



# PRESS RELEASE

Public Affairs Service – Department of National Defense

DND Annex Building, Natividad Ave., Camp General Emilio Aguinaldo, Quezon City, 1110 Metro Manila

**Website:** [www.dnd.gov.ph](http://www.dnd.gov.ph) | **E-Mail:** [dnd.opa@gmail.com](mailto:dnd.opa@gmail.com)

**Tel:** (+632) 982-5679 | 911-6001 to 31 ext. 8229 | **Fax:** (+632) 911-7113

**Date Released:** April 16, 2016

**Releasing Officer:** DR. PETER PAUL R.G. GALVEZ, MNSA, CESO III  
DND Spokesperson

## Filipino Veterans Rights Advocate dies in US

Retired U.S. Air Force Major Jesse Baltazar of Falls Church, Virginia, a former POW who managed to escape from the Bataan Death March in 1942, died on April 12, 2016, after battling complications from lung cancer.

On April 8, 2016, the 95-year-old veteran was about to attend the wreath laying ceremony to honor his fallen comrades during the Bataan Day of Valor anniversary at the National World War II Memorial in Washington DC, but he didn't make it to the annual commemoration. He was rushed to the Bethesda Naval Hospital, according to his wife Margrit.

Baltazar joined the US Armed Forces in the Far East (USAFFE) in 1941. After the war, he moved to the United States where he became the first native-born Filipino to join the US Air Force in 1948.

A veteran of three conflicts – WWII, Korean and Vietnam wars, Baltazar, was an untiring advocate for his fellow Filipino veterans who were denied full American government recognition of their military service in WW II.

He was active in the American Coalition for Filipino Veterans and the American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor. He regularly attended protest rallies, and testified in the congress on behalf of his fellow veterans.

He was an honored guest of President Barack Obama during the Veterans Day breakfast in the White House in 2013.

In January 2015, in an elaborate ceremony in his honor, he was awarded his WW II Purple Heart Medal by US Army Chief of Staff Gen. Ray Odierno. The Purple Heart is awarded to soldiers who are wounded or killed while serving in the US military

Baltazar waited 70 years to finally receive his medal because the US Army lost some of his war records. His family and supporters, including former US Secretary of State John Kerry, a Vietnam War veteran like him, spent years lobbying for him to receive the award.