

MESSAGE

As we mark Veterans' Day and the 50th anniversary of the liberation of the Philippines and the end of World War II this year, we proudly honor and revere the Filipino veterans who bequeathed to us the legacy of peace and freedom.

We salute these gallant men and women, particularly the veterans among the Filipino Communities in the United States for having taken up arms and defended our shores against a stronger, more prepared and far superior enemy force fifty years ago. In their native audacity and youthful aggressiveness they accepted the challenge to fight for their country and defend freedom.

In the Philippines, we identified and observed nationwide the 50th anniversaries of no less than forty-three World War II landings, battles and campaigns in the Philippines during the period from October 1994 to September 1995. We adopted the theme: "Peace - For A Better World". These celebrations brought into clear focus the gallantry of the Allied Forces, the guerrillas and the civilian population. We also recalled the sacrifices and deprivations endured by the families of the servicemen and ordinary civilians. They, too, were worthy heroes and martyrs. Many of them perished, most cruelly and ironically, during the liberation of our towns and cities. In Manila alone, the civilian casualties in February to March 1945 reached an astounding 100,000 or 10% of the city's population.

Given our history of sacrifices, deaths and devastation wrought by the war, we Filipinos are one in our resolve to always seek the peaceful alternative to conflicts. As enshrined in our Constitution, we renounce war in any form. It is also our ardent hope that this and future generations will never find it necessary to go to war because differences in ideals and interests can be resolved through peaceful dialogue.

It is now time to enjoy the peace and freedom won for us by our veterans. On this occasion, let us turn our thoughts to the future of our country and of the world. Let the Filipino-American veterans of World War II continue to pursue their aspirations for a brighter and more prosperous life. I exhort them to continue supporting the struggle for US recognition, specifically the passage of H.R. 1136, otherwise known as the Filipino Veterans Act of 1995, because it is our conviction that the service rendered by our veterans during World War II was military or naval service in the Armed Forces of the United States. This the Philippine Government and people support.

Finally, let the commemoration today be the symbol of the unity and loyalty to the great principles and values for which the Philippines stands and for which your great adopted country, the United States of America, is a leading advocate.

Mabuhay ang mga beterano!!

November 11, 1995