

U.S. returns three disputed bells taken in 1901 to Philippines

By Jim Gomez
The Associated Press

MANILA, The Philippines — Three church bells seized by American troops as war trophies more than a century ago were returned to the Philippines in a move long demanded by Filipino leaders, including the current president, who is critical of Washington and has moved closer to China.

U.S. defense officials and the American ambassador handed back the Bells of Balangiga to the Philippine defense chief in a solemn ceremony at an air force base in the capital, closing a dark episode in the treaty allies' love-hate relationship.

"It is my great honor to be here at this closing of a painful chapter in our history," U.S. ambassador Sung Kim said. "Our relationship has withstood the tests of history and flourishes today."

Defense secretary James Mattis has said the handover is an important gesture of friendship and is in the U.S. national security interest. Some U.S. veterans and officials had opposed the return of the bells, calling them memorials to American war dead.

The bells are revered by Filipinos as symbols of national pride, and their arrival on a U.S. military transport plane and the handover ceremony were shown live on national television. Two of the bells had been displayed for decades at F.E. Warren Air Force Base in Cheyenne, Wyoming, and the third was with the U.S. Army in South Korea.

After being colonized by Spain for more than three centuries, the Philippines became a U.S. possession in 1898 in a new colonial era that began with the outbreak



of the Philippine-American War.

American occupation troops took the bells from a Catholic church following an attack by machete-wielding Filipino villagers who killed 48 U.S. soldiers in the town of Balangiga on central Samar island in 1901 in one of the U.S. Army's worst single-battle losses of the era.

One of the bells was sounded to signal the attack by the villagers, some of whom were disguised as women who hid in the church near an American garrison, historian Rolando Borrinaga said.

The Americans retaliated, reportedly killing thousands of villagers above the age of 10, and a U.S. general, Jacob Smith, ordered Samar to be turned into a "howling wilderness," Borrinaga said.

President Rodrigo Duterte, who has had an antagonistic attitude toward the U.S. and has revitalized ties with China and Russia, asked Washington in his state of the nation address last year to "return them to us, this is painful for us."

"Give us back those Balangiga bells. ... They are part of our national heritage," Duterte said in the speech, attended by the U.S. Ambassador and other diplomats.

Philippine defense secretary Delfin Lorenzana said with the resolution of the issue, "It's time for healing, it is time for closure, it is time to look ahead as two nations should with a shared history as allies."

Duterte has referred to violence by

DIPLOMATIC GESTURE. Roman Catholic priest Monsignor Pepe Quitarro, second from left, poses with other priests and officials before one of three church bells that were seized by American troops as war trophies more than a century ago, following a handover ceremony on December 11, 2018 in suburban Pasay city, the Philippines. American occupation troops took the bells in 1901 from a Catholic church following an attack by machete-wielding Filipino villagers who killed 48 U.S. troops in the town of Balangiga on central Samar island in one of the U.S. Army's worst single-battle losses of the era. The bells are revered by Filipinos as symbols of national pride. (AP Photo/Bullit Marquez)

Americans in Balangiga and on southern Jolo island in the early 1900s in public criticism of the U.S. government after it raised concerns about his brutal crackdown on illegal drugs in which thousands have died.

A breakthrough on the bells issue came with an amendment to a U.S. law banning the return of war relics and memorials to foreign countries. That allowed the homecoming of the Balangiga bells, said Lorenzana, who saw the bells last year in Wyoming, where he was notified by Mattis of the U.S. decision.

Philippine officials led by Duterte turned over the bells to officials and the church in Balangiga, a small coastal town where villagers applauded while watching troops on television screens pry open the wooden crates containing the bells.

"The Bells of Balangiga will once again peal, it will still remind the people of Balangiga of what happened in the town square more than a century ago," Lorenzana said. "But we would also look at that history with more understanding and acceptance."

Associated Press journalists Alberto "Bullit" Marquez and Cecilia Forbes contributed to this report.

U.S. military identifies five dead in warplanes that crashed off Japan

TOKYO (AP) — The U.S. military has identified five Marines who were declared dead after their refuelling plane collided with a fighter jet off Japan's southern coast.

Search-and-recovery operations ended after finding only one survivor, who was aboard the fighter jet.

The five crew members identified were on a KC-130 Hercules refuelling aircraft that collided with an F/A-18 Hornet during regular training. The warplanes crashed into the sea south of Japan's Shikoku island.

The Marine Corps identified the crew members as Lt. Col. Kevin R. Herrmann, 38, of New Bern, North Carolina; Maj. James M. Brophy, 36, of Staatsburg, New York; Staff

Sgt. Maximo A. Flores, 27, of Surprise, Arizona; Cpl. Daniel E. Baker, 21, of Tremont, Illinois; and Cpl. William C. Ross, 21, of Hendersonville, Tennessee.

They were based at Iwakuni air station near Hiroshima as part of the Marine Aerial Refueller Transport Squadron 152.

"It is with heavy hearts that we announce the names of our fallen Marines," Marine Corps Lt. Col. Mitchell T. Maury, the squadron's commanding officer, said in a statement. "They were exceptional aviators, Marines, and friends whom will be eternally missed. Our thoughts and prayers remain with their families and loved ones at this extremely difficult time."

The two crew members in the fighter jet were recovered after the accident, but one died. He was earlier identified as Capt. Jahmar Resilard, 28, of Miramar, Florida. The Marines said the survivor was in stable condition when rescued.

The search for the five missing crew, joined by Japanese and Australian forces, was halted and they were declared dead. The cause of the crash is still under investigation, the Marines said.

It said Herrmann served in the Marine Corps for 16 years and is survived by his wife and three daughters. He was promoted posthumously to the rank of lieutenant colonel. Brophy, who served 12 years in the Marine Corps, is survived by his wife, son, and daughter. Flores served nine years in the Marine Corps and is survived by his wife.

Baker joined the Marines two years ago and is survived by his mother and father. Ross also served two years and is survived by his mother and father, the Marines said.

The crash is the latest in a series of recent accidents



MARINES MOURNED. In this December 6, 2018 aerial photo, Japan's Coast Guard ship and a U.S. military plane are seen at sea off Kochi, Japan, during the search-and-rescue operation for missing crew members of a U.S. marine refuelling plane and a fighter jet. The U.S. military has identified five Marines who were declared dead after the plane and jet collided off Japan's southern coast. (Kyodo News via AP)

involving U.S. military forces deployed in and near Japan.

In November, a U.S. Navy F/A-18 Hornet from the aircraft carrier *USS Ronald Reagan* crashed into the sea southwest of Japan's southern island of Okinawa, though its two pilots were rescued. In mid-October, a MH-60 Seahawk also belonging to the *USS Ronald Reagan* crashed off the Philippine Sea shortly after takeoff, causing non-fatal injuries to a dozen sailors.

Two years ago, a MV-22 tilt-rotor aircraft Osprey crashed during a nighttime refuelling exercise off the southern island of Okinawa, injuring two crew members.

More than 50,000 U.S. troops are stationed in Japan under a security pact.

Photos from Japan space rovers show rocky asteroid surface

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JAXA says it has narrowed down potential landing spots and still plans to attempt the touch down to collect samples. Scientists are analyzing data sent by the rovers to finalize the plans, including whether to have an additional touch-down rehearsal for the spacecraft, JAXA senior project member Takashi Kubota said at a news conference.

One of the two rovers is believed to have travelled about 300 yards by hopping on the asteroid, where gravity is too weak for wheeled

vehicles, and has sent more than 200 photos and other data to the spacecraft, which then relayed it to Earth, Kubota said. The other rover took about 40 photos and stopped moving after about 10 days, he said. The lower-than-expected surface temperature of the asteroid may have helped slow the rovers' deterioration, Kubota said.

He said the data collected so far shows similarities, including the shape and surface, with Bennu, an asteroid being investigated by the National Aeronautics and Space

Administration (NASA) with its spacecraft Osiris-Rex. The initial findings show the asteroids are more moist and studded with boulders than initially thought.

Asteroids, which orbit the sun but are much smaller than planets, are among the oldest objects in the solar system and may help explain how Earth evolved.

"We are extremely interested and looking forward to further analysis," Kubota said. "We hope to find anything that may help explain the origin of space and its evolution."

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9				7		5	6
				9			
		9	5				3
		1				2	
	7				2	8	
			3				
8	4			1			7
	3		4			5	

Difficulty level: Hard

#34897

Instructions: Fill in the grid so that the digits 1 through 9 appear one time each in every row, column, and 3x3 box.

Solution to last issue's puzzle

Puzzle #68432 (Medium)

All solutions available at <www.sudoku.com>.

1	9	5	6	4	3	2	8	7
4	3	2	7	9	8	5	1	6
8	7	6	2	1	5	4	9	3
6	1	9	3	8	2	7	5	4
5	4	3	9	6	7	8	2	1
7	2	8	4	5	1	3	6	9
3	5	1	8	7	9	6	4	2
2	8	4	1	3	6	9	7	5
9	6	7	5	2	4	1	3	8