

VFW Sponsors Bataan Memorial Death March for Fifth Year

Over 7,000 marchers registered for grueling event

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Last weekend, VFW National Commander John W. Stroud was at White Sands Missile Range, N.M., to support and cheer on marchers participating in the 26th Annual Bataan Memorial Death March. For the fifth year in a row, the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) was the presenting sponsor for the memorial



March.

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Every year thousands of service members, veterans and civilians travel to White Sands Missile Range, N.M., to participate in the rigorous Bataan Memorial Death March. The March, a grueling 26.2 miles through difficult desert terrain, is held in honor of the heroic American service members who defended the Philippine Islands during World War II. These soldiers endured horrendous conditions, including malaria-infested regions, no medical attention, meager rations and outdated equipment. Then in April 1942, tens of thousands of soldiers were surrendered to the Japanese and forced to march for days to a war camp, enduring the high Philippine jungle heat and extreme brutality of their captors, thousands perished.

This tragedy became known as the Bataan Death March.

Together, with VFW National Commander Stroud, dozens of VFW members spent the weekend visiting with service members and veterans who participated in the March, promoting the many programs and services the VFW has to offer. "I noticed this year, compared to previous years, a much greater interest in the VFW and our programs," said B.J. Lawrence, VFW Department of New Mexico assistant state adjutant/quartermaster.

VFW National Commander Stroud presented his "Chief's Medallion" to White Sands Army Base Commanding Brigadier General Timothy Coffin and to the original Bataan Death March survivors in attendance during an awards presentation ceremony after the March concluded.

Over 7,000 marchers registered in this year's event and March organizers expect that number to continue to grow. "The VFW is incredibly proud to be involved with events like the Bataan Memorial Death March. Supporting this March is a unique way to honor the memory of so many courageous soldiers who paid the ultimate price in the fight for freedom," said VFW National Commander John W. Stroud.