

Surgeon of Luzon Force Report II

Medical, Supply and Personnel

A.(1) The report of the Surgeon, Luzon Force, indicates that the defensive combat efficiency of the Luzon Force had been reduced more than 75% during the final weeks. This was due to malnutrition, avitaminosis, malaria and intestinal infections and infestations. Those men on a duty status were incapable of any long sustained physical effort. Malnutrition had made troops particularly vulnerable to disease. By 2 March 1942, individuals had used up their reserve and they were deteriorating rapidly in the physical sense and by 1 April, the combat efficiency was rapidly approaching the zero point.

The half ration was inaugurated 6 January. In terms of energy units the ration averaged 2000 calories during January, 1500 calories during February, and 1000 calories during March. The nature of the terrain in which the defense of Bataan was conducted required, conservatively estimated, an energy output of from 3500 to 4000 calories per man per day. By 1 March, serious muscle wasting was evident. The ration was deficient in vitamins A, B, and C and beriberii became universal. This, in combination with malnutrition, was the cause of thousands of hospitalizations.

Bataan is a malarial infested region. The supply of quinine was inadequate for prophylaxis and by 1 March, there were 500 daily malarial admissions to hospitals and by 1 April, this had reached the rate of 1,000 cases daily.

A serious shortage of drugs for treatment of all types of dysentery and hookworm was existent during the Bataan campaign. Convalescence from all disease was slow, due to the inadequate diet and blood building drugs. At the time of surrender, there were over 12,000 patients in rear area hospitals.

(2) The ailment of nerve fatigue became prevalent due to constant enemy bombing, shelling, and the absence of any counter activity, particularly in the air, on the part of our forces. During the early stages of the defense, it was noted that Philippine Army stragglers, in rear areas, kept their arms and equipment and could be rallied and returned to the front. However, during the latter stages of the defense, stragglers carried neither arms nor equipment, and it was impossible to return them to the front except by force. They were surly and physically exhausted, as well as mentally unequal to further combat duty. It had been impossible to relieve front line troops and send them to quiet areas in the rear for rest periods. There was no quiet area in Bataan, due to incessant enemy bombing and strafing.