, I am directing the Defense, Budget and Finance Departments to study the existing separation benefits of soldiers who incurred total permanent disability in the line of duty to see if these are commensurate to the sacrifices they have made and submit their recommendation while taking stock of the national government's position. [applause]

We are doubling our efforts. [applause] We are doubling our efforts to enhance their operational capability. We must therefore also ensure their safety by procuring the right equipment.

I therefore task the DND and AFP to assess and submit a report on the responsiveness of the current inventory of military supplies and equipment. These measures aim to show our unwavering support to our soldiers as they face new and growing challenges.

Ours is a complicated world today, but we must not yield. We must not back down from any and all challenges that seek to threaten our peace, our honor, our very existence.

The Shrine and all the nameless Filipino war heroes that it represents, beckon to us. May we all be inspired by their unbreakable will, unflappable courage and undying patriotism. The “spirit that made Bataan stand” cannot and must never fail.

Mabuhay ang mga alaala ng ating mga bayaning Pilipino!

Mabuhay ang ating mga beterano! [applause]

Mabuhay ang sambayanang Pilipino.

Maraming salamat po at magandang umaga po sa inyong lahat! [applause]
[00:08:054]

BAGONG PILIPINAS