



## **LTC Richard M. Sakakida**

Military Intelligence Corps Hall of Fame (1988)

Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI) Fall of Fame

Lt Colonel Richard Motoso Sakakida was born on November 19, 1920 in Puunene, Maui. He had two brothers and two sisters and the family moved to Honolulu in 1923. His father passed away when Richard was only 7 years old, and his mother raised the family on her own. His mother had a strong influence on his life and many of his personal traits and convictions regarding the family, truth, honor and loyalty can be attributed to her strong family values. Richard went to McKinley High School and Hongwanji Japanese language school in Honolulu, and graduated both schools in June 1939.

During the latter part of the 1930s and the early 1940s, the relationship between the United States and Japan were beginning to wane with Japan's invasion of China. The US Army believed it was just a matter of time before Japan expanded its territorial conquest to the Pacific with the Philippines being its initial target. General MacArthur's headquarters in the Philippines requested that two Niseis be recruited for the Corps of Intelligence Police to assume undercover status in Manila, with the express purpose of gathering intelligence on the Japanese community. Richard was recommended by a former high school ROTC instructor to be one of the two individuals to be recruited. On March 14 1941, Richard was inducted into the US Army at Fort Shafter with the rank of Sergeant. This was 9 months before Pearl Harbor. Unlike normal undercover personnel, who received intensive training for mission, Richard had no formal intelligence training to prepare him for his undercover assignment in the Philippines. He had to rely on his own initiative, instincts and wits. Barely three weeks after his induction, on April 7, 1941, Richard and one other Nisei agent (Arthur Komori , Military Intelligence Corps Hall of Fame) boarded the US Army transport "Republic" undercover as civilian crew members. He and Komori disembarked (ostensibly "jumped ship") in Manila on April 21, 1941.

Despite Sakakida's initial inexperience as an intelligence agent, he quickly established his cover and began his mission of gathering information. He was able to ingratiate himself with key

Japanese businessmen and developed relationships to obtain intelligence. Soon after bombing Pearl Harbor, the Japanese landed on parts of the Philippine islands. As a result the local Japanese nationals were rounded up and incarcerated in a central compound. To continue his intelligence mission, Sakakida volunteered to accompany the Japanese nationals. When questioned by the local Philippine constabulary, he was assumed to be a Japanese spy. Later, it was determined that he was a member of the Corps of Intelligence Police (CIP) and later "arrested" by members of the US Army G-2 to more firmly establish his bona fides as an American "civilian".

Sakakida later rejoined his outfit wearing his US uniform and participated in interrogations, translations and other assigned intelligence duties. He was transferred to General Wainwright's headquarters in Corrigedor. After the fall of Bataan, General MacArthur ordered the evacuation to Australia of his two Nisei linguists, Komori and Sakakida. Sakakida was to have been evacuated on April 13, 1942, but gave his seat up to Clarence Yamagata, a Hawaiian-born local civilian with a family. Yamagata had been one of Sakakida's primary contacts while undercover and had assisted US G-2 in gathering intelligence. This unselfish act typifies the courage, strength and goodwill Sakakida had with his comrades-in-arms.

Sakakida participated in the surrender by General Wainwright of Corregidor on May 7, 1942, to General Homma of the Japanese Imperial Army. Sakakida provided all of the translations and negotiations of terms of surrender on behalf of General Wainwright. He was accosted by Japanese military personnel when he stood forthright and declared that he was an American soldier and not a Filipino. After the surrender of Corregidor, he reverted to his undercover role. On November 18, 1942, Sakakida was taken to face court-martial charges that he was a traitor to Japan. Sakakida was questioned extensively by the Japanese concerning his status with the US Army, but he adhered to his original cover, insisting that he was a civilian interpreter working for the US and not a US soldier.

Between November 1942 and February 10, 1943, Sakakida was tortured in attempts to break his story. The Kempei Tai (Japanese Secret Military Police) were convinced that Sakakida was a member of the US Army and tried every conceivable torture and pressure to get him to change his story, including the water treatment, when his stomach was filled with water and then jumped upon by his torturers. They hung him from a beam by his wrists and he was burned by cigarettes repeatedly. Sakakida persevered remembering the admonishments of his mother that day he left Hawaii; she said "This is your country. Do your best. Don't bring disgrace to yourself and especially to your family. That is all I ask of you." Words of his mother gave him strength to undergo the most hideous of physical degradation and pain without breaking.

Unable to break his cover, Sakakida was given a position as an interpreter in the Judge Advocate General's Office of the Japanese 14th Army Headquarters. In his capacity as an interpreter, Sakakida not only provided valuable intelligence regarding troop movements, but helped plan, engineer and carry out a daring prison break at Muntinglupa prison. The breakout resulted in the freeing of a guerrilla leader and 500 other guerrillas. Other life-endangering acts performed by Sakakida included sneaking food to U.S. prisoners and translating derogatory

remarks made by U.S. prisoners and Filipino guerrillas in a manner not so offensive; this "softening " of the translation reduced the sentences of POWs during their trials.

Shortly after the prison break, the 14th Army was engaged in combat and in June 1945, Sakakida was finally able to flee. He rejoined the Filipino guerrillas and was wounded in the stomach by shell fragments during a firefight. He was left behind, but managed to dig out the shrapnel with a razor blade and live off the land for four long months. Finally on September 25, his uniform in shreds and suffering from his unhealed wounds, M/Sgt Sakakida was reunited with Allied Forces. He then learned of Japan's surrender.

Sakakida stayed in the Philippines after the war and participated in the War Crimes investigations and trials. In 1948, he joined the U.S. Air Force serving with OSI (Office of Strategic Intelligence) in Japan. He initiated an operation that coordinated all of the Japanese investigative agencies, such as customs, national police, and the Tokyo metropolitan police, for the common purpose of stopping black market activities in the Tokyo metropolitan area. He was highly regarded by the Japanese government and was given special recognition for his accomplishments. He retired as a Lieutenant Colonel in September 1975 after 34 years of service. Sakakida passed away on January 23, 1996 after a lengthy illness complicated by his war wounds.

In April 1994, Sakakida was awarded the Philippines Legion of Honor. In 1996, he was finally awarded the Bronze Star and the Prisoner of War Medal. On 28 October 1998, LTC Sakakida was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Medal.

LTC Sakakida was inducted into the Military Intelligence Corps Hall of Fame in 1988, He was also inducted into the Air Force Office of Special Investigations Hall of Fame.



**CWO/1st Lt Arthur S. Komori**

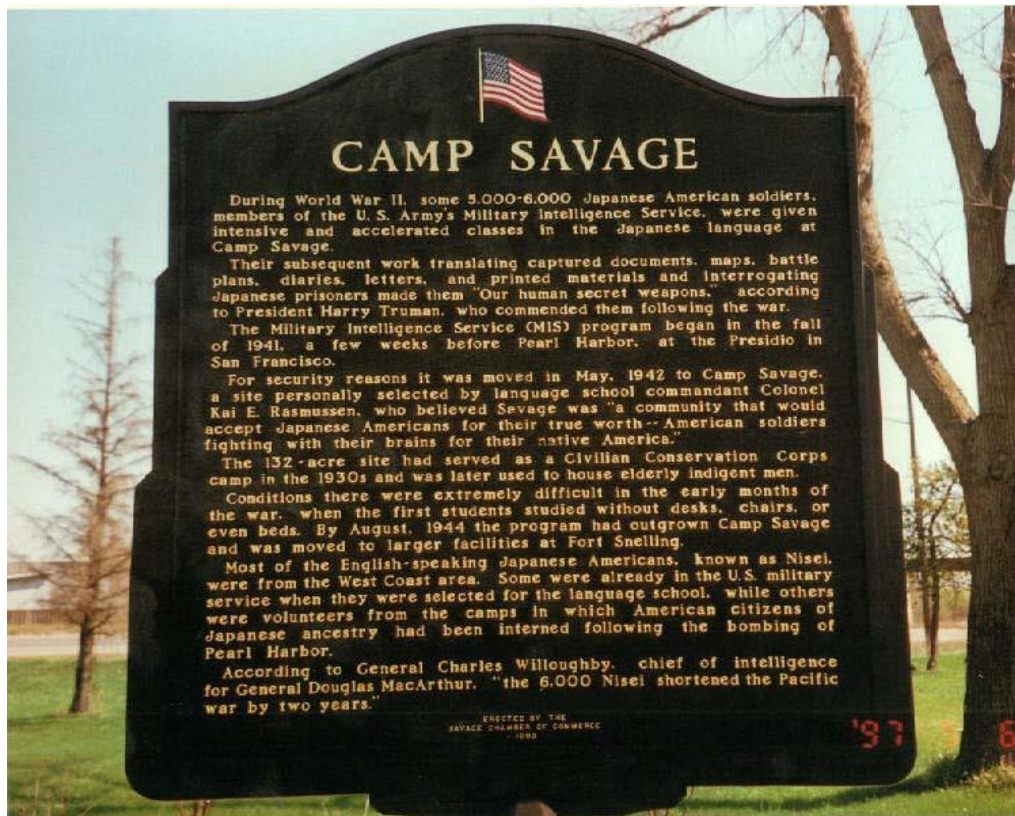
## Military Intelligence Corps Hall of Fame (1988)

On February 19, 1941, the Commanding General of Hawaiian Department at Ft Shafter received instructions from Washington which stated " Authority granted for original enlistment of two American citizens of Japanese extraction for transfer to Philippine Dept in grade of Sergeant , sailing on the next transport 22nd March". On recommendations from their ROTC Colonel , Komori and Richard Sakakida were inducted at Ft Shafter into the US Army Corp of Intelligence Police as Sergeants. On April 7 ,1941, they boarded a US Army transport "Republic" destined for Manila. Komori and Sakakida separated after landing in Manila and occasionally met discreetly in Manila. Komori was employed by the Japan Cultural Bureau, Domei News Agency, and the Japanese Consulate General. The Japanese neighborhood groups showed indications of a likelihood of invasion by Japanese forces.

When war with Japan was declared on December 7, 1941, Komori remained undercover in Manila. He was imprisoned by the Philippine Constabulary in Bilibid Prison, where he was able to obtain intelligence on Japanese intentions regarding occupation, their plans and strategy. Komori was rescued and joined General Wainwright's C.P. in the Maliata Tunnel in Bataan. There Komori collected intelligence from POWs brought in by the US troops. The most important sources of information were the diaries brought in with the prisoners, showing movement and identities of the Japanese forces.

With the fall of Bataan, Komori was evacuated from Bataan to Corregidor with Colonel Irwin on the Admiral's barge during the night of April 8, 1941.\* The two Niseis Komori and Sakakida were ordered by MacArthur to leave Corregidor and join the linguists in Australia. Komori left Bataan on a plane bound for Darwin. Sakakida elected to remain with General Wainwright (See narrative on Sakakida above).

Komori volunteered to go to New Guinea with MacArthur's troops, but this was rejected by MacArthur. Instead, Komori was ordered to travel to the Military Intelligence Service Language School (MISLS ) in Camp Savage, Minnesota on a 60-day TDY to inspire the language students as to the importance of our role as interpreters in the Pacific Campaign. Upon his return to Australia, he was assigned on temporary duty with the Australian Broadcasting System to monitor broadcasts from Tokyo. He worked with Hisashi Masuda (Military Intelligence Hall of Fame). He lived in a hotel in Melbourne and there met a Chinese-Australian woman who eventually became his wife. In April 1945, he was transferred to Manila. On July 20, 1945, T/Sgt Komori was officially transferred to 441st Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC) Detachment.



He was one of the early arrivals in Japan after the end of the war, looking for suitable billets for the 441st CIC personnel soon to follow. In November 1945, he returned to CIC Headquarters in Honolulu where he was involved in the investigation of communist leaders preaching strike.

On April 9, 1948, Komori was attached to a special taskforce called the "Joint Task Force Seven" to provide security for Eniwetok Atoll, site of atomic weapons testing. Komori was also used to courier the results of the testing to Washington DC. On January 31 1949, Komori was appointed Regular Army Warrant Officer with the Counter Intelligence Corps. On November 13, 1950, Komori was commissioned 1st Lieutenant. In 1952 Komori was teaching at the Fort Holabird Intelligence School. He resigned his commission in April 1952 when MacArthur was discharged. He continued teaching as a civilian from 1952 to 1956. He used this opportunity to attend law school at night at University of Maryland. In 1956 he returned to Hawaii to practice law.

Komori once commented, "How would one fare as an agent , if caught as a spy? It was understood the Army would not take responsibility or admit to my role or status and I would die rather than reveal my role. Ala Nathan Hale. To give my all for my country, for my parents, for Hawaiian people was my objective."

CWO/1st Lt Arthur S Komori was inducted into the Military Intelligence Corps Hall of Fame in 1988.

\* Just a slight correction: Arthur co-piloted an Army Trainer (with a Captain Bradford) out of Corrigidore and flew to Ilioilo on Panay Island was "picked-up" by Captain Gunn and flown to Del Monte on Mindanao and then flew with General Royce's group of B-25s on a 14+ hour flight to Darwin which at that time was a record breaking flight for B-25s. This taken from Arthur's own official Army Records....Arthur had received his private pilot's license before being recruited by the CIP. (Quentin Belles, Kapaa, HI)

---

## **Mr. Hisashi "Johnny" Masuda**

Military Intelligence Corps Hall of Fame (1988)

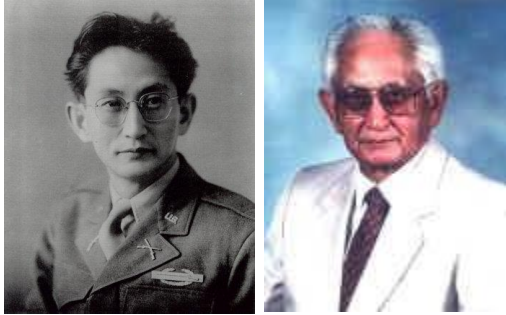
"Johnny" Masuda was born in 1915 in Sonoma, California. When he was three years old, his mother returned to Japan, taking Masuda with her. During the next 15 years, Masuda grew up in Japan and was educated there. By the time he returned to California in 1933, he was an accomplished Japanese linguist. When the evacuation orders were issued to evacuate all those with Japanese ancestry in 1942, he was evacuated first to Santa Anna and later to Camp Magee, Arkansas.

In September 1942, he volunteered when a US Army recruiting team visited the camp seeking volunteers for the Military Intelligence Service Language School (MISLS), located in Camp Savage Minnesota. After completing the intensive course there, he was sent to Camp Shelby for his basic training. In December 1943, he departed for the South Pacific aboard a new liberty ship. The ship carried a team of radar technicians and their equipment. They saw Christmas in New Caledonia and New Year in New Guinea. He was later assigned to work with the Australian Broadcasting Commission in Melbourne, Australia, where he served as an intercept operator and translator of Japanese national radio broadcasts. It was Masuda's Section that intercepted the first news of the impending resignation of the Tojo cabinet in early 1945.

He was in Manila in April 1945 and by September 1945, Masuda was in Japan working as a translator/interpreter for the Counterintelligence Command. He was discharged from the US Army in 1946 and began working for the Counterintelligence Corps as a civilian. In 1952, when the occupation Government ended and the Government of Japan resumed civil administration, he began working in liaison with civilian agencies. Throughout the intervening years, the military units have changed but Masuda remained as a cornerstone of the famous Foreign Liaison Detachment, which later developed into the 500th MI Group. Mr. Masuda served more than 44 years in the US Intelligence community.

Mr. Hisashi "Johnny" Masuda was inducted into the Military Intelligence Corp Hall of Fame in 1988.

---



## COL Harry Fukuhara

Military Intelligence Corps Hall of Fame (1988)

Harry K. Fukuhara was born in Seattle, Washington on January 1, 1920. Both his parents had emigrated to the United States from Japan. After his father's death in 1933, his mother returned to her home in Hiroshima with her children. For the next five years, Fukuhara attended school in the Hiroshima area, graduating from the Sanyo Commercial School in 1938. Returning to the United States in 1938, he attended Glendale Junior College in Glendale, California, receiving an Associate of Arts degree in 1941.

While incarcerated in an internment camp, Fukuhara volunteered for duty in November 1942 with the U.S. Army and received training at the Military Intelligence Service Language School at Camp Savage, Minnesota. Immediately after this training, he was assigned to the Allied Translator and Interpreter Service in the Pacific theater of operations. Between May 1943 and the end of World War II on August 1945, he served as an interpreter, translator and interrogator while working in support of Allied intelligence teams made up of Australians, Dutch and American military personnel. Fukuhara served as a language team chief throughout much of this period and his team was recognized for significant contributions to the Allied intelligence effort in the Southwest Pacific region. Much of his team's success in the interrogation of POWs can be attributed to Fukuhara's determined effort to convince American commanders of the value of capturing Japanese soldiers for intelligence purposes. Although Japanese soldiers were fierce warriors, willing to fight to the end, they were not as well prepared to resist skillful interrogation. As a result of his accomplishments in the field during the War, Fukuhara was awarded the Bronze Star Medal with two oak leaf clusters and was promoted up through the ranks to Master Sergeant. On August 1945, M/Sgt Fukuhara received a battlefield commission as a Second Lieutenant.

From September 1945 to February 1946, Lt Fukuhara participated in the disarmament and deactivation of the Japanese armed forces as a member of the US occupation forces. He also served as a liaison officer between the US military government and local Japanese government officials. After one year break in service, Lt Fukuhara returned to active duty in February 1947. He attended the Counterintelligence Corps Basic Course at Ft. Holabird, Maryland in 1947 prior to his assignment to the 441st Counterintelligence Corps Detachment in Japan in September of

that year. From 1949 to 1966, Fukuhara served in a number of counterintelligence positions with the US Army in Japan and the United States and conducted bilateral liaison with Japan for the United States. He was extremely successful in several different types of sensitive operations, providing critical intelligence in support of US troops during the early Cold War period, the Korean War, and the US buildup in Vietnam.

Fukuhara was a key figure in the Japan-based collection operations which the US Army mounted between 1967 and 1970 in support of US Forces fighting in Indochina. He was responsible for collecting information which aided the army's senior leaders and national policymakers in assessing the war-making potential and military objectives of the North Vietnamese Army and their Viet Cong allies. In 1969, he was promoted to the rank of Colonel.

In 1970, Colonel Fukuhara was appointed military governor of the Yaeyama Island Group of the Ryukyu chain. Serving until his retirement from active duty in 1971, COL Fukuhara was instrumental in the rebuilding of the island's infrastructure and materially improving the quality of life and morale of his constituents. His efforts directly contributed to better US-Japanese relations during the crucial period when US administered territory in the Ryukyus was returned to Japanese control.

The capstone of Fukuhara's long and distinguished career, his 18-year assignment as chief of 500th Military Intelligence Brigade's Foreign Liaison Detachment, began in July 1972 when he returned once more to Japan as a Department of the Army civilian. The remarkable record of his detachment in carrying out both routine and extraordinary requirements over many years is widely known and admired throughout the United States intelligence community. Furthermore, Fukuhara's unique personal abilities in the conduct of high level liaison work and his unparalleled network of contacts have often made him the "source of information when there was no other". Besides supporting the mission of the 500th Military Intelligence Brigade and its predecessors, his skills and contacts have been called upon by countless officials and decision-makers at the theater and national levels. He has also been a key figure in the negotiation of several bilateral agreements. Fukuhara's record reflects an unbroken string of accomplishments by an outstanding intelligence professional who has served the United States Army in this theater since 1943.

Fukuhara's military decorations include the Bronze Star with two oak leaf clusters, the Legion of Merit, the Meritorious Service Medal, the Army Commendation Medal and the Combat Infantryman's badge. Further evidence of Fukuhara's widely recognized contributions to the national intelligence effort are the following: The National Intelligence Distinguished Service Medal, presented in 1987 by the Director of Central Intelligence Agency; the Department of Army decoration for Exceptional Civilian Service, presented in 1987 by the Secretary of the Army; and "The President's Award for Distinguished Federal Civilian Service", which was personally signed by President Bush and presented on September 14, 1990.

In addition, on September 13, 1990, the Emperor of Japan authorized the award of the "Order of the Rising Sun" 3rd Class to Mr. Fukuhara, which was signed by the Prime Minister and



presented by the Chief of Staff, Japan Ground Defense Forces. Mr. Fukuhara received approximately 15 Certificates of Appreciation/Commendation and Outstanding performance awards from US military offices. Additionally he received approximately 20 Certificates of Commendations / Appreciation from various Japanese civilian and military government offices.

Mr. Harry Fukuhara was inducted into the Military Intelligence Hall of Fame in 1988.

---



## **COL John F. Aiso**

Military Intelligence Corps Hall of Fame (1991)

Colonel John F Aiso was born in Burbank, California in 1909. He excelled scholastically and was the class valedictorian and captain of a debating team at Hollywood High School, where he graduated in 1926. He then went to Japan and attended Seijo Gakuen University in Tokyo for one year studying the Japanese language. He then received a scholarship to Brown University in Providence, RI, where he majored in economics. During his four years, he earned a varsity letter in cross-country running and captained the debating team to an Eastern Intercollegiate Debating Championship in 1928-29. He graduated from Brown University in 1931 *cum laude* (with honors) in economics as the valedictorian. He attended the Harvard Law School for the next three years, graduating in 1934 with a Bachelor of Laws Degree.

He passed the New York bar examination and worked for a law firm where he practiced and studied international Japanese law. In 1936, his firm sent him to Tokyo to deal with Japanese banks. While there, Aiso studied Japanese law at Chuo University. Aiso's next position took him to Mukden, Manchuria, in March 1937 as the head of the legal department and later as the director of a British-American corporation. During the three years there, he met several influential Japanese, including a former Japanese consul to Los Angeles, who knew Aiso as a young man.

Aiso returned to the United States in 1940 and was drafted and reported for active duty in April 1941. Private 2nd Class Aiso was originally stationed at Fort MacArthur in San Pedro, and was

transferred to Camp Hahn where he worked in the motor pool. He and other Nisei met CPT Kai Rasmussen, who had recently returned from Tokyo as a Japanese language officer in the American Embassy. He told Aiso he was forming a secret Japanese language school--the Fourth Army Intelligence School at Presidio of San Francisco. Aiso received orders to go to Crissy Field at Presidio, San Francisco, where he met Lt Col John Weckerling, who explained about the projected secret school. Aiso initially began as an assistant instructor, but soon was made the Chief instructor of this fledgling school (1941-1942). Aiso faced the task of developing texts and organizing a curriculum in just a few weeks' time from scratch. Additionally, at a time when the patriotism and loyalty of Japanese Americans were very much in doubt, Aiso was the first Nisei in the US Army to have responsibility for such a major project and was under tremendous pressure to perform. With the deployment of Aiso's first graduates in May 1942, however, all doubt was dispelled and the school was flooded with requests from the field for more linguists.

With the evacuation of all Japanese and Japanese-Americans from the West Coast, the MIS school was moved to Camp Savage, Minnesota with Aiso as the Director of Academic Training. The school was officially named Military Intelligence Service Language School (MISLS), and was later moved to Fort Snelling in Minneapolis. From 1941 to 1945, the MISLS graduated 6,000 Army Japanese-language interrogators and translators, thereby making an invaluable contribution to the war effort. The school which Aiso helped create eventually became the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center. In 1945, Aiso was given a direct commission as an Army Major in Military Intelligence. He was assigned to Japan on General MacArthur's G-2 staff to prepare for the Tokyo war crimes trials. In 1947 Aiso was separated from the military service and was later promoted to Colonel in the Reserves.

In 1952, Aiso was appointed as Commissioner of the Los Angeles Superior Court. The following year he was the first Nisei appointed as a judge of the Municipal Court of Los Angeles. Later that year, he was elevated to the Superior Court of Los Angeles. In December 1967, Aiso was appointed as the Chief Judge of the Appellate Department and in 1968 Governor Ronald Reagan appointed him as an Associate Justice of Division Five of the California Court of Appeal for the Second Appellate District, which covered Southern California.

In 1965, Colonel John Fujio Aiso was decorated with the Legion of Merit for his World War II service with the Military Intelligence Service Language School from 1941 to 1946, his service as the Special Assistant to MG Charles Willoughby, General MacArthur's G-2, from 1946 to 1948 and his service as a legal military officer with the Judge Advocate General's Corps as a reserve officer from 1948 until retirement as a reserve officer in 1965.

In 1985, the Emperor of Japan conferred the Third Class Order of the Rising Sun on Colonel Aiso. He was one of only two Nisei upon whom the Japanese Government had conferred the high ranking Third Class Order of the Rising Sun for his service in the occupation of Japan from 1946 to 1948. Aiso was in charge of enforcing the political purge, as mandated by Potsdam Declaration, in the understanding and goodwill between the Japanese Government and the people of Japan and the United States.

John F. Aiso was inducted into the Military Intelligence Corp Hall of Fame in 1991.

---



## LTC Gero Iwai

Military Intelligence Corps Hall of Fame (1995)

Gero Iwai, born on November 3 1905 in Honolulu, Hawaii, was one of the first Japanese Americans (Nisei) to pursue a ROTC course in connection with his studies at the University of Hawaii. Upon graduation in 1931, IWAI was appointed 2nd Lt Infantry Reserve. On August 19, 1931, Iwai enlisted as a counter intelligence police at Headquarters, Hawaiian Department, Office of AC of S, G-2, where he served as an enlisted investigator. An important assignment was to monitor the activities community. He was also responsible for the surveillance of the activities of the Japanese Consulate General. He established a network of Japanese American informants working in the Japanese Consulate. No one, including his family, was aware of his true undercover assignment. He dressed in civilian clothes and he was seen only a "civilian" working for the US Government.

On April 8, 1941, he was honorably discharged as an enlisted soldier, to accept appointment as a Reserve Officer. He was assigned as Assistant to the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2 (Intelligence) at Headquarters Hawaiian Department. It was during this assignment that Japan attacked Pearl Harbor on Dec 7, 1941. Together with CDR Douglas T. Wada, a Nisei Naval Officer and working closely with FBI, they interrogated the first Japanese prisoner of war (the commander of a midget submarine). Valuable documents were found in the submarine which were translated by Iwai. Iwai conducted widespread and detailed investigation of the Japanese population in the Hawaiian Islands. These activities and accomplishments earned Iwai a Bronze Star.

The Roberts Commission report, published on Jan 25, 1942, alluded to widespread espionage in Hawaii by Japanese consular agents and by the Japanese residents of Hawaii. Largely as a result of Iwai's investigations, these allegations were proved to be entirely false. General Delos Emmons, then Commander of the Hawaiian Department, reported two weeks after Pearl Harbor, that "no American citizens or alien Japanese residents of Hawaii was involved in any acts of hostility against the US Forces". Unfortunately for the Iwai family, the Emmons Report did not appear in public press, and the family, his wife Betty and two sons, George and Bert,

were almost totally shunned by their contemporaries, which must have been to them a source of considerable personal pain and anguish.

In 1949 Iwai (then a Major) was transferred first to the 401st CIC Detachment and then to 441st CIC Detachment in Tokyo. He was awarded and Oak Leaf Cluster to his Bronze Star for "meritorious service as Executive Officer, 7th District, 441st CIC Detachment in Japan from 27 June to 2 November 1950". The citation notes, among other accomplishments, that "Lt Col Iwai accurately evaluated, correlated and edited large volumes of intelligence reports concerning a North Korean espionage case under investigation by the unit and rendered timely advice to the Commanding Officer of the District."

LTC Iwai's assignment in Tokyo afforded the opportunity to exercise his considerable talents in acting as an intelligence liaison between counterintelligence organization and elements of the Japanese government. He was honored by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government in 1954, when its governor, Seiichiro Yasui, presented him with the "Gold Key to Tokyo" for his services between 1949 and 1954. Until that date, the "Gold Key" award was given to only one other American, then Vice President Nixon, during his visit to Tokyo.

LTC Iwai retired from the Army on June 30, 1957. He chose to settle his family in California. He passed away on April 9, 1972. His name will rank with other members of the Military Intelligence Corp Hall of Fame as one who tirelessly and selflessly performed his responsibilities, regardless of the tremendous sacrifices which this required not only from his personal life, but also that of his family.

In 1995, LTC Gero Iwai was posthumously inducted into the Military Intelligence Corp Hall of Fame.



## **Mr. Harry M. Akune**

Military Intelligence Hall of Fame (1996)

On February 6, 1945, the 503d Parachute Regimental Combat Team, including the 462d Parachute Field Artillery Bn and C Company of the 161st Parachute Engineer Bn, had completed its part in the invasion of the island of Mindoro in Northern Philippines. It was then alerted and given the mission to seize and secure the enemy-held island fortress of Corregidor, key to the important seaport of Manila. Medium bombers and A-20s started daily attacks on the target. Designated as the Rock Force, the 503d had attached to it a reinforced battalion of Surgical Hospital and several other small units. Supporting the land forces were elements of the Navy Task Force 78.3 and the Fifth Air Force, including the 317th Troop Carrier Wing. Colonel George M. Jones, commanding officer of the 503d Parachute Regiment Combat Team, was designated commander of the Rock Force.

There were only two possible paratroop landing areas on the island, both small as to allow only eight-man sticks. This meant that early forces would be vastly outnumbered. It was anticipated that the element of surprise together with the enemy's expectation that D-day was merely another day of bombing, would allow the heavily armed veteran paratroopers to consolidate into a strong enough force to withstand enemy attack even though vulnerable to the chronic weaknesses of all airborne landings--the initial scattering for forces and jump casualties. It was later learned from a prisoner that the enemy commander had been so certain that no airborne landing could reasonably be undertaken that he took no steps to counter such an attempt.

The long-prepared enemy was strongly entrenched in the numerous reinforced tunnels, heavy gun batteries and concrete observation posts that American forces had constructed after having gained the Philippines following the Spanish-American War. Although the topside had been intensely bombed, most of the heavily manned defensive positions were on the sides of the island. As in many similar operations during the Pacific War, aerial bombing resulted in only superficial damage to the extensive fortifications and enemy personnel losses were also found to have been minimal.

Intelligence on the defending forces was scarce, old, and evaluated as of unknown reliability. The latest estimate available to the Rock Force was that there was a garrison of 850 service troops. Japanese language and intelligence Specialist Harry M. Akune had been attached to the 503d Parachute RCT for the seaborne operation on Mindoro Island and the information he was able to obtain had proven of value to the staff of the 503d in the conduct of that campaign. He was preparing to return to his Allied Translator and Interpreter Service unit when Colonel Jones personally asked Akune if he would join the 503d in our assault on Corregidor. The Colonel pointed out that this act would have to be completely voluntary on Akune's part since paratroop duty was restricted to volunteers only. Akune agreed to remain with the 503d, stating that he already felt as though he was a member of our unit and was honored to have been asked. Colonel Jones arranged for Akune to continue to be attached to the unit for the duration of the Corregidor campaign.

After a 0700 take-off from Mindoro, the parachute landing on Corregidor started at about 0835 on 16 February 1945. Since current intelligence about the enemy was needed, the 503d staff determined that Specialist Akune's skill in obtaining timely information was crucial; therefore,

he was assigned as a member of the third stick to jump from his plane. There was some confusion in the staging area at Mindoro as the paratroopers were loading onto C-47s. The vehicle carrying Akune's helmet, weapon, canteen and other personal equipment failed to meet him at his assigned plane. So, equipped with only a parachute, Akune boarded his C-47. One of the paratroopers on that spot stated, and many others agree, that very few men would have gone ahead at that point. To the amazement of his fellows, Akune took his assigned place in the jump sequence on the plane. Immediately, in the paratrooper tradition, he was the recipient of a weapon and ammunition "borrowed" from the crew of the plane. The first weapon was a .45 caliber Thompson submachine gun with an unwieldy 50-round drum, but Akune was unfamiliar with that weapon. So the troopers found a carbine with one 15-round magazine which they secured to Akune's parachute harness.

The column of C-47s flew two abreast over the small drop zone, each dropping equipment and eight men per pass. Heavy casualties were suffered through injuries from impalement on splintered stubs of trees resulting from earlier bombings and by falling onto fragments of concrete, steel reinforcing bars, rocks and other hazardous rubble. Casualties were also suffered as the defenders emerged from their shelters to fire at the descending paratroops, helpless in their parachute harnesses, and at the low-flying unarmed planes. Other paratroopers were lost when blown out of the landing zones and over the sides of the cliffs by many air currents. Some of these were fortunate enough to be saved by Navy small crafts.

Akune jumped onto the rubble and debris of the heavily-bombed topside and into the fire of the enemy without a helmet or other equipment and with only 15 rounds of ammunition to defend himself. He landed part way down the side of a cliff but uninjured. As he made his way upward, he found himself covered by a weapon of a paratrooper who later said that even though he had seen Akune's Japanese features, he recognized the coveralls and the carbine as being US Army issue, adding that the main reason he did not fire at Akune was that he had never seen anyone wearing such thick glasses.

Akune joined fellow paratroopers as they formed ad hoc units attacking enemy forces that were coming out of their shelters in increasing numbers and firing on the scattered Americans. He was able to arm himself with equipment from dead troopers. The Rock Force diary for that time reads. . . "sniper and machine gun fire pouring all about us from the east....heavy fire from enemy HMG....Can't locate medical bundles...dispensary swamped. ...heavy casualties... .and Requesting support fire from Navy". Akune fought as an infantryman here as well as later when he went on a number of patrols.

By nightfall the paratroopers had formed defense lines around the ruins of building left on the topside. The record also states that examination of enemy bodies indicated that they had been in excellent physical condition. As Akune translated captured documents, he found that the make-up of the enemy forces included a large number of Japanese Imperial Marines, not just service troops, as previously reported. Another document translated by Akune revealed that the enemy force was 5,000 strong, not 850 as previously reported, with 3,000 on the main part of the island and the other 2,000 on or in Malinta Hill and eastern portion. This was later borne

out by enemy body count and estimates of enemy buried in tunnels. Based on this information, Colonel Jones and his staff then revised their strategy to provide a more secure defensive posture during nighttime and an increase in the amount of naval and air support that would be required since the Rock Force was outnumbered at that stage.

Akune also found out that the enemy commander had been killed by one of the last bombs dropped just prior to the parachute landing, causing confusion on the part of the enemy command. Additional intelligence uncovered by Akune was that the main portion of the enemy communication system had been destroyed. From this data, the paratroop staff concluded, among other factors, that one coordinated attack by the enemy was not as likely as separate attacks by smaller units and so deployed defenses accordingly. Akune also elicited information from a POW that a Lt Endo had led a 600-man Imperial Marine force to reinforce the Corregidor garrison the previous October. Endo had the reputation of being imbued with the bushido principles of the ancient samurai, and his men were expected to adhere to the highest standards of that philosophy with no hesitation to sacrifice their own lives in destroying the Americans. This was demonstrated time after time in the number of suicidal banzai attacks by the enemy soldiers, and efforts to take American lives with them as they destroyed themselves in the caves and tunnels during our attacks on these sites. Alerted by Akune's findings of the fanatical nature of the enemy, the Americans attempted to stay away from the tops of fortifications as much as possible and implemented other defensive measures to reduce casualties.

Fresh water was extremely scarce. Initially, the very few fresh water sources were in enemy territory. Through interrogation of POWs, Akune established the location of springs that were still working, and US soldiers took them under intermittent, indirect fire resulting in enemy casualties, placing indubitable hardship on the thirsty defenders.

The structures of the island defenses led American soldiers to destroy the enemy in many caves and tunnels by means of flame-throwers and/or white phosphorus grenades, direct fire from our 75mm pack howitzers, or pouring gasoline into then dropping explosives down vents. If surviving enemy came out of the entrances, they were immediately cut down. These tactics--despite attempts to capture the enemy alive whenever possible and their determination not to be taken prisoners--made POWs scarce. Akune volunteered for a numbers of patrols in attempts to obtain more prisoners. Out of the 5,000 enemy only 22 prisoners were captured, indicating the savagery of the battle and the desperate nature of the enemy. It showed Akune's skill in being able to extract enough valuable data from such a small population of enemy captured. One prisoner attacked Akune with such force and tenacity that he had to be shot to save Akune.

In addition to that intelligence used to great benefit by Colonel Jones and his immediate command, the Navy saved possible serious damage through information that Akune extracted from one of the five Imperial Japanese sailors who were taken together. They were initially resistant to questioning so Akune "worked" one, a Korean, against the rest. Akune found out from him that there were some 100 motor "Q-boats" concealed around the island. These were

on wheeled carriages that allowed them to be kept in deep cover and, when ordered into action, to be launched at the waterline. Each had a large explosive device in the bow to be detonated against Allied ships. In response to this warning, supporting Navy vessels were able to take appropriate defensive measures against these boats and suffered no losses.

In summary then, as a direct result of his actions, Specialist Akune provided Colonel Jones' Rock Force with:

- An accurate and timely estimate of the strength of enemy garrison. The identification of an important part of the enemy force as Imperial Japanese marines.
- The information that the enemy was highly motivated and imbued with the spirit of fanatical resistance to the level of self-destruction.
- The knowledge that the enemy command had been deprived of its leader by bombing at the crucial time of parachute landing.
- Information that the enemy communication system had suffered severe damage and
- Location of probable worthwhile targets around the few sources of fresh water available to the enemy.

In addition, Akune discovered information that alerted the Allied Navy to the presence of approximately 100 explosive-laden motor boats that posed a serious threat to our vessels.

By having these essential elements of information about the enemy, the Rock Force Commander and his staff were able to develop operations so effective that it was noted by the corps commander, Major General C.P. Hall, commanding the XI Corps, who wrote in a letter dated 9 March 1945, "Throughout this (Corregidor) operation , there was a most careful planning and fine execution of the methodical attack he (Col Jones) made to clear the island of Nips".

In conclusion, it is these facts upon which General Jones recommended Specialist Akune's induction into the Military Intelligence Corps Hall of Fame for having greatly assisted U.S. forces in shortening the Corregidor campaign and reducing American casualties. It should be noted that the rapid neutralization of the enemy garrison on Corregidor opened immediate access for Allied naval ships to Manila, the port essential to the support of forces on Luzon.

Harry M. Akune was inducted into the Military Intelligence Corps Hall of Fame in 1996.

In August of 1986, Harry M. Akune was finally awarded the paratrooper badge with a bronze star, indicating one combat jump. Brigadier General (Ret) George M Jones wrote in August 1986: "It is with true pleasure that I can finally send you your long overdue certificate as a parachutist for which you qualified by participating in our airborne assault on Corregidor. I am enclosing a paratrooper badge containing a combat star which you earned as a member of my own 503d Parachute Regiment Combat Team The members of the 503rd came from varied backgrounds, from factories and schools, some born in Europe, some native Americans . . . and some from places like Amache Relocation Camp. What they all shared was an extraordinary



degree of courage. You joined our ranks because you have that rare amount of courage and have been one of us since then. Please take the opportunity to display the wings which should have been awarded to you over 41 years ago. I am proud to have been the commander of men like you."

---



## Major Kan Tagami

Military Intelligence Corps Hall of Fame (1996)

On 16 February 1941, Kan Tagami was drafted into the US Army and attended basic training with the 153d Infantry Regiment at Fort Ord. With growing tensions arising between the US and Japan, the US Army began looking into language training as key to military strategy in the Pacific. In 1941, just prior to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, a survey of qualified Japanese linguists turned up only 19 fluent soldiers. Caucasian linguists were limited to those who had served as attaches in Japan. With a dire need for linguists, the Army began actively recruiting Japanese-American soldiers for classified intelligence. In 1942, Kan Tagami was reassigned to the newly created Military Intelligence Service Language School (MISLS). His elementary schooling in Japan not only gave him basic Japanese language skills, but also a comprehensive background that was much needed in the war.

In June 1942, Kan Tagami attended the first class at the MISLS in Camp Savage, Minnesota. An avid reader and an exceptional student, he performed at the top of his class. Upon graduation, he was one of the few selected to remain as an NCO instructor of the Japanese language to military students. As the war in the Pacific intensified, he left the classroom and volunteered as a team leader of a 15-man language detachment. From July 1944 to April 1945, his unit was assigned to the 124th Cavalry Regiment as part of the MARS Task Force in Burma, fighting behind Japanese lines. As the war in the Pacific escalated, more Japanese linguists were demanded. Japanese American linguists were in such demand with Allied commanders that they were assigned to every military unit from the Army, Navy and Marines. Their role ranged from document translation to personal interpretation to POW interrogation. Other duties included monitoring Japanese radio broadcasts, intercepting enemy messages and preparing surrender leaflets. Moreover it was necessary that each linguist be able to understand,

comprehend and evaluate Japanese military tactics and doctrine. Their contribution became an important function in fighting and defeating the little-known Japanese military machine.

The Pacific was an unknown factor. Many military leaders had had experience in Europe, but little in Asia. The interpreters' role was to teach the US military leaders while getting timely and accurate intelligence information. The point was to save American lives through time and accurate information.

Mr. Tagami volunteered for many combat intelligence patrols. On one of these patrols, involving the capture of Lashio, he helped capture and interrogate Japanese POWs, gaining vital military intelligence on the strength of Japanese troops. The capture of Lashio enabled trucks to go to China through the Burma road.

After the Japanese surrender, he returned to Washington, where he was assigned to the Central Intelligence Group. He requested a transfer to the Army of Occupation in Tokyo in August 1946. In December 1946, he was assigned to the Office of Commander in Chief, Far East Command. In this assignment, he was the personal language interpreter for General Douglas MacArthur, interpreting for General MacArthur whenever a Japanese official visited the General, and translate and write letters for General MacArthur. Lt Tagami was General MacArthur's personal language aide for over four years, from December 1946 to April 1951.

On one occasion, Lt Tagami and the Emperor of Japan met privately, to discuss a personal problem facing the Emperor. It is interesting to note that Kan Tagami was the only person ever to have a single audience with the Emperor.

In all these assignments, his fluency in the Japanese language was unsurpassed, which meant not only as an interpreter and translator of the Japanese language, but comprehension and understanding of the customs, mores and philosophy of the Japanese people. The role he played was an important part in the success and accomplishment of the military mission. From among the 6,000 graduates of the MIS LS and their performance during WWII and the occupation of Japan, Kan Tagami's exemplary performance stands out as unique and worthy of special mention and recognition. All this time, his family remained in US detention centers. From this point on, throughout his career until his retirement 20 years later, his fluency in the Japanese language was a focal point of his military career. As an instructor in the Japanese language during the early phases of WWII, when Japanese linguists were in great demand, Kan Tagami was one of the first group of NCO instructors who taught 6,000 US Army Japanese linguists during WWII.

Kan Tagami received a commendation from Brigadier General John P Willey, MARS Task Force, dated April 11, 1945. He received the Bronze Star Medal for meritorious service for the period 27 June to 2 November 1950.

Kan Tagami was inducted into the Military Intelligence Corps Hall of Fame in 1996.



## MSG Roy Matsumoto

Military Intelligence Corps Hall of Fame (1997)

Ranger Hall of Fame (1993)

Roy Hiroshi Matsumoto was born in Laguna, California, in May 1913 to Tei Kimura and Wakaji Matsumoto. His father, a farmer and professional photographer, was the grandson of Wakamatsu Matsumoto, an Issei "pioneer" in the rich agricultural lands of southern California. His mother, a mail order bride, was the daughter of Shinjiro Kimura, a famous fencing (*kendo*) instructor to Lord Asano of Hiroshima.

When Matsumoto reached junior high school age, he was sent to Japan to live with his maternal grandparents and to receive a Japanese education. After three years at the *chugakko* (middle school) level, he came back to California for his junior and high school education. He remained there after his parents returned to Hiroshima taking his four brothers and two sisters with them.

When the U.S. government began the forcible removal and internment of 110,000 citizens and resident aliens of Japanese ancestry from west coast states in the spring of 1942, Matsumoto, then living in the Los Angeles area, was incarcerated first at the Santa Anita Race Track (converted to an assembly center) in Arcadia, and then at the "concentration" (internment) camp known as the Jerome Relocation Center in Arkansas.

Roy Matsumoto volunteered from the Jerome, Arkansas internment camp and was inducted into the US Army at Fort Snelling, Minnesota on November 12, 1942. In early December 1942, he attended the Military Intelligence Service Language School (MISLS) at Camp Savage, Minnesota. He graduated in the top language class in June 1943. After completing his basic military training at Camp Shelby, Mississippi in September 1943, he volunteered and became a member of the special 14-man language team assigned to the 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional), later known as Merrill's Marauders. After arriving in India, from October 1943 to January 1944, the 14-man language team underwent special combat jungle training with Merrill's Marauders in Deogarh, Northern India.

General Frank Merrill, who was formerly a military attache in Japan before WWII, understood the importance of obtaining reliable and timely intelligence information. He made special effort to instill upon his staff and his soldiers the importance of the Nisei soldiers attached to each battalion. Before they were sent into action, General Merrill took extreme pains to make sure that all 3,000 Marauders recognized the fourteen Nisei soldiers under all conditions and not mistake them for the enemy. The General placed them on the stage and had them "Left Face, Right Face, About Face" and ordered his men to memorize how they looked and spoke. All fourteen Nisei Merrill's Marauders earned the respect and admiration of their fellow Marauders because of their undaunting courage under fire and indispensable language skills.

Merrill's Marauders was made up of an all-volunteer ranger unit consisting of approximately 3,000 soldiers. This special unit consisted of three combat battalions with two combat teams to each battalion. Each combat team was designated by color. Roy Matsumoto was with the 2nd Battalion which had the Blue and the Green Teams. He was assigned to Battalion Headquarters and was attached to both combat teams during their skirmishes. The mission of Merrill's Marauders was to clear the North Burma area of Japanese troops and to recapture the town of Myitkyina and its all-weather air strip so that supplies could be flown into China. The Marauders faced the Japanese Imperial Army 18th Infantry Division, which controlled most of Northern Burma. The Marauders operated behind Japanese lines.

In March 1944, the Blue Team was in combat for 38 hours while establishing a road block at Walawbum in Northern Burma. Roy Matsumoto repeatedly distinguished himself. He located a telephone wire running through the trees on the main road through Hukawng Valley. He then borrowed a field telephone from Captain Philip B Piazza, climbed the tree and tapped into the line. Matsumoto listened to the Japanese sergeant speaking with his commanding officer saying there was enemy in the area, strength unknown, and did not know what to do. He said there were only two men guarding the ammunition dump, and that they were lightly armed. He then foolishly gave the coordinates of the dump. With this information, the Marauders were able to destroy the ammunition dump.

That same day on March 5, 1944, Matsumoto picked up another piece of information that saved the unit from heavy casualties. Matsumoto intercepted a message from Japanese General Tanaka's Headquarters ordering the 18th Division to proceed to another area. With this advance notice, the 2nd Bn was able to avoid confrontation with a larger Japanese force which was approaching the road block. Having engaged the enemy for over two months without outside support or reinforcement, the 2nd Bn was not in a position to take on a large Japanese force. Thus the 2nd Bn was able to vacate the area under cover of darkness and avoid the enemy. To obtain those two pieces of information, SGT Matsumoto had to suspend himself in a tree for most of the day and late into the evening of March 5, 1944, exposing himself to enemy sniper fire continuously. His only protection was to move to the other side of the tree. As the soldiers of the 18th Division spoke the Kyushu dialect which the other linguists in the unit did not comprehend well, Matsumoto's linguistic skills and bravery proved invaluable on this occasion.

For exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding service from February 24, 1944 to March 11, 1944, Staff Sergeant Roy Matsumoto was personally awarded the Legion of Merit from General Frank Merrill.

One month later, on April 6 and 7, 1944, SGT Matsumoto distinguished himself again in a fierce battle fought at Nhpum Ga, Burma. During the two week siege, the 2nd Bn was completely surrounded by Japanese forces. SGT Matsumoto was assigned to the Green Team, and although they occupied a hill, they were surrounded, cut off, and were supplied food, ammunition and water by airdrop. Casualties approached 40%; it was a desperate situation and the 3rd Bn was unable to come to 2nd Bn's assistance because of strong Japanese opposition. The enemy was so close they could hear them but not see them. On the evening of April 6, SGT Matsumoto volunteered to sneak up closer to the enemy and infiltrate their area risking capture and certain death. Armed with only two hand grenades, under cover of total darkness, he slithered down the hill as quietly as possible. He got close enough to hear them discussing plans to attack early next morning. Within 30 minutes, he crawled back to his unit and reported this important information. Warned in time, the Green Team was able to prepare for the enemy's "surprise " attack. They booby-trapped their original foxholes and dug-in at new nearby positions. As expected, the enemy attacked the vacated positions. When they met no opposition, the enemy forces redirected their attack up the hill directly in the line of fire of the Green Team, who was waiting for the enemy with heavy weapons. The Japanese suffered heavy casualties and withdrew to the vacated foxholes. In the heat of the battle, SGT Matsumoto, stripped to the waist, exposed himself and waving his carbine imitating a Japanese officer call out in Japanese, "Charge! Charge!" Thinking it was their own officer's command, the Japanese soldiers rose as one and charged into the Marauder's withering fire, suffering unusually high casualties. After the battle, fifty-four dead Japanese soldiers, including two officers, were counted. It was estimated that the enemy casualties numbered at least twice that figure whereas the 2nd Bn had no combat casualties during this battle.

SGT Matsumoto's part in the battle of Nhpum Ga enabled the Marauders to emerge victorious. Had he not sought out the enemy and learned of their plans, the annihilation of the Green Team would have been certain. By his actions, he saved numerous American lives. To this day, many Green Team/Merrill's Marauders say "We owe our lives to SGT Matsumoto."

The Merrill's Marauders continued to fight behind Japanese lines until August 1944 when they finally recaptured the all-weather air strip at Myitkyina. The Marauders, approximately 3,000 of them, began their trek in Ledo, Assam and finally reached Myitkyina after seven months. From February to August 1944, they marched over 700 miles through dense jungles behind enemy lines. The severe hardships they endured inflicted high casualties caused by dysentery, typhus, malaria and other diseases. It is reported that of the total casualties of 2,394 (original strength 2,830), 1,970 were disease casualties and 424 were battle casualties. SGT Matsumoto was hospitalized briefly for tropical disease. However, he completed the seven hundred mile, seven-month trek with the Merrill's Marauders and was in the last contingent of seventeen men that left Myitkyina when the unit was disbanded in late August 1944.

From February to August 1945, SGT Matsumoto was assigned to Detachment 202, OSS and attached to the Chinese Army guerrilla forces in Yunnan Province. Again he operated behind enemy lines near the French-Indochina border, was involved in demolition of bridges, disruption of enemy communications and capturing prisoners.

When the war ended, Matsumoto was assigned to headquarters, China Command, Shanghai, where he remained for a year. His duties including escorting 24 war crime prisoners to Japan by air. He was later transferred to GHQ in Tokyo where he was assigned undercover missions during the Occupation. During the Korean War, he was stationed in Okinawa. In 1952, he was transferred to Sixth Army headquarters, Presidio, San Francisco and then to the Oakland Army Base, from which he was reassigned to the Transportation Command, Fort Story, Virginia. He retired in 1963, after 20 years of Army service. He passed away at the age of 100 in 2014.

Master Sergeant Roy Matsumoto was inducted into the Military Intelligence Corp Hall of Fame in 1997. In 1993, he was inducted into the Ranger Hall of Fame.