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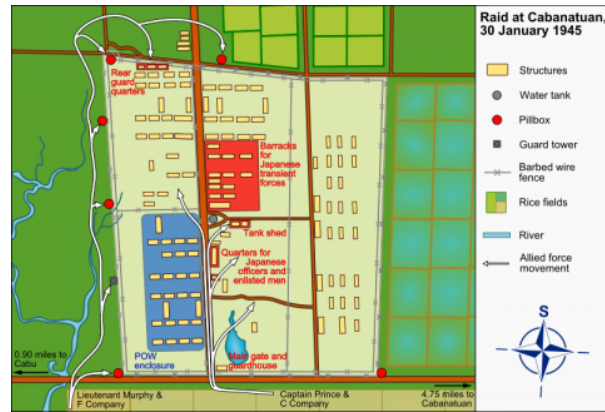
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Michael J. King created this drawing—"Bird's eye view illustration of the actions taken by the US Rangers in their Raid at Cabanatuan"—while researching a paper he completed as a Teaching Fellow at the Combat Studies Institute. See King, Michael (June 1985). "Rangers: Selected Combat Operations in World War II." Leavenworth Papers (11): Map 6. Kansas, United States: Combat Studies. (Map later colorized by Jappalang and uploaded to Wikimedia Commons.) This provides an overview of the rescue plane undertaken on January 30, 1945.

His blossoming Rangers loved Henry Mucci—although at first they resented him and his methods. As he trained with them, even in the worst conditions, they grew to understand and appreciate his objectives.

Captain Robert Prince, who planned the prison-camp details of the Cabanatuan rescue, said of Mucci:

We knew he was selling us the blue sky, but we would have followed him anywhere.

Private First Class Alvie Robbins expressed his admiration for the colonel:

Mucci was so charismatic you couldn't believe it ... If you ever had to go to war, that's the kind of man you wanted to go with.

Captain Juan Pajota, leader of Filipino guerillas, knew both the lay of the land and the people who lived near the prison camp. The locals trusted him. Because of Pajota, the villagers would keep their dogs quiet the night of the raid, allowing the Rangers to pass by without commotion.

It was Pajota who recommended that weak prisoners be evacuated in a carabao caravan (water buffalo carts). Local villagers, using their typical means of transportation, would wait for the prisoners—all 500, or so, of them—at the Pampanga River, a mile away.

Mucci and his men knew the POWs were ill and unable to walk thirty miles to relative safety. As the Rangers helped the sick and starving men away from the camp, Pajota and his men would engage nearby Japanese—perhaps a thousand or more—at the bridge. All the commando leader's recommendations made perfect sense.

Pajota also used his local sources—Japanese collaborators, in Cabanatuan town, had mysteriously "disappeared"—to gather intelligence about Japanese movements in and around the camp. He tried to convince Mucci to be patient.

When Alamo Scouts gave him similar information, Mucci agreed to delay the raid by a day. To do otherwise, in Pajota's words, would have been "suicide."

It was also Pajota who suggested that an airplane, flying overhead, could distract the Japanese as the rescue team inched closer to the camp. Later, talking about that P-61 Night Flyer, Captain Prince said:

The P-61 was one of the biggest factors maintaining our surprise ... And they did a wonderful job of it, including cutting out an engine to make it sound like the plane was in trouble.

More than a thousand people would play a role in the raid. In addition to the Army Rangers and two groups of Filipino guerillas, there were local villagers, Alamo Scouts, the U.S. Army Air Force and the prisoners themselves. Most had never met each other.

Another key person—Margaret Utinsky, an American woman living in Manila with her family before the Japanese occupation—had greatly helped the Cabanatuan prisoners of war before their rescue. Utinsky's husband Jack (a U.S. Army Reserve captain called to active duty when the war began) had survived the Bataan Death March only to die of starvation at Cabanatuan.

Margaret (known as "Peggy" to her friends) received a smuggled message, penned by Cabanatuan POW Lieutenant Colonel Edward Mack:

Your husband died here recently. He is buried here in the prison graveyard ... You may be told that he died of tuberculosis. That is not true. Our men say he died of starvation. A little more food and medicine, which (the Japanese) would not give him, might have saved him. (The Great Raid, page 69.)

Learning his fate, Margaret was completely distraught—she did not have a relationship with any other prisoner of war—and vowed to do what she could to prevent similar deaths.

Posing as a Lithuanian nurse, she and her "Miss U" underground network (operating between Manila and the camp) risked torture and beheading to smuggle medicine, money and supplies to help the Cabanatuan captives stay alive.

As the Allies continued their liberation efforts, fears for the survival of POWs greatly intensified. Within weeks of learning about the Palawan Massacre, Mucci and his Alamo Scouts and Rangers were keen to rescue the Cabanatuan men.

They had 48 hours to plan the risk-filled mission.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/THE-RESCUE-PLAN-Great-Raid-The)

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Media Stream



Colonel Henry Mucci - Leader of Cabanatuan Raid

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Colonel-Henry-Mucci-Leader-of-Cabanatuan-Raid>



Captain Robert Prince - Cabanatuan Raid

U.S. Army image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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Juan Pajota and the Great Raid

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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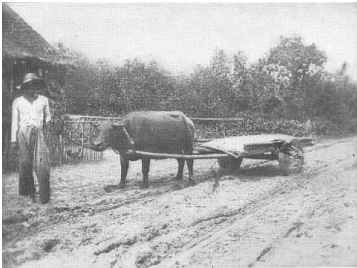
<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Juan-Pajota-and-the-Great-Raid>



Water Buffalo

Image online, courtesy Dr. George W. Norton, Virginia Tech University.

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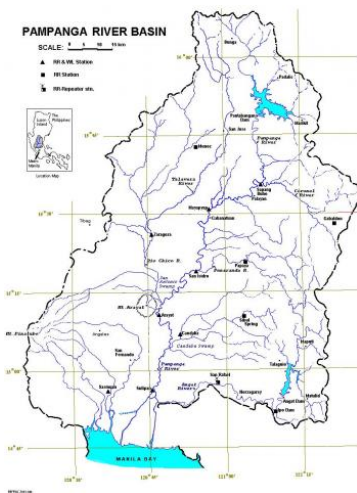
Water Buffalo Cart - Cabanatuan Raid

Image online, courtesy University of Vienna.

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Map of Pampanga River

Map image online, courtesy PRBFFWC (Pampanga River Basin Flood Forecasting and Warning Center).

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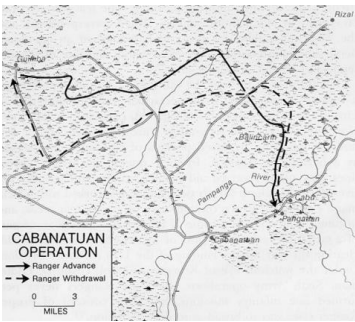


P-61 Night Flyer

Image online, courtesy U.S. Air Force.

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Cabanatuan Operation Map

Image from [U.S. Army Special Operations in World War II](#), by David W. Hogan, Chapter 4 ("Special Operations in the Pacific"), at page 84.

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

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Margaret Utinsky - Great Raid

Photo of Margaret Utinsky, by the U.S. Signal Corps in 1945, maintained by the U.S. National Archives.

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Great Raid - Rescue Plan for Cabanatuan Prisoners

Clip, from the History Channel's [series Shootout!](#) Episode - *Raid on the Bataan Death Camp*.

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Directed by: Douglas Cohen

Written by: Douglas Cohen and Sam Dolan

Narrated by: Erik Thompson

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