

American Defenders of Bataan & Corregidor, Memorial Society

3156 Myers Lane, Makanda, IL 62958 Phone: (618) 521-3654 E-mail: JanThompson@gmail.com



April 9, 2014

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

On this 72nd anniversary of the Fall of Bataan, we former POWs of Japan and their descendants ask that in your upcoming discussions with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe you insist that his government continue the reconciliation process it started with American POWs in 2009 and expand it into a permanent, meaningful program of remembrance and responsibility.

April 9th marks the end of the heroic defense of Bataan and the beginning of the Bataan Death March followed by more than three years of brutal captivity for the survivors. More than four of every ten Americans captured by Imperial Japan during WWII perished. In your first term you honored these POWs by proclaiming April 9th as National Former POW Recognition Day. We are truly grateful.

In May 2009, the Government of Japan finally acknowledged Japan's WWII brutality by offering an apology to American POWs for the inhuman treatment they received from Imperial Japan's military and its private corporations that abused them as slave labor. In 2010, the Government initiated a program of annual trips to Japan by a small number of POWs. Ambassador Caroline Kennedy highlighted this program in January as an example of successful war reconciliation. Prime Minister Abe's revisionist view of Japan's war history makes it uncertain, however, if this visitation program will continue. The program should not be allowed to end with ability of our 90-year old POWs to travel or with the vagaries of Japan's national budget. Its success should encourage Japan to do more.

The Government of Japan needs to restructure the program into a permanent fund for research, documentation, and exchange that includes families, descendants, researchers, and students. Our POWs' history of sacrifice and perseverance under the most horrific conditions holds lessons for both our countries.

Enclosed is our March 2014 testimony to a Joint Session of the Senate and House Veterans' Affairs Committees. It outlines our vision of a reconciliation program with Japan.

Most respectfully,

Jan Thompson, President