Guerrilla Fighter: Frederick Funston in the Philippines, 1900-1901

by Brian M. Linn

The military career of Frederick Funston has become associated in many people's minds with the American occupation of the Philippines and the suppression of the Philippine Insurrection. Funston, the best known figure of the war, has served as a focal point for the much larger debate over the U.S. Army's alleged brutality and cruelty in the archipelago. To some students of the war, Funston remains the heroic "Fighting Fred" who forded rivers under fire, charged insurgent positions, and captured Emilio Aguinaldo, the leader of the Filipino resistance. Those opposed to the U.S. conquest of the Philippines have been equally quick to link Funston's career with the darker side of military pacification. Mark Twain attacked Funston's actions as dishonorable, and recently David H. Bain and Stuart C. Miller have accused him of serious atrocities against the Filipinos. Unfortunately, both Funston's partisans and his detractors have concentrated primarily on his service as colonel of the Twentieth Kansas in early 1899 and his capture of Emilio Aguinaldo in March 1901. His far longer tenure of service between these two dramatic periods as commander of a military district on the island of Luzon has been virtually ignored. An examination of this period in Funston's life offers a substantially new perspective from which to study both his career and the U.S. Army's experiences in the Philippines.

Born in 1865, the son of a Kansas congressman, Funston's early life was marked by a love of adventure and a succession of odd and colorful careers. By the time he turned thirty, he had been a teacher, university student, newspaper reporter, railroad conductor, and lecturer. As a botanist for the U.S. Department of Agriculture he traveled from Death Valley to Alaska, in one instance building his own boat and paddling fifteen hundred miles down the Yukon River. Although he was interested in martial affairs, he joined neither the U.S. Army nor the National Guard. In 1896, inspired by the struggle of the Cuban revolutionaries against Spain, he taught himself to use a Hotchkiss twelve-pounder and posed as an artillery expert. He fought in a number of battles in Cuba and was wounded several times. Sent back to the United States to recover from malaria, he publicized his exploits in a series of lectures. While his early career provided little experience in military science or command, it showed him to be both a brave and competent individual. In the Philippine War he finally found a stage suitable for his talents.

Funston first arrived in the Philippines in 1898 as part of the U.S. Army expedition assigned to capture Manila from the Spanish. His experience as a Cuban artilleryman and his excellent political connections secured him an appointment as colonel of the Twentieth Kansas Infantry. He participated in the battle of Manila which secured the city from the Spanish. On February 4, 1899, fighting broke out between the Americans and their former allies, the Philippine Republican forces, or insurgents. Funston soon established a reputation as an overview of the Philippine Insurrection, see John Morgan Gates, Schoolbooks and Kings: The United States Army in the Philippines, 1898-1902 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1973); John R. M. Taylor, "The Philippine Insurrection Against the United States" (unpublished galley draft, 1903, National Archives, Washington, D.C.). Taylor's manuscript, which can only be found in galley form, contains a brief narrative and translations of approximately one thousand documents. The documents are listed as "Exhibits" and hereafter will be cited as such. Each chapter of the galley begins a new page numbering sequence or the page number and a letter code, such as GV; hereafter citations will use the galley's numbering system.

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excellent, if impetuous, field commander. His Kansas regiment demonstrated an elan and recklessness which, against a more disciplined foe, would have resulted in substantial casualties. Funston returned to the United States with the Twentieth Kansas in the fall of 1899 but was commissioned a brigadier general within a month and sent back to the Philippines for another tour of duty.

Funston returned to the Philippines just in time to see the U.S. Army launch its final assault on the Filipino forces of Emilio Aguinaldo. In an intricate series of maneuvers the army succeeded in turning the Filipinos' flank while an army amphibious landing at Lingayen Gulf blocked the insurrectos' retreat. The Philippine forces retreated, but the retreat quickly became a rout. On November 13, Aguinaldo and his remaining advisors met at Bayambang and adopted a new strategy to continue their struggle for Philippine independence. Philippine military forces would no longer attempt to meet the Americans in open combat but would rely on guerrilla warfare which, when coupled with the unhealthy climate, would soon wear down and demoralize the American soldiers. Any attempt by the Americans to impose colonial government would be frustrated by a Filipino boycott on political office. Aguinaldo assumed that the prospect of fighting an interminable guerrilla war would contribute to anti-imperialist sentiment in the United States and force the Americans to withdraw. Accordingly, he ordered the remnants of his army to disperse into small groups and return to their homes where they could begin this new guerrilla strategy.

In December the U.S. Army's commander in the Philippines, Maj. Gen. Elwell S. Otis, also decided to adopt a new strategy in order to pacify the archipelago. Convinced that the collapse of Aguinaldo's conventional forces marked the end of organized resistance to American rule, Otis broke the large military organizations into small detachments of one to four companies and placed them as garrisons in important towns. U.S. Army officers would now be expected to assume civil-military functions, hunting down the "bandits" whom Otis perceived as the major threat to order, establishing temporary governments in the provinces and towns, and preparing the Filipinos for American colonial government. Unwittingly paralleling Aguinaldo's own organization, Otis divided the Philippines into military districts, assigned each district a few thousand troops, and made his senior officers district commanders.

The decisions of Otis and Aguinaldo contributed to a localized, regional guerrilla war which would last in some areas until July 1902. The sixty thousand troops commanded by Otis and his successor, Maj. Gen. Arthur MacArthur, were scattered into a number of small towns to prepare the Filipinos for civil colonial rule. Expecting to find the country pacified, the army soon found itself engaged in a vicious struggle with local guerrillas. From the north of Luzon to southern Mindanao, American soldiers and Filipino insurrectos stalked each other over a countryside that varied from tropical rain forest to frigid mountain peaks, from tangled swamps to sodden rice paddies. The broken terrain, poor communications, and localized native resistance threw the burden of pacification on the army's provincial and district commanders. It was left to these officers to develop and implement the policies and methods which would restore peace in their area. One of the most effective of these officers was Funston who, in late December 1899, was assigned to command an area that was designated the Fourth District, Department of Northern Luzon.²

The Fourth District comprised the two central Luzon provinces of Nueva Ecija and Prinçipe. The province of Prinçipe was an isolated, mountainous province with a population of only 5,242, and many of this number were members of primitive mountain tribes. Nueva Ecija, on

the other hand, was a vital rice producing area with a population in excess of 130,000 living within an area of some 2,040-square miles. Despite the fact that the area was controlled by the Philippine Republic for over a year, Aguinaldo's government established neither a strong administration nor a popular base in the province. Nueva Ecija was deeply divided along ethnic and economic lines. Much of the province had been recently settled by groups of Tagalogs and Pampangans from the south and Ilocanos from the north. The distrust between Tagalogs, Ilocanos, and Pampangans led to ethnic tensions which the Americans were later to exploit.

Nueva Ecija was also showing signs of the socio-economic stress which would plague it in the twentieth century. Absentee landownership and tenancy were common, while traditional patron-client relations were weakening. The Philippine Republic's elitist economic policies and its failure to institute economic or social reforms alienated peasants; the provincial elite depended on the restoration of order by American troops to continue their local political control. Nueva Ecija's military preparations were minimal and a U.S. Navy observer estimated that in late 1898 the province had only three hundred Republican troops. Moreover, the Filipino soldiers behaved so badly that they caused the populace of one town to riot and take away their guns.

Under Aguinaldo's November 13 reorganization, Nueva Ecija fell into the area termed "Center of Luzon" and was placed under the politico-military command of Aguinaldo's former chief of staff, Maj. Gen. Pantaleon Garcia. Unfortunately for the insurgents, Garcia was a poor commander who spent much of his time in hiding and exerted little control over his subordinates. Garcia's weak leadership at the top was compounded by bad guerrilla leadership within Nueva Ecija. Col. Pablo Padilla, described by Funston as "a cruel and cowardly

scoundrel," was unable or unwilling to control the misbehavior of his forces. In the north of Nueva Ecija was the bombastic Col. Teodoro Sandico, dismissed by Funston as a military nonentity. Sandico devoted his time to organizing a "Republican Guard" out of nonexistent troops and contemplating the ideal conditions which would allow him to surrender with honor. Not surprisingly, he was soon writing letters to Aguinaldo complaining that other guerrillas paid no attention to him.4

The guerrillas' internal weakness was balanced by the lack of U.S. Army military strength in the province. To pacify the Fourth District, Funston was assigned some twenty-four hundred American troops from six different units and a squadron of the Macabebe Native Scouts, or Philippine Cavalry. Denied a sufficient force to institute a thorough military occupation, Funston decided to pursue an opportunistic strategy. Whether because of his own experience in guerrilla war or his personal inclinations, he determined to remain uncommitted to any concrete pacification policies. Instead, he would wait and see what the guerrillas did and then counter their moves. From the first he was guided by pragmatic considerations. In one letter he summed up his counter-insurgency methods as: "Am not following any particular plan except to send out numerous small detachments with instructions to maintain a guerrilla warfare."5

Funston's strategy paid off in early March when Garcia disregarded his own instructions to avoid battles and sanctioned an attack on Peñaranda which involved many of the insurgent forces. On March 18, Garcia and Padilla's forces, an estimated four hundred to seven hundred troops, were located by an army patrol at Manuilui near the town of Peñaranda. With a company of infantry and fifty Macabebes, the Americans scattered the guerrillas and inflicted substantial casualties on them. Exploiting the guerrilla defeat, Funston went on the offensive, sweeping the mountains and driving the defeated guerrillas into the plains. Many insurrecto bands broke up as the men hid their guns in mountain caves and fled to the towns to resume their civilian occupations. Other bands refused to fight and were held together only by threats of punishment. In the midst of this general collapse, nearly the entire Nueva Ecija guerrilla leadership was captured. On May 6, Funston's intelligence service located Garcia at Jaen, Nueva Ecija, and Pablo Padilla and Casimiro Tinio were arrested ten days later. The success of Funston's operations as well as his political skills can be seen by the active assistance these men gave the Americans against their former comrades.6

The arrival of Brig. Gen. Urbano Lacuna in April prevented the disintegration of the insurgent cause in Nueva Ecija. A native of neighboring Bulacan province and a veteran of over four years of fighting, Lacuna remained a humane and chivalrous commander who won the respect of the army officers who faced him. Arriving with a force of some two hundred Bulacano guerrillas, Lacuna quickly set to work gathering the


scattered provincial forces, locating arms, and asserting his authority over the remaining provincial guerrilla chiefs. Lacuna realized that the attempts by Garcia and Padilla to concentrate their forces for attacks on American towns had been disastrous. He rejected this strategy of confrontation for one that would increase guerrilla morale and demonstrate to the populace that the insurgents still controlled the countryside. In May, Lacuna's guerrillas began to fire into army-occupied towns at night, thus making maximum use of the guerrillas' poor marksmanship and faulty ammunition. In slightly more spectacular attempt to impress the population, Maj. Tomas Tagunton attacked San Isidro on May 12, killing several civilians in the fighting. Unlike Garcia, Lacuna kept his forces dispersed and the Americans were unable to locate the perpetrators of "this devilry."

In June, Lacuna attempted to take advantage of Funston's lack of manpower and the summer rainy season by concentrating his forces and attacking isolated American garrisons. This proved to be a mistake. On June 14, an American patrol located Lacuna's force as it was assembling near Peñaranda and administered a severe defeat, killing twenty-two men and capturing sixteen rifles. On July 4, the insurrectos attacked Maniencing, Nueva Ecija, which had just been garrisoned by a small detachment and lacked any defenses. To prevent U.S. reinforcements, the guerrillas also attacked Gapan and Peñaranda. While there was some hard fighting at Maniencing, these attacks were beaten off, with large guerrilla losses. The July 4 engagements cost the guerrillas heavily in men and ammunition and eroded much of Lacuna's work in building up insurrecto confidence.


7. Brig. Gen. Frederick Funston to AG, DNL, June 14, 1900, RG 935/2263, Box 3; Capt. Ernesto V. Smith to Brig. Gen. Frederick Funston, May 12, 1900, RG 935/2263, Box 1; For Lacuna's background, see Emilio Aguinaldo to Col. Urbina Lacuna, October 29, 1899, PIR Roll 3, Adjutant General's Office, 3317; Brig. Gen. Frederick Funston to AG, DNL, May 28 and June 28, 1900, RG 935/2263, Box 2; Brig. Gen. Frederick Funston to AG, DNL, May 25, 1901, RG 935/2262, LS 2759.

8. War Department, 1900 1:7:370-71; Headquarters, Fourth District.

Funston quickly reacted to this guerrilla offensive with a counteroffensive aimed at driving the guerrillas into the mountains. Despite the monsoon conditions, he sent forces into the hills and destroyed Lacuna's largest permanent camp. The guerrillas also suffered a major loss when Lt. Col. Isidro Carmona, Lacuna's chief tax collector, was captured with Lacuna's administrative correspondence. Carmona's capture led to the arrest of many members of the guerrillas' clandestine supply organization. By August much of Lacuna's success in building up an organization capable of sustained guerrilla war had been reversed. Army intelligence reported increased insurrecto desertions and over a hundred rifles captured or surrendered.

The failure of his summer attacks and the American counteroffensive forced Lacuna to fall back on the tactics he had developed in May. The *insurrectos* resumed firing into U.S. occupied towns, and Lacuna instructed that the houses of *americanistas* be burned. The American garrisons suffered negligible casualties during these attacks but "the situation of the people who had taken refuge in the garrisoned towns was in many ways pitiable." Funston did not halt military operations in the mountains to protect the towns but rather increased them. Throughout the winter and early spring the Americans inflicted substantial casualties on the insurgents while losing only three wounded. More important, the provincial elite decided that the guerrillas posed a major threat to their safety and openly allied with the Americans. In January 1901, Funston reported that the "better class" of Filipinos was in favor of the Americans and hostile to the guerrillas and that "there is a very decided tendency to actively aid us."  

In the winter of 1900-1901 most of the prominent *insurrectos* in the Fourth District either surrendered or were hunted down and killed. Engagements yielded few American casualties but increasing numbers of captured or surrendered guerrillas. In January alone the Americans counted 135 rifles captured and 24 surrendered, more than the total obtained in the four previous months. In February, the principal men of ten provincial towns wrote Lacuna stating that the population was sick of war; they threatened to turn their people into anti-guerrilla "voluntarios" if he did not surrender. In one town, guerrillas who attempted to get food were killed and their rifles turned over to the Americans. Increasingly, guerrilla bands were forced into the border areas in the southeast where they were harried by army expeditions from several districts. Prominent guerrilla leaders such as Lt. Col. Joaquin Natividad and Maj. Antonio Mendoza surrendered while others, such as the notorious Tomas Taguntan, were killed. Those *insurrectos* that remained spent most of their time fleeing from army patrols and there were few engagements between January 28 and May 19. The guerrillas' refusal to fight forced Lacuna to threaten *insurrecto* commanders with punishment for allowing the Americans to travel through their areas without molestation. By April, Lacuna's own officers were deserting him, while in the neighboring provinces, *insurrecto* leaders surrendered. Despite the hopelessness of his cause,
Lacuna held out until May 19, when, after prolonged negotiations, he finally capitulated.12

The major American pacification methods developed by Funston in the Fourth District were a well organized intelligence service, rapid response to insurgent military offensives, and the inclusion of key elements of the population in their own defense. Funston himself never articulated these policies, and it is quite probable that he never consciously developed them into a coherent pacification strategy. He was primarily an operational leader who conducted much of the district's pacification from horseback. His personal charisma allowed him to form close contacts with the local elite, ex-insurrectos, and the Ilocanos which he exploited whenever practicable. Against a deeply rooted popular guerrilla movement he may well have been an abysmal failure, but against the particular provincial resistance he faced, Funston was a success. Pragmatic and flexible, he quickly exploited the opportunities the guerrillas gave him.

Funston's intelligence system was, by his own words, "hard to beat" and gave him valuable information on insurgent plans and concentrations. He established social contacts with former or captured insurrecto leaders in order to gain information on guerrilla organization.

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12 Brig. Gen. Frederick Funston to AG, DNL, February 8, 1900, RG 395/2263, Box 1; Brig. Gen. Frederick Funston to AG, DNL, May 25, 1901, RG 395/2292, LS 2759. For reports on operations, see War Department, 1901, I:7:303-76; "Reports of Operations in Fourth District, Department of Northern Luzon," Annual Report of the War Department, 1901 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1901), 1:5:130-34; Brig. Gen. Frederick Funston to AG, DNL, January 25, 1901, RG 395/2263, Box 4; Capt. John J. Crittenden, February 16, 1901, RG 395/2263, Box 30, LR 3787; Brig. Gen. Frederick Funston to AG, DNL, March 10, 1901, RG 395/2243, Box 32, LR 808; Brig. Gen. Frederick Funston to AG, DNL, May 10, 1901, RG 395/2263, Box 4; Brig. Gen. Frederick Funston to AG, DNL, May 25, 1901, RG 395/2263, LS 2759; Funston, Memoirs of Two Wars, 381-83; "Translation of Surrender Terms for Urbano Lacuna," May 18, 1901, PIR SD 6856. For Sandico surrender, see Brig. Gen. Frederick Funston to AG, DNL, March 10, 1901, RG 395/2215, Box 32, LR 803; Lt. Burton J. Mitchel, ADC to AG, DNL, April 7, 1901, RG 395/2205, Box 4; Brig. Gen. Frederick Funston to AG, DNL, April 10, 1901, RG 395/2263, Box 4; For Roberto Grasso's surrender, see Col. Henry B. Freeman to AG, DNL, October 8, 1900, RG 395/2263, Box 3; For Natividad's surrender, see Brig. Gen. Frederick Funston to AG, DNL, January 5, 1901, RG 395/2263, Box 4; Maj. Benjamin Abord, Assistant Adjutant General, DNL to Brig. Gen. Frederick Funston, January 7, 1900, RG 395/2270, Box 5. For evidence of Lacuna's having to threaten his subordinates, see Brig. Gen. Urbano Lacuna to Captains Severo and Dionisio de los Santos, August 12, 1900, in Taylor, "Philippine Insurrection," Exhibit 1683, 58 CV; Brig. Gen. Urbano Lacuna to Majors and Captains Commanding Companies of the First and Second battalions, December 7, 1900, PIR SD 6854.
Quite early in his tenure he created a native secret service whose efficiency he promoted by making very large payments for vital information. The Filipinos who located Pantaleon Garcia, for example, were paid $200 for their help and the Filipino guide who led Funston to the hidden papers of the Philippine Republic received $150. Funston’s intelligence also owed a great deal to the insurgents’ own carelessness. The capture of Carmona, delegated to establish a supply system, compromised much of the guerrilla civil organization. In June 1900, Lt. Frank A. Jernigan’s Ilocano Scouts located Casmirio Tinio’s correspondence for the two years in which he had headed the insurgent organization in Nueva Ecija. According to Col. Lymon W. V. Kenna, Funston’s chief subordinate, this gave the names and organizations of the entire civil-military organization as well as “a very complete idea of the existing military conditions in this province.”

Funston was able to utilize this intelligence to organize and conduct fast, hard-hitting military operations against the guerrillas. In early 1900 he organized a twenty-five man unit called the “Headquarters Scouts” which served as a personal escort on expeditions and as a scouting and strike force. Funston also made good use of the Philippine Cavalry (Macabebe) assigned to the district. These native scouts proved their worth during the rainy season and excelled in the swamps and mountains where American forces bogged down. By blending in with the population they could also secure information and act as decoys. On one occasion they disguised themselves as farmers to ambush and break up a group of insurgents attempting to levy tolls on the Cabiao road.


April 20, 1900, RG 395/2263, Box 1; Brig. Gen. Frederick Funston to AG, DNL, May 8, 1900, RG 395/2262, Box 1, LS 218; Brig. Gen. Frederick Funston to AG, DNL, May 19, 1900, RG 395/2263, Box 1; Brig. Gen. Frederick Funston to Provost Marshal General, December 13, 1900, RG 395/2263; Brig. Gen. Frederick Funston to AG, DNL, January 10, 1901, RG 395/2263, Box 4.

14. Funston, Memories of Two Wars, 915-16; Jack Gantoborn, Lee Killed Men (London: Robert Hale, Ltd., n.d.), 147-49; Entry of Octo-
In contrast to the insurgents’ open use of terrorism, Funston made increasing efforts to insure that his military operations fell only on *insurrectos* and their supporters. In his tenure as district commander, Funston moved from an advocate of harsh and rather indiscriminate repression to a relatively benevolent governor. His treatment of wire cutting in his district offers a good example of this. In January 1900, Funston’s policy, if wires were cut, was to confine the village headmen and burn down the houses immediately around the cut, with the provision that if the problem continued the entire village would be burned. There are hints that even more drastic measures were occasionally “discretely administered.” By January 1901, however, Funston wrote, “I cannot see the expediency of burning the barrios in the vicinity of where a wire has been cut as the damage is almost invariably done by people from elsewhere. I think the unarmed and defenseless people in the barrios could not prevent wire cutting if they were so disposed.” Funston’s own counterinsurgency experience taught him that effective military operations could go hand in

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15. Capt. Ernest V. Smith to C.O., San Jose, January 7, 1900, RG 395/2263, Box 1. For official policy, see Capt. Ernest V. Smith to Col. Lymon W. V. Kennon, January 31, 1900, RG 395/2263, Box 1; Capt. Ernest V. Smith to C.O., Calhao, February 5, 1900, RG 395/2263, Box 1.

16. Brig. Gen. Frederick Funston to AG, DNL, January 3, 1901. Funston was under considerable pressure to retaliate for wire cutting, see Maj. Benjamin Alvord to Brig. Gen. Frederick Funston, January 3, 1901, RG 395/2270; Brig. Gen. Frederick Funston to AG, DNL, October 29, 1900, RG 395/2263, Box 3; Maj. Thomas Baldwin to AG, Fourth Division, DNL, June 4, 1900, RG 395/2133, LR 6474.

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Assigned to Funston was a squadron of Marabele Native Scouts. Shown here is the detail of First Battalion Marabeles that captured Aguinaldo.
The Fourth District, Department of Northern Luzon, under Funston's jurisdiction was made up of two provinces, Nueva Ecija and Príncipe. Nueva Ecija (marked off by bars) was a populous, rice-producing area, while Príncipe (to the east of Nueva Ecija) was mountainous and sparsely populated.
This map, based on a much more detailed map of the central Luzon district, indicates towns and cities important to both the U. S. military and the insurrectos; also shown is the general geography of the region, indicating major rivers (excluding the hundreds of tributaries) and mountains which separated the Nueva Ecija and Pampanga provinces.
hand with conciliating the population. He made increasing efforts to insure that Filipino civilians were allowed to remain neutral.

The third aspect of Funston's pacification efforts in the Fourth District was the integration of important segments of Nueva Ecija's society into counterinsurgency activities. Despite his lack of interest in such benevolent aspects of American occupation as schools, Funston was able to draw on considerable Filipino support throughout his tenure. He had excellent relations with Nueva Ecija's social elite and was often invited to bailes and fiestas. Funston in turn overlooked the elites' contributions to the insurgents. This elite americanista feeling increased through the war, prompting one insurrecto chief to comment that since both Ilocanos and Tagalogs "of importance" were so hostile to the guerrillas "it will be necessary that four or five lives be taken in each town."[13]

Perhaps because of his ties with the local gentry and town elders, Funston was able to utilize the services of the many former insurrecto chiefs who wished to resume their place among the provincial elite. The original Nueva Ecija guerrilla command had not been distinguished by a strong commitment to Filipino independence and after their capture many of ex-insurrectos collaborated against Lacuna. Lacuna's terrorism strengthened this tie between former guerrilla leaders and the Americans. Casimiro Tinio, for example, received several notes and even a visit from Sandico, who threatened to kill Tinio and destroy his town of Licab. Tinio, probably against his own instincts, was forced to become an American informer and give Funston information on the strength and composition of the insurgent bands in his area. Funston encouraged the support of ex-insurrectos by giving lenient surrender terms to former guerrillas. Initially Funston opposed negotiations with insurrectos, but he quickly became a master of using his former adversaries to aid district pacification. Insurrecto commanders who wished to surrender were expected to bring in their men and arms when they capitulated or risk being sent back to round them up. Once they surrendered, guerrilla leaders were often given positions within the American civil government. The benevolence of this approach contrasted with the guerrilla attempts to intimidate ex-insurrectos and explains why many guerrillas collaborated with Funston. Lacuna was perhaps the greatest beneficiary of Funston's lenient policy. He and his officers were promised complete amnesty, allowed to keep their side arms, and given immediate liberty and freedom to travel. After Lacuna's surrender, Funston "spent many hours in pleasant reminiscence" with his former adversaries.[14]

One of the most successful instances of Americans utilizing Filipinos against the insurrectos was Funston's use of the Ilocano community and especially the Ilocano Scouts. The Ilocanos were tied to the Americans through their traditional distrust of the Tagalogs, who comprised the guerrilla leadership, and because the guerrillas had murdered one of their leaders. While the original impetus for these units came from Col. Lymon W. V. Kennon, Funston was quick to support them. Raised primarily in the northern part of Nueva Ecija, the Ilocano Scouts took part in many of the army's expeditions and operations and served as translators, escorts, and outposts as well as protecting the Ilocano community from insurrecto retaliation. Funston claimed that they had never lost a man or gun in over a year and had captured more weapons than any other unit in the district.[15]

In addition to the Ilocano Scouts, the Americans relied on the Ilocano populace as guides, construction workers, and bearers. The Americans rewarded their Ilocano allies by favoring Ilocanos in appointments to municipal offices and ordering their troops operating near Ilocano towns not to molest "peaceful citizens" because "it is desired to win and retain the friendship of every Ilocano."[16] The insurrectos attempted to stop Ilocano support for the Americans by murdering key...

14. Lt. Col. Casimiro Tinio to Brig. Gen. Frederick Funston, September 26, 1900, PIR SD 480:8; Lt. Col. Casimiro Tinio to Brig. Gen. Frederick Funston, September 26, 1900, PIR SD 481:3; Brig. Col. Frederick Funston to AG, DNL, January 2, 1901, RG 395/2262. For the good relations between Tinio and Funston, see Brig. Gen. Frederick Funston to Brig. Gen. J. Franklin Bell, July 25, 1900, RG 395/2263, Box 3.
15. Funston, Memories of Two Wars, 433; Brig. Gen. Frederick Funston to AG, DNL, May 9, 1901, RG 395/2263, Box 4; Brig. Gen. Frederick Funston to AG, DNL, May 19, 1901, RG 395/2263, Box 4; Brig. Gen. Frederick Funston to AG, DNL, December 30, 1900, RG 395/2262; Col. Lymon W. V. Kennon to AG, DNL, June 7, 1900, RG 395/2248, LS 83; Col. Lymon W. V. Kennon to AG, DNL, June 8, 1900, RG 395/2248, LS 94; Col. Lymon W. V. Kennon to Lt. Col. Robert L. Howe, June 13, 1900, RG 395/2248, LS 114; Maj. Edwin B. Bolton to AG, Fourth Division, December 16, 1900, RG 395/2296; Col. Lymon W. V. Kennon to AG, Fourth Division, DNL, June 30, 1900, RG 395/2248, LS 142. For Americans serving with the Ilocano Scouts, see Capt. Ernest E. Smith to C.O.'s, Companies A and B, Ilocano Scouts, January 16, 1901, RG 395/2262. For operations against those insurrectos who were intimidating the Ilocano community, see Col. Lymon W. V. Kennon to AG, DNL, June 7, 1900, RG 395/2248, LS 83; Col. Lymon W. V. Kennon to AG, DNL, June 8, 1900, RG 395/2248, LS 94.
16. Adjutant, Thirty-fourth Infantry to Capt. Frank A. Sullivan, April 14, 1900, RG 395/2070. For Ilocano operations, see "Miller" to Col. Lymon W. V. Kennon, September 2, 1900, RG 395/2248, LS 349; Col. Lymon W. V. Kennon to AG, Division of the Philippines, October 8, 1900, RG 395/2133; Brig. Gen. Frederick Funston to AG, DNL,
leaders and Ilocanos suspected of working for the Americans; in one instance they decapitated an old woman and buried two other people alive. This terrorism seems to have only tied the Ilocanos closer to the Americans and may explain the ferocity with which the Ilocanos fought the guerrillas.  

Despite Funston’s overall success in the Fourth District, he displayed both some real and alleged shortcomings as a commander. He gave the Ilocano Scouts and the Philippine Cavalry a relatively free hand against possible insurrecto. While he made it clear that he would tolerate no insurrecto misconduct against his native auxiliaries, Funston was less prompt in punishing the misbehavior of these forces. Ilocano “voluntarios” were accused of being secret members of an obscure religious cult and of shooting and torturing suspects. The Macabebe of the Philippine Cavalry also had a vicious reputation. On one occasion they took over the town of San Francisco, Nueva Ecija, and “committed numerous and atrocious outrages during the 24 hours they were garrisoned there.” Funston reprimanded the officer responsible, and pointed out that such conduct negated the otherwise good record of his men, but he made little effort to exact further punishment. He may have believed that occasional displays of ruthlessness were necessary to demonstrate possible alternatives to cooperation with the army.

A more serious charge against Funston has recently been raised by David H. Bain and Stuart C. Miller, who have accused Funston of summarily executing twenty-four Filipino prisoners-of-war in retaliation for the ambush of an American patrol. Bain writes:

After a small American detachment was lured into an ambush by civilians claiming to know of an insurgent weapons cache, Funston ordered reporters to that avenue the American deaths he had ordered twenty-four prisoners summarily executed. But when he heard rumors that he might be subject to court-martial, he insisted that these had attempted to escape and were killed in the chase.

Stuart C. Miller gives the following account:

As American frustration escalated, so did the stories of less than civilized reprisals on both sides. One “treacherous official,” under the pretense of leading Lieutenant Kohler to a cache of insurgent arms, led his force into the arms of a bolon, who butchered the Americans. A soldier’s letter bragged that Lieutenant Colonel House beat to death the several officials involved in the betrayal of Kohler and his men. General Funston announced that to avenge Kohler he had summarily executed twenty-four prisoners. Later, amidst rumors that he and House were slated for court-martial, Funston insisted that the twenty-four prisoners had been killed “while attempting to escape.”

Both accounts refer to the same incident and cite the same source: an article from the Albany Press-Knickerbocker which appeared in Public Opinion on April 19, 1900. However, the Public Opinion source cited makes no reference to the killing of twenty-four prisoners. Instead it refers to Funston’s summary execution of two guerrillas caught in the act of killing U.S. native scouts. This is one of the more controversial incidents in Funston’s career and one he freely admitted. On March 27, 1900, Funston, while returning from a patrol, came across a Macabebe guide, his arms tied up, who led him to two other Macabees who were bound and badly slashed. An investigation located two guerrilla officers who admitted they had captured the Macabees and had been interrupted in the process of killing them. Funston summarily executed these two officers, basing his action upon General Orders 100, an internationally recognized code of conduct for armies in the field. He
did not cover this up, indeed he immediately made a full report of his action and was upheld. 28

A look at the original army accounts and primary sources, which neither Bain nor Miller apparently had an opportunity to examine, shows other discrepancies. One of the most obvious is that there was neither a Lieutenant Kohler nor a Lieutenant Colonel House serving in the Philippines in 1900. Funston did have a Capt. Lewis M. Koehler serving with him but this officer survived the war. One possible explanation may be that Miller and Bain confused Lewis Koehler with Lt. Edgar F. Koehler, who was killed in an ambush in the nearby province of Tarlac. Bain and Miller are mistaken, however, in their assertion that twenty-four prisoners were hanged or that Funston was involved in any way. There is no documentary material which suggests Funston ever killed twenty-four prisoners nor was he threatened with a court-martial for killing prisoners. Indeed, barring the execution of the two Filipino guerrillas, which Funston could justifiably claim was based on international law, there is no evidence that Funston executed anyone without trial. 29

While his treatment of native auxiliaries and relations with the local elite showed Funston was capable of

28. For the incident regarding the summary execution of the guerrillas, see Brig. Gen. Frederick Funston to AG, Second Division, March 27, 1900, RG 925-2383, Box 1; Funston, Memories of Two Wars, 391-392; Gaunttorn, For Killed Men, 196-198; Army and Navy Journal 37 (April 14, 1900), 765.

29. "Report of an Encounter with Insurgents near Timbua, Luzon, March 4, 1900, by Capt. John M. Sigworth, Ninth Infantry," in War Department, 1900, 1:6783-3. There was a Lt. Col. Robert J. Howe in the Philippines, but he was some two hundred miles away at the time.
working with anyone who could help him, it is clear that he was unwilling to concede equality to any non-white peoples. His treatment of the black troops of the Twenty-fourth U.S. Infantry indicates both Funston’s racism and his pragmatism. On October 10, 1900, a twenty-man telegraph-repair party was attacked by a larger guerrilla force and, after a spirited resistance, thirteen were killed or captured. Funston chose to interpret this as an example that “while the colored troops do not lack either loyalty or individual bravery they seem to go to pieces when attacked from lack of knowing what to do.” He ordered that the Twenty-fourth confine itself to its garrison towns and not undertake any more patrols unless accompanied by an officer. Col. Henry B. Freeman, the Twenty-fourth’s commander, pointed out that this order could not be enforced. Most of the Twenty-fourth’s detachments had only one officer and if he went on patrol it would leave the soldiers in the town without an officer. Funston did not enforce the order, perhaps reminded that in another skirmish the white soldiers of the Thirty-fourth Infantry had fled before a smaller insurrecto force. The incident reflects both Funston’s impetuosity and racism and his equal ability to retreat from a position that proved fruitless.

Funston nonetheless must be judged a great success as a district commander in a guerrilla war. He was quick to establish an efficient intelligence service, organize elite units, and develop native auxiliaries. Funston’s close relations with local elite and ex-insurrectos and his utilization of the Ilocanos are two prominent examples of his abilities. Funston’s military and civil methods were well suited to the regional guerrilla war he encountered in the Fourth District. The provincial guerrilla resistance was badly led and lacked popular support, and the defeats in the spring of 1900 further weakened it. Lacuna’s attempts to revive guerrilla power through guerrilla tactics alienated the population while inflicting few casualties on the Americans. Despite these advantages, Funston’s task in pacifying a hostile countryside with a handful of soldiers and native scouts is impressive. He should be credited with the intelligence to exploit the situation and to develop policies which were effective in his region. By conciliating antiguerilla social groups, using native auxiliaries, and conducting military operations which struck at the insurrectos but left the populace relatively untouched, he contributed greatly to his district’s pacification.

Funston’s career in the Philippine guerrilla war demands a reappraisal of his character and military abilities. Historians have traditionally judged Funston solely on the basis of his spectacular exploits with the Twentieth Kansas or his capture of Emilio Aguinaldo. These incidents do show Funston as an active, courageous, and daring military commander. But Funston was far more than an adventurer placed in the right place at the right time by circumstances. In his command of the Fourth District he showed himself a capable, practical, and efficient civil-military leader with considerable political and military skills. For over a year he fought a long and frustrating guerrilla war with very limited resources. He demonstrated a marked talent for developing and implementing pragmatic pacification policies. In this respect, Funston is symbolic of successful U.S. Army counterinsurgency policies in the Philippines. His career may well explain the relatively easy pacification of much of the archipelago.

While the Philippines made Funston a hero and gave him a permanent position in the U.S. Army, he found that both were a mixed blessing. His penchant for publicly criticizing opponents of Philippine annexation eventually provoked President Roosevelt to admonish him. He also found himself attacked for his use of deception to capture Emilio Aguinaldo. He was not comfortable with a peacetime U.S. Army anxious to forget the brushfire war in the Philippines. Funston was at his best in a crisis, and the humdrum but essential administrative tasks of the modern professional officer were something he disliked. He was also resented by many of the highly trained officers bypassed while Funston achieved rapid promotions. In many respects, Funston was a throwback to the old citizen-soldier in an army that was increasingly concerned with management. Yet much of the old fire still remained. In 1906, when San Francisco was devastated by an earthquake, Funston’s prompt action established order and prevented widespread looting. When violence from the Mexican Revolution forced American intervention, it was Funston who was assigned to the military governorship of occupied Vera Cruz. With the United States drifting into war with Germany, Funston’s name was prominent as a possible commander of the American Expeditionary Force. Funston never had a chance to prove his capabilities on the modern battlefield. On November 19, 1917, while listening to the “Blue Danube Waltz,” he suffered a heart attack and passed away peacefully.