



Corresponding to the Congressional Medal of Honor in the United States, Medal for Valor is the highest local military decoration which, so far, has been awarded to only five soldiers, two of whom were enlisted men of the Scout Ranger Regiment



By Captain Jose R. Fariñas, Inf.

EVER since the days of yore when man first set out for the wars, there has been chronicled the custom of awarding some token of appreciation for personal acts of outstanding achievement by the soldier in the battlefield. This practice is a military tradition and is carried down to the present in the armed forces. Awards and decorations are bestowed by the government to recognize promptly and fittingly any officer or enlisted man in the military who has, either in peace or in war, contributed unusual and exceptional merit to the country. The psychological value of this practice is in the fact that military decorations can never be acquired through purchase nor special privilege but that the recipient must be an individual who has made some

rare, extraordinary and exemplary contribution to the well-being of his group or nation. The instinctive desire in the human breast to excel finds stimulation through recognition of unusual performance — a truism which is the basis of all systems of military decorations.

Kinds of Decorations

In the Armed Forces of the Philippines, there are two general classes of decorations. One is for acts of gallantry; the other, for distinguished services of other types. In the United States the highest decoration is the Congressional Medal of Honor. Most famous awardees of the American Congressional Medal of Honor are Alvin York and Audie Murphy of World Wars I and II, respectively, whose individual exploits are now

legendary.

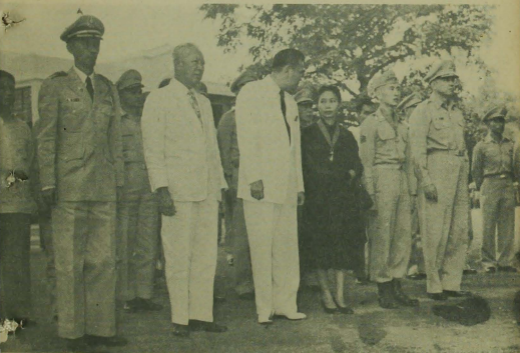
In the Philippines there is the AFP Medal for Valor which, like the Congressional Medal of Honor is awarded by the highest magistrate of the land to each person who, while an officer or an enlisted man in action involving actual conflict with the enemy, distinguishes himself conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. The many conditions surrounding the nature of

the act for which the Medal for Valor can be properly awarded make it the most highly-prized of all AFP decorations and the one most seldom bestowed.

Local Awardees

By virtue of General Orders No. 672, GHQ, AFP dated Dec. 22, 1955, AFP, the President of the Philippines directed the Secretary of National Defense to award the Medal for Valor to Master Sergeant Fran-

President Magsaysay awarded the Medal for Valor, highest military award, to two scout rangers who killed Huk Commander Eddie Villapando and two of his aides. Below, during the decoration rites in the Malacañang parade grounds are (left to right): Former Defense Secretary Sotero B. Cabahug; the President; Mrs. Expectacion Camacho, who received the medal for her husband, M/Sgt. Francisco Camacho, who died in the fight; Cpl. Martillana, who survived the fight; and Lt. Gen. Vargas, AFP chief of staff.





F. M. Camacho

cisco M. Camacho, 504735, PA (Posthumous) and to Corporal Weenie Martillana, 522227, PA for distinguishing themselves conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of their lives above and beyond the call of duty. The citation states further "that the extraordinary heroism and indomitable courage displayed by Camacho and Corporal Martillana will inevitably form a part of the glorious traditions of our Armed Forces".

The Medal for Valor had been awarded to only three persons before the late Master Sergeant Camacho and Corporal Martillana. They are Lieut. Col. Egmidio Cruz under the direction of the late President Manuel Quezon for exemplary war services, the late Capt. Conrado Yap for heroism in Yultong, Korea and Maj. Gen. Mariano Castaneda for kicking away a grenade hurled at, and intended for, President Manuel Roxas. The late Master Sergeant Camacho and Corporal Martillana, both of the 1st Scout Ranger Regiment, are the only enlisted men of the AFP awarded the

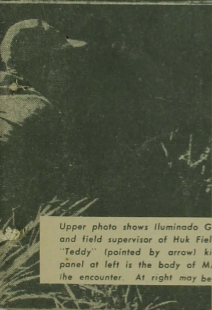
Medal for Valor. They now join the elite ranks of the nation's soldiers who have won this highest decoration.

Tough Requirements

The act for which the award is made should have met the tough requirements. Before any General order is issued authorizing the award of the Medal for Valor, a thorough investigation of the circumstances of the case is made. Things taken into consideration are manifold, among which are gallantry, intrepidity, superiority of enemy force and arms, daring, stability under pressure, calm judgment on crises, sheer disregard of personal danger from treacherous enemy, and skill.

All wars have been attended by display of personal valor; heroism has sprouted as a legitimate result of presenting opportunity.

It was in the early morning of December 21, 1955 which, incidentally, was the 20th anniversary of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, when Col. Ernesto S. Mata, commanding officer of the Scout Rangers, woke up with a start and grudgingly stretched his arm to answer the strident ringing of his telephone. The call came from Second Military Area Headquarters at Canlubang, Laguna. For a split second, what Col. Mata heard from the other end of the line stunned him. He muttered half to himself: "This is it". He continued: "If you say four of my men were ambushed, that could hardly be. Only two of them may be my boys." The Colonel had in mind Camacho and Martillana who



Upper photo shows Iluminado Guevarra, alias Eddie Villapando, notorious Cavite outlaw and field supervisor of Huk Field Command Nos. 104 and 105 and aides "Viring" and "Teddy" (pointed by arrow) killed during encounter with two scout rangers. Lower panel at left is the body of M/Sgt. Francisco Camacho, the scout ranger killed during the encounter. At right may be seen Villapando's body.

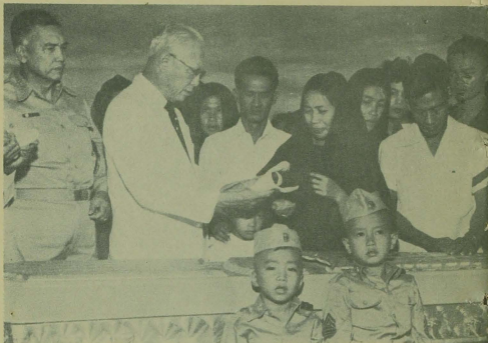


Photo shows Mrs. Expectacion S. Camacho (in black dress), widow of M/Sgt. Francisco Camacho, receiving from former Defense Secretary Satero B. Cabahug the Filipino flag that had draped her husband's coffin. At extreme left is Lt. Gen. Jesus Vargas. In the foreground are two of the sons of Camacho — Federico, 5, and Francisco Jr., 6. The President assured Camacho's widow that the slain hero's son will be admitted to the Philippine Military Academy without taking any examination when the latter comes of age.

were then for sometime assigned in "Operations Secret" to bug Eddie Villapando, then reportedly the field supervisor of Huk Field Command Nos. 104 and 105 and concurrently head of Regional Command No. 10 comprising Cavite, Laguna and Batangas.

It was so utterly "unranger"-like, concurred the regimental staff, to have more than one ranger soldier down and out in one count. No, it could not be, declared Lt. Col. Rafael M. Iletto, executive officer, whose

brainchild the Scout Ranger unit is. Why, that is simply impossible! And soon Martillana, bedrugged and bruised but nonetheless worse for his experiences, came out as if from nowhere and tersely reported the outcome of his mission: Enemy side—Iluminado Guevarra alias Eddie Villapando, aides Commanders Teddy and Viring, slain. Scout Ranger side — Francisco Camacho, heroically killed in action.

Through army intelligence operatives, Camacho learned that

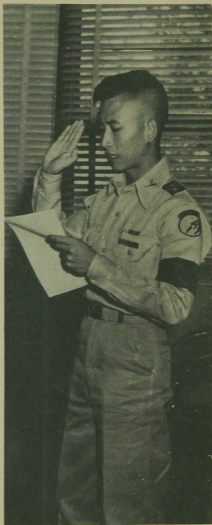
Huk commander Villapando, because of the intense military operations in Cavite, decided to slip from the army cordon thrown in the area. Camacho also gathered the information that Villapando was being called by the Huk top-brass presumably to receive a field promotion and assignment to command a bigger force. Somehow Camacho chanced to come across Villapando way back in 1951 when the latter was still a neophyte in the Huk organization. The former then tried to persuade the up-and-coming Huk to mend his ways and follow the path of peace. On the other hand, Villapando made similar attempts to enlist the sympathy of Camacho in the Huk movement, and continued doing so down the years through communist propaganda leaflets sent to the soldier. Villapando believed that Camacho, being a Scout Ranger with military experience, would be an asset to the Huks. As a former 21st BCT detachment commander in Cavite, he would, Villapando reasoned out, psychologically enhance the Huk cause. Assigned on Operations Secret to bag Villapando, Camacho had no choice but to launch on a bold and daring plan. He spread the word through the Cavite grapevine that he wanted to meet Villapando personally and, if the Huk chieftain was willing, to proceed to a lone nipa shack in the center of a ricefield somewhere in Palangue, Naic, Cavite, a place known to Camacho from his old BCT days. Camacho specified that he would be waiting for Villapando at 8 o'clock in the night of December 16, 1955.

With the blessing of the Commanding Officer for the success of the

dangerous mission, Camacho and Martillana left for the destination. Camacho was playing a long shot; he was not sure that Villapando got his message or, if he did, whether he would appear at the rendezvous point. He was just gambling on the chance that Villapando would appear. Of course Camacho and Martillana were adequately armed but they knew the Huks would kill the soldiers anytime they wished to. As luck would have it, Villapando and several of his henchmen appeared at the designated place and again on December 18, Villapando desired another pow-wow. The first meeting lasted for one-and-a-half hours. As the Scout Rangers left the hut with their backs to the Huks, Camacho and Martillana felt as if the dissidents' guns were trained on their backs. During the second meeting, it was decided that Camacho would provide the get-away jeep for the planned escape of Villapando. There was merrymaking, with wine and food passed around by the Huks who told the soldiers the supply was "donated" by sympathizers. The Scout Rangers then could not help but feel that they were being wined and dined before the killing. The little party was a sort of celebration which made the Huks happy. Camacho and Martillana at the moment sensed that maybe it was one of those rare moments wherein the Huks' longing for sympathy and companionship was satisfied. The merriment that evening seemed to erase the loneliness of their hunted life. All the while, Martillana posed as William Camacho, Jr., younger brother of his team-mate. The for-

mer could easily pass for one because of his striking resemblance to Camacho from the Chinese features to the lean five-foot-three built not to mention from the swagger to the mannerisms.

The Commanding Officer agreed to dispatch an army jeep. There followed a briefing as to the plan of action to be taken. It was decided to take Villapando in the jeep and kill him at the first opportune time on a likely spot. The password "maginaw" was picked as the signal for the killing as the nights then were cold. At the rendezvous point, the Scout Rangers waited for Villapando with their fingers crossed. Both were armed with cocked grease-guns with safety latches on, and a .45 caliber pistol each. Anxiety gripped the soldiers' hearts as they waited alongside huge trees and dense undergrowth on a deserted side road. When Villapando appeared later with his cohorts, twenty-man strong and heavily armed, Camacho and Martillana tried to appear calm and composed. Villapando decided then and there to leave immediately. It was early evening of December 20, 1955, dark, with the moon just several days old. It was indeed very favorable for escape. Villapando took along with him his trusted aides, Commanders Viring, Teddy and Ruby. Viring, in fatigue uniform and armed with an automatic carbine, sat in the middle of the back seat. Teddy, in khaki with a carbine, sat at the right of Viring. Ruby, also in khaki and armed with a Garand rifle, sat at the left. Villapando, wearing fatigue uniform



Weenie Martillana taking his oath as an officer. Before being directly commissioned into the Regular Force, 2nd Lieut. Martillana was a Corporal promoted to permanent Sergeant and then a temporary Staff Sergeant after the Villapando assignment.



For distinguishing themselves conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of their lives above and beyond the call of duty, two Rangers, M/Sgt. Francisco Camacho and Corporal W. Martillana, were awarded the country's highest military award, the Medal for Valor, at Malacañang. Mrs. Camacho (in dark dress) weeps as AFP troops pass in review.

and armed with an automatic carbine, sat between Camacho who was at the wheel, and Martillana at the other end. Camacho instructed the Huks to pose as soldiers. The jeep drove off, leaving the rest of Villapando's men as rear-guards to cover the escape. At Naic, and Calamba, there were chances that could have liquidated Villapando and his men. But Villapando was a sort of Robin Hood in Cavite. Camacho feared that other Huks, who were not far away, or sympathizers, might retaliate if the plan were carried out there. In Calamba they stopped for some snacks, with the Scout Rangers fearing they might endanger the lives of innocent civilian bystanders. Martillana, the surviving member of the two-man team, will carry on the story in his own words: 'Past the University of the Philip-

pinas' agricultural college in Los Baños, and only a few kilometers from Barrio Tabon, the jeep slowed down and Camacho complained that there must be something wrong with the clutch or engine as the vehicle could not go up the low incline of the road. The jeep stopped and Camacho told me to check. I bounded out carrying my greasegun, opened the hood and by the light of the jeep's headlight, I tinkered with the engine. I was certain now that this was to be the place. The terrain was ideal: the concrete highway was deserted, there were no houses nearby, on both sides of the highway were ricefields slightly below the level of the road. It was about 10:30 p.m. and the moon was beginning to set.

'So as not to make the Huks suspicious, I got a tin can of oil un-

der the front seat, punctured two holes into it with my hunting knife, and poured its contents into the oil gauge. The headlights went off, and Camacho got off the jeep also carrying his greasegun and, walking towards me, said loudly: "*Arreglado na ba?*"

'I said "Yes" and we lowered the hood and fastened it at the sides. As I turned to board the jeep I uttered the password, "*Maginaw*" and acted as if I was shivering.

"*Oo-nga,*" replied Camacho.

'Even the Huks nodded in assent, uttering "*Oo-nga.*"

'As I put my left foot on the running board as if to climb into the jeep, the magazine of the greasegun resting on my thigh, I quickly released the safety lock and squeezed the trigger. Camacho was standing at the other side of the jeep and also fired a burst at Villapando. He yelled in pain and surprise but managed to jump out of the jeep. Badly wounded, he fell beside the jeep just in front of me. I finished him on the ground. Camacho, meanwhile, had swung his gun at the others. I stepped back and fired through the windshield at the others in the back seat. Above the roar of the guns, I could still hear them yelling.

'Suddenly, I heard Camacho grunt. I glanced at him and saw him falling, clutching his chest. Then I saw a flash behind the jeep and heard the bark of a Garand rifle. In the flash, I saw the outline of a man crouched behind one of the rear tires and taking pot shots at me. I dropped to the ground and fired a burst at him. He returned the fire and I

started to crawl towards the jeep. I circled the jeep towards him, firing my gun as I went. He was putting up a fight. Then my greasegun stopped firing and I knew that its magazine was empty. I had no extra magazine so I drew my pistol and fired at him. I ran to the shoulder of the road and from my cover exchanged fire with the man behind the jeep.

'I knew he was one of the three aides in the back seat, but I did not know then who he was. Later, it turned out to be Ruby. He obviously was able to jump through the canvas covering the back of the jeep while we were finishing Villapando and, crouching behind the jeep, had shot Camacho. I was saving my ammunition as I had no extra magazine for the pistol. I kept moving, firing at the flashes of his gun.

'During a lull in the shooting, when both of us were waiting for the other to shoot first so he would reveal his position by the flash of his gun, I heard the sound of an approaching jeep. I did not know who were in the jeep and I was afraid they may be Villapando's rear-guard. If they were army soldiers, I was afraid they would mistake me for one of Villapando's men and shoot at me as I was in civilian clothes. If they were civilians, they may think I was a Huk as I did not have any identification papers with me.

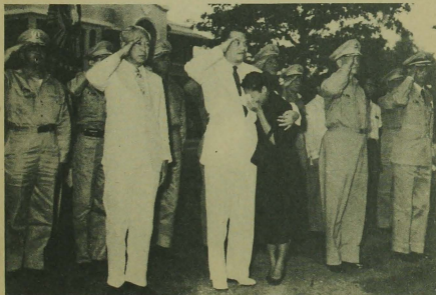
'I crawled to where Camacho fell and dragged him to the shoulder of the road. I felt his pulse. He was dead. The bullet had hit his chest after grazing his left hand. I pulled

him down the steep incline towards the rice paddies and left him there. I hid my greasegun among the rice stalks and crawled through the rice paddies to Barrio Tabon. It was about 3:30 of the dawn of December 21st. I saw a bus moving up. On the road, I hailed a bus and proceeded to Manila...'

The scene of the bloody encounter was along a desolate stretch of road in Barrio Tabon, Calauan, Laguna, where Villapando and two of his aides were mowed down to their ignominious death late in the night of Dec. 20, 1955. Much hulahaloo was created in the press on the pro and con of the manner in which these notorious outlaws have been eliminated. However, the discussions then

raised in the controversy are now purely academic. But the cold fact still remains that it took just two simple soldiers strictly on their own and without any contact with friendly troops to consummate the heroic exploit. Aware of the grave dangers and the perilous risks involved, these two Scout Rangers effected hazardous infiltration into the heart of a lawless territory swarming with dissidents and other bandits whose ruthlessness, cunning and guile are only too well-known. Once out there, Master Sergeant Camacho and Corporal Martillana could not help but expect the worst to happen, the place being naturally one where the honor code is unknown, where unprincipled men would kill at the snap

Show below saluting (left to right) are Brig. Gen. Alfredo Santos of the 2nd Military Area, Col. Diosdado Rodriguez, deputy chief of staff; former Defense Secretary Cabahug; the President with Mrs. Camacho weeping; Lt. Gen. Jesus Vargas; ranking AFP officers, and members of the 1st Scout Ranger Regiment as the colors pass by.





President Magsaysay viewed the remains of M/Sgt. Camacho as he led others in paying tribute to the scout ranger who, with another, accomplished a dangerous mission which merited for them no less than the Medal for Valor.

of a finger without compunction at all or so much as batting an eyelash. These two valiant would have chosen to tarry and await the natural turn of events, using the routinary army methods to pursue the enemy. But they knew they had a job to do. There was their duty to get their main quarry — a man who struck wanton terror in the countryside for years. There was their duty to uphold the majesty of the law and instill in the people a sense of security — a faith in the efficacy of the armed forces to preserve peace and maintain order.

With extraordinary heroism and indomitable courage above and beyond the call of duty, Sergeant Camacho and Corporal

Martillana chose to stake everything, true to the Scout Ranger Code, on one swift effort to either win or lose. But in killing notorious Huk Villapando and his henchmen, Camacho paid the supreme sacrifice. Spurred by patriotism, he gave the fullest measure of devotion to his country.

Why the Two EM?

The late Master Sergeant Camacho and Corporal Martillana were hand-picked for Operations Secret to get Villapando because the pair were independent, self-reliant and quick-acting. They possessed the conviction of principle, discipline, iron courage and strong endurance. Brave by nature, vigorous through training and possessed of an intellect developed by constant learning, each had ready

command of expedients. It was believed that if they were cornered, they would fight back with all the desperation of a panther held at bay.

When these two enlisted men were sent out to the field, they knew what they were up against. Despite the tremendous risks involved, they were determined to carry out their mission. Surely, a motive powerful and far-reaching prompted this bold, fearless determination, and beneath the motive there were to be found lofty incentives actuating these soldiers. What was the actuation that made them accomplish their mission despite everything? It may be attributed to the unquenchable spirit which animated and drove them on to unflinching deter-

mination. During the long, watchful waiting in their assigned mission, they had shown infinite patience and the utmost perseverance against seemingly impossible odds. Men with lesser fiber would have quitted. But the restless longing to achieve something drove them relentlessly on. It seemed as if they resented the very idea of a limit.

These two soldiers defied all the hardships, and laughed off all perils. The attitude alone called for pluck of the highest order. The noblest heroism is that which remains serene at the moments of treachery and disaster. With consummate skill, the late Master Sergeant Camacho engineered his last project and, with a masterful stroke, he and Corporal Martillana executed the plan. As long as heroes

Camacho is shown being borne by comrades-in-arms who acted as pall-bearers as hero was taken to his resting place in the heroes' cemetery. Camacho goes on record as one of first two enlisted men to be awarded Medal for Valor.

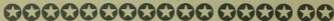


and their deeds are told, this heroic achievement of these two Scout Rangers will be recounted. Their exploit is an integral part of the great story of the Armed Forces.

At one time before Camacho left for his last mission as he sat calmly blowing smoke rings at his 1st Sergeant's table in the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Scout Ranger Regiment (GHQ) AFP, the boys grouped around him. Suppose the mission fails? one asked. He replied that in the military lexicon, there was no such word as "fail". "But suppose," pressed another, "something goes haywire — God forbid it — and you fall in the night?" "Then", he said, "I shall learn the rest of that beautiful adventure we all must make", quoting Charles

Frohman while on the deck of the sinking Lusitania. And pausing, the Master Sergeant pointed to an inscription beneath the glass-top of his table. It is a classic statement of a famous soldier. It read:

"Soldier, above all other men, is required to perform the highest religious teaching-sacrifice. In the face of danger and death, he discloses those divine attributes which His Maker gave when He created man in His own image. No physical courage and no brute instincts can take the place of the anunciation and spiritual uplift which alone would sustain him. However, the soldier who is called upon to offer and to give his life for his country — is one of the noblest developments of mankind".



MEDAL FOR VALOR

Recently, President Eisenhower was presented a letter from the National Archives written by the late President Franklin D. Roosevelt on behalf of Colin Kelly, Jr., for his admission to the United States Military Academy at West Point. His father was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for extraordinary heroism above and beyond the call of duty during the Japanese invasion of the Philippines. President Magsaysay assured the widow of M/Sgt. Francisco Camacho, that her eldest son will be admitted to the Philippine Military Academy in Baguio without examination when the latter comes of age.