

RESTRICTED

GENERAL HEADQUARTERS
 UNITED STATES ARMY FORCES, PACIFIC
 WAR CRIMES BRANCH

19 February 1946

MEMORANDUM TO: Prosecution Section (Report No. 210)

THRU : Executive Officer, War Crimes Branch.

SUBJECT : Transportation of prisoners of war under improper conditions from Davao Penal Colony, Mindanao, P.I. to Manila, P.I. from June 6 to June 26, 1944.

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II. SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE:

Sometime during the first week in June, 1944 between 1,200 and 1,500 American prisoners of war were transported by truck from the Davao Penal Colony to Davao City. The men were tied together by rope around their waists and crowded into trucks. They were blindfolded and required to keep their hands in view. Many of the sick prisoners and even amputees on crutches were required to stand during the 25-mile-trip. If it was thought that any of the men were peeking, they were struck with clubs or rifle butts by the guards. Many were suffering from beri-beri and during the rough trip their flesh was rubbed raw against the sides of the trucks. Some men fainted and were held up only by the rope, tying the prisoners together, and this in turn, cut off the circulation of blood of the prisoners near by. (R 1, 6, 11, 17, 26, 27, 30, 37, 44). When they arrived in the port at Davao, the men were loaded into two holds of a small unmarked freight ship that had not been cleaned since carrying a cargo of coal. The ship stayed in the harbor a few days and then sailed with a convoy. The more seriously ill were in one hold where there was room for them to lie down in a crowded condition. The ship traveled close to the shore during the day and anchored at night. The prisoners were allowed a free run of the ship until they were near Zamboanga where a Lt. Colonel John MAGEE and a Lt. ILLIS escaped over the side of the ship. For the remaining days of the trip the prisoners were required to stay in the hold. There was not enough room for them to lie down and it was necessary for them to sleep in shifts. The only latrine facilities were a few 5-gallon cans that were lowered into the hold. As many of the men were suffering from dysentery and diarrhea they often were forced to relieve themselves before these latrine cans became available. The hatches were kept almost completely covered. The men never had enough water to drink and what was provided was not completely distilled. The temperature of the hold was estimated at 120 to 125 degrees Fahrenheit and many suffered from heat prostration. The food consisted of small amount of rice and thin soup. Some of the soup had been made from spoiled meat which probably aggravated the sickened condition of the men. After the escape of the two officers, the rations were decreased so that it was estimated that the Americans received about one-sixth of the amount received by the Japanese (R 2, 7, 11, 12, 13, 17, 20, 23, 27, 30, 33, 37, 45, 46, 47, 51, 54).

Around 12 or 14 June 1944, the ship arrived at Cebu where the men were all put ashore. Many of them had to be carried because of their weakened condition. The seriously ill were crowded into a barracks and the others were put into a small open area inside an old Spanish fort believed to have been called Fort San Pedro. It rained part of the time and the prisoners were given no shelter either day or night. There were no latrine facilities and the men had to designate latrine areas on the open ground (R 2, 13, 27, 47, 54).

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After two or three days at Cebu, the prisoners were loaded into the holds of another larger unmarked former coal ship. It was infested with rats and mice. Though this ship was larger, they were crowded worse than before. The physical condition of the men was worse as they were weak and sick from malnutrition. Some of the men were unable to stand, their nerves were shattered and their rations were so small that fist-fights occurred over a spoonful of rice. The men were not allowed on deck. The sanitary facilities again consisted of 5-gallon cans and because of illness many of the men were unable to control their bowels. The ventilation, food and sanitary conditions on this ship were in general the same as on the previous ship. However, some medical supplies were finally given to American medical officers. About 24 June 1944, they arrived in Manila Bay. On 26 June 1944, Lt. William EDEEN of Minneapolis, Minnesota, died. This is the only death recorded during the voyage. The men disembarked at Pier 7. The litter patients were taken by truck to Old Bilibid Prison in Manila, while the others were compelled to walk through the streets to Bilibid (R 2, 3, 7, 14, 17, 20, 27, 30, 37, 54, 55). Later, most of the men were sent to the Cabanatuan Prison Camp. Bilibid and Cabanatuan are the subjects of separate reports.

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