

**REMARKS OF H.E. ALBERT DEL ROSARIO
AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
FOR THE PHILIPPINE MEDALS PRESENTATION CEREMONY
WICHITA, KANSAS, 7 DECEMBER 2003**

I am deeply honored to be invited here for this important occasion that marks a milestone in the alliance between the Philippines and the United States. Furthermore, the occasion is made even more significant today, the anniversary of Pearl Harbor, when both the Philippines and the United States were attacked for the first time in the Second World War.

This special Philippine Medals Presentation Ceremony speaks of the close friendship that Filipinos and Americans have shared for many years. Never was that friendship so tried and tested as during the harrowing days of World War II, when our people struggled in a common defense of freedom and democracy.

On the great battlefields of Bataan and Corregidor, our soldiers fought for liberty and justice. Through the long dark years of enemy occupation, Filipinos and Americans kept faith with one another, joining together in the guerilla resistance movement. When at last General Douglas MacArthur redeemed America's pledge to return to free the Philippines, Filipinos rose up to support their U.S. allies in the Philippine liberation campaign.

Today's ceremony, therefore, is a tribute to the citizens of the great State of Kansas, and to Americans everywhere, for their role in liberating the Philippines. Truly, those Filipinos and Americans who saved freedom in World War II constituted the Greatest Generation.

The spirit of our old alliance lives on in our time. Immediately after 9/11, the Philippines was the first country in Asia to pledge full support for the global anti-terror coalition. The Philippines has also sent a humanitarian contingent to Iraq. Our countries are collaborating in many areas to contain and defeat the terrorists who threaten the peace and security of Filipinos and American alike.

In this regard, I wish to recognize the leadership of Congressman Todd Tiahrt, who has been a strong advocate of our alliance. Congressman Tiahrt is a good friend of the Philippines. He led in founding the Philippines-United States Friendship Caucus in Congress in Washington, D.C. Congressman Tiahrt and the people of Kansas, have shown great sympathy and understanding for the Philippines and for closer ties between the Philippines and the United States.

I would also like to thank Congressman Tiahrt for helping the Filipino Veterans of World War II. We are indeed gratified that US Congress passed key legislation last month that would improve their treatment and benefits.

Our alliance is further consolidated on the people-to-people level. Today, some 2.3 Filipinos and Filipino-Americans constitute a vibrant and growing community all over the United States. Filipinos make up the second largest Asian-American minority group and the second largest foreign-born population in the United States. They are making valuable contributions in many fields to the progress of their adopted country, including here in Kansas.

As we look forward to the future, let us continue to be inspired by the bravery of the Greatest Generation and by our old alliance. We have challenges in common to face, but we have a proud history of shared achievement to give us hope that we will, as always, prevail.

Thank you.