

No. 1450

Exh. 1450

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

APD 500  
17 October 1945

MEMORANDUM TO: Prosecution Section (Report # 75)  
THRU: Executive Officer, War Crimes Branch  
SUBJECT: Offenses Committed by the Japanese at  
Camp O'Donnell.

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II. SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE:

Over nine thousand American and about forty-seven thousand Filipino prisoners of war were imprisoned in Camp O'Donnell, and all had surrendered on 9 April 1942 upon the capitulation of the American Forces on Bataan (R 6, 39). Many of them had made the so-called "Death March" from Bataan to San Fernando and thence on to Camp O'Donnell (R 20, 88, 192). As a result of this trip and the privations they had endured just prior to their surrender, all of the prisoners reached Camp O'Donnell in a state of exhaustion (R 8, 38). Upon arrival at the camp, the prisoners were searched, and some were killed by the Japanese when found to possess Japanese money or souvenirs (21, 37, 38, 105, 112, 161, 163). Other groups of American and Filipino prisoners of war were executed (R 24, 129, 196), or taken from camp under guard and never heard of again (R 7).

Most of the deaths in Camp O'Donnell were due to dysentery and malaria coupled with malnutrition, and many of these deaths could have been prevented had the Japanese furnished adequate food, shelter, clothing, water, sanitation facilities, and medicine and hospital care (R 1, 7, 8, 17, 27, 91, 117, 155, 181). The quarters provided for the prisoners were overcrowded and inadequate to protect them from the weather (R 27, 109, 142, 173). Only open latrines of the "straddle trench" type were available, but many of the prisoners were too weak from illness to use them, and flies and filth were everywhere (R 54, 81). No screens were provided for the kitchen and food was contaminated by flies from the open latrines (R 54, 134). Food was inadequate, consisting only of a bowl of rice sprinkled with salt, camotes, with occasionally a little watery soup made from greens (R 1, 109), but this was later increased until the men began to gain a little weight (R 17). The death rate mounted to

nearly sixty per day during the first two months of imprisonment (R 27). During the first few months at Camp O'Donnell the prisoners were not allowed to use water for bathing, and conditions in the hospital were most unsanitary due to the inability of the patients to move to the latrines. There were no beds nor bedding, and the patients were crowded on the floor and under the building, with no protection from insects, flies, and the weather (R 54, 96, 99, 109, 110, 134, 158). Repeated requests for medicine and hospital equipment were refused (R 38, 133). More than fifteen hundred American prisoners of war died in Camp O'Donnell between the period 18 April 1942 to December 1942 (Ex. D); and approximately twenty-six thousand Filipino prisoners died during that period (R 9, 209).

American and Filipino prisoners were forced to stand in the hot sun without hats for many hours for minor violations of prison regulations (R 3). Others were beaten with rifles, scabbards, and bamboo poles when they fell, exhausted, while at work (R 88, 119). Beatings of the prisoners on work details by the Japanese guards, with bayonets, clubs, and pick handles were common occurrences (R 100, 121).

Many of the prisoners were forced to bury the dead, build fences, and dig latrines, though they were physically unfit to perform such labor because of illness and malnutrition (R 89, 91, 119, 129, 181).

Upon arrival at Camp O'Donnell, the prisoners were forced to place all their personal belongings on their blankets, and the Japanese confiscated all money, jewelry, watches, and equipment including medical supplies, although some of the officers were allowed to keep a blanket (R 36, 91, 114, 133, 195).

The prisoners were required to bury their own dead in graves containing twelve to sixty bodies each, without regard to proper identification of the graves or positions of the bodies (R 3, 4, 84, 148). Sixty-five who died were listed as unknown (Ex. D). On some occasions they were forced to bury men who were still alive (R 24, 129). Frequently the Japanese would not grant permission to bury the dead, and bodies were left exposed to the sun for two or three days at a time before permission was granted to bury them (R 3, 54, 78).

On several occasions representatives of the Red Cross and other charitable organizations attempted to bring medicine and supplies to alleviate the condition of the prisoners, but they were turned away at the entrance to the camp (R 9, 27, 38, 55). When supplies were allowed to be brought in by charitable organizations, the Japanese confiscated much of it for their own use and only allowed the prisoners to have what was left (R 8, 38, 39).

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