

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: March 21, 2016

STORY ONLINE AT: <http://www.army.mil/article/164575/>

FULL-SIZED PHOTOS AT:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/whitesandsmissilerange/albums/72157665614514530/with/25851870341/>

VIDEO ONLINE AT: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0pfMuzVy92k>

White Sands Missile Range hosts successful 27th Annual Bataan Memorial Death March

White Sands Missile Range, N.M., March 21, 2016 –Six thousand six hundred thirteen marchers, including wounded warriors, a 10 year old and a 98 year old participated in the March 20 Bataan Memorial Death March at White Sands Missile Range, honoring those who endured the Bataan Death March.

The Bataan Memorial Death March honors a special group of World War II heroes responsible for the defense of the islands of Luzon, Corregidor and the harbor defense forts of the Philippines. On April 9, 1942, tens of thousands of American and Filipino Soldiers surrendered to Japanese forces. The Americans were Army, Army Air Corps, Navy and Marines. Among those seized were members of the 200th Coast Artillery, New Mexico National Guard.

"We have marchers here covering nine decades," said event host WSMR Commander

Brig. Gen. Timothy Coffin. "That is the history of our past...and the foundation of our future."

Bataan prisoner of war survivor 98-year-old retired Col. Ben Skardon completed 8.5 miles of the Bataan Memorial Death March course for the ninth consecutive year marching with his "brigade," made up of family members, prior students or individuals who have connected with him in prior marches. His "brigade" has consistently grown every year, this year was his largest following.

Coffin also thanked volunteers who helped make the event possible.

WSMR Installation Management Command Administration Assistant Shelly Lowe, who runs the volunteer program for the event, said over 1,200 volunteers help make the memorial march the success that it is every year.

"Without them we couldn't do it," Lowe said. "We appreciate every one of them. They help make Bataan successful."

Many of the marchers carried food items such as rice and beans in their rucksacks to reach the 35-pound minimum weight for the "Heavy" category, which were donated to six local county food banks. Bataan 2016 set a record donating 24,334 pounds of food which equates to 20,278 meals, said Lisa Frankson, Bataan Memorial Death March project officer.

The memorial march is an international event with all 50 U.S. states and many countries represented during the march.

The overall winners are: Dillon Clift, 3:44:21; ROTC team light, St. Johns University ROTC, 3:47:44; ROTC team heavy, Colorado University ROTC, 5:23:55.

The next Bataan Memorial Death March has been scheduled for March 19, 2017.