



REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
House of Representatives
CONSTITUTION HILLS, QUEZON CITY

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 5569



AN ACT DECLARING THE WORLD WAR II JAPANESE BUNKERS IN GENERAL SANTOS CITY AS PROTECTED HERITAGE AND HISTORICAL SITES, AND PROVIDING FOR THEIR PRESERVATION, CONSERVATION, AND PROMOTION

Introduced by Representative SHIRLYN L. BAÑAS-NOGRALES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

During World War II, Japanese forces occupied the then Koronadal Valley Settlement, now General Santos City, after their arrival on 14 May 1942, following bombardments from Cotabato and Sarangani Bay.

In early 1944, the Japanese constructed a 1,200-hectare airbase in Buayan as part of their strategic military network, together with the establishment of bunkers, tunnels, and command posts across the City's eight (8) barangays.

These bunkers – classified under Japanese military construction standards from Class A to Class D – were built using reinforced concrete, coral, gravel, and local materials, with some walls measuring more than two feet thick. Many of these structures remain standing today as silent witnesses to the wartime history of General Santos City.

Beyond their military purpose, these structures reflect cross-cultural encounters between the Japanese and the people of General Santos City. Oral historical accounts reveal that local workers, though compelled to take part in construction efforts, were compensated and introduced to Japanese engineering techniques, architectural discipline, and work ethics. In turn, the Japanese learned to adapt to local materials and methods, and shared cultural exchanges with the locals – from cuisine to craftsmanship.

Today, the Local Government of General Santos City has identified forty-four (44) remaining bunkers scattered across the City. These sites, though resilient through time, are now threatened by urban development, neglect, and treasure hunting.

This measure seeks to declare these World War II structures as protected heritage and historical sites, ensuring their preservation, conservation, and development as living memorials and educational tourism destinations. Recognizing their historical and cultural significance will not only honor the past but also enrich future generations' understanding of the nation's resilience, unity, and shared wartime legacy.

In view of the foregoing, approval of this Bill is earnestly sought.

SHIRLYN L. BAÑAS-NOGRALES



REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
House of Representatives
CONSTITUTION HILLS, QUEZON CITY

TWENTIETH CONGRESS

First Regular Session

House Bill No. 5569

AN ACT DECLARING THE WORLD WAR II JAPANESE BUNKERS IN GENERAL SANTOS CITY AS PROTECTED HERITAGE AND HISTORICAL SITES, AND PROVIDING FOR THEIR PRESERVATION, CONSERVATION, AND PROMOTION

Introduced by Representative SHIRLYN L. BAÑAS-NOGRALES

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

SECTION 1. Short Title. – This Act shall be known as the “*World War II Heritage Sites Preservation Act of General Santos City*.”

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy. – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to preserve, protect, and promote historical, cultural, and architectural structures that embody the nation’s wartime legacy. These tangible remnants of World War II, including the Japanese bunkers, tunnels, and airbase sites in General Santos City, shall be conserved as enduring memorials of courage, resilience, and cooperation among peoples during one of the most defining periods in Philippine history.

SECTION 3. Coverage. – The Japanese Bunkers situated in the barangays of Ligaya, Buayan, Baluan, Bula, Conel, Labangal, Mabuhay, and San Isidro in General Santos City are hereby declared as World War II Heritage and Historical Sites.

SECTION 4. Historical and Cultural Importance. – These World War II structures represent:

- a. The intersection of Japanese engineering sophistication and local craftsmanship;
- b. The socio-cultural exchanges between the Japanese and the Filipino people during the occupation;
- c. The resilience of the local population amid the adversities of war; and
- d. The role of General Santos City as the last Japanese defensive stronghold in the Philippines prior to liberation in August 1945.

SECTION 5. Responsibilities of the National and Local Government. – (a.) The National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP), in coordination with the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), shall officially recognize and register the identified bunkers, tunnels, and related structures as historical and cultural properties. (b.) The Local Government of General Santos City, through its Heritage and Tourism Councils, shall be tasked to:

- a. Protect and maintain the structural integrity of the bunkers and tunnels;
- b. Develop appropriate heritage markers, museums, and interpretive centers; and

- c. Promote sustainable cultural tourism programs centered on the World War II heritage trail.

SECTION 6. *Appropriation.* – The amount necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current appropriations of the National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP), the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), and the Department of Tourism (DOT). Thereafter, the funding requirements for its continued implementation shall be included in the respective annual budgets of the said agencies.

SECTION 7. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within ninety (90) days after the effectivity of this Act, the NHCP, NCCA, DOT, and the City Government of General Santos shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations to carry out its provisions.

SECTION 8. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional, the remainder shall not be affected thereby.

SECTION 9. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, and regulations inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 10. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,