

Overview of the Philippine Commonwealth Army and Guerilla review process for individuals seeking VA Benefits

Background

To extend formal recognition to the Philippine Commonwealth Army units, guerrilla units and individuals, the United States Army developed and administered a well-publicized recognition program between late 1942 and June 30, 1948. Over 1.2 million persons applied for recognition, and ultimately the service of over 260,000 members of the Philippine Commonwealth Army and guerillas was recognized as U.S. service. Finalized on June 30, 1948, the Army's recognition program involved a robust field investigation by hundreds of Army officials working closely with Philippine authorities and guerrilla unit commanders. The resulting service determinations (rosters of recognized Philippine Commonwealth Army and guerrilla units, rosters of recognized guerilla unit membership, and letters of individual recognition) were based on written criteria applied by competent authority with first-hand evidence. The original documentation of the recognition program consists of over 1,600 boxes of records which are publicly available at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) facility in College Park, Maryland. The official and now declassified report from the Headquarters, Philippines Command, United States Army, entitled "U.S. Army Recognition Program of Philippine Guerrillas," is also available at <<http://research.archives.gov/description/6921767>>.

By agreement with NARA, the Army transferred responsibility to the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC), to provide reference service on the Army's collection of Philippine Army files. In response to VA requests for U.S. service verification, the NPRC will retrieve and authenticate Army records pertaining to their prior service determinations.

Process Overview

Step 1: The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) receives a claim for disability or death benefits based on an individual's claimed Philippine Commonwealth Army or guerrilla service. VA completes the VA Form 3101, Request for Information, based on service information provided by Claimant and any supporting documents available, if any.

Step 2: The VA Form 3101 and any accompanying documentation provided by the Claimant is forwarded to NPRC. ***Note: The documents provided by the Claimant cannot be used to adjudicate their claim. They are simply used as a reference to help locate the official records maintained by NPRC for the Department of the Army.***

Step 3: When the VA Form 3101 is received by NPRC, the request is entered in their Case Management and Reporting System, the source documents are scanned and appended to the request and a unique identifier is assigned to facilitate tracking.

Step 4: The request is assigned to an Archives Technician to research.

Step 5: The Archives Technician reviews the information provided by the Claimant and searches for the responsive claim folder. If a claim folder is not located, the Archives Technician will gather all available documents pertaining to this request including copies of rosters for the units listed by the Claimant on the VA Form 3101 and forward them to the Army Human Resource Command so they can validate service. The Army Human Resource Command will review the information, consult with the staff at NPRC and at Archives II in

College Park Maryland before forwarding a recommendation to the Adjutant General for signature. Once the final determination has been made, the VA Form 3101 will be returned to the Department of Veterans Affairs. All the documents associated with this review will be returned to NPRC so a new claim folder can be established in the event additional inquiries are made regarding the Claimant's service.

Step 6: If a claim folder is located, the Archives Technician will attempt to locate the AGO Form 23 (Affidavit for Philippine Army Personnel) within the claim folder. If this form is found, the technician will use the data transcribed on the form to locate a roster(s) of recognized units that were finalized during the U.S. Army Recognition Program. Since the rosters only list the names and ranks of the soldiers, the information in the claim folder, specifically the AGO Form 23, is necessary to verify service. If the AGO Form 23 cannot be located, the Archives Technician will attempt to locate the roster(s) with information from the VA Form 3101. If a name matching the Claimant appears on the roster(s), the technician will send a request to VA so they can attempt to procure a copy of the AGO Form 23 from the Claimant or the Non-Current Records Section of the Philippine Office of the Adjutant General. Once the response is received from the VA proceed to Step 7.

Step 7: If the information on the AGO Form 23 matches the information on the recognized rosters, the service can be verified and the Archives Technician sends the completed VA Form 3101 along with the AGO Form 23 and a summary of the recognized service history to VA. If the AGO Form 23 cannot be located or the information on the AGO Form 23 does not match the roster(s) and there is no further information in the claim folder to verify service, the Archives Technician will send a negative reply to the VA.

Summary

The detailed process outlined above replicates the process employed by the Department of the Army for decades following the end of the recognition period. The NPRC, serving as the agent for the Department of the Army, is not making service determinations, but is simply verifying prior decisions made by the Department of the Army. In the following cases the NPRC will forward the VA inquiry and the results of NPRC record retrieval efforts to The Adjutant General for a service determination: the official records do not reference a service determination concerning service in the Philippine Commonwealth Army; the official records do not reference a service determination rendered during the U.S. Army Recognition Program of Philippine Guerrillas; or a claimant submits evidence not previously considered by the Army. In making the service determination, The Adjutant General considers any documents provided by the VA and the relevant Army records. The Adjutant General determines whether these documents and records establish that the claimant was recognized in 1948 as a veteran of the Philippine Commonwealth Army in the Service of the United States during World War II; not whether Army records should be changed.