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2006 CDSG Trip to the Philippines

February 25 - March 8, 2006

Mark Berhow

This was my first trip to the Philippine forts, and it was indeed impressive to see the largest remaining collection of American seacoast artillery. The sheer size of Fort Mills is hard to visualize from maps and pictures, and I was impressed by the height of the hills and cliffs that make up Corregidor and the other islands. I understand little has changed since the last official tour in 2001, so I will just try to hit the highlights. The trip was outstanding; we were able to see all the American fortifications as well as make some great side trips.

With the help of a good tour agency, it is possible to fly to Manila, spend the night in a hotel, get to the ferry dock, and out Corregidor. Once there, it is easy to walk or ride (via a Jeepney or motor scooter) to all the major sites on the island. Arrangements can also be made for a boat to Carabao Island (Fort Frank) and Fort Drum. Similar travel agency arrangements can be made to get to the Grande Island Resort in Subic Bay. The problems are getting permission to visit Caballo Island (Fort Hughes), a Philippine Navy reservation, and getting on Fort Drum without swimming or getting injured. By having a large group and good Philippine contacts, we were able to visit Caballo and to rent a large-enough boat (with experienced pilots) to land at Forts Drum and Frank while staying dry.

Glen Williford is to be commended for making all the arrangements for the group; all we had to do is hand over the cash and show up in San Francisco or Los Angeles. His arrangements through Rajah Tours proved very satisfactory. Our local contacts, including member Tony Feredo in Manila, Ron Binadero, the

Corregidor Foundation's representative on Corregidor, and the Sun Cruises staff of the Corregidor Inn and the MacArthur Store were all extremely helpful.

An alleged coup attempt and declaration of emergency by the Philippine government in the days before we left the U.S. hung over proceedings, but there was no evidence of civil unrest on our arrival in Manila. We arrived on the morning of the 27th and made it through immigration, baggage, and customs into the warm Manila air. The Rajah Tours bus was waiting, and after loading our baggage we were off through Manila.

Clark Field and Camp O'Donnell

The first stop was at the bayfront in Manila to drop off two adventurers going straight out to Corregidor (they were actually delayed a day by ferry problems) and to pick up three members from the Netherlands. Then, it was off to the town of Angeles and the old Clark Air Force Base.



The parade ground at Fort Stotsenburg

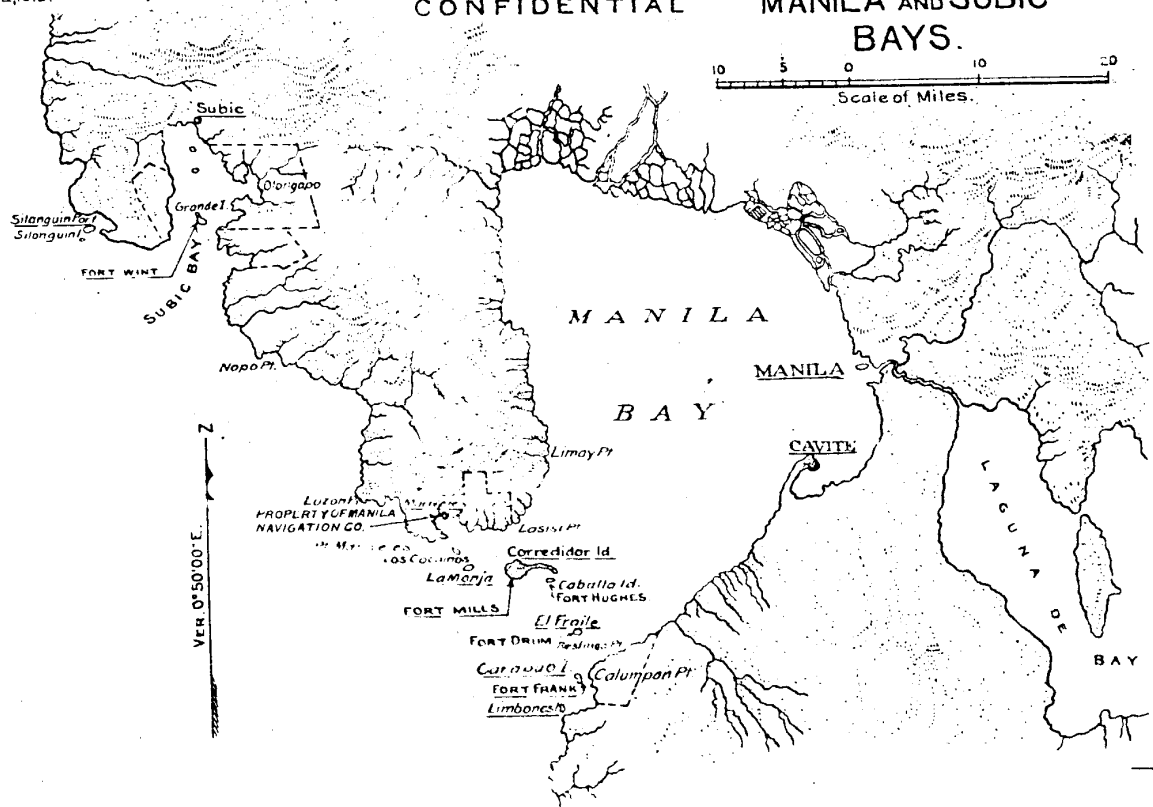
EDITION OF JAN. 14, 1915.
REVISIONS: JAN. 22, 1918.

SERIAL NUMBER

CONFIDENTIAL

PHILIPPINE ISLANDS

MANILA AND SUBIC BAYS.



EDITION OF JAN. 14, 1915.
REVISIONS: DEC. 7, 1915;
NOV. 8, 1916; JAN. 22, 1918;
OCT. 24, 1919; MAY 6, 1925;
MAR. 21, 1926; APRIL 11, 1935

SERIAL NUMBER

SECRET

DEFENSES OF MANILA BAY FORT MILLS CORREGIDOR ISLAND, P.I. GENERAL MAP.

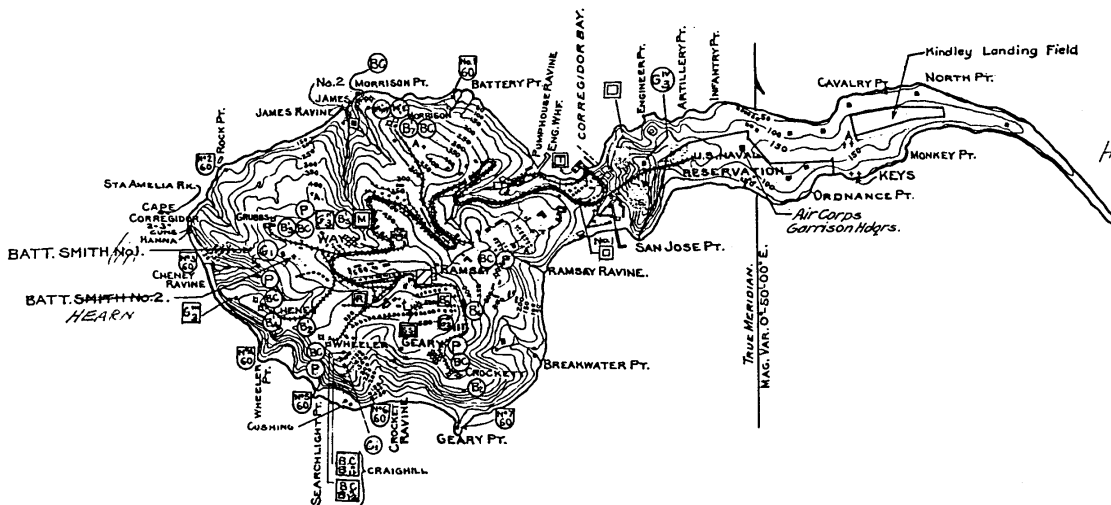
BATTERIES

GEARY.....8-12" M.
WAY.....4-12" M.
WHEELER.....2-12" Dis.
CROCKETT.....2-12" "
CHENEY.....2-12" "
GRUBBS.....2-10" "
RAMSAY.....3-6" "
MORRISON.....2-6" "
JAMES.....4-3" "
SMITH #1.....1-12" BAR
HEARN-SMITH #2.....1-12" BAR
KEYS.....2-3" "
HANNA.....2-3" "
CUSHING.....2-3" "

A. Antiaircraft Gun Blacs

RAZOR 18.

HOOVER PT.



2500 0 2500 5000

Active Status.

Clark started as Fort Stotsenburg (1909-1942), a US Army infantry and cavalry base. An aircraft landing field was added in 1919 and the location became Clark Air Force Base after Philippine independence in 1947. Re-negotiation of the military agreements with the Philippine government closed Clark and Subic Bay Naval Station in 1992, hastened by the eruption of Mt. Pinatubu in 1991. The old air base was slated for economic development, but little evidence of that could be seen. A quick stop at the museum on the old base and a drive around the old Fort Stotsenburg parade ground rounded out our windshield tour.

From Clark, we headed north to the site of prisoner-of-war Camp O'Donnell, the end of the Bataan Death March. The site is now a Philippine World War II memorial, with a number of monuments and memorials to the American and Filipino soldiers who fought and died during 1941-1945. Little remains of the actual camp, but visiting the site is quite an experience.



Memorials at Camp O'Donnell

Fort Wint, Grande Island, Subic Bay

From Camp O'Donnell we headed to Subic Bay. We arrived at the back entrance to the old US Naval Base and drove down to the main pier area. The former Subic Bay Naval Station has fared much better than Clark Field; there appears to be much more prosperity and development. At the end of our first day we boarded our ferry to Grande Island Resort, the site of former Fort Wint.

Grande Island was acquired by the military in the early 1900s to defend Subic Bay and the planned naval station. The defenses — mines, two batteries of 3-inch guns, two batteries of 6-inch guns, and a battery of 10-inch guns — were built along with those in Manila Bay. The fort was abandoned in December 1941 and



The main wharf at the old Subic Bay Naval Station



The Grande Island Resort

recovered in 1944. The island became a recreation area after the Subic Bay Naval Station was built in the late 1940s. In 1963 the four remaining 3-inch guns at Wint were moved to Washington State, followed by the two 10-inch guns of Battery Warwick in 1967. With the rest of the Subic Bay navy holdings, Grande Island was turned over to the government of the Philippines in 1992. Today the island is a privately run resort with sleeping, dining, and recreation facilities, catering to generally Taiwanese and Korean tourists. We settled into our rooms and had a nice buffet-style dinner, followed by drinks and live music.

In the morning, Glen led the group around the island to the various remaining defensive structures. The first stop was the remains of Battery Hall and its two 6-inch M1905 guns on M1905 disappearing carriages. The battery magazine was destroyed by the explosion of munitions stored there soon after the fort was reoccupied by American forces. The guns remain in excellent condition, as they were on US Navy property and spared the



Battery Hall, Fort Wint

attention of scrappers. The vegetation around the magazine area and around the guns had been knocked down prior to our visit, allowing for good photographs.

Next, we walked through Battery Flake (four 3-inch Ped), now mostly overgrown, and up the main hill of the island. We visited the powerhouse and water reservoir behind Battery Warwick, and the fire control structure in front of the battery. Battery Warwick (two 10-inch DC) is fenced off and currently occupied by Philippine Marines. The site is a naval communications station; we were allowed to visit but not take photos. The central traverse has been modified for the communication station. The

gun pits are covered with metal grates. The right parapet wall of the No. 1 gun is separating from the main battery structure and leans to the side.

Walking down towards the north end of the island, we arrived at Battery Jewell (four 3-inch Ped); part of the battery has been fenced off as a work area. Backtracking south up the hillside brought us to the remains of Battery Woodruff (two 6-inch DC). Little remains of the battery except parts of the parapet walls; a couple of buildings are on what were once the loading platforms. Completing our tour was a visit to the mine area. The casemate remains, but has been sealed, and the mine wharf is gone, but we could see the foundations of the two cable tanks. The site of the torpedo storehouse has a couple of guest rooms on it, and a few intrepid souls crawled into the dynamite magazine north of the mine casemate.

Having the afternoon pretty much to ourselves, we indulged in swimming, walking, and beverages. The group gathered at a dinner buffet on the beach for more food, drink, and conversation.

The Fortifications of Manila-Intramuros

Checking out, we boarded the ferry to Subic and the Rajah tour bus. We made a quick trip around the former naval base and through Olongapo, with a short stop at the old American Legion, before winding back to Manila via San Fernando. Traffic slowed us, so it was mid-afternoon when we pulled into old Fort McKinley.

Our first stop was the Philippines Veterans Museum, where we met CDSG member Tony Feredo, with the news that our visit to Fort Hughes had been approved by the Philippine Navy - good news indeed. We had a quick visit to the museum, then another short stop at the American Cemetery of the Pacific. From there, it was downtown Manila and the Intramuros district, the old Spanish fortified city. The scene of bitter fighting during the American retaking of Manila in 1944-45, the Intramuros area was heavily damaged, but the Philippine government has substantially rebuilt much of the fortifications and the fortified wall. The area outside the wall is now a park and golf course. A small museum is inside rebuilt Fort Santiago, where the Pasig River originally emptied into Manila Bay. Fort Santiago looks great, as does the wall around the Intramuros, but many of the structures in the old city have yet to be rebuilt.



American Cemetery of the Pacific, Manila



Fort Santiago, Manila



Dinner at the Old Manila Hotel

We then checked into the Old Manila Hotel, with dinner and a nightcap. We were able to tour the MacArthur Suite, Douglas MacArthur's headquarters, rebuilt and refurnished after the war.

Fort Mills, Corregidor Island

The Rajah Tours bus took us to the ferry landing. The ferry was running this day, and we had a full boat on the first morning run to Corregidor. Once ashore, we loaded onto jeepneys and began our tour of the island. Glen had an itinerary mapped out for "first timers." Most folks stayed with the group, but some headed out on their own.



Battery Morrison, Fort Mills

The island is divided by topography, “Bottomside” near the docks at the narrows in the middle of the island, “Middleside” partway up the larger part of the island, then “Topside.” Malinta Hill dominates the way to the tail of the island.

Our first stop was the main reservoir at Middleside, followed by Battery Morrison (two 6-inch DC), Battery James (four 3-inch Ped), and locations down James Ravine including a mine casemate. These sites are not on the regular tour route, so the roads are not paved and the sites are becoming overgrown. Glen arranged for the brush to be cleared at Battery Morrison, allowing good photography.

After eating lunch and checking into the Corregidor Inn, we headed back to the building and barracks areas at Middleside and Topside. The areas along the main tour route are well maintained; lawns are mowed on a regular basis and the vegetation kept at bay. It was impressive to see the bombed-out ruins of the Middleside and Topside barracks, the theater, administration building, hospital, and a number of officers quarters. We visited the War in the Pacific Memorial topside and saw the museum, where the CDSG Fund helped mount photographs. In general the sites and batteries on the tour have been cleared of major debris, the structure stabilized and, in the case of the guns, painted. Those emplacements and structures off the tour route are becoming increasingly overgrown.



Topside Barracks, Fort Mills



Malinta Hill and the Corregidor Inn

That evening I took in the guided tour of Malinta Tunnel. We walked through the damaged quartermaster tunnels, where the Japanese ammunition supply exploded in 1945, along the main laterals and the hospital laterals.

Fort Hughes, Caballo Island

The main feature of the next day was the visit to Fort Hughes on Caballo Island. A Philippine Navy reservation, it houses a large collection of outdated munitions and some communication equipment and is generally off limits to the public. The group loaded on two bancas and made the hour-long ride around the Tail to Caballo, where we were met by Lt. Cdr. Orlando Sto. Domingo, commander of the unit on Caballo, and Capt. Catalino Lim of the Philippine Naval Historical Office. Admonished to



Middleside Barracks, Fort Mills



Pacific War Memorial, Corregidor



Caballo Island (Fort Hughes) from Corregidor

stay together and follow the rules on what we could or could not photograph, we visited the remains of Battery Leach (two 6-inch DC) and Battery Fuger (two 3-inch Ped), both largely destroyed by 1945. One 6-inch barrel remains atop a pile of concrete rubble at Leach; only a few concrete piles remain of Fuger.



Battery Woodruff, Fort Hughes

Walking back up the middle of the island, we gathered behind Battery Woodruff (one 14-inch DC). We could not photograph the lower level of the battery, but could take pictures on the top and the loading platform. This was one of the sites I really wanted to see, having volunteered with the Fort MacArthur Museum at Battery Osgood-Farley, which once had the same guns. This gun and the mortars of Battery Craighill are among the most-intact weapons in the Manila Bay collection. Very impressive!



Battery Craighill, Fort Hughes

Next, we climbed to Battery Craighill (four 12-inch mortars in two pits). The scene of the final Japanese stand in 1945, a number of artifacts, shells, and battle debris can still be found. The M1912 mortars are the only ones of that type remaining, and the site has graffiti from the Japanese defenders. The light filtering through the trees ringing the top of the pit gave the place an eerie ambience. The lower (A) pit is fairly clear of debris; the upper (B) pit is still partially caved in, mostly burying one mortar.

Next, we climbed out the cableway to the road and walked to Battery Gillespie (one 14-inch DC). A test location for a rocket



Battery Gillespie, Fort Hughes, Corregidor behind program, the gun pit has been filled with concrete, but we could explore the lower level of this battery. While we returned to the dock area, a few folks visited some fire control and searchlight positions. After a box lunch and many thanks, we boarded our bancas back to Corregidor.



Departing Caballo Island



Battery Way, Fort Mills

Upon our return, we loaded the jeepneys and visited Battery Way (four 12-inch mortars in a single pit). This battery was one of the last put into service in 1942, and the last to fire on the day of the surrender. Our visit coincided with two other tour groups. Heading back down the hill, Glen lead the hearty souls to the top of Malinta Hill to visit the fire control and related structures there.

Fort Drum and Fort Frank, Carabao Island

Another boat day, to Forts Drum and Frank. By this time, a number of us, including myself, were suffering from what turned out to be bronchitis. I decided to skip the landings and took a small banca to circle Fort Drum and head back by late morning. The larger banca made a few circles and then went through the complicated process of tying the stern to the sallyport landing and trundling folks up into the fort. Fort Drum (four 14-inch guns in two turrets and four 6-inch guns in two casemates) suffered battle damage, but mostly from neglect and scrappers. The intrepid explored the inner levels where allowed by the collapsing floors, the rest of the group headed to the top deck to see the turrets. Returning to the boats with some difficulty (one near slip but no major injuries), the group then headed to Fort Frank.



Landing on Fort Drum

The crew backed the banca up to the pier at the bottom of the incline in the middle of Caraboa Island. This allowed a tricky, but dry, scramble up on the landing, where the group climbed the rubble of the incline to the top of the island. As noted on previous visits, all the seacoast weapons have been removed from the island, and a great deal of the concrete has been broken to remove the rebar. The island has an interesting network of underground tunnels and rooms. The group was able to visit all the major batteries on the island, including Battery Greer (one 14-inch DC) and one emplacement of Battery Hoyle (two 3-inch Ped) in front of Greer, then along the spine of the island to Battery Koehler (eight 12-inch mortars in two pits), and across a ravine to Battery Crofton (one 14-inch DC). After about two hours of scrambling and exploring, the group headed back down to the bancas and the hour ride back to Corregidor.

Fort Mills, Corregidor Island

The rest of our time was spent on Corregidor. We had already been to a few sites; now we hit the batteries and the outlying structures in earnest. Sunday, we visited Battery Grubbs (two 10-inch DC) the lone 10-inch battery in Manila Bay. Then we headed to Batteries Wheeler and Cheney (each two 12-inch DC); not on the tour route, they are marginally overgrown. The weapons of both



Battery Grubbs, Fort Mills



Battery Wheeler, Fort Mills



Battery Smith, Fort Mills



Administration building, Fort Mills



Parade ground, Fort Mills



Battery Cheney, Fort Mills



Battery Hearn, Fort Mills

batteries have suffered from extensive scrapping, and the carriage is completely gone from Wheeler's number one emplacement. The intrepid members of the group also visited Wheeler Tunnel in front of the No. 1 emplacement. After lunch, we explored Battery Smith (one 12-inch BCLR), walking through the magazine and down the ravine to Battery Sunset (four 155 mm GPF on PM), a land-defense battery, and Battery Hanna (two 3-inch

Ped). One of Hanna's positions has been covered by a landslide; the other is on the edge of a cliff overlooking Conchita Island, with its machine gun positions. Trudging back up the hill, we



Battery Geary, Fort Mills



Mortar tube resting between Batteries Geary & Crockett jeepneyed to Battery Hearn (one 12-inch BCLR), which received quite a working-over by American bombers in 1945.

The next day we visited the remains of Battery Geary (eight 12-inch mortars in two pits), which was destroyed when Japanese artillery exploded the central magazine on May 1, 1942. The mortars of the left pit were flung out of their emplacements. The left two mortars of the right pit were dislodged, one wrecking



Battery Crockett, Fort Mills

the front-right mortar, while the right-rear mortar is relatively intact. The devastation is starkly apparent. Beyond Geary is Battery Crockett (two 12-inch DC), the most-intact 12-inch DC guns on the island. Side trips around Crockett included visits to nearby land-defense positions, Geary's "missing" mortar barrel on top of the hill, and the infantry positions in front of Crockett. The next stop was the remains of Battery Ramsay (three 6-inch DC) on Middleside. Again, the brush had been cleared from the main area so we could see the rubble of the magazines destroyed by American bombs in 1945. The three guns and parts of their carriages remain, the No. 1 carriage on its side with the gun dislodged, the No. 2 gun essentially buried in the rubble, and the No. 3 gun still in the gun platform, but ravaged by scrappers. The amount of concrete strewn over the area is amazing!

After lunch, it was back in the jeepneys for a tour of the tail of the island. With stops at RJ-43 (one 8-inch BC), the 92nd garage area where the American prisoners were kept by the Japanese, the Japanese Peace Garden (with its Japanese weaponry), the Philippine War Memorial, Water Tank Hill (the scene of fierce fighting in May 1942), Battery Maxwell Keyes (two 3-inch Ped),



Japanese 120 mm AA mount on Corregidor

the partially collapsed navy intercept tunnel, Battery Levagood (four 155 mm PM), and a quick stop at Kindley Field, once again an operating landing field. Our afternoon was cut short by word that the sole remaining Sun Cruises ferry had broken down. Another ferry came later that evening to rescue the day visitors, but it was proclaimed unseaworthy and could not make the trip the next day. Finally, arrangements were made to take us and our mountain of luggage by banca to Cabcaben in Bataan the following day.

On our last day, we spent the morning on Bottomside — Powderhouse Ravine and the Japanese 120 mm AA position above it. At 10 AM we loaded the bancas and set out for Bataan, leaving behind a small group who planned to stay a few more days. The bus was waiting and we headed through San Fernando (again!) to Manila and the airport. We arrived somewhat haggard, but ready to head home. Two people ran into problems during security checks and one was detained overnight (a long story, see below), but the rest headed home.

The trip was a most satisfying success. Between Glen Williford, Tony Feredo, Ron Binadero, and the staffs of Sun Cruises and Rajah Tours, we were able to get to all the hard-to-get-to places, especially Forts Hughes, Drum, and Frank. Those who had been to Corregidor before got to explore off the beaten path. Many of the "vets" found the island generally more overgrown, but I considered Middleside and Topside to be clear and well maintained, much better than I had expected. Getting to stay on Grande Island and see Fort Wint was an outstanding bonus. Glen, thanks for another successful journey to the Philippines!

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"Adventures in Coast Artillery Paradise" Some Thoughts on Foreign Travel

On the recent CDSG tour to the Philippines, unexpected events overtook several of our travelers. The entire episode is a reminder that we as Americans take much for granted while guests in far-away lands. As noted elsewhere, the 2006 tour of the defenses of Manila and Subic Bays went fairly well, but this is not the story to be told here.

Many of us collected souvenirs of all types on "The Rock" - spent artillery fuzes, bits of china or glass, things from the gift shops, and more to the point various examples of small arms ammunition. Vendors commonly sell dug bullets and ammunition parts to tourists. Under the circumstances, mundane details are easily overlooked. For example, in the Philippines, possession of small arms ammunition is illegal. In fact, only drug trafficking is more serious under Philippine law. The mandatory sentence for possession of illegal ammunition, whether a loaded gun or just one bullet, was life imprisonment until September 2005. The Philippine Congress revised this statute (PO 1866) and the new mandatory sentence is 25 years, 15 years, or 7 years, at the discretion of the court. This law goes back to the 1970s and the Marcos government. Such laws are tied to problems with guerilla, terrorist, and bandit activities all over the country. These heavily armed groups trafficked in drugs to finance their operations. The response was to not only forbid drug trafficking (punishable by death), but to also prohibit private ownership of

firearms and ammunition (punishable by life imprisonment). No half measures! Most of the guerilla groups have since disbanded (except in the southern islands, where Moslem separatist remain very active), but one threat has replaced another. Now we have the "War on Terror." In 2005, the Philippine government was put on notice by the American TSA that they would risk losing direct-flight access to the United States (LAX and SFO) if they did not improve security at Manila International Airport. The threat to this privilege is serious to the Philippine government, not to be taken lightly. The immediate result was stepped-up baggage searches and X-raying of luggage. There is no distinction between checked and carryon luggage in the Philippines.

Getting back to ammunition and airport security, there are two issues. Tourists have ammunition as souvenirs and Asians believe a bullet is a powerful good luck charm. Combined with Philippine law and American threats to direct flight access, looking for ammunition became an intense focus for frontline airport security people, and they find lots of it.

You can begin to see where this is going. When our CDSG tourists entered the Manila airport the baggage was X-rayed at the front door. One of our group was tagged and taken aside - "your ticket and passport please." They continued to view the bag looking for the bullet. After some time and interviews, security determined that this guy was going "downtown"! After several hours of paper work and further interviews, it was decided that the next stop would be the courthouse for indictment and official arrest in the morning! Meanwhile another of our group was taken to the security office for "the treatment" and released after about two hours. Another was interviewed at the airport and released. All this over souvenir bullets! Why the different treatment over similar possession of bullets?

In the recent past, this was not an issue. (Thanks TSA!) It is all a matter of degree. Ammunition is made up of several components; under Philippine law, each individual component is by itself illegal. Possession of an empty shell case, a fired bullet, powder, or a single primer is illegal. In one case, having individual components caused the detention and interview at the airport. The material not being a "live" round, it was confiscated and the lucky individual was scolded and allowed to proceed. The next case was several "dug" .45 cal. auto rounds. Because they were complete, assembled rounds, SOP required the person be taken "downtown" for further interview. Having determined that these were not "live" rounds, they were confiscated. After signing a statement, he was returned to the airport. The next person had the bad luck of having a brand new "live" round in a pants pocket. It was a .38 Special round. This bullet being "live," security was required to process the maximum offence. The SOP is very clear about what had to be done in this case. Without dwelling on what happened over the next 18 hours, suffice it to say it was extremely stressful! After many calls to the American embassy and much more paperwork, this person was released. Thank goodness for that! And thanks to the American embassy staff for their energetic assistance - the situation could have been extremely difficult without their help. The alternative would have involved going to court, posting bail (\$14K-\$18K!) and IF released (after 2-3 weeks in jail), skipping town never to return. What a deal!

In the end all worked out well. Other CDSG folks with later flights were warned not to bring bullets to the airport and no more detentions occurred. The lesson here is to be aware that other countries have stringent laws and regulations concerning various classes of weapons. If you do not know for sure, find out or do not even try to bring this stuff back.

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Armament of Forte Do Bom Sucesso, Lisbon, Portugal

Phil Sims

Charles Bogart's article on the Tower of Belem (*CD Journal*, Vo. 20, No. 1) mentioned the armament of nearby Fort do Bom Sucesso. The final armament of the fort consisted of WW2 (1944) British-built powerdriven twin 6-pounder (57 mm) mounts, anti-motor torpedo boat weapons provided to Portugal through NATO after WW2. Also on the rampart are four 1874 80 mm guns converted to saluting guns, with fixed azimuth and variable elevation.



Right 6-pounder twin mount. Author.



The four saluting guns. Author.