

FROM THE FRONT PAGE

Filipino veterans honored...

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 because any little mistake could put lives in danger. Because of our reports, the US knew where to bomb, and that saved civilians from becoming casualties," she was quoted as saying by the *Honolulu Advertiser* (www.honoluluadvertiser.com).

Another veteran, Artemio Caleda, 85, served in the advance infantry unit sent to surround the forces of Japanese Gen. Tomoyuki Yamashita in Ifugao. He recounted the difficult jungle combats and how he and his comrades got sick of malaria and dysentery.

"We did it not for the benefits that were promised to us, but to defend our country. It was the US and multinational presence that made us a target, but it was up to us to defend our freedom and democracy," he said.

The veterans each received certificates and commemorative medals from Hawaii's congressional delegation and the state legislature.

They thanked the US federal

government for including long-deferred benefits payments to Filipino veterans in President Barack Obama's stimulus package but complained that many of the veterans in the US and the Philippines have yet to receive their checks after five months of waiting.

The veterans also lobbied for the passage of the proposed Family Reunification Act of 2009, set for hearings in the US Congress later this month, which would reunite veterans, who are either US citizens or residents, with their children in the Philippines who have languished for years on the visa waiting list.

Inouye and fellow Hawaiian senator Daniel Akaka are among the co-sponsors of the bill.

Of the 30,000 surviving Filipino World War II veterans, about 7,000 are US citizens residing in the US. Many have filed visa petitions for their children who remain in the Philippines.

The bill, if enacted into law, would exempt some 20,000 children of veterans from the quota

on immigrant visas for humanitarian reasons.

In 1941, over 200,000 Filipinos were drafted into the United States armed forces and fought during WW II. In 1946, the US Congress passed the Rescissions Act, which authorized a \$200-million appropriation to the Commonwealth Army of the Philippines, provided that their service is not deemed part of the active military or air service of the United States.

It took the US Congress more than four decades to acknowledge that Filipino WW II veterans had served in the US armed forces. The Immigration Act of 1990 included a provision that offered the opportunity to obtain US citizenship.

Last February, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 (Public Law 111-5) authorized the payment of benefits to the 30,000 surviving Filipino veterans: \$15,000 for US citizens and \$9,000 for non-citizens. ■



AMERICAN CITIZENS. Seven members of the US armed forces, including from left, Petty Officer First Class Sherwin Shane Shepherd, of Guyana, Sgt. Nilton Alonso Arrubla Torres, of Colombia, Spc. Herbert Rainiero Gomez Maldonado, of El Salvador, and Spc. Bryan Curato Atega, of the Philippines, are sworn in as citizens during a Naturalization Ceremony on Liberty Island in New York Saturday, July 4. The first visitors were allowed into the Statue of Liberty's crown Saturday in nearly eight years after it was closed to the public after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.
 AP Photos by David Goldman

Proposed California bullet train runs...

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 populated areas of California as they embark on the most ambitious US rail project, threatening delays that could stall the project for years if extensive opposition surfaces.

If completed as planned, the rail system would stretch 800 miles (1,300 kilometers) and link the San Francisco Bay area, Sacramento, Fresno, Los Angeles, Anaheim and San Diego with trains running at speeds of up to 220 mph (350 kph).

California's line and a Midwestern project are the likely front runners for \$8 billion in federal stimulus money dedicated to development of high-speed and conventional rail. It's not clear whether delays, either through neighborhood opposition or lawsuits, would jeopardize California's share.

By the time the entire California high-speed rail system is completed, the total cost is expected to top \$45 billion.

In some of the neighborhoods south of San Francisco, resi-

dents are urging the state high-speed rail board to consider tunneling, trenching or making San Jose the system's terminus in the Bay Area.

That step would require riders to take commuter trains from the heart of Silicon Valley to San Francisco.

Others suggest a different route, perhaps taking the trains off the peninsula and reaching San Francisco through an underwater tube from Oakland.

Their allies in the California Legislature have inserted language into a pending bill that would require the rail board to consider a different San Jose-to-San Francisco route than the one currently selected.

"We're supportive of (high-speed rail), but we have some deep concerns over potential implementation," said Patrick Burt, a city councilman from Palo Alto, a peninsula community about 30 miles (48 kilometers) southeast of San Francisco.

Palo Alto and four other pen-

insula cities - Atherton, Belmont, Burlingame and Menlo Park - have joined to create a unified voice on the project.

Atherton, Menlo Park and Palo Alto also are involved in a lawsuit challenging the rail board's selection of the Pacheco Pass as the primary route for trains between the Bay Area and the Central Valley. They say a more northerly route, through the Altamont Pass, would be the better choice.

Making Altamont the primary route could leave all or some peninsula cities untouched by high-speed rail, depending on where tracks are placed.

Last year's bond measure designated the San Francisco to Los Angeles and Anaheim segment as the first built. State officials hope to have it finished by 2020. Links to San Diego and Sacramento could follow shortly after, depending on funding, said Mehdi Morshed, the rail board's executive director.

Planners have settled on the

corridor used by the Caltrain commuter line as the best high-speed rail route on the peninsula, but they haven't decided if trains will run above or below ground.

They also haven't determined if tunneling would be more expensive than other alternatives.

Part of the 52-mile (83-kilometer)-long corridor is wide enough for Caltrain and high-speed rail tracks to run side by side. In narrower sections, tracks might have to be stacked or the state might have to obtain adjoining property through eminent domain, Morshed said.

That has some residents worried that elevated trains will split their communities, that the rail board will need to expand the right of way or both.

A Web site established by a group of peninsula residents features pictures depicting the transformation of Menlo Park's picturesque, tree-lined Caltrain station into a barren place with trains on a cement berm. (AP)

Cory showing improvement...

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 Buzz, Aquino's daughter Kris said her mother is not in pain.

"She is comfortable. She is not in pain and to this day she makes us feel so loved and appreciated," Kris said.

Kris said her mother will stay in the hospital indefinitely.

"We know that whatever happens is part of God's will," Kris said.

Meanwhile, healing priest Fr. Fernando Suarez said Mrs. Aquino will be happy whatever happens to her.

"Whatever will happen to her, I'm sure she is happy. She has a unifying effect on the people," Suarez said.

In his Gospel during the Mass, Suarez said Aquino is a fulfilled woman who rose from being a plain housewife to an icon of democracy.

"What Cory wants more than her healing is the healing of our country. She is a fulfilled woman. She cannot ask for more. What she wants now is to meditate and reflect," Suarez said.

Movie actress Susan Rocas,

wife of the late movie king Fernando Poe Jr. (FPJ), attended the healing Mass at the Greenbelt Chapel on July 6 and said she came to pray for Cory.

Rocas said Cory was among the first who visited her husband when he got sick.

"When my husband got sick, Cory came. She brought a rosary and we prayed together. Right now, I'm praying for her," Rocas said, adding that she admires Aquino.

"She gave her best to be able to establish our democracy. She is very dedicated in everything she does," Rocas said.

Rocas said these are the reasons why people love Mrs. Aquino.

"I know that there are many people who love her and we are one of them. She is a person who understands the feelings of other people," Rocas said.

Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay, president of the United Opposition (UNO), said seventeen barangays in Makati have so far joined the prayer vigils for the speedy recovery of Aquino. ■



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