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As General MacArthur prepared (against his will) to leave his officers and soldiers behind, and travel to Australia, Japanese troops continued their quest to capture the Philippines. This image—another of the many later-captured Japanese photographs—depicts “Bicycle-Mounted Japanese Troops” making their way after landing at The Philippines. It is included in “The Fall of the Philippines,” by Louis Morton, [at page 185](#). It is part of the series “United States Army in World War II” and is online via the Center of Military History.

Convinced [MacArthur](#) should remain [leader](#) of American forces in the Far East, as America battled Japan, [Roosevelt](#) and Marshall wanted the general to leave the Philippines. Discussing his future, however, MacArthur made it clear he wanted to remain with his troops.

Replying to FDR’s “no surrender” order, MacArthur advised the President of the decision he and his wife [Jean](#) had reached. They, together with their young son [Arthur IV](#), would “share the fate of the garrison.” He planned to fight “to destruction” on Bataan, then on Corregidor:

I have not the slightest intention in the world of surrendering or capitulating the Filipino element of my command. . . There has never been the slightest wavering among the troops.

As a desperate situation worsened, [Manuel Quezon](#) left the Philippines on February 20, 1942. He would lead the Philippine government-in-exile from the United States. Before he departed by submarine, Quezon gave MacArthur his ring; stating:

When they find your body, I want them to know you fought for my country.

Two days later, on February 22nd, FDR directed MacArthur to also leave—for Australia—with a brief, one-week stay in [Mindanao](#). At first, according to MacArthur’s biographer Frazier Hunt, the general wanted to refuse the order. His staff convinced him otherwise.

Believing one of his primary objectives in Australia was to mount a Philippine counter-offensive, based from Mindanao, MacArthur left the Philippines on March 12. He *thought* he would soon return.

Without telling MacArthur their *actual* plans—that the American government would temporarily abandon soldiers, sailors and nurses serving their country in the Philippines—the President and General Marshall allowed MacArthur to leave at a time he considered best for his men and the Philippine people. When it appeared that Japanese and Allied forces had fought to a stalemate on Bataan, MacArthur left.

Not until he was in Australia did the general learn that his return to the Philippines would be delayed indefinitely.

MacArthur, [turning over](#) his Philippine command to Major General [Jonathan Wainwright](#), believed that his urgent dispatches would surely lead to desperately needed reinforcements. Anyone receiving messages—like the following from General Marshall—would have reached a similar conclusion:

We are doing our utmost ... to rush air support to you. The President has seen all of your messages and directs navy to give you every possible support in your splendid fight. (William B. Breuer, *The Great Raid*, page 13.)

The carefully worded replies misled MacArthur. No one told him, exactly, that reinforcements were on the way to the Philippines. No one told him, precisely, that supplies were coming for his beleaguered men. He understandably—albeit wrongly—reached that conclusion based on what he read.

Not until he was in Australia did MacArthur learn that the government was sending all those reinforcements to Australia—where fighting forces would be built up to resist the Japanese—leaving his men in the Philippines to survive by their own wits.

America, not a superpower at the time, had few realistic options. Her ships to the Pacific theater carried tanks, planes and ammunition, not food. Australians sent shiploads of food to the beleaguered men at Bataan, and fed Americans stationed in their country, but supplies sent to the Philippines were insufficient.

The men on Bataan and Corregidor would soon be completely overwhelmed.

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Media Stream



President Roosevelt At His Desk

Image online, courtesy Penn State University website.

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Jean MacArthur

Image online, courtesy the nightscribe.com website.

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Jean and Arthur MacArthur IV

Image online, courtesy the kilroywashere.org website.

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Manuel Quezon Photograph

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Island of Mindanao

Image online, courtesy the U.S. Army, [Center of Military History](http://www.centerofmilitaryhistory.com) website.

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General MacArthur with Major General Wainwright

Image online, courtesy U.S. Army, Center of Military History.

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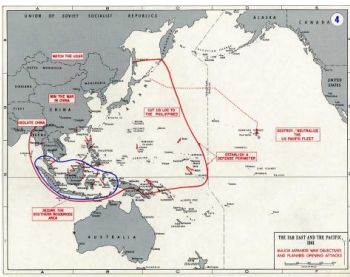


Jonathan Wainwright

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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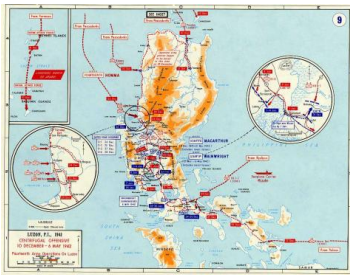
Major Japanese War Objectives 1941

Image online, courtesy U.S. Military Academy's Atlas Collection.

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Troop Movements on Luzon May-December 1942

Image online, courtesy U.S. Military Academy's Atlas Collection.

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