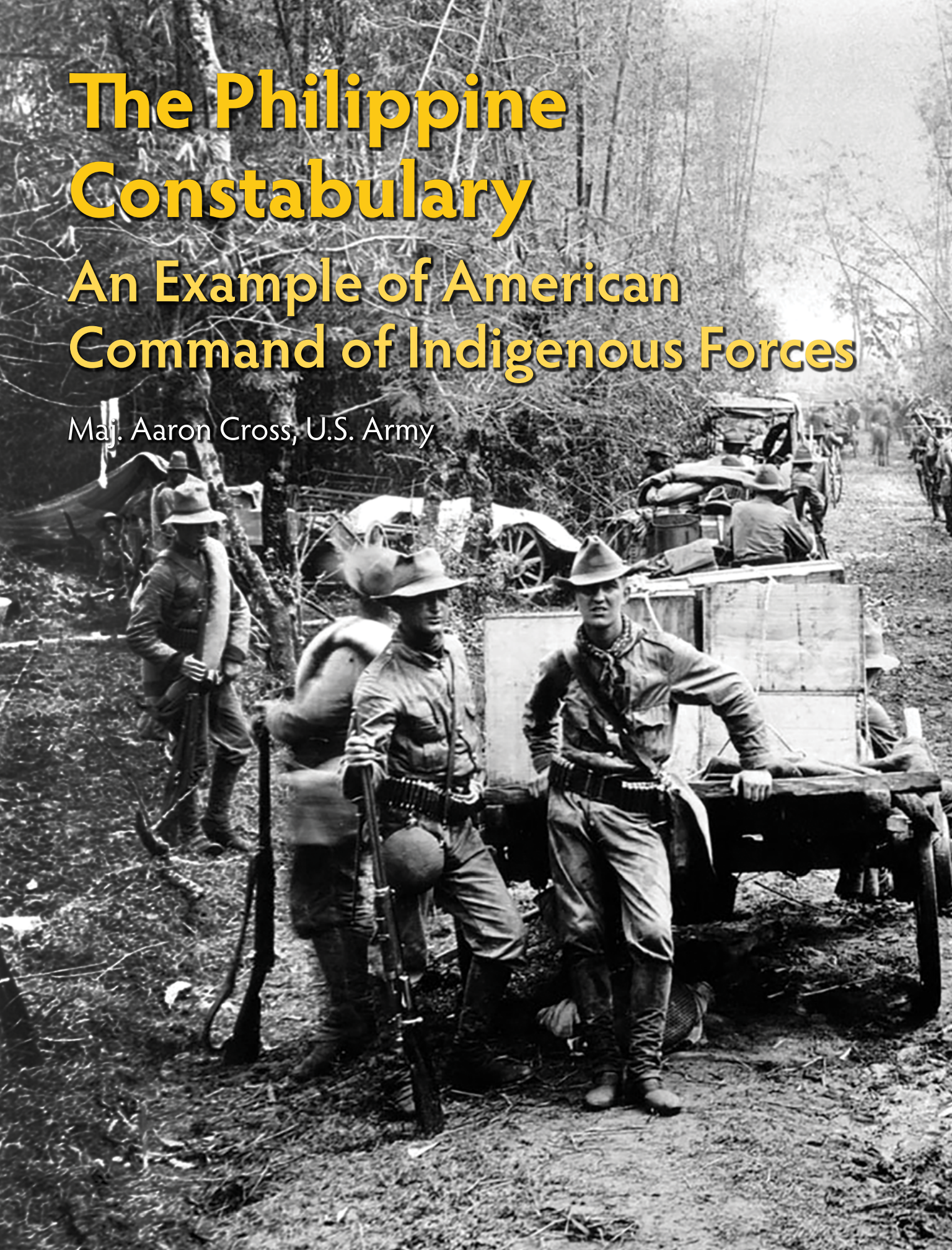


The Philippine Constabulary

An Example of American Command of Indigenous Forces

Maj. Aaron Cross, U.S. Army





In the past twenty years of conflict, military thinkers and practitioners looked to the examples of America's small wars to garner lessons about the techniques and tactics of counterinsurgency. The assumption underpinning these inquiries revolved around the U.S. military, as an outside entity, working in coordination with host-nation forces to suppress such insurgencies and insurrections. However, in an era with diminished support for extended nation-building projects involving large numbers of U.S. soldiers, the appeal of an alternative way to establish an effective fighting force in developing nations where there is an interest in stability could prove fruitful. America's history provides such an option to satisfy these conditions. The Philippine Constabulary, led by a cadre of U.S. Army officers from 1901 to 1917, provides an excellent study in the ability of American military officers to exercise effective command over indigenous forces.¹

To adequately draw out these lessons, it is first necessary to examine the historical precedents for external command of indigenous forces. Next, a sufficient definition of effective command is required to evaluate the Philippine Constabulary case. Due to the sparse nature of the literature on effective command, Allan R. Millett, Williamson Murray, and Kenneth H. Watman's definition of military effectiveness—tweaked to consider the things a commander must do to make a military organization effective—will serve such a purpose. Using this construct, evaluating the inspiration, organization, and effectiveness of the Philippine Constabulary through official and personal accounts of key individuals is possible. The views of Henry T. Allen, the first commander of the Philippine Constabulary, and other constabulary and civil government officials will help to demonstrate the case for effectiveness. Last, the constabulary offers several implications for the potential use of contemporary American officers to command indigenous forces.

In Search of a Model

Before the annexation of the Philippines, the U.S. military had limited experience with commanding indigenous forces. Since colonial days, the U.S. military employed Native Americans as auxiliaries, but these forces typically either participated as a separate entity, found employment as individual guides or scouts, or became incorporated into the existing

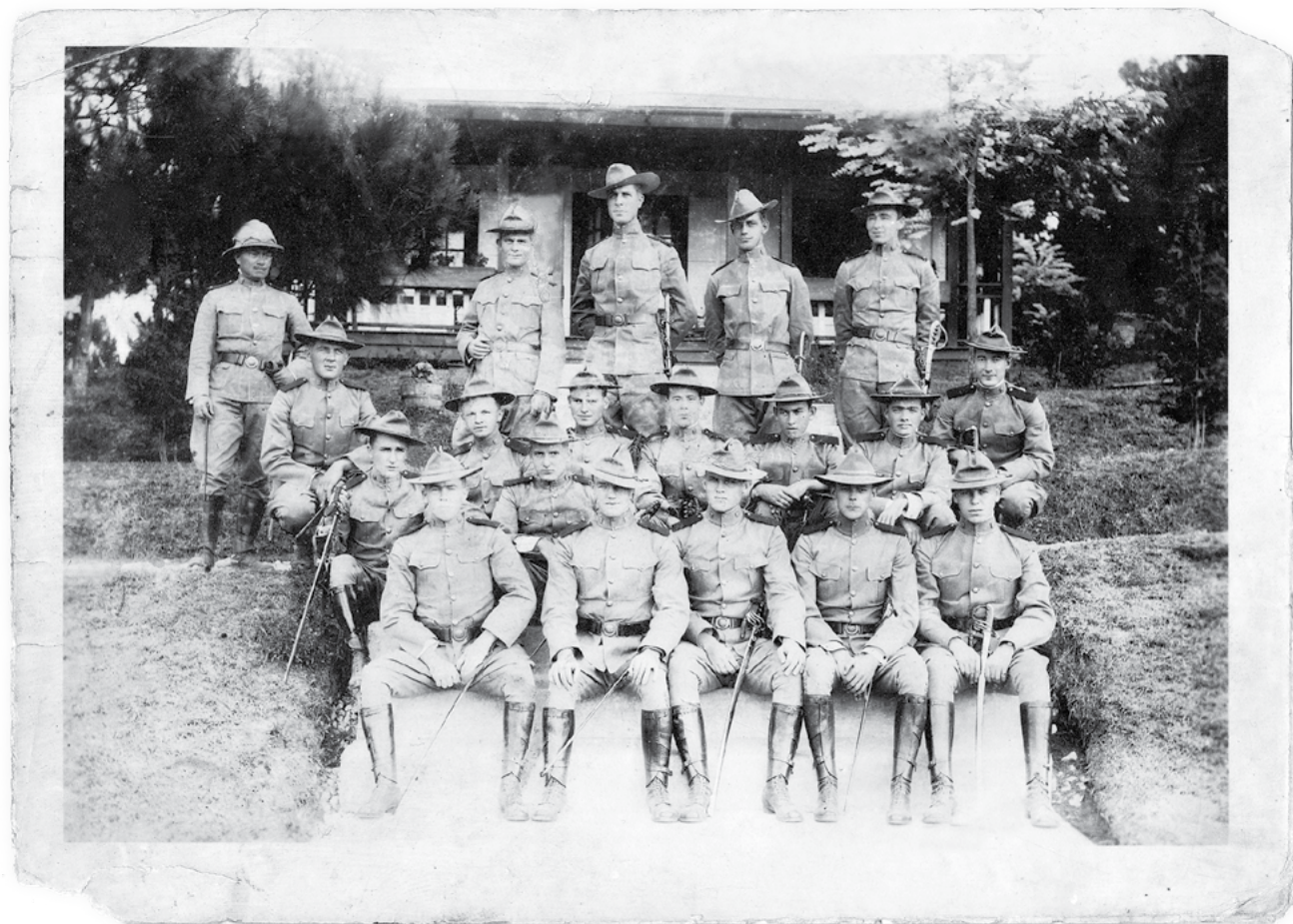
military structure (e.g., the Apache Scouts).² Thus, a model for keeping internal order would need to come from somewhere else, despite the desire of some in the United States to use our territorial model to govern overseas holdings.³ The contemporary example of Great Britain in India provided an approach to advising indigenous forces.

The British Indian Army featured native Indian troops officered directly by the British. While the British had employed native troops through private armies since their establishment of a colony in India, the Great Mutiny of 1857 caused a shift in colonial army policy. Instead of employing native soldiers as a whole, the Jonathan Peel Commission recommended that the British should recruit the more “martial” castes of Indians and mix them throughout the regiments. While this policy later switched to employing a company of each class within a regiment, the system of dividing the castes to mitigate rebellion remained.⁴ Further, the British defined the more educated classes of Indians as nonmartial, granting them leave to deny entry of the educated into officer ranks and assure the loyalty of the “martial” and less educated soldiers to white British officers.⁵ This loyalty of a soldier to an officer, as former Indian Civil Service officer and scholar on the British Indian Army Philip Mason observes, is summed up by the statement, “I am your man; I will serve you in any way you command and you will protect me against everyone else.”⁶ While no doubt colored by culture on both sides of the equation, the statement provides an intriguing invitation to consider the exact meaning of command and what it means for an officer to exercise effective command over any soldier, indigenous or otherwise.⁷

Bringing in Effectiveness

In the introduction to the three-volume series *Military Effectiveness*, Millett, Murray, and Watman recognized assessing military effectiveness as complex. According to the authors, military effectiveness is “the process by which armed forces convert resources into fighting power. A fully effective military is one that derives maximum combat power from the resources

Previous page: U.S. troops in the Philippines during the Philippine-American War circa 1899–1902. (Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress)



A group of cadets affiliated with the Officers' School of the Philippine Constabulary (Baguio) pose for a photograph in 1914. The Philippine Constabulary was a gendarmerie-type police force established in 1901 to replace the previous Spanish colonial Guardia Civil. The Officers' School was established by the U.S. military on 17 February 1905 to develop constabulary leadership. The constabulary units were led by a cadre of officers in each unit who trained, organized, and led native Philippine recruits for the purpose of maintaining peace, law, and order in the various provinces of the Philippines under the direction of the U.S. colonial administration in the aftermath of the Spanish-American War. (Photo courtesy of Tiffany Bernard Williams via the University of Michigan)

physically and politically available. Effectiveness thus incorporates some notion of efficiency.”⁸ To deal with such a large problem, they identified the output and functional dimensions (they termed them as vertical and horizontal dimensions) and set out to define effectiveness across both dimensions. For the authors, the vertical dimension consisted of the political, strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war, while the horizontal dimension encompassed all of the functional things an organization needed to do at each level to achieve its goals.⁹ To build a framework for evaluation, the authors developed questions to draw out whether an organization is effective or not at each level of war. These questions, modified to ask how the commander

of an organization performed in making his or her organization effective or not, serves as the framework for evaluating effective command in this article.

Foundation of the Constabulary

With a framework of command effectiveness established, the question turns to the inspiration, organization, and effectiveness of the Philippine Constabulary. President William McKinley saw the need for a civil government to administer the Philippines as a territory until Filipinos could govern themselves.¹⁰ The Filipinos, however, understood that their liberation from Spanish control would mean immediate independence.¹¹ Thus, the misunderstandings resulted in an insurgency that



necessitated the first few years of occupation coming under the administration of the U.S. Army, with the commander of the Philippine Division as military governor. McKinley set in motion establishing civil government before the insurrection by sending the first Philippine Commission in January 1899, under the direction of Jacob Schurman, to determine the conditions in the islands and recommend a way forward.¹²

The Schurman Commission concluded that “the United States cannot withdraw from the Philippines,” and “the Filipinos are wholly unprepared for independence, and if independence were given to them they could not maintain it.”¹³ Further, the commission’s recommendations relied heavily on the British model of governing their colonies.¹⁴ The Schurman report convinced McKinley he must establish a civil government, and in April 1900, sent a commission under the direction of William Taft to create a civil government that would take control of the Philippines on 4 July 1901. McKinley

William H. Taft, governor-general of the Philippines, sits at his desk circa 1901 in his office where a map of Manila hangs on the wall next to him. (Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress)

did not explicitly state the commission should set up a constabulary force, but he did instruct them to protect the people, ensure local Filipinos governed themselves, and follow the recommendations of the Schurman Commission.¹⁵ Thus, the later decision for a constabulary force seems to rest more with the plans of the Taft Commission, though they did indeed receive instruction from Secretary of War Elihu Root that they should “take the lessons we could get from the colonial policy of other countries, especially Great Britain.”¹⁶ Hence, examining the logic of the commission members for the institution of a constabulary is necessary.

Taft wrote several letters to Root from July to November 1900 that outlined his preference for a

constabulary force comprised of indigenous personnel. In the letters, Taft used the logic of the Schurman Commission in that constabulary forces would be cheaper than keeping U.S. Army soldiers in the Philippines and that these forces should have U.S. officers.¹⁷ Additionally, Helen Taft recalls that her husband wanted to form “a force of several thousand Filipinos, trained and commanded by American Army officers.”¹⁸ Taft and the commission members voiced the arguments again in their annual report where they stated,

We further recommend that a comprehensive scheme of police organization be put in force ... that it be separate and distinct from the army ... The chief officers of this organization should be Americans; but some of the subordinate officers should be natives, with proper provision for their advancement as a reward for loyal and efficient services.¹⁹

And further, “The experience of England in dealing with conditions practically the same as those which we are called on to meet ... furnishes a precedent for our guidance which should not be overlooked. Though she has had here and there unfortunate experiences, as a general rule she has been served faithfully by her native soldiers, even against their own brethren [sic].”²⁰ The desire to create a constabulary flowed from the examination of the British experiences in India. With these sentiments in mind, the Philippine Commission established the Philippine Constabulary on 18 July 1901.

In Act 175 of the Philippine Commission, the commission founded a force “for the purpose of better maintaining peace, law, and order in the various provinces of the Philippine Islands.”²¹ The chief of the insular constabulary shall “have general charge and control thereof and shall see that brigandage, insurrection, unlawful assemblies and breaches of the peace and other violations of law are prevented or suppressed and the perpetrators of such offenses arrested, and peace, law and order maintained.”²² Additionally, the chief of insular constabulary will ensure that the force “is properly selected and organized and that it is suitably armed, uniformed, equipped, governed, disciplined and in all respects made and kept effective for the performance of its duties.”²³ The initial organization of the constabulary consisted of a “force of not exceeding one hundred

and fifty men for each province, selected from the natives thereof ... who are placed under the immediate command of one or more, not exceeding four, provincial inspectors ... The islands are divided into four departments, and each assistant chief is in immediate charge of a department.”²⁴ At the outset of the constabulary, it is clear that the commission envisioned the effective command to encompass both the output and functional components.

While the commission outline four districts (the commission called them “departments,” whereas the constabulary called these “districts”) for the islands, the initial organization consisted of only three until 1903.²⁵ Each district functioned as a regiment, commanded by an assistant chief with the rank of colonel, and included numerous provinces, each which functioned as a company under the command of a captain. Within the provinces, detachments organized around towns contained anywhere from a few men led by a Filipino noncommissioned officer (Americans only served as officers) to a detachment of more than one hundred men with several U.S. officers.²⁶ And while not explicitly stated in their report, the commission’s assumption was that the chief and assistant chiefs, appointed by the commission, would be American officers. For such an important post, Taft and the commission needed to select a capable officer sharing their views on natives.

The commission chose Capt. Henry T. Allen, 6th U.S. Cavalry, as its first chief. According to Allen, “General [Adna] Chaffee sent several names to the Commission and the latter selected me.”²⁷ Chaffee selected Allen to put forward based on his prior work with native scouts—native auxiliaries hired by and put under

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the command of the U.S. Army—in Leyte.²⁸ In a report as commander of the Second Subdistrict of Leyte in October 1900, Allen highlighted his interest in using natives to control the islands and was already thinking about an independent paramilitary force of police:

I desire to invite special attention to the value of the native soldiers (Leyte Scouts) ... in ferreting out insurgents and criminals and in understanding motive and method of the natives with whom we have to deal, they are of inestimable value. With a careful selection of recruits and good thorough military training they produce an effective military police body at about one-third the cost (or less) of Americans.²⁹

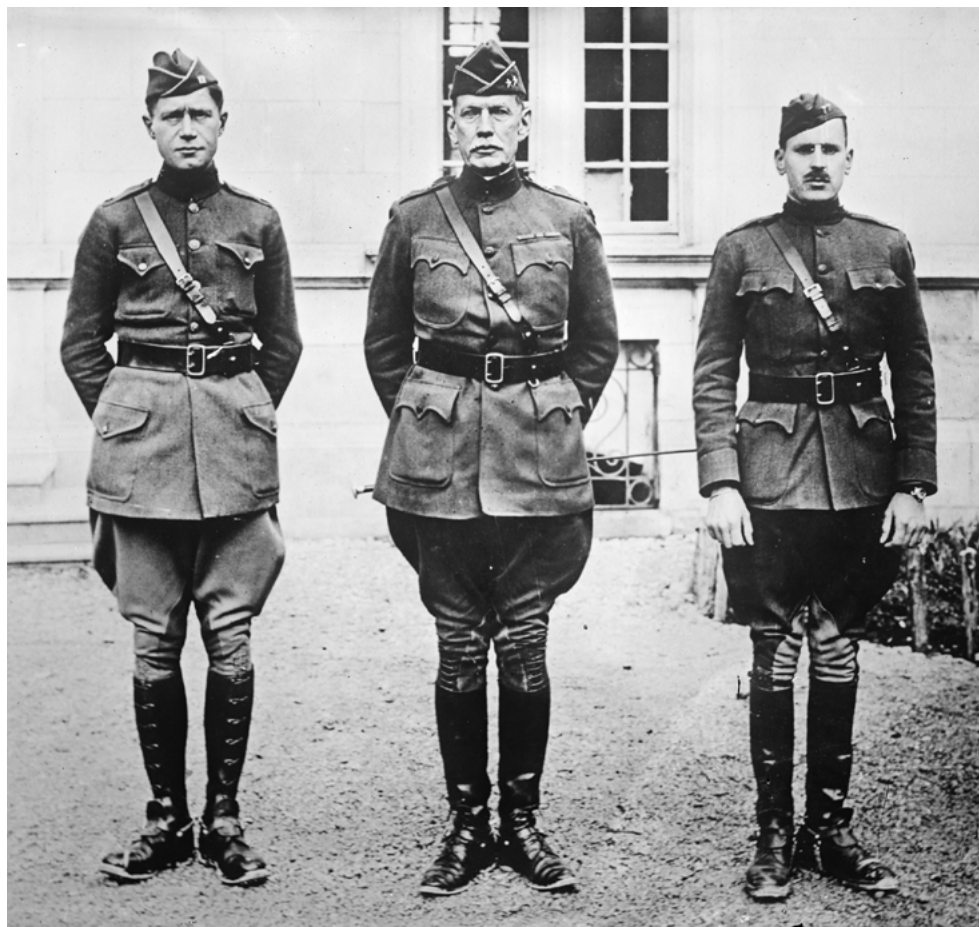
Further, Allen wrote to Taft in February 1901, asking for assistance in elevation in rank for command over native troops. Allen wrote, “Will you kindly inform me with what advancement beyond the rank of battalion commander, could successful work with native troops be rewarded. Would there be a career in that branch?

So far, I have had good results with Leyte Scouts

... I would be disposed to devote all energy to developing native auxiliaries.”³⁰ Allen had both good experiences with and made himself known as interested in the development of native troops to the future governor of the island, thus advertising himself as an ideal candidate. Allen’s willingness to be forward with political and civil officials helped spur the effectiveness of the constabulary at the political level.

Political Level of Military Effectiveness

In what follows, I analyze Allen’s military effectiveness as a commander on Millett, Murray, and Watman’s four vertical dimensions: political, strategic, operational, and tactical. Allen was mostly effective in command at the political level, demonstrated by his cordial relations with the civil commission members to



Maj. Gen. Henry Tureman Allen (*middle*) with his son Capt. Henry T. Allen Jr. (*right*) and Capt. Sidney Webster Fish pose for a photo 11 January 1919 in Côte-d’Or, France. (Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress)

guarantee the constabulary had a regular share of the national budget sufficient to meet their needs, quality individuals for the constabulary, and access to the American industrial base (though he failed to get the most advanced equipment needed for the mission). In a letter supporting Allen’s quest for permanent promotion to brigadier general, Henry Ide, director of the Department of Finance and Justice and future

governor-general of the Philippines, told Allen, “You know well that your services are thoroughly appreciated by all the civil authorities of the Philippines Islands.”³¹ Further, Allen knew he had to keep his pulse on politics as well: “In my present position it is not merely with the organization and administration of

Allen held the recruitment of quality individuals for service in the constabulary in high regard. With reference to officers, he stated, “The greatest amount of care has been taken in the selection of each individual member of the force, and as regards the officers every one of them has had from one to three years



It is therefore of the utmost importance that high-grade officers, thoroughly courageous, upright, sober, intelligent, and energetic, be placed over them [Filipinos].

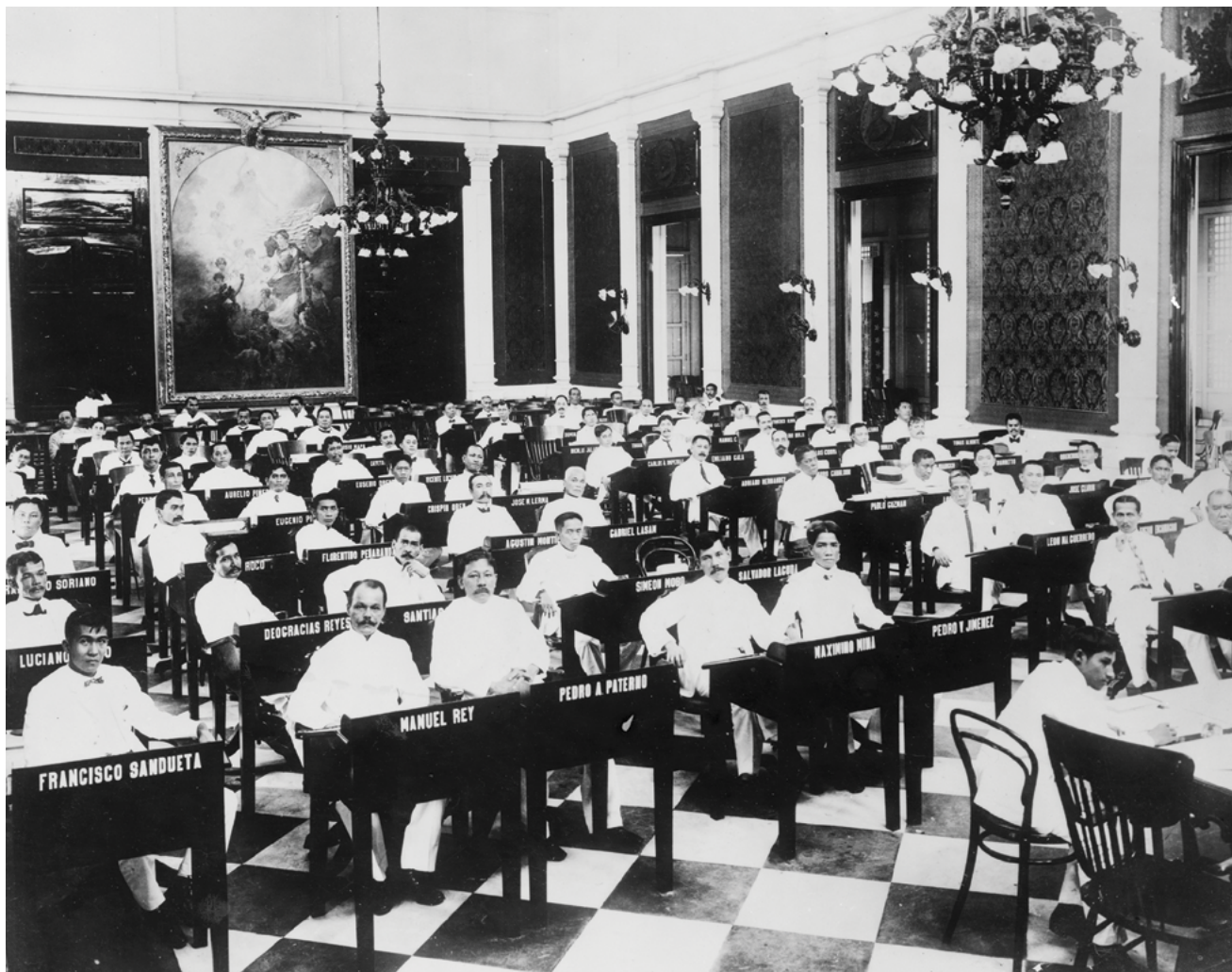


the Constabulary force that I have to deal, but I have a great deal to do with the manipulation of the ‘intransigent’ [sic] leaders here in Manila and much correspondence with the various governors of the provinces and the officials thereof.”³² Although the constabulary saw a budgetary reduction in 1905–1907, the general trend remained either stable or increasing budgets. The cultivation of political relationships no doubt helped secure stable funding.

As time went on, the all-native Philippine Assembly, which modeled itself on the U.S. House of Representatives in contrast to the Senate-like U.S. Commission, took more power over appropriations. The demonstration of the necessity of a constabulary, however, made their political access to resources secure. According to James G. Harbord, a constabulary officer and later chief, when the Assembly confronted budget problems as late as 1908, “I have been assured by [Manuel L.] Quezon [Philippine Assembly Chairman of Appropriations] that there is no feeling of hostility toward the Constabulary that will manifest itself by action in the Assembly.”³³ Further, “The Assembly I think will not attack the Constabulary very much, perhaps may urge its ‘Filipinization,’ but the idea of the Constabulary as the nucleus of their army when they get their independence has taken hold on the native mind, and its existence will not be threatened in my judgment.”³⁴ Thus, a guarantee of perpetuation initially relied upon cordial relations between the constabulary officers and the civil commission, but over time this transitioned to pride and necessity in the minds of Filipinos.

military service in the Philippine Islands, and should therefore be acquainted with the native character and the handling of them.”³⁵ Further, “It is therefore of the utmost importance that high-grade officers, thoroughly courageous, upright, sober, intelligent, and energetic, be placed over them [Filipinos].”³⁶ To ensure such qualities, Allen personally interviewed prospective officers to identify their fitness for duty.³⁷ As time went on, however, Allen had to expand his search for qualified officers, going as far as placing ads in newspapers in the United States urging colleges and military academies to impress upon their youth the chance to serve in the constabulary.³⁸ This did not always have the effect he wished, as Allen noted in his journal, “Native press objects to my sending to the States for officers for constabulary.”³⁹ Nonetheless, Allen sought out quality manpower for his force.

Concerning equipment, however, Allen failed to get access to necessary rifles and ammunition. In 1901, the Army turned over all Remington shotguns and .45 caliber pistols to the constabulary. These weapons, however, were not adequate due to their single-shot nature and inaccuracy at long ranges.⁴⁰ Further, Chaffee, the military commander in the Philippines in 1901, wrote to the adjutant general, “Even now it is self evident that 50, 100, or 200 men, with hostile intent, armed with rifle or carbine, constitute a force that takes thousands of troops and months of time to overcome.”⁴¹ Fear of constabulary defections drove opposition to arming the Filipinos with newer and better rifles. Allen continued to write about the need for superior weapons but did not receive rifles until 1907. In his 1907 report,



The first Philippine Assembly elected in 1907. (Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress)

he stated, “During the year the enlisted personnel has been partially armed with the Krag carbine, modified by the addition of the rifle bayonet—a most important change ... He no longer must depend on firing one shot and then clubbing his gun in the almost inevitable bolo [Filipino knife] rush.”⁴² Allen’s political connections did not suffice to overcome deep suspicion of arming natives with advanced weaponry.

Strategic Level of Military Effectiveness

At the strategic level, the Philippine Constabulary also mostly achieved effectiveness. Allen often communicated with leaders, influenced opinion on strategic goals, and developed relationships to force the Army’s integration into his strategic framework. He did not balance, on the other hand, strategic goals and the force size as he allowed mission creep. In his letters from 1901 to 1903, Allen corresponded

with President Theodore Roosevelt, Sen. Albert Beveridge, Gen. Henry Corbin (adjutant general of the Army), Col. Clarence Edwards (chief of the Bureau of Insular Affairs), among others. Most of the letters pertain to the cost-savings of a reduction in Regular Army soldiers in combination with maintaining a strong constabulary, ending a split in civil and military government, and placing the Philippine Scouts at the disposal of the constabulary rather than the Army.⁴³ While Beveridge admonished Allen for being too hasty about the end of military governance, his correspondence certainly had an effect.⁴⁴ From 1902 to 1907, the number of U.S. Army troops in the Philippines reduced from 24,238 to 11,508.⁴⁵ Allen’s

greatest influence, however, came with the detail of Philippine Scouts to the constabulary.

On 30 January 1903, Congress “authorized the detail of companies of scouts to cooperate with the Philippine Constabulary ... and to be under the command for tactical purposes of the chief and assistant chiefs of the Philippines Constabulary, who are officers in the United States Army.”⁴⁶ Through this maneuvering, Allen had almost doubled the amount of manpower available to him. Understandably, the Army had significant issues with this construct, as it believed commanders lost “the troops of their command whom they had organized, instructed for years, brought to a high state of efficiency, and whose material wants, under other leadership, they must still supply.”⁴⁷ According to Allen, this was nonsense: “We are now trying to use the Scouts, which General Davis apprehends is fraught with much trouble to both the branches, but, in my opinion, this apprehension is largely due to the conservatism that necessarily is a characteristic of every old soldier.”⁴⁸ By August 1904, Allen noted in his journal, “Constabulary from 7200 to 6000. I have taken over five companies giving me now 35 of the 50. The Gen. order (99) War Dept. authorizing me to order scouts has changed the aspect of affairs considerably.”⁴⁹ Regardless of the internal squabbling, Allen’s ability to influence those people necessary to allocate more resources toward his strategic goal of quelling violence in the islands demonstrates effective command at the strategic level.

Allen failed at the strategic level, however, in his inability to stem mission creep. Over time, the constabulary took on more and more requirements. In the 1903 report, Commissioner Luke Wright outlined that in addition to other duties, the constabulary also had responsibility for the telegraph division, and “the bureau of constabulary has also imposed upon it the duty of running a supply store ... [servicing] also all civil employees of the government outside the city of Manila.”⁵⁰ In the same vein, Forbes states that in addition to the telegraph lines, supply stores, a band, and medical services during epidemics, “In short, the Constabulary at one time or another rendered service to practically every branch of government. It furnished guards for collectors of public revenue, disbursing officers, public land surveyors, and scientific parties on explorations, and for the transportation of lepers.”⁵¹ The accumulation of duties resulted in a need for augmentation.

According to Chief H. H. Bandholtz in 1907, “The number of officers authorized is barely sufficient to meet the demands upon the service if all were present for duty.”⁵² While some of these duties were arguably necessary for carrying out the mission of the constabulary, the accumulation over time stretched resources thin without a proper accounting by the leadership to the government of a need for increase.

Operational Level of Military Effectiveness

The ability of the constabulary to perform so many functions did, however, demonstrate that the organization was mobile, flexible, and thought about combined arms; and that commanders placed their strengths against the enemy’s weaknesses by assigning soldiers in their home province. The mobile and flexible organization at the operational level resulted from the ability of the constabulary to use the roads and telegraph lines built in the Philippines since the commencement of the occupation. When the constabulary turned over the telegraph service to the Bureau of Posts in 1906, it included 307 operators and 4,933 miles of telegraph lines.⁵³ The outbreak of violence in Samar in late 1904 demonstrated the ability for the organization to move forces around the archipelago. According to Allen, “Reenforcements [sic] of constabulary from many of the other provinces were hurried to Sámar,” with more than 747 officers and enlisted detailed to the province.⁵⁴ While the uprising ended up too much for the constabulary to handle and the U.S. Army had to take responsibility for suppression, the ability to move a significant number of constabulary companies shows the mobility of the organization.

According to Allen, the flexibility of the constabulary came from its organization: “As organized and utilized at present the constabulary has greater mobility than the scouts. This is due chiefly to three reasons: First, a greater percentage of officers; secondly, a greater period of field service in small detachments; and thirdly, greater facility in subsistence.”⁵⁵ The constabulary’s agility resulted from the more decentralized operations and oversight by officers. Further, the organization also thought about the importance of incorporating combined arms. For example, in 1907, James Harbord wrote to Bandholtz, “I have seen enough of this District in the five days it has had its present size to be sure that

it cannot be handled without a coast guard cutter and I wish that you would bear that in mind when appropriations are asked. We shall fall down if we don't have such a boat, and we will not fall down if we do."⁵⁶ While

their own neighbors certainly helped operations, the fact that soldiers who grew up in a particular area had an intimate knowledge of terrain negated this advantage for the enemy.



While many colonial powers had policies of dividing ethnic groups to exploit differences and minimize corruption, the American decision to do the opposite had operational benefits.



traditional combined arms such as artillery are unsuitable in this context, the constabulary took into account other means of ensuring its success.

The constabulary gained an operational advantage by the decision to assign soldiers to their home province. According to Wright,

Each province should furnish its quota of men, whose operations ordinarily were to be confined to their province. This latter principle involved a departure from the rule which had invariably controlled the English in their colonial possessions and the Spaniards in their dealing with the Filipinos, their policy having been to utilize native troops and constabulary in other sections than that from which they were drawn, thereby taking advantage of supposed tribal prejudices and, as it was believed, removing the tendency to disloyalty or inefficiency which would exist when dealing with their own immediate friends and neighbors ... It was believed that with proper treatment there need be no fear of treachery, that there was a great advantage in having the police operating in a particular province familiar with its terrain and the people living therein, and finally that in view of the fact that these people were kinsmen and neighbors of the constabulary there would be absent that disposition to abuse and oppression.⁵⁷

While many colonial powers had policies of dividing ethnic groups to exploit differences and minimize corruption, the American decision to do the opposite had operational benefits. While preventing abuses of

Tactical Level of Military Effectiveness

Closeness with the people held potential to help with tactical effectiveness, but Allen's decisions led to some inefficiencies. The failure to institute a training program from the beginning resulted in tactical inefficiencies and abuses, and the focus on chasing insurgents rather than on police work engendered ill feelings. Allen's command was effective, however, in instilling cohesion and esprit de corps from the willingness of constabulary officers to lead their men from the front. In early 1903, Allen recounted, "I have here now in Manila a so-called Headquarters Troop wherein I am educating non-commissioned officers and also giving Inspectors a chance to learn what is to be the standard of officers in the Constabulary."⁵⁸ He tempered this feeling, however, with the admission that "it has been impossible up to the present time to make much headway with this matter owing to the fact that every officer and man available have been required in the 'bosque,' and it has been a question of hustle from the day of organization until now, and that on the part of each and every one."⁵⁹ Thus, while founded in 1901, Allen did not create an actual constabulary school until 1906.⁶⁰ Most likely, Allen took this action due to increasing criticism of the constabulary by both indigenous and domestic audiences. In 1905, Dr. Henry P. Willis published *Our Philippine Problem*, a critique of American policies in the islands, in which he said,

A glance at a constabulary outpost conveys an unfavorable impression, to be strengthened upon closer inspection. The men are manifestly untrained in soldierly qualities ... They feel the hostility of their countrymen, and repay it

with the disregard of individual rights which can be found only among a subject people.⁶¹

While the truth is most likely somewhere in between the two extremes painted by Allen and Willis, the little amount of training in police duties and focus on insurgent hunting in the early days certainly contributed to ineffectiveness of supporting strategic goals vis-à-vis the population at the tactical level.

Compounding the inefficiency due to low training levels, the decision to pursue the tactic of “reconcentration” caused serious fractures with the population. The 1903 commission report said,

It was exceedingly difficult for the constabulary to come in contact with these outlaws ... As this was an intolerable state of things, which could not be prolonged without immense damage to the province, it was determined to draw in the people from the remote and outlying barrios pursuant to the provisions of Act No. 781, which authorizes this step, and thereby cut off the source of supplies of the outlaws ... They were thus concentrated for several months.⁶²

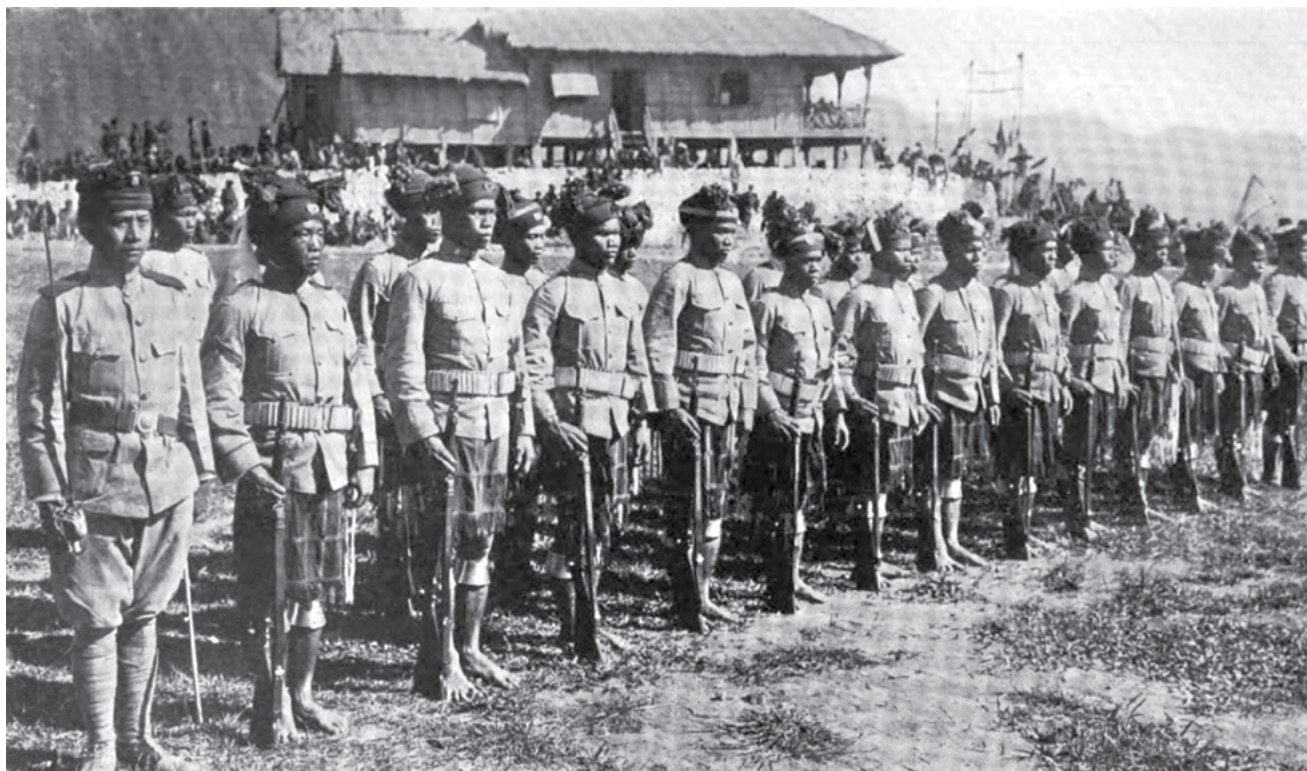
The resort to physically isolating the population from the insurgents had resulted in cutting off supplies and making the constabulary’s job of pursuit easier, but it caused serious disruptions and engendered the hatred of the people. According to Willis’s own personal observations and estimates from reports, he concluded that the constabulary put more than 450,000 inhabitants in reconcentration areas from 1902 to 1904.⁶³ The indigenous elites began to grow tired of these tactics as well. According to Attorney General Lebbeus R. Wilfley in 1906, “Chief



Two native Philippine Constabulary leaders pose for a photograph 15 January 1905. Philippine Constabulary recruits were trained, organized, and equipped in accordance with U.S. doctrine and standards of the time. (Photo originally from the *New-York Tribune* via the Library of Congress)

Justice Arellano ... thinks that the Insular Government is too elaborate for the resources of the country, and fears a quasi-military regime unless the Constabulary is put in good condition soon.”⁶⁴ The semi-military tactics, use of scouts along with the constabulary, and reconcentration resulted in very hard feelings of the indigenous peoples toward government efforts.

Allen did achieve tactical success, however, in making sure his officers led from the front and instilled in the



Ethnic Ifugao constabulary soldiers drawn from the Ifugao region of the Philippines stand in formation under the leadership of native Philippine officer Lt. Maximon Meimban. Early in the colonial administration of the U.S. government, U.S. and Philippine political leaders began to regard development of the constabulary as a key component for the eventual establishment of a Philippine national army to support future national independence. Philippine Constabulary members across all ethnic groups developed a reputation for not only bravery, loyalty, and fearsome martial ability in combat but also for efficiency in the discharge of government administration activities often quite unrelated to their regular domestic security duties. (Photo originally in *The Philippines: Past and Present* by Dean C. Worcester via Project Gutenberg)

organization a feeling of esprit de corps that drove mission success. One of the best measures in the installation of esprit de corps was the desertion rate of the constabulary. Allen continually referred to the low desertion rate of his soldiers versus that of other military organizations. For instance, Allen wrote to Beveridge, "Out of the total number of our Constabulary [4,000] we have up to the present time lost only three members,—a record that can scarcely be equaled anywhere."⁶⁵ In the years of his tenure, the desertion rate was seven-tenths of one percent, nine times below that of the Army in the Philippines.⁶⁶ The willingness of soldiers to stay with their units demonstrates the cohesion within the constabulary, propelled by the willingness of the officers to lead from the front. An example of this (if somewhat romanticized) comes from Vic Hurley's *Jungle Patrol*:

We are to see Allen later in the course of the fierce fighting in Samar, ploughing his way

through high *cogon* grass, three feet to the rear of Captain Cary Crockett, on patrol in very hostile country. He wears the full dress uniform of a brigadier-general; he insists that his officers go into battle clothed as becomes their rank. When grimacing and shouting *pulajans* rise all about the party there in that tangled grass, Captain and Private and Brigadier-General fight for their lives ... Allen was a soldier in the grand manner; he was a dashing cavalryman who refused to let the glamour and romance of campaigning ever die.⁶⁷

Further, in an Army report of the actions of Capt. John R. White and his constables at Bud Dajo in 1906, Col. J. W. Duncan stated, "The 51 men of the Sulu and Zamboanga Constabulary were distinguished for their work. Led by that fearless soldier, Captain White, and Second Lieutenant Sowers, these

men fought like demons, the per cent of their casualty list exceeding all others.”⁶⁸ Both insurgents and soldiers received high casualty counts. In the years of Allen’s tenure, the constabulary killed 3,153 and captured 10,755 bandits, confiscated 5,341 weapons, with nearly 1,000 constabulary soldiers dead.⁶⁹ According to Forbes, “The Filipino enlisted men respected their officers, and, when properly trained, commanded, and led, performed gallant service in the field,” and “the story of the Constabulary is one of heroism, endurance, and loyalty to ideals under great difficulties, of which the American people should be very proud.”⁷⁰ The ability of the American commanders to develop the cohesion of their indigenous soldiers provided them with the means toward tactical success in suppressing insurrection.

Contemporary Implications

The Philippine Constabulary offers several implications for the potential use of contemporary American officers to command indigenous forces. First, effective commanders must cultivate political connections to ensure success of their organization. In the case of the Philippine Constabulary, U.S. civil leadership in the archipelago made things much easier for Allen and his subordinates. This example could provide evidence for the argument that the United States should only command indigenous forces if they hold civil power as well (a case such as the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq). Even if that were the circumstance, the Philippine Constabulary offers that a commander must cultivate relationships with the indigenous elite, as did Allen, Bandholtz, Harbord, and their subordinates. While the colonial authority rested with the U.S. commission, each province had native elites elected to office with which the constabulary officials had to cooperate.

A further issue in dealing with political elites is language fluency. Allen put a premium on ensuring that his officers could speak or learn Spanish. While the emphasis placed on multilingualism stemmed from a desire for the officers to communicate with their soldiers and the citizens of the island, the fact also arises that to cultivate closer political bonds it helps to communicate without a translator. A recent study on the effects of group collaboration and shared language concludes that when members

of a group share a common language, collaborative problem-solving increases across both insight and divergent-thinking tasks; these boosts potentially come from an increase in in-group affinity with the familiar-speaking members.⁷¹

Language fluency relates to another important lesson—that these assignments be long term. First, cultivation of fluency (especially outside of the European family of languages) takes a long time. If a cadre of American officers takes the time and effort to learn more difficult dialects, then the probability arises that there will be fewer of them. A smart return on such an investment lies with placing these individuals in positions to use that skill over an extended period. Second, to cultivate the relationships necessary and set the organization on the right track, it will take a matter of years. Allen spent six years as commander of the constabulary; his two successors spent more than a decade each in the Philippines. American commitment to a course of action such as this relies on a cadre dedicated to the long march.

The constabulary case also highlights a concern for station in the native force. Allen and all Regular Army officers detailed to the constabulary remained on active duty. Further, they retained their sequence in seniority.⁷² Translating that to today’s system, the officers would need to remain in their year group and be competitive at each promotion board. While there are numerous ways one could configure the service for this (separate branches, for instance), these officers took such a position for so long because they had a guarantee that they would not lose their spot for advancement. Otherwise, the cadre would not attract the caliber of officer needed for such a task.

Finally, a cadre of American officers over indigenous forces allows younger officers to experience leadership of larger organizations at an earlier time in their career. For instance, Allen was a captain when first detailed to the constabulary; he held the temporary rank of brigadier general as a result of his position, reverting to a major when he left the Philippines. His subordinates all held higher temporary positions as a consequence of the number of soldiers entrusted to their care. This experience boded well for the United States when commencing its involvement in World War I. Of former constabulary officers, twelve reached the rank of general during the war.⁷³ These

officers either already displayed the necessary abilities to become a general officer, or their time in the constabulary molded them into better leaders. The truth is probably both.

From 1901 to 1917, the Philippine Constabulary, led by a cadre of U.S. Army officers, showed that Americans could exercise effective command of indigenous forces. The ability to communicate with and influence both indigenous and American elites and competing to secure the resources necessary to align ends, ways, and means meant that U.S. Army

officers could set a solid political and strategic foundation for an indigenous force. Further, developing an organization that embraced flexibility and mobility at the operational level and exuded esprit de corps at the tactical level ensured development of a force that the Filipinos came to not only be proud of but also saw as essential to their future. While not appropriate in every contemporary circumstance, the case of the Philippine Constabulary demonstrates that American military officers can exercise effective command over indigenous forces. ■

Notes

1. In the course of this article, I equate the Philippine Constabulary with a military organization. While the definition of a constabulary is usually a military-style police force, the Philippine Constabulary from 1901 to 1917 mostly operated as a military organization fighting an insurgency and demonstrates that American officers can command a military force of mainly indigenous soldiers.

In addition, I use the word command rather than leadership. While one can debate the appropriateness of either term, I find command to encompass both the responsibility to inspire men to action and to develop effective organizations. It is outside the scope of this work to debate the appropriateness of either. For one take on this, see G. D. Sheffield, introduction to *Leadership and Command: The Anglo-American Military Experience since 1861* (Lincoln, NE: Potomac Books, 1997). Other authors on the subject tend to use the term interchangeably, such as John Keegan, introduction to *The Mask of Command* (New York: Viking, 1987).

2. Richard L. Millett, *Searching for Stability: The U.S. Development of Constabulary Forces in Latin America and the Philippines*, Occasional Paper 30 (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2010), 1, accessed 26 May 2021, <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portal/7/combat-studies-institute/csi-books/millett.pdf>.

3. H. K. Carroll, "The Territorial System for Our New Possessions," *The Outlook* 63, no. 17 (23 December 1899): 966–68, accessed 26 May 2021, <https://www.unz.com/print/Outlook-1899dec23/>.

4. Amar Farooqui, "'Divide and Rule'? Race, Military Recruitment and Society in Late Nineteenth Century Colonial India," *Social Scientist* 43, nos. 3–4 (March–April 2015): 50, 54, accessed 26 May 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24372935>.

5. Jeffrey Greenhut, "Sahib and Sepoy: An Inquiry into the Relationship between the British Officers and Native Soldiers of the British Indian Army," *Military Affairs* 48, no. 1 (January 1984): 15–16, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1988342>.

6. Philip Mason, *A Matter of Honour: An Account of the Indian Army, Its Officers and Men* (London: Purnell Book Services, 1974), 406.

7. Greenhut, "Sahib and Sepoy," 17.

8. Allan R. Millett, Williamson Murray, and Kenneth H. Watman, "The Effectiveness of Military Organizations," in *Military Effectiveness*, ed. Allan R. Millett and Williamson Murray, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 2.

9. Ibid. An organization, however, does not need to be effective at each level to be overall effective. On the contrary, most military organizations are never able to achieve effectiveness in all categories.

10. W. Cameron Forbes, *The Philippine Islands*, vol. 1 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1928), 130–34.

11. Ibid., 88–92.

12. U.S. Philippine Commission, *Report of the Philippine Commission to the President*, vol. 1, pt. 1 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1900), 1.

13. Ibid., 121.

14. Ibid., 97–106. Also see Exhibit VIII in the same volume, "Kirkwood's memorandum on the administration of British dependencies in the Orient (prepared at request of commission)." Montague Kirkwood, a Briton, lived in Japan and had advised the Japanese government on colonies as well. See Christopher A. Morrison, "A World of Empires: United States Rule in the Philippines, 1898–1913" (PhD diss., Georgetown University, 2009), 45, accessed 26 May 2021, <http://hdl.handle.net/10822/553126>.

15. U.S. Philippine Commission, *Reports of the Philippine Commission, the Civil Governor, and the Head of the Executive Departments of the Civil Government of the Philippine Islands (1900–1903)* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1904), 5–11 (hereinafter cited as *Reports of the Philippine Commission, 1900–1903*).

16. Elihu Root in a note to Philip Jessup, quoted in Philip C. Jessup, *Elihu Root*, vol. 1 (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1938), 345.

17. Morrison, "A World of Empires," 63.

18. Helen Taft, *Recollections of Full Years* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1914), quoted in Alfred W. McCoy, *Policing America's Empire: The United States, The Philippines, and the Rise of the Surveillance State* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 85.

19. *Reports of the Philippine Commission, 1900–1903*, 93, 95.

20. Ibid., 97.

21. Bureau of Insular Affairs, U.S. War Department, *Public Laws and Resolutions Passed by the United States Philippine Commission* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1901), 370.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

24. *Reports of the Philippine Commission, 1900–1903*, 183.

25. U.S. War Department, *Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1903*, vol. 7 (Washington, DC:

- Government Printing Office, 1904), 24 (hereinafter cited as *Report of the Philippine Commission*, 1903).
26. Ibid., 27–33.
27. Henry T. Allen (hereinafter cited as HTA) to Caspar Whitney, 2 August 1901, box 7, Henry T. Allen Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress (hereinafter cited as HTA Papers).
28. Heath Twichell Jr., *Allen: The Biography of an Army Officer: 1859-1930* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1974), 115–16.
29. U.S. War Department, *Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1901*, vol. 1, pt. 6 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1901), 26.
30. HTA to William H. Taft, 22 February 1901, box 7, HTA Papers.
31. Henry C. Ide to HTA, 8 November 1904, box 8, HTA Papers.
32. HTA to Clarence R. Edwards, 21 February 1902, box 7, HTA Papers.
33. James G. Harbord (hereinafter cited as JGH) to H. H. Bandholtz, 5 April 1908, box 2, James G. Harbord Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress (hereinafter cited as JGH Papers).
34. JGH to David Baker, 14 June 1907, box 2, JGH Papers.
35. HTA to Henry C. Corbin, 1 February 1902, box 7, HTA Papers.
36. *Report of the Philippine Commission*, 1903, 46.
37. John R. White, *Bullets and Bolos: Fifteen Years in the Philippine Islands* (New York: The Century Co., 1928), 9.
38. "Various constabulary officers are being dropped out as unfit for the higher standard that is being reached." HTA Journal, 2 November 1904, box 1, HTA Papers; Unknown newspaper clipping, n.d., box 1, HTA Journal, HTA Papers.
39. HTA Journal, 15 July 1904, box 1, HTA Papers.
40. U.S. War Department, *Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1901*, vol. 1, pt. 2 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1901), 389.
41. Adna R. Chaffee to Adjutant General, 30 July 1901, quoted in Twichell, *Allen*, 124.
42. U.S. War Department, *U.S.A. Annual Reports*, 1907, vol. 8, pt. 2 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1908), 295 (hereinafter cited as *Report of the Philippine Commission*, 1907).
43. HTA to Theodore Roosevelt, 7 November 1901, box 7, HTA Papers; HTA to Albert J. Beveridge, 5 December 1901, box 7, HTA Papers; HTA to Henry C. Corbin, 1 February 1902, box 7, HTA Papers; HTA to Clarence Edwards, 21 February 1902, box 7, HTA Papers.
44. "I hope you are not too sanguine in thinking that the Military Governor should be withdrawn at present . . . I think the greatest possible mistake and the greatest possible injury to the Filipino people can be done by going too fast at the present moment." Albert J. Beveridge to HTA, 19 March 1902, box 7, HTA Papers.
45. Brian Linn, *Guardians of Empire: The U.S. Army and the Pacific, 1902-1940* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 253.
46. *Report of the Philippine Commission*, 1903, 9.
47. Gen. George W. Davis, quoted in *Report of the Philippine Commission*, 1903, 9.
48. HTA to Luke E. Wright, 19 February 1903, box 8, HTA Papers.
49. HTA Journal, 21 August 1904, box 1, HTA Papers.
50. *Report of the Philippine Commission*, 1903, 11–12.
51. Forbes, *The Philippine Islands*, 1:208–13.
52. *Report of the Philippine Commission*, 1907, 296.
53. Forbes, *The Philippine Islands*, 1:210n.
54. U.S. War Department, *Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1905*, vol. 12, pt. 3 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1905), 4, 28.
55. *Report of the Philippine Commission*, 1903, 47.
56. JGH to H. H. Bandholtz, 5 April 1907, box 2, JGH Papers.
57. *Report of the Philippine Commission*, 1903, 4.
58. HTA to Clarence R. Edwards, 31 January 1903, box 8, HTA Papers.
59. HTA to Arthur Murray, 31 January 1903, box 8, HTA Papers.
60. U.S. War Department, *Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1906*, vol. 8, pt. 2 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1907), 232.
61. Henry P. Willis, *Our Philippine Problem: A Study of American Colonial Policy* (New York: Henry Holt, 1905), 143.
62. *Report of the Philippine Commission*, 1903, 6.
63. Willis, *Our Philippine Problem*, 132.
64. Lebbeus R. Wilfley to William H. Taft, 2 June 1906, box 2, JGH Papers.
65. HTA to Albert J. Beveridge, 13 February 1902, box 7, HTA Papers.
66. Twichell, *Allen*, 136.
67. Vic Hurley, *Jungle Patrol: The Story of the Philippine Constabulary 1901-1936* (Salem, OR: Cerberus Books, 2011), 61.
68. Bureau of Constabulary, *General Orders No. 19*, 23 May 1906 (Manila, Philippines: Bureau of Printing, 1907), 64.
69. Twichell, *Allen*, 143.
70. Forbes, *The Philippine Islands*, 1:219, 1:235.
71. W. Quin Yow and Tony Zhao Ming Lim, "Sharing the Same Languages Helps Us Work Better Together," *Palgrave Communications* 5, no. 154 (2019): 9, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-019-0365-z>.
72. At the time, promotion rested not on merit, but on seniority. Once a person of the next higher rank advanced, retired, or died, the number one person in line advanced.
73. Forbes, *The Philippine Islands*, 1:236–38. Henry T. Allen, H. H. Bandholtz, James G. Harbord, Mark L. Hersey, Peter E. Traub, Dennis E. Nolan, William C. Rivers, Herman Hall, William S. Scott, John B. Bennet, C. E. Kilbourne, and Marcus D. Cronin.