

## **GUILLERMO NAKAR**

(1905-1942)

### **World War II Guerrilla Leader and Martyr**

Constabulary officer and World War II resistance leader Guillermo Nakar was born on January 10, 1905 in Infanta, Tayabas (now Quezon). After graduating from the Philippine Military Academy, Nakar was inducted into the Philippine Constabulary, rising from the ranks with his meritorious service. He was already a PC captain by the time the Second World War broke out in December 1941. The PC was then integrated to the United States Armed Forces in the Far East (USAFFE). Nakar served with its 71<sup>st</sup> Infantry, based on Northern Luzon.

During the Japanese invasion, the sudden landings made by the Japanese Imperial Army in Aparri, Cagayan caught the USAFFE by surprise. The enemy's rapid advance southward prevented some of its units, such as Nakar's 71<sup>st</sup> Infantry, from joining other USAFFE units in Bataan, where the combined Filipino-American forces intended to resist the invaders until the promised reinforcements would arrive from the United States. To avoid being encircled by the Japanese forces, Nakar led his men out of Bauang Bay in La Union on a northward trek, which lasted for 17 days. Arriving in Aritao, Nueva Vizcaya, they then joined up with Troop C of the 26<sup>th</sup> Cavalry and some elements of the 11<sup>th</sup> Infantry, which had earlier taken to the hills. Organizing the combined units under the most unfavorable conditions, Nakar formed a guerilla force, officially designated by the USAFFE headquarters as the 1<sup>st</sup> Guerilla Regiment, with Nakar as lieutenant colonel. It was one of the early underground resistance groups formed during the war.

On January 13, 1942, the regiment's first battalion attacked the town of Tuguegarao, Cagayan and an adjacent airfield, killing around 100 Japanese soldiers and destroying three enemy planes on the ground. This move ushered his unit's redesignation as the 14<sup>th</sup> Infantry. Redesignated thus, Nakar's unit conducted raids on enemy garrisons and ambushed Japanese patrols while the battles of Bataan and Corregidor raged.

Corregidor fell on May 6, 1942, followed by Bataan, on May 9. Despite these debacles, Nakar refused to surrender. He moved to Madela, Nueva Vizcaya, where he kept the 14<sup>th</sup> Infantry intact, resisting all attempts of the Japanese to destroy the guerilla movement. He organized an effective intelligence system, which covered the provinces of Isabela, Nueva Vizcaya, and Pangasinan.

His guerilla force survived until November 1942, when the Japanese launched a coordinated offensive to capture him and other guerilla leaders. Betrayed by a traitor, Nakar was captured and imprisoned by the Japanese. The general headquarters of the Southwest Pacific Area Command under General Douglas MacArthur considered his capture as "the first serious blow to the coordinated command of the USAFFE remnants," since Nakar was regarded as "the most prominent USAFFE officer in the (Northern Luzon) area."

Even as a prisoner, Nakar remained defiant. Offered his freedom in exchange for signing his surrender papers and swearing allegiance to the Japanese, he bluntly refused, saying, "I cannot transfer my allegiance to the United States and my country." In Echague, Isabela, the Japanese allowed him to speak in public as part of their propaganda campaign. Instead of humoring or kowtowing to his captors, however, Nakar denounced the Japanese for the abuses and cruelty they were inflicting on the people. Nakar is said to have been taken later to Fort Santiago, where he was executed on September 29, 1942.

For his intense patriotism and devotion to duty, Nakar was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Conduct Star on July 22, 1945. In Lucena, Quezon, a military camp, which is now

the headquarters of the Southern Luzon Command of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, was named in his honor.

Nakar left behind his wife, Angelina Coronel, and two children.

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